



THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

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INTRODUCTION

The Book of Proverbs is a collection of articles about wisdom. It teaches us that we must respect God. Proverbs is not merely an anthology but a 'collection of collections' relating to a pattern of life which lasted for more than a millennium. It is an example of Biblical wisdom and raises questions of values, moral behaviour, the meaning of human life, and right conduct.

AUTHORS

There are three authors attributed to the Book of Proverbs: Agur, Lemuel and Solomon. We know nothing about Agur except what is recorded in his prayer, where he asked for deliverance from economic extremes, **Proverbs 30:1 / Proverbs 30:8-9**.

We know nothing about Lemuel except that he was an unknown king who wrote the words his mother taught him, **Proverbs 31:1**. Some of the early Jewish rabbis identified Lemuel with Solomon. Other scholars believe he was Hezekiah or even an anonymous Arabian prince.

We know a lot about Solomon, who was the third king of Israel, around twenty years old, **1 Kings 1:28-36**. He built God's temple in Jerusalem, **1 Kings 6-7**. His mother was Bathsheba, **2 Samuel 12:24**; his father was David, **1 Kings 3:4-15**; his brothers were Absalom and Adonijah; and his sister was Tamar. His son was Rehoboam.

He wrote Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, most of the Proverbs and a couple of Psalms, and we know he was wise, **1 Kings 3:15-28**. Solomon is said to have written three thousand proverbs, and those contained in this book may be a selection from these, **1 Kings 4:32**.

In the New Testament, there are thirty-five direct quotations from this book or allusions to it. He got his wisdom from God after asking for it, **1 Kings 3:9**, but he wasn't the first person in the Bible who desired to have wisdom; that would be Eve, **Genesis 3:6**.

WHAT ARE PROVERBS?

Proverbs are sayings, poems, parables, questions and sonnets. Even today, there are many sayings that people use, for example, too many cooks spoil the broth, two eyes on one human is one eye too many, and an apple a day keeps the doctor away.

WHY WERE THEY WRITTEN?

Solomon tells us why the proverbs were written; they were written to teach wisdom and discipline, and how to live a prudent and sensible life. They were also written to teach the difference between right and wrong, **Proverbs 1:2-3**.

WHAT IS WISDOM?

Wisdom may be defined as a realistic approach to the problems of life. Wisdom is an insight into the underlying causes and significance or consequences of things, which insight enables one to apply to the best end the knowledge that one has.

Knowledge is 'knowing what to do'.

Understanding is 'knowing how to do something.'

Wisdom is 'doing correctly what you need to do.'

Wisdom is a discipline of applying truth to your life in the light of experience or someone else's experience, **James 3:13**. The point is that wisdom is more than knowing and doing the right thing; it's a lifestyle which affects the way we walk and talk and even the way we think in our minds.

As Christians today, we should study the Book of Proverbs because it helps us not to become foolish, **Ephesians 5:15-17**. And so, if we get wisdom from God by asking him, **James 1:5**, that means that we first need to have a knowledge of God to get to know His will, **Romans 12:2**.

HOW CAN WE GET WISDOM?

We usually get wisdom from our experience, from arguments, from sermons, from our mistakes, but if we want true wisdom, we need to ask God, **James 1:5**. When God was making preparations for the tabernacle, He gave wisdom to those who were going to build it, **Exodus 28:3**.

When God is speaking about His decrees and commandments, he tells his people He will show them what wisdom is. God wanted His people to be wise so that the nations around could see in God's people just how wise He was, **Deuteronomy 4:6**. Nothing has changed today because God still wants us, His church, to show the people around us His wisdom, **Ephesians 3:8-11**.

FEAR THE LORD

There are many people who fear things in life, whether it's snakes, hospitals, ghosts or spiders. Most people have a fear of something because they know or think that what they fear is real.

Sadly, a lot of people don't fear God because they don't believe or want to acknowledge that He exists. If you don't believe in something, it can't frighten you. If you can't see it, you don't believe in it, and so it doesn't frighten you.

To fear the Lord isn't about being scared or frightened of God; it's about being respectful of God, **Proverbs 1:7**. A fool is a person who is an unbeliever who lives for self; they don't consider God's ways. The fool is not interested in the truth; they are only interested in themselves, **Proverbs 14:7**.

THE WISDOM TEST

What kind of person do your friends generally think you are?

What do you consider yourself to be?

What's the wisest thing you have ever done?

What's the one area you think you are extremely wise in?

What's the one area that you think you are not wise in?

OUTLINE

Wisdom for young people. Proverbs 1:1-9:18

Wisdom for all people. Proverbs 10:1-23:34

Wisdom for leaders. Proverbs 25:1-31:31

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

‘The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel: for gaining wisdom and instruction; for understanding words of insight; for receiving instruction in prudent behaviour, doing what is right and just and fair; for giving prudence to those who are simple, knowledge and discretion to the young—let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance—for understanding proverbs and parables, the sayings and riddles of the wise.’ Proverbs 1:1-

6

THE PURPOSE OF THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

The introduction is very much self-explanatory. What is the first reason Solomon tells us why we should study the Proverbs? The proverbs help us in our understanding of God's way of life for us, Proverbs 1:2. Solomon mentions three things here.

1. Wisdom.

This is not human wisdom but God's wisdom, but can we understand God's wisdom? To a degree, but the world certainly doesn't understand, Job 28:20-28. How does the world get its wisdom? The world gets its wisdom from television, radio, newspapers, etc. Advertisements constantly tell us that we can't really live or be happy until we have or buy this or that product.

2. Discipline.

Discipline is the practical things we can do, or the sensible things we can do to help us live a godly life, but discipline is never easy; it's for our own good. Do you love discipline? Why are people who hate discipline stupid? Proverbs 12:1. They are stupid because they are fools, and they don't see the goodness in discipline, Proverbs 1:7.

3. Understanding.

Understanding is the power of distinguishing right from wrong, but also so that we can tell the difference between the genuine truth and something that appears to be the truth but is really a fake.

What does understanding words of insight mean? What is another reason Solomon gives for why we should study the Proverbs? The proverbs will help us to live disciplined and sensible lives, Proverbs 1:3.

Why does everyone need discipline, especially the young? Proverbs 1:4. Discipline helps to prevent chaos; it helps us live by the rules of society, etc. Our young people need to learn this quickly; they will end up in trouble. So, Solomon says that there are three things that these proverbs are good for.

1. For attaining wisdom and discipline; for understanding words of insight.
2. For acquiring a disciplined and sensible life, doing what is right, just and fair.
3. For giving caution to the simple, knowledge and helping the young make good judgments.

But Solomon tells us that the proverbs are not just for the young; he tells us that they are also for the wise and the discerning or those who are careful and want to think things through properly.

Who might these wise and discerning people be? Proverbs 1:5. It appears they would be leaders, people who are in high places of authority. etc. This would also apply to everyone in their everyday lives.

Has someone ever told you something and you haven't got a clue what they are trying to tell you or what they are saying? If we listen to the proverbs and gain wisdom and think carefully about every step of our life, we begin to understand the proverbs we are reading and know what they mean, Proverbs 1:6.

After Jesus had been teaching the people some parables, they really struggled to understand what He was teaching and what the parables meant, Mark 4:10-13. Jesus is telling the disciples exactly what Solomon is telling us here.

When we begin to understand the meaning of some of the simple proverbs or parables, sayings and riddles, we will be able to deepen our understanding when it comes to the tougher ones, which are more difficult to understand.

As Christians, we must grow in our knowledge and understanding of God's Word. A newborn baby starts life by feeding on milk, but as that baby grows and develops, there comes a time when it needs to move on to solid food to help with its physical development.

The same applies to baby Christians; they start by feeding on the milk of the Scriptures, but eventually, they must move on to some good meat to further develop their spiritual development, 1 Corinthians 3:2 / Hebrews 5:12-14.

Remember what Proverbs 1:3 says? 'For receiving instruction in prudent behaviour, doing what is right and just and fair.' We never stop learning because we can never know enough.

No one can stand and tell us they understand every single thing in the Bible because we are always striving towards spiritual maturity. And why can't anyone do that? Proverbs 1:7.

'The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.' Proverbs 1:7

It starts with God and finishes by taking a good look at ourselves, Job 42:5-6 / Psalms 111:10. When we follow God's way and understand God's ways, we understand just how small we really are. All too often, people who think they know better than God try to take God's place.

Do you know of any people, not necessarily Biblical, who think they are or were bigger than God? I can think of a few: the devil, Adam, Hitler, Churchill, etc. In what ways do people think they are smarter than God today? Some think they are smarter because of their insight into the Bible; they think they have it all worked out and never change their minds on any matter.

When do you think the world will finally understand just how small humans really are? The answer to this question is simple: Judgement Day. That'll be the day when everyone will truly understand and see just how unwise they really are, Hebrews 9:27.

The word 'yara' is the common word for fear in the Old Testament and has three basic meanings:

- a. Dread, terror, Deuteronomy 1:29 / John 1:10.
- b. To stand in awe in reference to a king, 1 Kings 3:28.

c. To revere, to respect in regard to parents, Leviticus 19:3.

The fear of the Lord serves as the beginning or principal part of becoming truly wise, Proverbs 1:7 / Proverbs 8:13 / Proverbs 10:27 / Proverbs 14:26-27 / Proverbs 16:6 / Proverbs 19:23 / Proverbs 22:4.

We should fear God, not man, Matthew 10:28. The church walked in the fear of the Lord, Acts 9:31. We are to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, Philippians 2:12. We should be fearful of apostasy, serving God with godly fear, Hebrews 10:26-31 / Hebrews 12:28-29.

The Hebrew word ‘evil’ is an adjective meaning foolish in the sense of one who hates wisdom and walks in folly, despising wisdom and morality. They are fools because they refuse to listen to wisdom, Proverbs 1:22 / Proverbs 17:16 / Proverbs 18:2.

In the book of Proverbs, the fool is characterised mainly by their unwillingness to listen to the advice of others, God, parents, friends, etc, Proverbs 1:25 / Proverbs 1:30 / Proverbs 11:14 / Proverbs 12:15 / Proverbs 15:22 / Proverbs 19:20 / Proverbs 27:9.

PARENTAL GUIDANCE FOR OUR CHILDREN

‘Listen, my son, to your father’s instruction and do not forsake your mother’s teaching. They are a garland to grace your head and a chain to adorn your neck.’ Proverbs 1:8-9

Solomon has just finished giving instructions about how to live a wise and disciplined life, and he said in Proverbs 1:7 ‘The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.’ And then he sets out two rules, which will help children become good, God-fearing people.

How important is it for parents to teach their kids God’s ways? Proverbs 1:8. It’s very important. What is one of the most powerful ways of showing our kids that God is number one in our lives? Spending time together in prayer and study, and showing our kids an example of what a follower of Christ looks like.

A young child came home from church one day, and she was just following her mother everywhere, almost to the extent that she was tripping her mother up. Her mother finally lost her temper and said, ‘Why are you following me everywhere?’ And the little girl said, ‘My Sunday school teacher said I should follow in Jesus’ footsteps, but I can’t see Jesus, so I will just follow yours.’

It’s the parents who have the responsibility to teach and give their children an example to follow. Too many parents think that school is the place for teaching, and so the parents don’t have to do anything to help their children with their studies.

Their kids fail at school, and the first thing they do is blame the school, instead of asking themselves, ‘What did I do to help my child with their schooling?’ This would apply to the parents whose kids go to Sunday school, too.

But our children need to know just how important God is in our lives, and it’s the parents who have the role and responsibility of teaching their kids about God, Ephesians 6:1-4 / Colossians 3:20-21. In other words, how are children ever going to obey God if they don’t obey their parents?

What does Solomon mean here? Proverbs 1:9. He simply means that the advice and teaching we give our kids are going to help our kids be better people. People will listen to them when they are older, and they will get respect, Genesis 41:41-42 / Daniel 5:29.

Our parents know us better than anyone; they fed us, clothed us, and changed our nappies. They saw us grow, how we responded to crisis, and know our personality. Parents have the potential to provide better advice than anyone else.

They have been where we are. Through experience, they are now where we are headed. Children with parents are blessed to have advice from those who have travelled the same road, only much farther. Their own experience provides us with a great source of wisdom.

Most people eventually appreciate their parents' advice, [Proverbs 4:1-4](#), especially when their own kids come along. So, parents often have the accumulated wisdom of several generations.

Their wisdom may also include the wisdom of God, especially if one is blessed to have Christian parents. The wisdom of listening to our parents should be a blessing because only the foolish and immature despise the advice and counsel of their parents, [Proverbs 15:5](#).

Like beautiful accessories worn to make people more attractive, beautiful, or handsome, children are made attractive by their parents' wisdom. Children who don't respect their parents' advice often fall, [Proverbs 20:20](#) / [Proverbs 30:1](#) / [Proverbs 30:11](#) / [Proverbs 30:17](#). Children who did not honour their parents were harshly judged by God in Old Testament times, [Leviticus 20:9](#) / [Deuteronomy 21:18-21](#).

‘My son, if sinful men entice you, do not give in to them. If they say, ‘Come along with us; let's lie in wait for innocent blood, let's ambush some harmless soul; let's swallow them alive, like the grave, and whole, like those who go down to the pit; we will get all sorts of valuable things and fill our houses with plunder; cast lots with us; we will all share the loot’—my son, do not go along with them, do not set foot on their paths; for their feet rush into evil, they are swift to shed blood. How useless to spread a net where every bird can see it! These men lie in wait for their own blood; they ambush only themselves! Such are the paths of all who go after ill-gotten gain; it takes away the life of those who get it.’ [Proverbs 1:10-19](#)

Have you ever warned your children not to hang around with certain people? Why do people warn their kids about these things? Simply because they don't want their kids to end up on drugs or alcohol or end up in some kind of trouble. Telling them not to hang around with certain kids is a way of keeping them safe and out of trouble.

Well, that's what Solomon is saying here in [Proverbs 1:10-19](#). One of the dangers of being a Christian is to end up hanging around with people who aren't Christians.

As an older Christian, we could probably be able to stand our ground and not be tempted to join in with the crowd, but as a young child or a young Christian, that's one of the toughest challenges they face today, fitting in. And it's so easy to give in to them. But Solomon says, ‘My son, if sinful men entice you, do not give in to them.’ [Proverbs 1:10](#). Why is prevention better than a cure? If children don't give in, in the first place, [Ephesians 4:27](#), they won't be tempted or enticed to do the rest of what Solomon goes on to say, [Proverbs 1:11-14](#).

That's exactly what Jephthah did; he ended up in the wrong crowd doing all sorts of evil things, [Judges 11:3](#). Solomon says, ‘Let's swallow them alive, like the grave, and whole, like those who go down to the pit.’ [Proverbs 1:12](#).

What does he mean here? He simply means the destruction of those whom these sinners attack will be as sudden as that of those who die quickly. And then Solomon tells us the second form of temptation that children will have to face. False risks and false hopes, [Proverbs 1:13-14](#).

Thieves and robbers all take risks in life; a bank robber will take the risk of getting caught only for one reason, and that's to get the reward, the money. But they don't usually work alone; they usually have company, and the way they get company is by offering them a share in the reward. So, in fact, what they are doing is sharing the risks too.

But these people that Solomon is describing to his son here are not your common house burglars; they are cold-blooded murderers. And then Solomon goes on to describe what is going to happen to them and to any child who will follow their ways, [Proverbs 1:15-19](#).

Have you ever been in a hurry to go somewhere, and while you're running, you forget to look where you're going? Solomon says, ‘for their feet rush into evil’. In other words, they know they are doing wrong, but they go ahead and

do it anyway because they don't care about the consequences, they don't care about who they hurt or take with them, Isaiah 59:7.

What does Solomon mean when he says, 'how useless to spread a net in full view of all the birds!' Proverbs 1:17. Well, there are a few options, and you can decide for yourselves.

1. Some people take the words as pointing to the failure of the plans of the evildoers against the innocent, which would be the bird.
2. Other people interpret the proverb of the young man who thinks that he at least shall not fall into the snares laid for him, and so goes blindly into them.
3. Some other people believe it's talking about what they are doing, as in the net being spread out in the open is in vain or to no purpose.

In other words, what they are doing is in vain. The birds still fly in.

4. Others believe it's talking about the great net of God's judgments that is spread out, open to the eyes of all, and yet the doers of evil, wilfully blind, still rush into it, Proverbs 1:18.

Solomon says there's a time coming when they are going to reap what they sow, their own blood, Psalms 7:14-16 / Revelation 16:6. And then Solomon says, 'Such are the paths of all who go after ill-gotten gain; it takes away the life of those who get it,' Proverbs 1:19. In other words, your greed for gain will end up killing you. Everyone who is greedy for gain will end up the same way, Job 8:13.

Have you ever listened to those people who wear billboards around their necks? They always preach about something, but because of the hustle and bustle in the street, you can't quite make out what they are saying. But they are saying something that is important to them, and we need to listen to what they are saying.

Do we know any Bible character who was like that? John the baptiser was a man like that; he constantly preached, 'Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand,' Matthew 3:2. Well, something like that is happening here in Proverbs 1:20-33.

It's true we must be separate from the world, but we cannot isolate ourselves, 1 Corinthians 5:9-11 / Matthew 11:19. But we must be honest with ourselves, do we influence them more than they do to us? If not, then we should stay away until we are strong enough to be a positive influence, 1 Corinthians 15:33.

'Out in the open, wisdom calls aloud, she raises her voice in the public square; on top of the wall she cries out, at the city gate she makes her speech: 'How long will you who are simple love your simple ways? How long will mockers delight in mockery and fools hate knowledge?' Proverbs 1:20-22

Now, why is wisdom called 'She' here? Simply to make the words come alive, make it more personal. The city gates were the place where all the business of everyday life was taken care of.

Everybody had to come into the city through the gates and go out of the city through the gates. It was a very busy area, it was the place with a massive wooden door in a city wall through which traffic passed.

They were open during the day and closed at night for safety reasons. Goods were often bought and sold, and important legal matters were discussed just inside the city gate. In Ruth 4, we find the elders who met at the city gates being witnesses to the fact that Boaz bought the property of Elimelech, Kilion and Mahlon.

Socrates said that the fields and the trees taught him nothing, but that he found the wisdom he was seeking in his conversations with the men whom he met as he walked in the streets and agora of Athens. But all sorts of people passed through here where wisdom was being preached, lawgivers, teachers, etc.

The point is that she preaches to all of mankind, and then wisdom asks three questions to three different types of people. She addresses the simple: what kind of people might they be? They are those who are easily seduced or those who are very vulnerable to evil.

In other words, she is asking, How long will you simple ones love simplicity? Or we can say that those simple ones and some Christians today need to wake up, Romans 13:10-11 / Ephesians 5:13-14.

Then wisdom addresses the mockers: What kind of people might they be? They would be the freethinkers, those who just make fun of people because of the fun of it.

And in the Bible, we find a few contrasts between those who are mockers and those who are wise, Psalms 1:1 / Proverbs 29:8 / Isaiah 28:14-15. Then, finally, she addresses the fools: what kind of people might they be? They are the stupid, the crooked or depraved, Proverbs 17:10 / Proverbs 26:4. In other words, it's a waste of time trying to talk to these people because wisdom doesn't make any sense to them. Then wisdom goes on to say what would have happened if they listened to her and what is going to happen now that they didn't listen to her.

‘Repent at my rebuke! Then I will pour out my thoughts to you, I will make known to you my teachings.’ Proverbs 1:23

Wisdom is going to tell us today that if we listen to her and do what wisdom says, then we will live, but if we don't, then disaster will come. It's a case of you reap what you sow, Galatians 6:7.

Have you ever exposed your deepest feelings to someone? Maybe your wife, husband, brother, sister, etc. Have you ever exposed your deepest thoughts and feelings to anyone else?

Maybe your friend or work colleague, etc. Why don't we open up just to anyone we meet? Probably because we're afraid, we're afraid that people will be judgmental, etc.

Why should we open up our deepest fears, ambitions, weaknesses and strengths to God? Simply because He already knows everything about us. In Proverbs 1:22-33, we are going to see that wisdom is willing to pour out her heart and thoughts to all of mankind if they would just listen.

God's upfront with us from the Book of Genesis right through to the Book of Revelation. He has told us what He wants from us, what He has done for us and what He is willing to do for us. He has opened up His heart and left Himself exposed to abuse, Proverbs 1:23.

Even today, God opens His heart up to people who want to follow Him. When the Pharisees were looking for an excuse to arrest Jesus, He still asked the crowd to follow Him, John 7:37-38. Why don't people listen to words of wisdom? Simply because of pride and wisdom goes against their plans.

‘But since you refuse to listen when I call and no one pays attention when I stretch out my hand, since you disregard all my advice and do not accept my rebuke.’ Proverbs 1:24-25

People don't like wisdom because wisdom involves discipline and punishment, Proverbs 15:32 / Isaiah 65:12. Have you ever told someone not to do something because you know better?

For example, you can tell someone not to buy a certain brand of car because it will give them nothing but problems, but they go ahead and buy it anyway, and after a little while, the problems start.

Have you ever done something like that and then had the satisfaction of saying, ‘I told you so?’ Have you ever laughed at someone when their plans go wrong? All the pleasure these simple ones, mockers and fools, Proverbs 1:22, get from their way of life is now turned against them. We could say, ‘what goes around comes around,’ Proverbs 1:26-27.

‘I, in turn, will laugh when disaster strikes you; I will mock when calamity overtakes you—when calamity overtakes you like a storm, when disaster sweeps over you like a whirlwind, when distress and trouble overwhelm you. Then they will call to me, but I will not answer; they will look for me but will not find me.’ Proverbs 1:26-28

Solomon is speaking about the judgement that will come upon them, [Proverbs 10:24](#) / [Matthew 24:29](#). When do most people turn to God? Usually, people turn to God in times of despair, etc, [Proverbs 1:28](#).

God isn’t going to deliver them from their pain, much like He wouldn’t deliver Samaria and Judah from the hands of their enemies, [Micah 3:4](#). Is God stubborn? No, His people are. Why has God stopped listening to these people? [Proverbs 1:29-30](#).

‘Since they hated knowledge and did not choose to fear the LORD. Since they would not accept my advice and spurned my rebuke, they will eat the fruit of their ways and be filled with the fruit of their schemes. For the waywardness of the simple will kill them, and the complacency of fools will destroy them; but whoever listens to me will live in safety and be at ease, without fear of harm.’ Proverbs 1:29-33

They wouldn’t listen to God; they had no respect for God and despised God’s rebukes. And what will their punishment be? [Proverbs 1:31-32](#). This is what wisdom has been saying all along: They will reap what they sow, if you live by the sword, you will die by the sword, [Matthew 26:52](#) / [Deuteronomy 32:15](#) / [Jeremiah 6:19](#) / [Galatians 6:8](#).

What’s going to happen to those who do listen to wisdom and practice what wisdom says? [Proverbs 1:33](#). Why will they live in peace and at ease? God is in control, [Isaiah 33:15-16](#).

CHAPTER 2

INTRODUCTION

Back in [Proverbs 1:7](#), Solomon reminded us that, ‘The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.’ Notice what he says concerning fear of the Lord.

MORAL BENEFITS OF WISDOM

‘My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding—indeed, if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure.’ Proverbs 2:1-4

Searching for wisdom requires a willingness, and it requires an engagement. We need to listen with an open heart and have a willingness to speak, that is, a willingness to cry out for understanding. It requires a high estimation, that is, to see wisdom like a valuable hidden treasure, [Colossians 2:3](#). In other words, it requires a diligent search for wisdom. Today we do this by hearing the Word of God, [Acts 17:11](#) / [Acts 17:11](#). We need to take the time to reflect and ponder on the Word, [Philippians 4:8](#) / [Psalm 119:97-100](#). We need to pray for wisdom, [James 1:5](#) / [Matthew 7:7-11](#). Do you notice anything important in these verses about how we understand what it means to fear the Lord and get knowledge of God? They are all action words! So many times, people say something is free, and they say you don’t have to do anything to get it.

There's nothing free in this world, and if people understood that, then a lot of people wouldn't be in debt to loan sharks and banks. To understand what it means to fear the Lord and get knowledge, we have to do something.

Have you ever had a letter saying you've won this or that, and you say great, but then you realise you have to do something else to get whatever you've won? It's the same with salvation; we can't just believe in God, we need to do something to receive that salvation, we need to be baptised, Mark 16:16 / Acts 2:38, and stay faithful to the Lord all your life, Revelation 2:10.

God gives us everything we need to stay faithful and live holy lives, but sometimes we need to ask for it first before we can enjoy the benefits of being a child of God.

'Then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding. He holds success in store for the upright, he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless, for he guards the course of the just and protects the way of his faithful ones.' Proverbs 2:6-8

What does the text say that God does for us? He gives us knowledge and understanding. He holds the victory for us. He shields and guards and protects those who are faithful. It's all down to God; He offers things, and all we can do is just accept them, Ephesians 2:8-9.

It's all down to God; He gives us everything, there's nothing smart about mankind, it's God who does the giving. And when we finally understand that it is God who gives everything and that God is at the centre of the universe, then what will happen?

'Then you will understand what is right and just and fair—every good path. For wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul. Discretion will protect you, and understanding will guard you.' Proverbs 2:9-11

Wisdom guides our life and helps us make the right decisions in life, and when we get a taste of knowledge from God's Word, we will want more because it tastes good, as we realise it's good for us.

The more we learn, the more we understand what kind of life God wants us to live and from that comes protection and understanding. Then wisdom says that it will save us from wicked people, and the reason it can save us from these people is that it describes what these people are like.

'Wisdom will save you from the ways of wicked men, from men whose words are perverse, who have left the straight paths to walk in dark ways, who delight in doing wrong and rejoice in the perverseness of evil, whose paths are crooked and who are devious in their ways.' Proverbs 2:12-15

Notice that these people are going away from God with their actions. This is in total contrast to what we read a moment ago in Proverbs 2:1-5, remember the action words! They are headed in the opposite direction from where we are trying to head.

That's why the world will never be one. We're trying to do the will of God, and these other people are doing their own will. That's why there won't be any conflicts when Christ comes back to take us home.

On the earth, there are billions of wills, but in heaven, there is only one will, and that's the will of God, Matthew 6:9-10. Solomon continues and tells us that wisdom will save us from something or someone else.

'Wisdom will save you also from the adulterous woman, from the wayward woman with her seductive words, who has left the partner of her youth and ignored the covenant she made before God. Surely her house leads down to death and her paths to the spirits of the dead. None who go to her return or attain the paths of life.' Proverbs 2:16-19

What does the writer mean when he talks about being saved from the adulteress? Is she someone specific or a general term for those who turn from God? Ezekiel 6:9 / Ezekiel 16:32 / Matthew 16:1-4.

Israel was called an adulterous nation many times by God because they were married to God but gave themselves over to other nations and worshipped idols. Instead of being pure and holy, they slept around with other so-called gods. And that's because adulteresses are just like the world, they seduce you and trick you into thinking that they have got something better to offer you.

Something better than your wife or husband could ever offer you. Or in this case, something better than God could ever offer you. How wrong the world is because, as we have already seen, God gives us everything we need, 2 Peter 1:3-4. And wisdom ends by saying what she has been saying since the beginning of time: if you listen, you will live; if you don't, then disaster will come.

‘Thus, you will walk in the ways of the good and keep to the paths of the righteous. For the upright will live in the land, and the blameless will remain in it; but the wicked will be cut off from the land, and the unfaithful will be torn from it.’ Proverbs 2:20-22

If we listen and do what wisdom says, then we will continue to share in the blessings we receive from God, but if we continue to stray off the path deliberately, we will lose our place in heaven and lose all our privileges, Romans 11:22.

CHAPTER 3

INTRODUCTION

In today's society, scientists have come up with many miracle cures for all sorts of diseases. They found a miracle cure for heart disease, and they reckon that in a few years, no one should ever die of heart failure.

Cloning is becoming very popular, and it seems that the world is looking for immortality. People go on diets and exercise to try to prolong their lives. Why does the world do this? Because nobody wants to die, they want to live forever. Let's see what Solomon says about how to live a long life.

BENEFITS OF WISDOM

‘My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart, for they will prolong your life many years and bring you peace and prosperity. Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will win favour and a good name in the sight of God and man. Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil. This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones. Honour the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine.’ Proverbs 3:1-10

God has always promised if we live wisely, our lives will be lengthened, Psalm 91:14-16. There are two conditions for true human growth: finding favour with God and man, Luke 2:52 / Ephesians 6:1-3.

Solomon says nine things about how to get a long life.

1. Do not forget God's teaching.
2. Keep His commands in your heart.

3. Keep love and faithfulness near you all the time.

a. Bind them around your neck.

b. Write them on the tablet of your heart.

4. Trust in the Lord with all your heart.

5. Lean not on your own understanding.

6. In all your ways acknowledge him.

7. Do not be wise in your own eyes.

8. Fear the Lord and shun evil.

9. Honour the Lord with your wealth.

It's all about focus and keeping life in its proper context; it's about recognising there is a God and living our life out of respect for God. It's about keeping God in His proper place. Why is the world an ugly place sometimes?

1. The world doesn't want to acknowledge that there is a God.

2. It doesn't want to obey His commands.

3. It has forgotten how to love.

4. It relies on its own understanding.

5. It trusts no one.

6. The world thinks it is wise.

7. People like to honour themselves with their new cars and houses, etc.

We must allow the Lord to direct our paths, Proverbs 3:5-6, this means trusting him with all our heart, Psalm 37:3-6 / Psalm 37:23-24 / Psalm 37: 34-36. It also means acknowledging Him, James 4:13-16, and leaning on Him for our understanding, Proverbs 28:26. We must put God first in our lives, Matthew 6:31-33, and we must cheerfully give to His causes, 2 Corinthians 9:6-9.

The word 'direct' means to make smooth or straight. The Lord can help our journey in life go more smoothly with His blessing. If there is one material thing you could possess in this world, what would it be? A car, house, etc. What is a new car worth? What is a new house worth? They are worth nothing compared to the wisdom of knowing God.

'My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline, and do not resent his rebuke, because the LORD disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in. Blessed are those who find wisdom, those who gain understanding, for she is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold. She is more precious than rubies; nothing you desire can compare with her. Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honour. Her ways are pleasant ways, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her; those who hold her fast will be blessed.' Proverbs 3:11-18

Solomon says that discipline is a gift from God, but sometimes it's hard to find any wisdom in discipline. Imagine telling kids that there is good to be found when their parents rebuke them! Job 5:17.

Even the righteous may be allowed to suffer, Job 1:8-22. We need to remember that when God rebukes or disciplines us, it's because He loves us, Hebrews 12:5-11.

In Revelation 3, when Jesus is talking about the church that meets in Laodicea. He says that they are lukewarm, wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. And He tells them in Revelation 3:19, ‘Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline.’

He rebukes us because He loves us and it’s for our own good. We can see the wisdom in God rebuking us because we can see past the rebuke and see His love and concern for us. It stops us from getting into even more danger and falling further and further away from Him.

He says when we begin to understand wisdom, we will discover that it is more profitable than silver or gold; it’s more precious than rubies, Proverbs 8:35. Solomon says there is nothing compared to wisdom, nothing.

She has a long life on one hand and riches and honour on the other. If we live our lives wisely, we will live our lives in peace with God. Wisdom is the tree of life; if you hold on to her, Proverbs 11:30 / Proverbs 13:12 / Proverbs 15:4. When we accept and respect who God is and trust in Him and His ways and obey His commands, then we will be a people who will be blessed. Solomon tells us that if you want a picture of wisdom in action, then just look at creation. Look at the world you are living in.

‘By wisdom the LORD laid the earth’s foundations, by understanding he set the heavens in place; by his knowledge the watery depths were divided, and the clouds let drop the dew.’ Proverbs 3:19-20

God used wisdom in His acts of creation. He used wisdom to create the heavens and the earth, Genesis 1:1, and He used wisdom to break up the depths of the sea and create the clouds above, Genesis 1:6-9. Its beauty and harmony were made possible using wisdom, Proverbs 8:22-31

Just think about creation, Genesis 1. Who can understand how the Earth truly works? Everything God created was created in a specific order, Job 36:26-33. Can anyone really understand how God does these things? Psalms 33:6 / John 1:3-4. Our God is awesome.

Do you ever worry about all the evil that is going on in the world? Does the threat of terrorism keep you awake all night? When we walk in the ways of wisdom, James 1:5-8, and keep God and His commands in our sight, that will give us peace, James 3:17-18.

‘My son, do not let wisdom and understanding out of your sight, preserve sound judgment and discretion; they will be life for you, an ornament to grace your neck. Then you will go on your way in safety, and your foot will not stumble.

When you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet. Have no fear of sudden disaster or of the ruin that overtakes the wicked, for the LORD will be at your side and will keep your foot from being snared.’ Proverbs 3:21-26

God gives us wisdom and discretion which gives us life, John 10:10 / John 15:11. Wisdom gives us safety and security, and so, our steps will be directed by wisdom and we will be able to avoid many of the pitfalls experienced by others, Proverbs 2:8 / Proverbs 4:12. They also help us sleep at night, free from any concerns, Psalms 3:5 / Psalms 4:8 / Matthew 8:26.

If you had something valuable, would you just leave it lying around the house? No, you would guard it and keep it safe and watch it all the time, that’s what Solomon is saying here.

Keep your eye on wisdom and don’t let it out of your sight, it’s about God protecting us against. And notice, where our confidence is, it’s not in ourselves but in the Lord. And then Solomon tells us things we are not to do.

‘Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to act. Do not say to your neighbour, ‘Come back tomorrow and I’ll give it to you’—when you already have it with you. Do not plot harm against your neighbour, who lives trustfully near you. Do not accuse anyone for no reason—when they have done you no harm. Do not envy the violent or choose any of their ways. For the LORD detests the perverse but takes the upright into his confidence. The LORD’s curse is on the house of the wicked, but he blesses the home of the righteous. He mocks

proud mockers but shows favour to the humble and oppressed. The wise inherit honour, but fools get only shame.’
Proverbs 3:27-35

He tells us five things we need to avoid.

1. There needs to be a willingness to help those who deserve it, Mark 12:43-13:1 / Romans 13:8 / 1 John 3:17 / James 4:17 / Galatians 6:10.
 2. If you can help someone today, then do it today, Proverbs 27:1 / James 2:15-17.
 3. You can’t walk in God’s peace and then falsely cause trouble for your neighbour, Proverbs 6:16-18.
 4. Don’t falsely accuse someone, Proverbs 17:14 / Proverbs 18:6 / Proverbs 25:8-10 / Matthew 18:15-16 / Luke 17:3 / Romans 12:18-21.
 5. Don’t go getting jealous of a man who does evil things, Psalms 37:1-2 / Proverbs 1:15-18 / Proverbs 22:22-23.
- Why not? Because those people are cursed, but you are blessed. He mocks those people but gives grace to those who are humble, 1 Peter 5:5. The wise inherit honour, but fools lift up shame, 1 Peter 1:3-4.

CHAPTER 4

INTRODUCTION

What words of advice or wisdom will you or did you pass on to your children? Here, Solomon has words of wisdom passed on from generation to generation.

HOLD ON TO THE SUPREME WISDOM

‘Listen, my sons, to a father’s instruction; pay attention and gain understanding. I give you sound learning, so do not forsake my teaching. For I, too, was a son to my father, still tender, and cherished by my mother. Then he taught me, and he said to me, ‘Take hold of my words with all your heart; keep my commands, and you will live.’ Proverbs 4:1-

4

Solomon said that when he was a boy, his father passed on words of wisdom to him, Deuteronomy 6:6-9 / 1 Kings 2:1-9 / Ephesians 6:4. Who was his father? David. Who was his mother? Bathsheba.

There is a great responsibility on Christian parents to teach their kids the ways of God from a very early age. We all have a choice in life; there are only two roads to go on, the wicked or the righteous, Matthew 7:13-14.

‘Get wisdom, get understanding; do not forget my words or turn away from them. Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you; love her, and she will watch over you. The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding. Cherish her, and she will exalt you; embrace her, and she will honour you. She will give you a garland to grace your head and present you with a glorious crown.’ Proverbs 4:5-9

His father was anxious regarding his son’s learning, Proverbs 4:5-6.

Solomon could look back on his childhood memories with happy recollections. He was taught by his father while he was young, and what he learned was important for the rest of his life, 2 Chronicles 1:7-12 / Psalms 19:7-11.

Wisdom doesn't just happen; you need to go after it, no matter how difficult life becomes or how hard the road gets. We know that Solomon asked God to be wise, but what other things may he have asked for that others might have thought were more important?

What does it mean when it says that wisdom will be a garland of grace on your head and a crown of splendour? There is nothing more precious, valuable or important than wisdom.

We all know that some people are very good at listening; we can tell people about a truth in the Bible, and they will say 'Amen', but they never seem to do what they learn. Why do some people find it hard to accept what they are being taught? It could be because the teaching is too hard, or it makes them feel uncomfortable, etc.

'Listen, my son, accept what I say, and the years of your life will be many. I instruct you in the way of wisdom and lead you along straight paths. When you walk, your steps will not be hampered; when you run, you will not stumble. Hold on to instruction, do not let it go; guard it well, for it is your life. Do not set foot on the path of the wicked or walk in the way of evildoers. Avoid it, do not travel on it; turn from it and go on your way. For they cannot rest until they do evil; they are robbed of sleep till they make someone stumble. They eat the bread of wickedness and drink the wine of violence. The path of the righteous is like the morning sun, shining ever brighter till the full light of day. But the way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble.' Proverbs 4:10-19

Again, Solomon tells us that wisdom and long life go together. He tells us to avoid walking on the road of evil, and he tells us not to even think about putting one step in that direction. In fact, if you see that wide road, go in another direction just to keep clear of it, [1 Corinthians 10:13](#).

These people that Solomon is describing here are pure evil. Do you ever struggle to sleep at night sometimes because you've got something on your mind? Well, these people can't sleep because they are always thinking about evil things. They are always thinking about who their next victim is going to be.

Solomon says that people who live there live wisely and know where they are going in life, but those who are wicked haven't got a clue where they are going, [John 8:34](#) / [Ephesians 4:19](#).

The path of the righteous is like the shining sun; just as the sun becomes brighter and brighter as it rises to reach its highest point in the sky, so the righteous are progressively enlightened, [Matthew 7:14](#) / [2 Corinthians 3:18](#) / [1 Peter 2:2](#) / [2 Peter 3:18](#). The way of the wicked is like darkness; they go through life stumbling time and time again without knowing why, [Matthew 7:13](#) / [Ephesians 4:17-18](#).

'My son, pay attention to what I say; turn your ear to my words. Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart; for they are life to those who find them and health to one's whole body. Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it. Keep your mouth free of perversity; keep corrupt talk far from your lips. Let your eyes look straight ahead; fix your gaze directly before you. Give careful thought to the paths for your feet and be steadfast in all your ways. Do not turn to the right or the left; keep your foot from evil.' Proverbs 4:20-27

You will notice that in the remaining verses, different parts of the body are mentioned eleven times: the eyes, [1 Timothy 4:13](#), the feet, [Psalms 37:23](#) / [Psalms 40:2](#) / [Proverbs 3:6](#), and the heart are mentioned twice, [Mark 7:21-23](#) / [Philippians 4:8](#).

And the ear, [Acts 17:11](#), the body, the mouth and the lips, [Ephesians 4:25](#) / [Ephesians 4:29](#), and the eyelids once, [Matthew 6:22-23](#). We need to honour God with our entire body, [John 6:63](#) / [Romans 6:12-13](#).

Why are Solomon's words to be kept near our hearts, and why are they so important? Because they are a matter of life and health. 'Why is the heart so important? Simply because God has always been interested in our hearts, [Proverbs 27:19](#) / [Matthew 15:17-20](#).

We shouldn't be looking for any excuse to complain, [Philippians 2:14-16](#), and we should keep our eyes focused on Christ, [Hebrews 12:2](#). We need to remain strong and courageous and trust God to help us, [Joshua 1:6-8](#). It's so important to stick to the truth and nothing but the truth, no matter how much pressure the world puts on us.

CHAPTER 5

INTRODUCTION

What is the cause of most marriage break-ups today? Some would say lack of communication or falling ‘out’ of love with each other, but it appears the cause of most marriage breakups is adultery.

WARNING AGAINST ADULTERY

‘My son, pay attention to my wisdom, turn your ear to my words of insight, that you may maintain discretion and your lips may preserve knowledge. For the lips of the adulterous woman drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil; but in the end she is bitter as gall, sharp as a double-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps lead straight to the grave. She gives no thought to the way of life; her paths wander aimlessly, but she does not know it.’

Proverbs 5:1-6

Who or what kind of person is the adulteress described here? She’s described as a prostitute. How does she invite people who want to get involved with her? Through flattery and smooth talk, [Proverbs 2:16](#) / [Proverbs 6:24](#) / [Proverbs 7:21](#).

She forsakes her husband and God, [Proverbs 2:17](#). Most people, when they do something illegal, sometimes have a conscience, but she doesn’t. What damage does adultery have on a family? [Proverbs 2:18-19](#).

It causes major damage, it causes families to break up, the kids get used as tools, and it usually ends in divorce, etc. [Hebrews 13:4](#). What was the punishment supposed to be for adultery? Nothing less than being stoned to death, [Leviticus 20:10](#) / [John 8:5](#).

‘Now then, my sons, listen to me; do not turn aside from what I say. Keep to a path far from her, do not go near the door of her house, lest you lose your honour to others and your dignity to one who is cruel, lest strangers feast on your wealth and your toil enrich the house of another. At the end of your life, you will groan when your flesh and body are spent. You will say, ‘How I hated discipline! How my heart spurned correction! I would not obey my teachers or turn my ear to my instructors. And I was soon in serious trouble in the assembly of God’s people.’

Proverbs 5:7-14

What is the writer saying here? Basically, he’s saying that even at the end of our lives, it’s too late to take advice. Solomon pleads with his children to stay away from the adulterous woman. When we desire something, it can take us and take over us, so advice is the last thing we want to hear when it’s got a grip on us, [Genesis 3:6](#) / [Genesis 4:7](#). The best time to know about the dangers of going after anything harmful, not just sex with an adulteress, but sex in general outside of marriage, is well before the temptation comes. Prevention is better than cure, [Proverbs 6:27-35](#). If we know there is a danger or a temptation, we will struggle with it; we should know how to handle that danger or temptation when it comes, [1 Corinthians 6:9-11](#) / [1 Corinthians 10:13](#).

‘Drink water from your own cistern, running water from your own well. Should your springs overflow in the streets, your streams of water in the public squares? Let them be yours alone, never to be shared with strangers.’

Proverbs 5:15-17

What does the writer mean when he says, ‘Drink water from your own cistern, running water from your own well?’ It’s a picture of faithfulness, in other words, stick to and enjoy the wife that God has given you, [Ecclesiastes 9:9](#) / [Ephesians 5:25](#) / [Ephesians 5:28](#) / [Titus 2:3-4](#).

This was written by Solomon, possibly to Rehoboam, did he take his father's advice? Unfortunately, he didn't listen to his father's advice, 2 Chronicles 11:21. When the Bible talks about water in the Old Testament, that usually signified power, and it was a crime to steal water from anyone else, just as it is a crime to have sex with another woman. Marriage is for life, not just for Christmas!

‘May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth. A loving doe, a graceful deer—may her breasts satisfy you always, may you ever be intoxicated with her love.’ Proverbs 5:18-19

What is sex? Sex is a gift from God for both couples to enjoy, Song of Songs 4. We must remember that we don't make love TO anyone, we make love WITH someone. It's a pleasure to be enjoyed by married couples, Ecclesiastes 9:9.

‘Why, my son, be intoxicated with another man's wife? Why embrace the bosom of a wayward woman?’ Proverbs 5:20

What's the writer saying here? If they commit adultery with you, they are likely to commit adultery against you. He's saying, why go elsewhere for this pleasure when you can have so much pleasure with your own wife together?

‘For your ways are in full view of the LORD, and he examines all your paths. The evil deeds of the wicked ensnare them; the cords of their sins hold them fast. For lack of discipline, they will die, led astray by their own great folly.’ Proverbs 5:21-23

The writer says that everything we do is in full view of God, even though we may go into a prostitute's house and close the door behind us, God can see us anyway. The Lord is omniscient, and sins will have their effect. He sees it all, Proverbs 15:3, and will judge accordingly, Hebrews 13:4.

When we sin against the Lord, our sins will be exposed, Numbers 32:23. It's always better to love the Lord and be faithful to Him, 2 Chronicles 16:9 / Matthew 22:37.

Joseph is a perfect example of someone who resisted temptation because of his faithfulness to God, Genesis 39:7-10, and as a result, God blessed him, Genesis 39:21 / Genesis 41:50-52.

When a baby is born, the cord is still attached, and the doctors need to cut that cord to set the baby free, but if no one cuts that cord, they would be attached to its mother for the rest of its life.

In other words, once that sin has got a grip on us, we will be addicted to it until the day we die unless we take God's advice and learn how to be disciplined, Romans 6:15-18.

CHAPTER 6

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever promised to do something for someone but never got around to doing it? Have you ever promised something to someone and regretted promising it?

WARNINGS AGAINST FOOLISHNESS

‘My son, if you have put up security for your neighbour, if you have shaken hands in pledge for a stranger, you have been trapped by what you said, ensnared by the words of your mouth. So, do this, my son, to free yourself, since you have fallen into your neighbour’s hands: Go—to the point of exhaustion—and give your neighbour no rest! Allow no sleep to your eyes, no slumber to your eyelids. Free yourself, like a gazelle from the hand of the hunter, like a bird from the snare of the fowler.’ Proverbs 6:1-5

What’s the writer saying here? He’s saying we need to keep a balance between helping people and looking after our own families. He gives a warning not to put up security for a neighbour.

In other words, do not make yourself liable for someone else’s debt, but if you do, then get out of it as quickly as possible. even if it’s humility and pleading, just get out of it, [Proverbs 11:15](#) / [Proverbs 17:18](#).

The reason for this is simply that, at the time, it may seem like kindness to take out a loan for a friend, but there are reasons it may not be. You might be helping them to buy something which it is not God’s will for them to have in the first place.

You might be encouraging them to spend carelessly or get involved in gambling, etc. If the person you loan to misses any payments, you end up having to pay, which would end your friendship with them.

What’s the point of giving someone £100 to help them if you are going to leave yourself without any money for food? It’s not so much the amount we give but the way we give that counts, [Matthew 5:42](#) / [1 Corinthians 16:1-2](#) / [1 Timothy 6:10](#) / [2 Corinthians 9:7](#).

‘Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise! It has no commander, no overseer or ruler, yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest. How long will you lie there, you sluggard? When will you get up from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest—and poverty will come on you like a thief and scarcity like an armed man.’ Proverbs 6:6-11

What do we know about the ant? If anything, they are always busy and very well organised as a group. They are diligent without the need of an overseer; they provide in the summer and gather in the harvest, [Proverbs 30:25](#). The emphasis is on being diligent in our work.

Laziness just brings poverty, [Proverbs 10:4](#) / [Proverbs 13:4](#) / [Proverbs 20:4](#). When someone is lazy, they ultimately only steal from themselves, [Ecclesiastes 9:10](#) / [Romans 12:15](#).

Before I became a Christian, when I was younger, my dad used to shout at me every single morning to get me out of bed and on Sunday mornings, I was woken up by the wonderful sound of country and western music.

When we go to bed at night on a Sunday evening, and we have a good night’s sleep, but the alarm clock goes off, what do we feel like? Most of the time, most of us don’t really want to get out of our beds; most of us want to sleep longer.

Have you ever taken a day off work even though there is nothing wrong with you? What the writer is saying here is that when we get a lazy attitude toward work, then the time will come when we won’t work, and we’ll end up being poor.

God isn’t saying we can’t rest and chill; He’s not saying that we need to work seven days a week. He’s saying work when you are supposed to work, and in between that time, rest.

What about the preacher who works full-time for God? Why should he continue to work? Simply because of the reward, [1 Corinthians 15:58](#). Even though you are working in a place and your work may be different from the preacher, you’re still working for the Lord, [Colossians 3:23-24](#).

‘A troublemaker and a villain, who goes about with a corrupt mouth, who winks maliciously with his eye, signals with his feet and motions with his fingers, who plots evil with deceit in his heart—he always stirs up conflict.

Therefore, disaster will overtake him in an instant; he will suddenly be destroyed— without remedy.’ Proverbs 6:12-

15

What kind of person is the writer describing here? He’s describing a troublemaker. They don’t work, they are lazy, and all they do is go about making trouble.

They walk with a corrupt mouth, wink with their eyes, shuffle their feet and point with their fingers, all indicators of deceit. Their hearts are continually plotting evil.

This is the opposite of the righteous person, Proverbs 4:20-27. The apostle Paul warns the young widows about becoming lazy busybodies, 1 Timothy 5:13. In other words, they cause trouble.

SEVEN THINGS THAT GOD HATES

We have only to look at the daily newspaper, and we read that it is filled with these sins. They go on all around us every day. Read about the cruel things that happened to people in the past, which sound unbelievable, but things are no better today. All seven of these sins overlap; there are elements of them all in each of them.

HAUGHTY EYES

‘There are six things the LORD hates, seven that are detestable to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil, a false witness who pours out lies and a person who stirs up conflict in the community.’ Proverbs 6:16-19

Why does God hate those with ‘haughty eyes’? Haughty eyes refer to those who are proud and arrogant, Matthew 23:12 / James 4:6. It means showing great pride in oneself and disdain, contempt, or scorn for others. Proud, arrogant, Mr Know-it-all. Mr. Expert. Someone who is quick to criticize some statement someone else makes.

When Nebuchadnezzar looked out upon his kingdom, he became full of pride and his own achievements, Daniel 4:28-37. Nebuchadnezzar demonstrated great pride when he had the desire to be like God, Isaiah 14:13-14.

When a Pharisee compared himself to the tax collector in Jesus’ parable, he was full of self-righteousness, Luke 18:9-14. Even Jesus’ disciples became full of pride when they wrestled for positions of prominence, Mark 10:35-45.

The Book of Proverbs is filled with warnings about haughty eyes, Proverbs 16:8 / Proverbs 18:12 / Proverbs 21:4. Israel’s sin made Sodom look righteous, Ezekiel 16:49-50.

LYING TONGUE

Why does God hate a liar? Simply because they are hypocrites, Proverbs 6:17 / 1 John 1:10 / James 3:7-10. People who lie usually do so to gain some advantage over others or to cover their tracks.

The devil lied to Eve when he told her she wouldn’t die, Genesis 3:4. Cain lied to God when he said that he didn’t know where his brother Abel was after murdering him, Genesis 4:9. Joseph’s brother lied to their father by telling him that Joseph had been eaten by a wild animal, Genesis 37:31-21.

Peter lied about knowing Jesus three times, [Matthew 26:69-75](#). Ananias and Sapphira lied to God about the amount of money they received from selling their land, [Acts 5:1-11](#). There will be no liars in heaven, [1 Corinthians 6:9-11](#) / [Revelation 21:8](#).

HANDS THAT SHED INNOCENT BLOOD

Why does God hate the shedding of innocent blood? We are all made in the image of God, [Genesis 1:27](#). God is the one who gives us life, [Deuteronomy 32:39](#), and God is the one who numbers our days, [Psalms 139:16](#). In the Old Testament, God commanded His people not to murder, [Exodus 20:13](#). Committing murder was punishable by death, [Leviticus 24:17](#). God values human life and made a covenant with all of creation that life wasn't to be taken from anyone, [Genesis 9:1-6](#). Jesus says murder starts in the heart, [Matthew 5:21-22](#). Cain murdered his brother Abel, [Genesis 4:8](#). Moses killed an Egyptian and tried to hide the evidence, [Exodus 2:11-14](#). David orchestrated the killing of Bathsheba's husband, Uriah, in an effort to cover up his adulterous behaviour and her pregnancy, [2 Samuel 11:1-17](#). The Jews orchestrated the murder of Jesus, [Acts 2:36](#).

A HEART THAT DEVISES WICKED SCHEMES

Why does God hate a deceitful heart? A deceitful heart is exactly that, it's deceitful, [Proverbs 23:7](#). These are people who want to deceive you and take advantage of you. They devise tricky schemes to deceive you into trusting them with your money. People who are not willing to be honest with others, never mind themselves.

The heart is what He wants from all people, [Deuteronomy 6:5](#) / [Jeremiah 17:9](#) / [Proverbs 4:23](#) / [Romans 13:14](#). When Joshua led the people into the Promised Land and all the land was given to the Israelites, Joshua asked the Israelites where their hearts were and declared that his heart and his family's hearts belong to God, [Joshua 24:20-24](#).

FEET THAT ARE QUICK TO RUSH INTO TROUBLE

Why does God hate those who are quick to get into trouble? Whatever we are thinking about in our minds, our feet tend to lead us to do those things. People rush into trouble simply because they don't care what the consequences are, [Isaiah 59:7-8](#).

They just don't care about who they hurt or the consequences; they don't even care about God and His punishment. There are those who spend all their time plotting and scheming evil deeds. They have plans in place and know exactly what course of action to take.

We often make quick decisions which end up being bad for us. Sarah asked Abraham to sleep with Hagar in order to have a child, [Genesis 16:1-3](#). Moses struck the rock twice instead of just speaking to it, [Numbers 20:10-12](#). Samson was set upon having a wife, despite being foreign, [Judges 14:1-3](#). The mother of Zebedee's sons rashly asked Jesus to give her sons positions of authority in the Lord's kingdom, [Matthew 20:20-21](#).

A FALSE WITNESS WHO POURS OUT LIES

Why does God hate false witnesses? Giving false testimony was forbidden by God in the Law of Moses, Exodus 20:16. Have you ever had someone say false things about you?

Maybe they have accused you of something you didn't do. How did you feel? What damage does that cause? It causes destruction; it destroys people's lives and reputations.

Satan accused God of lying to Eve concerning eating the fruit, Genesis 3:1-6. Potiphar's wife accused Joseph of trying to seduce her into bed, Genesis 39:7-20. A multitude of people accused Jesus of being a glutton and drunkard, Matthew 11:19.

The Scribes and Pharisees falsely accused Jesus of blasphemy when he forgave sin, Matthew 9:2-6 / Mark 2:7 / Luke 5:21. Many religious people accused Stephen of blasphemy, Acts 6:7-15.

A MAN WHO STIRS UP CONFLICT IN THE COMMUNITY

Why does God hate people to cause trouble? Division is of the devil as it tears down instead of building up, James 4:1. Conflict is everywhere and has become a part of our lives.

We read about it in our newspapers and hear about it on the news. Country fighting country, gangs against other gangs, family against family, conflict is everywhere.

Division causes the church to stop functioning properly, 1 Corinthians 1:10-17. Each part has to do its work; it may have a different task, but it is just as important as the other parts, 1 Corinthians 12:12-27.

Those who cause division are usually those who have hidden agendas, those who love to gossip, Romans 1:29 / 2 Corinthians 12:20, but no one should tolerate them, Proverbs 22:10-20 / Titus 3:10.

CONCLUSION

I'm sure you noticed that haughty eyes refer to how we see people. Lying tongues refer to how we speak to people. Hands that shed innocent blood refer to how we treat people. A heart that devises wicked schemes refers to how we plan our lives.

Feet that are quick to run into trouble refer to our moral decisions. A false witness who pours out lies refers to how we influence people's perceptions of others. The man who stirs up conflict within the community refers to how we influence people's relationships with one another.

We may be forgiven for thinking all of the things which God hates are not linked together, but they actually are. What we read is one action or sin leading to another.

In Proverbs 6:16-19, Solomon describes six qualities that God hates and the seventh as worse than them all. We know that the number seven symbolises completeness, so what we read here are actually the qualities of the very person he described earlier in Proverbs 6:12-14.

All of these things listed totally destroy the unity of God's purpose, 1 Peter 2:11-17. Christians are called to be united with each other, 1 Peter 3:8 / 1 Corinthians 1:10, and Christians are called to maintain the unity of the Spirit, Ephesians 4:3.

God wants His people to be humble, Micah 6:8 / Philippians 2:3-4 / 1 Peter 5:6. God wants His people to tell the truth at all times, Proverbs 12:22 / Zechariah 8:16 / Ephesians 4:15 / Ephesians 4:25. God wants His people to protect the innocent, Isaiah 1:17 / Acts 7:24 / James 1:27.

God wants His people to have hearts which make good plans, Proverbs 16:3 / James 4:13-15. God wants His people to run quickly towards good, Psalms 34:14 / Romans 12:9 / Romans 12:21.

God wants His people to be true witnesses who speak nothing but the truth, Proverbs 14:25 / Matthew 5:16 / 1 Peter 3:15. God wants His people to sow peace, not conflict, Psalms 34:14 / Matthew 5:9 / Romans 12:18.

WARNING AGAINST ADULTERY

'My son keep your father's command and do not forsake your mother's teaching. Bind them always on your heart; fasten them around your neck. When you walk, they will guide you; when you sleep, they will watch over you; when you awake, they will speak to you. For this command is a lamp, this teaching is a light, and correction and instruction are the way to life, keeping you from your neighbour's wife, from the smooth talk of a wayward woman.' Proverbs 6:20-24

Why should children always listen to their parents? They've lived longer, they have a lot more experiences in life, etc, Proverbs 1:8 / Proverbs 3:3. It is interesting how the father gives the commands, and the mother does the teaching, Ephesians 6:11-24.

God's commands keep children safe, Deuteronomy 6:6-9 / Psalms 119:105. Unlike what the world thinks about discipline, God tells us that discipline is a way of life. If we listen to our parents' warnings and obey them, they will keep us from a smooth-talking wayward woman.

'Do not lust in your heart after her beauty or let her captivate you with her eyes. For a prostitute can be had for a loaf of bread, but another man's wife preys on your very life.' Proverbs 6:25-26

Why is there a difference in consequences between a prostitute and an adulteress? You pay for one but not the other. How can a prostitute reduce you to a loaf of bread? Simply because they cost money. How does the adulteress prey upon your life? They eventually wreck your life, Proverbs 7:1-27.

The two forms of evil bring, each of them, its own penalty. By the one, a man is brought to such poverty as to beg for 'a piece of bread' by the other and more deadly sin, he incurs a peril, which may affect his life, 1 Samuel 2:35-36 / 1 Kings 2:26-27.

'Can a man scoop fire into his lap without his clothes being burned? Can a man walk on hot coals without his feet being scorched? So is he who sleeps with another man's wife; no one who touches her will go unpunished.' Proverbs 6:27-29

What is Solomon saying here? She is too hot to handle safely; you will only burn yourself. He's basically saying if we touch, we will get burnt, and you will get punished.

'People do not despise a thief if he steals to satisfy his hunger when he is starving. Yet if he is caught, he must pay sevenfold, though it costs him all the wealth of his house. But a man who commits adultery has no sense; whoever does so destroys himself. Blows and disgrace are his lot, and his shame will never be wiped away. For jealousy arouses a husband's fury, and he will show no mercy when he takes revenge. He will not accept any compensation; he will refuse a bribe; however great it is.' Proverb 6:30-35

What's Solomon saying here? He's saying if we do wrong, we will get punished, we will have to pay back, Exodus 22:1-4. Someone who commits adultery will always be ashamed; there's no way to pay that back.

Adultery is serious. People may have a little tolerance for one who steals out of hunger, but no one has respect for a man who steals someone else's wife, Leviticus 20:10.

CHAPTER 7

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter again, we have the advice of keeping God's commands, and we will live. It's a continuation from the previous chapter concerning the warning against the wayward woman, Proverbs 5:1-4 / Proverbs 6:20-24.

WARNING AGAINST THE ADULTERESS

'My son, keep my words and store up my commands within you. Keep my commands, and you will live; guard my teachings as the apple of your eye. Bind them on your fingers; write them on the tablet of your heart. Say to wisdom, 'You are my sister,' and to insight, 'You are my relative.' They will keep you from the adulterous woman, from the wayward woman with her seductive words.' Proverbs 7:1-5

Who's the apple of your eye? For me, it's my wife. What does the writer mean when he says to keep the commands as the apple of our eye? Did you know that we are the apples of God's eye? Isn't that great? Psalms 17:8.

Notice how personal wisdom is here, she's 'your sister.' What is a relative or kinsman, as other translations have it? A relative or kinsman is a person who redeems, delivers or avenges, Leviticus 25:25 / Ruth 4:6.

Solomon encourages his son to have a deep relationship with God's Word. It's deep in the sense that God's Word needs to be in his heart and not just his mind. It should not be only on his mind but also in his heart.

He should love God's Word as his sister and relative. The wisdom and power we receive from God's Word will encourage us to stay away from the wayward woman and see through her seductive words.

'At the window of my house, I looked down through the lattice. I saw among the simple, I noticed among the young men, a youth who had no sense. He was going down the street near her corner, walking along in the direction of her house at twilight, as the day was fading, as the dark of night set in.' Proverbs 7:6-9

Do you think today's youth lack judgement? Most of them always have, I know I did when I was younger. When I lived in Scotland, a lot of us used to just hang around the street corners and do a lot of flirting with the younger women.

Notice that the youngster deliberately set out to meet a woman, maybe not to sleep with her but definitely to flirt with her, Proverbs 1:4 / Proverbs 1:22. He clearly has no idea what he is flirting with, but if he listens to wisdom, he would fully understand the dangers that lie ahead for him, Psalms 119:9 / Proverbs 4:5-7.

'Suddenly, a woman came out to meet him! She was dressed like a prostitute and with secret intent. (She is loud and rebellious; she does not remain at home—at one time outside, at another in the wide plazas, and by every corner she lies in wait.) So, she grabbed him and kissed him, and with a bold expression, she said to him, 'I have fresh meat at home; today I have fulfilled my vows! That is why I came out to meet you, to look for you, and I found you! I have spread my bed with elegant coverings, with richly coloured fabric from Egypt. I have perfumed my bed with myrrh,

aloes, and cinnamon. Come, let's drink deeply of lovemaking until morning, let's delight ourselves with sexual intercourse. For my husband is not at home; he has gone on a journey of some distance. He has taken a bag of money with him; he will not return until the end of the month.' Proverbs 7:10-20

In some countries today, we still see women hanging out on the street corners for business, Matthew 6:13 / Hebrews 11:24-25. Do we know that pleasure is short, but is it worth it? No. Many people have fallen because of a fleeting pleasure. Stupid one-night stand mistakes have caused the end of many marriages, 2 Timothy 2:22.

Do you know any chat-up lines? We used to use them all the time when we were teenagers. 'Here's 10p, go call your mum and tell her you won't be home tonight'. 'You're like a parking ticket, you've got fine written all over you.'

What's the first thing you notice about her actions? The first thing I notice is that her actions are deliberate; she knows where to go, what to say and how to say it, and she knows how to hit all the right buttons, Proverbs 30:20. She even gives assurance that they won't get caught because her husband is away for a while. She uses the words 'I have fresh meat', which is a 'peace offering', Leviticus 3:1-2 / Leviticus 22:21, and she uses those words in terms of something personal.

In other words, after they have sinned, she already has the peace offering ready. This is an intentional sin; it's like saying let's go out and get drunk and we will ask God for forgiveness in the morning because we know He will.

Now notice what she does.

1. She dressed to impress. Dressed as a prostitute, Proverbs 7:10.
2. She left him no chance. She grabbed him and kissed him, Proverbs 7:13.
3. She's prepared. She invites him back to hers, Proverbs 7:16-18.
4. She mind reads. Her husband is away for a while, Proverbs 7:19-20.
5. She persuades him. With smooth talk, Proverbs 7:21.
6. She has him where she wants him. Trapped, Proverbs 7:23.

It's very clear that this isn't the first time she has done this; she has become somewhat of an expert at this.

'She persuaded him with persuasive words; with her smooth talk, she compelled him. Suddenly, he went after her like an ox that goes to the slaughter, like a stag prancing into a trapper's snare till an arrow pierces his liver—like a bird hurrying into a trap, and he does not know that it will cost him his life.' Proverbs 7:21-23

After some persuasion, the young man took the bait. Have you ever been fishing? We will never catch anything unless we take the time to lure the bait until the fish is caught. She lured the bait of sex in front of his eyes, and he took it hook, line and sinker. She got her man, Proverbs 3:25 / Proverbs 6:15.

Why does it say it will cost him his life and not hers? The man's sinful actions will lead to his death, but in the spiritual sense, he was like an ox to the slaughter, and the woman was already dead, 1 John 5:16.

'So now, sons, listen to me, and pay attention to the words I speak. Do not let your heart turn aside to her ways—do not wander into her pathways; for she has brought down many fatally wounded, and all those she has slain are many. Her house is the way to the grave, going down to the chambers of death.' Proverbs 7:24-27

Once again, it's clear that this woman has been doing this for a while; she has had so many victims, Proverbs 5:5 / Proverbs 9:18. She's pictured as someone who brought the downfall of many a soldier.

Have you ever heard of Sweeney Todd? He was a fictional character who was a barber; he murdered the people who came into his shop for a haircut. The woman described in this is just like him, Psalms 9:16.

CHAPTER 8

INTRODUCTION

Proverbs 8 stands in contrast to what we just read in Proverbs 7. In Proverbs 7, we read about the woman standing on the street corners luring men into sin, but here we see wisdom standing on the street corners luring people into life.

WISDOM GUIDES US

‘Does not wisdom call out? Does not understanding raise her voice? At the top of the elevated places along the way, at the intersection of the paths, she takes her stand; beside the gates opening into the city, at the entrance of the doorways, she cries out: ‘To you, O people, I call out, and my voice calls to all mankind. You who are naive, discern wisdom! And you fools, understand discernment!’ Proverbs 8:1-5

Notice how wisdom also calls to the ‘simple’ and the ‘fools’. In other words, they have to choose between the prostitute’s voice and the voice of wisdom. In the previous chapter, we read that the prostitute was lurking around, almost hidden, Proverbs 7:12, but here we read that wisdom openly wants to be heard by everyone.

How does wisdom speak to us today? Wisdom speaks to us through the Scriptures; we hear her in sermons and studies. In Old Testament times, elders would often be seen and heard at the city gates, Proverbs 1:20 / Proverbs 7:9 / Proverbs 31:23.

‘Listen, for I will speak excellent things, and my lips will utter what is right. For my mouth speaks truth, and my lips hate wickedness. All the words of my mouth are righteous; there is nothing in them twisted or crooked. All of them are clear to the discerning and upright to those who find knowledge.’ Proverbs 8:6-9

Have you ever put something in your mouth and thought that it tasted disgusting? Solomon is saying that wisdom never has anything disgusting to say; she never lies because wisdom cannot lie, Luke 4:22.

Wisdom has excellent and right things to say; she has words of truth and righteousness, things which are clear and upright. Remember, we’re dealing with God’s ways here, and we know that God will never force us to listen to Him.

‘Receive my instruction rather than silver, and knowledge rather than choice gold. For wisdom is better than rubies, and desirable things cannot be compared to her.’ Proverbs 8:10-11

Wisdom is better than silver, gold, rubies, and all that can be desired. God always gives us a choice, it’s our choice of riches or God’s will, God’s will or wealth; it’s up to us. He says that wisdom is more precious than any other thing you can possess in this world. Nothing compares to it.

‘I, wisdom, live with prudence, and I find knowledge and discretion. The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; I hate arrogant pride and the evil way and perverse utterances.’ Proverbs 8:12-13

Do you know of any two things that go together? Beans and toast, Ant and Dec, etc. Solomon says that ‘where you have wisdom, you have prudence, that is, caution, where you have knowledge, you have discretion, that is good judgement’.

In other words, they are like sausage and mash; one has to go with the other. And that’s why he says that there are other things that cannot go together. We can’t fear the Lord and love evil. We can’t fear the Lord and be proud and full of arrogance.

We can’t fear the Lord and love evil behaviour and love evil speech. He says we can’t have it two ways because the two ways cannot go together. We either love the one or hate the other, Matthew 6:22-23.

WISDOM HELPS US SUCCEED

‘Counsel and sound wisdom belong to me; I possess understanding and might. Kings reign by means of me, and potentates decree righteousness; by me princes rule, as well as nobles and all righteous judges. I love those who love me, and those who seek me find me. Riches and honour are with me, long-lasting wealth and righteousness. My fruit is better than the purest gold, and what I produce is better than choice silver. I walk in the path of righteousness, in the pathway of justice, that I may cause those who love me to inherit wealth, and that I may fill their treasuries.’

Proverbs 8:14-21

What is wisdom saying here? Wisdom is saying people are in the positions they are in because of God. Anybody who is in a position of power is in that position because God allowed that to happen, [Daniel 2:21](#).

What else is wisdom saying here? Wisdom is saying she will help us succeed, not on worldly terms but godly terms, [Ecclesiastes 7:11-12](#). Who are some of the richest people on Earth?

You may say King Charles, Bill Gates or Richard Branson, but the truth is, it's Christians. We're so rich we don't know how rich we are. But those riches are only available to those who are God's people.

In other words, as they say with the lottery, you've got to be in it to win it. If you're not in Christ, then you can't get those riches, [Matthew 6:33](#). Doesn't the value of wisdom make us want to hear her?

WISDOM WAS THERE IN THE BEGINNING AND WORKS WITH GOD

‘The LORD created me as the beginning of his works, before his deeds of long ago. From eternity I was appointed, from the beginning, from before the world existed. When there were no deep oceans, I was born, when there were no springs overflowing with water; before the mountains were set in place—before the hills—I was born, before he made the earth and its fields, or the beginning of the dust of the world. When he established the heavens, I was there; when he marked out the horizon over the face of the deep, when he established the clouds above, when the fountains of the deep grew strong, when he gave the sea his decree that the waters should not pass over his command, when he marked out the foundations of the earth, then I was beside him as a master craftsman, and I was his delight day by day, rejoicing before him at all times, rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth, and delighting in its people.’

Proverbs 8:22-31

In what way was wisdom there in the beginning? Simply put, wisdom was in the mind of God, [Job 38:8-11](#) / [John 1:1-2](#) / [Psalm 90:2](#) / [Isaiah 45:18](#). The wisdom utilised by God in the creation of the heavens and earth is the voice crying out for us to hear! If we have ears to hear, shall we not hear?

GOD LOVES THOSE WHO LOVE HIS WISDOM

‘So now, children, listen to me; blessed are those who keep my ways. Listen to my instruction so that you may be wise, and do not neglect it. Blessed is the one who listens to me, watching at my doors day by day, waiting beside my doorway. For the one who finds me finds life and receives favour from the LORD.’ Proverbs 8:32-35

God is saying that if we find Him and listen to what He says and do what He says, we will find life, [Psalm 134](#). Day to day life, and eternal life, we will find life to the full, [Psalm 145:16](#) / [John 1:4](#).

‘But the one who does not find me brings harm to himself; all who hate me love death.’ Proverbs 8:36

In what way does someone harm themselves if they don't find God? Ultimately, it will cost them their soul. Are we going to listen to wisdom that cries out to be heard and wants to share understanding and knowledge, truth and righteousness?

Are we going to listen to the wisdom that wants to bless our lives with riches and honour, especially that offered by the Lord, 1 Kings 3:4-15, or are we going to listen to the woman who lurks on the street corners wanting to slaughter us? Proverbs 7:27 / Proverbs 20:2.

CHAPTER 9

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, there is an invitation from two people.

1. A responsible woman who represents wisdom, Proverbs 9:1-12.
2. A prostitute who represents folly, Proverbs 9:13-18.

INVITATIONS OF WISDOM AND FOLLY

‘Wisdom has built her house; she has set up its seven pillars. She has prepared her meat and mixed her wine; she has also set her table. She has sent out her servants, and she calls from the highest point of the city, ‘Let all who are simple come to my house!’ To those who have no sense, she says, ‘Come, eat my food and drink the wine I have mixed.’ Proverbs 9:1-5

What does Solomon mean when he says, ‘wisdom has set up its seven pillars’? The number seven means completeness or perfection. He’s basically saying that wisdom lacks nothing, James 3:17. Do these words sound familiar? Luke 14:15-24. Read the following verses, Proverbs 9:2 and Revelation 19:9, Proverbs 9:5 and John 6:27. Notice also that wisdom is personified as someone who is carefully prepared and beautifully presented. She wants to be heard; she has sent out her servants. She cries out from the highest places of the city, and she invites the simple and those who lack understanding to eat and drink of her prepared feast.

‘Leave your simple ways, and you will live; walk in the way of insight.’ Whoever corrects a mocker invites insults; whoever rebukes the wicked incurs abuse. Do not rebuke mockers or they will hate you; rebuke the wise, and they will love you. Instruct the wise and they will be wiser still; teach the righteous and they will add to their learning.’ Proverbs 9:6-9

She won't invite scoffers because correcting a scoffer only shames and harms the one doing the correcting. The wise and just, however, appreciate and will learn from correction. How do you feel when someone insults you? It's pretty difficult not to retaliate in some way, but wisdom tells us otherwise, Romans 12:11-18.

‘The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. For through wisdom your days will be many, and years will be added to your life. If you are wise, your wisdom will reward you; if you are a mocker, you alone will suffer.’ Proverbs 9:10-12

When we fear the Lord and know the Lord, we will have long life, Proverbs 3:2 / Proverbs 3:16. Our days will be multiplied, and years added to our lives. There's a sense of loneliness in being foolish, whereas the wise grow wise together. We need to be careful about judging others, Matthew 7:2.

'Folly is an unruly woman; she is simple and knows nothing. She sits at the door of her house, on a seat at the highest point of the city, calling out to those who pass by, who go straight on their way, 'Let all who are simple come to my house!' To those who have no sense, she says, 'Stolen water is sweet; food eaten in secret is delicious!' But little do they know that the dead are there, that her guests are deep in the realm of the dead.' Proverbs 9:13-18

The unruly woman, as opposed to wisdom, makes no preparation; she is loud, seductive and knows nothing. The words, 'stolen water is sweet, and food eaten in secret is delicious' are an allusion to illicit intercourse, Proverbs 5:15, but it is a false promise, Proverbs 20:17 / Proverbs 5:3-5.

The real promise is unknown to the simple who lack understanding. Her home is the house of the dead, Proverbs 2:18-19; her house is the way to death, Proverbs 5:5 / Proverbs 7:27. What's Solomon saying here? He simply says that sin is dangerous. He's saying that pleasure is attractive because it is forbidden, it is deadly, Romans 7:7-8.

CHAPTER 10

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, we see many great contrasts between the wise and the unwise, the righteous and the wicked.

THE PROVERBS OF SOLOMON

'The proverbs of Solomon: A wise son brings joy to his father, but a foolish son brings grief to his mother. Ill-gotten treasures have no lasting value, but righteousness delivers from death. The LORD does not let the righteous go hungry, but he thwarts the craving of the wicked. Lazy hands make for poverty, but diligent hands bring wealth. He who gathers crops in summer is a prudent son, but he who sleeps during harvest is a disgraceful son. Blessings crown the head of the righteous, but violence overwhelms the mouth of the wicked. The name of the righteous is used in blessings, but the name of the wicked will rot.' Proverbs 10:1-7

Some would argue that Solomon was a wise son because he valued wisdom above everything else, 1 Kings 3. It's not surprising that when David saw this in his son, he, too, would have a glad heart.

Fathers enjoy seeing their son's willingness to be taught and learn wisdom. A son who will not learn causes his mother to endure much suffering. Wisdom is necessary for the 'good life' which parents desire for their children. These 'ill-gotten gains,' literally 'treasures of wickedness,' seem profitable and sound profitable, but are not, Luke 12:16-21.

We should be able to match our treasures with our righteousness. There is no real security in wealth acquired wickedly, and it does not matter how a man acquires his money and property. Generally speaking, the Lord will not allow those who try to do right to suffer, Matthew 6:33.

Poverty is the product of indifference. During harvest, the whole family was needed in the field or vineyard, Proverbs 6:6-8. A son shows his true quality in such times. The righteous man receives blessings and leaves a good reputation behind him, Deuteronomy 27-28.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘As blessings shall be on the head of the just, so the violence of the wicked shall cover their face with shame and confusion. Their own violent dealings shall be visited upon them.’

SCHOOLING FOR SUCCESS

‘The wise in heart accept commands, but a chattering fool comes to ruin. Whoever walks in integrity walks securely, but whoever takes crooked paths will be found out.’ Proverbs 10:8-9

It is the wise who are truly humble because they willingly accept instruction from God and anyone who is in authority, as well as obeying any commands. The wise are contrasted with those who walk in crooked ways; they never listen to the wisdom of God or the wisdom of those in authority, [Proverbs 10:20](#) / [Matthew 10:26](#). The wise man walks with integrity, which means he is always safe; he’s never in doubt about the direction he goes in.

CONTRASTS WITH THE TROUBLEMAKER IN THE COMMUNITY WITH THE ONE WHO CONTRIBUTES TO ITS WELFARE

‘Whoever winks maliciously causes grief, and a chattering fool comes to ruin. The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life, but the mouth of the wicked conceals violence. Hatred stirs up conflict, but love covers over all wrongs. Wisdom is found on the lips of the discerning, but a rod is for the back of one who has no sense. The wise store up knowledge, but the mouth of a fool invites ruin.’ Proverbs 10:10-14

Notice the word ‘winks’, this could mean the troublemaker is overlooking evil, or perhaps it’s a sign showing he is not telling the truth, [Proverbs 6:13](#) / [Psalms 35:19](#).

The man whose speech cannot be taken at face value is a source of trouble. When love is behind our actions, it has a way of producing positive results, [Jeremiah 2:13](#) / [James 5:20](#) / [Matthew 18:15](#) / [Matthew 18:20](#).

The quality of speech is determined by its results; the speech of the fool gets them into trouble. Discipline is needed since reason and logic did not work, [Proverbs 26:3](#).

Notice that ‘love covers all wrongs’, some translations have the words, ‘love covers all sins’. This probably means that love covers the sins of others and or that love covers the sins of the one who sins, [1 Peter 4:8](#). The idea is that hatred only brings trouble, but love brings healing.

Wise people are wise because they are silent, listening and storing up for good, [Matthew 12:34](#). It is quite difficult to learn when you are always talking, [James 1:19](#).

‘The wealth of the rich is their fortified city, but poverty is the ruin of the poor. The wages of the righteous is life, but the earnings of the wicked are sin and death. Whoever heeds discipline shows the way to life, but whoever ignores correction leads others astray.’ Proverbs 10:15-17

The wise man does not underestimate the power of wealth, it provides protection. Yet he needs to be careful that this wealth does not become his god, [Luke 12:15](#).

The poor man must be careful, or else he will use his poverty as an excuse and thus ruin himself, [Romans 6:23](#). This is the person who has been instructed and disciplined but has forsaken it.

‘Whoever conceals hatred with lying lips and spreads slander is a fool. Sin is not ended by multiplying words, but the prudent hold their tongues. The tongue of the righteous is choice silver, but the heart of the wicked is of little value. The lips of the righteous nourish many, but fools die for lack of sense.’ Proverbs 10:18-21

The word ‘conceals’ means they talk like a friend, but they are not. Even concealed hatred is wrong. Do you engage in gossip? Solomon says you are a fool!

Clarke, in his commentary says the following.

‘This is a common case. How many, when full of resentment, and deadly hatred, meditating revenge and cruelty, and sometimes even murder, have pretended that they thought nothing of the injury they had sustained; had passed by the insult, etc.! Thus, lying lips covered the malevolence of a wicked heart.’

If we continue to talk so much, we are bound to say something that will offend or damage another. There is much power in speech, and good speech is very valuable. We ‘nourish many’ through counsel and guidance, Hosea 4:6.

‘The blessing of the LORD brings wealth, without painful toil for it. A fool finds pleasure in wicked schemes, but a person of understanding delights in wisdom. What the wicked dread will overtake them; what the righteous desire will be granted. When the storm has swept by, the wicked are gone, but the righteous stand firm forever. As vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes, so are sluggards to those who send them.’ Proverbs 10:22-26

The idea here seems to be that the way wealth is acquired is important. When we acquire wealth in the right way, the Lord sends no sorrow with it, Psalms 37:4 / James 1:17. To a fool, wickedness is like fun and playtime.

So also, is learning to understand, Matthew 7:24-25. The lazy performance of one sent on a mission brings unpleasantness and irritation, Matthew 20:7 / Matthew 25:30.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘As tornadoes that sweep everything away before them, so shall the wrath of God sweep away the wicked; it shall leave him neither branch nor root.’

‘The fear of the LORD adds length to life, but the years of the wicked are cut short. The prospect of the righteous is joy, but the hopes of the wicked come to nothing. The way of the LORD is a refuge for the blameless, but it is the ruin of those who do evil. The righteous will never be uprooted, but the wicked will not remain in the land. From the mouth of the righteous comes the fruit of wisdom, but a perverse tongue will be silenced. The lips of the righteous know what finds favour, but the mouth of the wicked only what is perverse.’ Proverbs 10:27-32

How did the fear of the Lord prolong life? Proverbs 8:13 / Proverbs 14:27 / Proverbs 15:33.

1. It kept one from trouble, sin and evil.
2. It encouraged one to keep the specifics of the Old Law, including cleanliness laws.
3. It will bring special blessings from God.

The fear of the Lord provides a certain confidence and assurance. If the people are righteous, they will be allowed to stay in the land, Matthew 5:5. If not, they will be removed. This also states the conditions of the land promise given to Abraham. This is acceptable to whom? God first, then men, Deuteronomy 6:5 / Matthew 22:37.

CHAPTER 11

INTRODUCTION

‘The LORD detests dishonest scales, but accurate weights find favour with him. When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom. The integrity of the upright guides them, but the unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity. Wealth is worthless in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death.’ Proverbs 11:1-4

REASONABLE AND RIGHT RULES FOR LIVING

There is a fundamental law in business, it's called integrity. The Lord detests dishonest scales, Leviticus 19:35-36 / Deuteronomy 25:13-16. There are so many ways to cheat, but it really pleases God when we are honest, Amos 2:6 / Amos 8:5.

A dishonourable person is a disgraceful person; a humble person is a reasonable, disciplined individual. Pride is almost certainly going to lead to disaster, but humility, which is the opposite of pride, has the benefit of wisdom, thus success, Micah 6:8 / James 4:6 / 1 Peter 5:5.

The course of our life is determined by the nature of our inner self, what we are; this will determine what will happen to us. God really does not care about how much we have accumulated, but He will judge us based on how we live our lives, Luke 12:33-34. The reference to death here probably refers to premature death. The point in these verses is that righteousness can deliver us from anything, Ezekiel 7:19.

‘The righteousness of the blameless makes their paths straight, but the wicked are brought down by their own wickedness. The righteousness of the upright delivers them, but the unfaithful are trapped by evil desires. Hopes placed in mortals die with them; all the promise of their power comes to nothing. The righteous person is rescued from trouble, and it falls on the wicked instead. With their mouths the godless destroy their neighbours, but through knowledge the righteous escape.’ Proverbs 11:5-9

What hope does the wicked have in the afterlife? The wicked have no hope of anything beyond the grave, and the wicked receive trouble instead of blessings, Hebrews 9:27.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Often God makes this distinction; in public calamities and in sudden accidents, he rescues the righteous, and leaves the wicked, who has filled up the measure of his iniquities, to be seized by the hand of death. Justice, then, does its own work; for mercy has been rejected.’

Have you ever been on the receiving end of verbal abuse? Solomon says the wicked use their mouth for verbal assassination. If we do not watch our mouths and what we say, we are godless, James 3:1-12.

THE EFFECT OF THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED ON A CITY

‘When the righteous prosper, the city rejoices; when the wicked perish, there are shouts of joy. Through the blessing of the upright, a city is exalted, but by the mouth of the wicked it is destroyed. Whoever derides their neighbour has no sense, but the one who has understanding holds their tongue. A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy person keeps a secret. For lack of guidance, a nation falls, but victory is won through many advisers. Whoever puts up security for a stranger will surely suffer, but whoever refuses to shake hands in pledge is safe. A kind-hearted woman gains honour, but ruthless men gain only wealth. Those who are kind benefit themselves, but the cruel bring ruin on themselves.’ Proverbs 11:10-17

Unfortunately, not many people rejoice when someone prospers, nor are there many shouts of joy when the wicked perish; in fact, it seems to be rarely true today.

Poole, in his commentary, says the following.

‘When such men are encouraged and advanced into places of power and trust, the city rejoiceth; the citizens or subjects of that government rejoice, because they confidently expect justice and tranquility, and many other benefits, by their administration of public affairs.’

Have you ever been told gossip by others? How does that make you feel? Why do people gossip in the first place? The wisdom teachers were also concerned with the influence on the community, and they controlled themselves by not saying what they thought. The trustworthy man is not a gossip; he does not speak about confidential matters, and he is dependable.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following about the gossip.

‘Whatever was confided to him, he is sure to publish abroad. The word means a hawker, or travelling chapman. Such are always great newsmongers, and will tell even their own secrets, rather than have nothing to say.’

When decisions are being made, those in a group are likely to be more successful. A wise man refrains from business deals with strangers. The word ‘violent’ could mean energetic and strong, and the contrast between the gossip and the trustworthy person may be the two ways of obtaining success.

Perhaps this means that ruthlessness is not the only way to be successful. In addition to [Proverbs 11:16](#), [Proverbs 11:17](#) depicts the entire story of violence and cruelty, [Joshua 7:25-26](#) / [Matthew 5:7](#).

THE WICKED

‘A wicked person earns deceptive wages, but the one who sows righteousness reaps a sure reward. Truly, the righteous attain life, but whoever pursues evil finds death. The LORD detests those whose hearts are perverse, but he delights in those whose ways are blameless. Be sure of this: The wicked will not go unpunished, but those who are righteous will go free. Like a gold ring in a pig’s snout is a beautiful woman who shows no discretion. The desire of the righteous ends only in good, but the hope of the wicked only in wrath.’ [Proverbs 11:18-23](#)

These verses compare the righteous with the wicked. If we ‘sow’ righteousness, we will not have a crop failure. God guarantees success! [Galatians 6:8-9](#). Being kind to others will be rewarding, and others will respect you for your kindness. The wicked only cause themselves pain; they may receive some money, but it’s not a real benefit because they can’t take it with them when their life is over.

The word ‘perverse’ here means stubborn. Evil will be punished, either in this world or the next, [Ephesians 4:19](#). The word ‘discretion’ means discrimination, good taste, [Exodus 16:31](#) / [1 Samuel 25:33](#) / [Psalm 119:66](#). The righteous desire nothing but good, and their desires will be fulfilled; however, the wicked will have nothing else to hope for, [Romans 2:8-9](#).

GIVING EXAMPLES OF UNEXPECTED RESULTS

‘One person gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty. A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed. People curse the one who hoards grain, but they pray God’s

blessing on the one who is willing to sell. Whoever seeks good finds favour, but evil comes to one who searches for it. Those who trust in their riches will fall, but the righteous will thrive like a green leaf. Whoever brings ruin on their family will inherit only wind, and the fool will be servant to the wise. The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and the one who is wise saves lives. If the righteous receive their due on earth, how much more the ungodly and the sinner!’ Proverbs 11:24-31

These are the economic facts of life: the person who hoards will find themselves in poverty, but the one who invests will make money, [2 Corinthians 9:6-13](#) / [1 Timothy 6:17](#).

Are you a hoarder? What things do you like to keep hold of? Are you an investor? What kind of things or people do you invest in? Mismanagement of money will destroy a family.

Solomon says anyone who manages money badly will end up serving the wise man, who is the person who knows how to handle money, [Genesis 33:11](#) / [1 Samuel 25:27](#) / [2 Corinthians 9:5](#). It seems to mean the wise save people from physical and spiritual disaster, [Deuteronomy 4:29](#) / [Matthew 7:7](#) / [Acts 20:35](#) / [James 5:20](#).

Note that the Septuagint, Syrian, and Arabic read [Proverbs 11:30](#) as follows: ‘And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?’ [1 Peter 4:18](#). And all will be ‘rewarded’, each person will get what they deserve, [Joshua 7:26](#) / [1 Samuel 25:17](#) / [1 Samuel 25:33](#) / [1 Peter 4:18](#).

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Even the righteous, when they offend on earth, shall meet with sharp corrections; much more will the wicked meet the due reward of their sins. Let us then seek those blessings which our Surety purchased by his sufferings and death; let us seek to copy his example, and to keep his commandments.’

CHAPTER 12

INTRODUCTION

‘Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but whoever hates correction is stupid. Good people obtain favour from the LORD, but he condemns those who devise wicked schemes. No one can be established through wickedness, but the righteous cannot be uprooted.’ Proverbs 12:1-3

DISCIPLINE LEADS TO KNOWLEDGE

Here Solomon reminds us that the stupid man lacks rational ability and acts by instinct, and he condemns those who think more highly of those people who want to improve themselves, [Psalms 32:9](#).

This is contrasted with good people, the people who are obedient to God and who obtain favour with the Lord, as the following says, [Deuteronomy 27-28](#) / [1 John 1:6-7](#).

Have you ever tried to pull or dig out a hedge? It’s really difficult, to say the least. This is what Solomon says about those who try to uproot the righteous: [Colossians 2:6-7](#) / [Ephesians 3:16-21](#).

‘A wife of noble character is her husband’s crown, but a disgraceful wife is like decay in his bones.’ Proverbs 12:4

Have you ever had a toothache? I used to have a friend whose teeth were just pure rotten; they caused a lot of pain for him, and ultimately, he would have to have them all removed.

A good wife complements a man; she enables him to realise status and success, Ephesians 5:22-24. A poor wife saps her husband's abilities and constantly keeps him from doing his best. She disgraces and damages his reputation through incompetence and immorality.

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

‘A wife who is pious, prudent, and looks well to the ways of her household, who makes conscience of her duty, and can bear crosses; such a one is an honour and comfort to her husband. She, that is the reverse of this, preys upon him, and consumes him.’

‘The plans of the righteous are just, but the advice of the wicked is deceitful. The words of the wicked lie in wait for blood, but the speech of the upright rescues them. The wicked are overthrown and are no more, but the house of the righteous stands firm. A person is praised according to their prudence, and one with a warped mind is despised. Better to be a nobody and yet have a servant than pretend to be somebody and have no food.’ Proverbs 12:5-9

The plans of the righteous are indeed just; their lives and their thinking reflect this, Romans 12:1-2. Have you ever heard of the phrase, ‘keeping up with the Joneses’? What does that phrase mean? It's the idea of trying to live your life whilst comparing your life to those who are better off.

These verses commend the person who enjoys a modest but sure prosperity way of life, but the person who pretends to be something they aren't and then lacks necessities because of their vanity and overspending.

‘The righteous care for the needs of their animals, but the kindest acts of the wicked are cruel. Those who work their land will have abundant food, but those who chase fantasies have no sense. The wicked desire the stronghold of evildoers, but the root of the righteous endures.’ Proverbs 12:10-12

When I read these verses, I think about those who stand up for animal rights. God has always stood up for animals' rights, and here He tells us He doesn't approve of the abuse of animals, Matthew 10:29 / Psalms 104:27.

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

‘A godly man would not put even an animal to needless pain. But the wicked often speak of others as well used, when they would not endure like treatment for a single day.’

Solomon also says those who chase fantasies have no sense. These are those who seek to win the lottery; they believe that just one big deal will set them up for life.

The stronghold is referring to speculative financial dealings. The root of the righteous endures because they are rooted in God, and it flourishes because it's well supported.

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

‘When the ungodly see others prosper by sin, they wish they could act in the same way. But the root of Divine grace, in the heart of the righteous, produces other desires and purposes.’

‘Evildoers are trapped by their sinful talk, and so the innocent escape trouble. From the fruit of their lips, people are filled with good things, and the work of their hands brings them reward. The way of fools seems right to them, but the wise listen to advice. Fools show their annoyance at once, but the prudent overlook an insult.’ Proverbs 12:13-16

Some people have all kinds of addictions. Here, Solomon says that some people are addicted to lying, and just like an alcoholic who won't admit they are one. The fool has a reliance on their own opinions, thus making them deaf to the advice of the wise.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘A man who deals in lies and false oaths will sooner or later be found out to his own ruin. There is another proverb as true as this: A liar had need of a good memory; for as the truth is not in him, he says and unsays, and often contradicts himself.’

Have you ever had those times when you say something but later regretted saying it? As Christians, we must always think before we speak, [Ecclesiastes 5:2-12](#).

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

‘A foolish man is soon angry, and is hasty in expressing it; he is ever in trouble and running into mischief. It is kindness to ourselves to make light of injuries and affronts, instead of making the worst of them.’

‘An honest witness tells the truth, but a false witness tells lies. The words of the reckless pierce like swords, but the tongue of the wise brings healing. Truthful lips endure forever, but a lying tongue lasts only a moment. Deceit is in the hearts of those who plot evil, but those who promote peace have joy. No harm overtakes the righteous, but the wicked have their fill of trouble. The LORD detests lying lips, but he delights in people who are trustworthy. The prudent keep their knowledge to themselves, but a fool’s heart blurts out folly.’ Proverbs 12:17-23

The wise do not live behind a facade of falseness, which is the way of the fool. The application is simple: if you want to know the truth, then ask an honest person, [Proverbs 8:22-31](#), because no one can trust anyone who lies.

Our words have the power to hurt others, [Mark 14:56](#), but our words also have the power to heal. The wise man doesn’t talk too much, [Isaiah 53:7](#) / [Matthew 26:63](#); the wise man seeks to speak effectively, [James 3:1-12](#).

‘Diligent hands will rule, but laziness ends in forced labour. Anxiety weighs down the heart, but a kind word cheers it up. The righteous choose their friends carefully, but the way of the wicked leads them astray.’ Proverbs 12:24-26

Hard work will keep us from even harder work. A good friend once said concerning anxiety, ‘Christians are just too blessed to be stressed.’ There’s a lot of truth in those words, [Matthew 6:25-34](#) / [1 Peter 5:7](#).

Have you ever been hurt or let down by a close friend? A real friend would never want to hurt anyone, especially a friend when they are down, [Matthew 9:2](#) / [Luke 7:48](#) / [John 8:11](#). Christians should be in the caring business, going out of their way to help others, [Galatians 6:10](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Our simple words of encouragement can encourage and guide beyond all our imagining. “A single good or favourable word will remove despondency.”

‘The lazy do not roast any game, but the diligent feed on the riches of the hunt. In the way of righteousness there is life; along that path is immortality.’ Proverbs 12:27-28

Solomon finishes this chapter by reminding us that we won’t get anything out of something unless we put something into it, [Proverbs 21:25](#) / [2 Thessalonians 3:10](#).

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The slothful man makes no good use of the advantages Providence puts in his way, and has no comfort in them. The substance of a diligent man, though not great, does good to him and his family. He sees that God gives it to him in answer to prayer.’

CHAPTER 13

INTRODUCTION

‘A wise son heeds his father’s instruction, but a mocker does not respond to rebukes. From the fruit of their lips, people enjoy good things, but the unfaithful have an appetite for violence. Those who guard their lips preserve their lives, but those who speak rashly will come to ruin.’ Proverbs 13:1-3

THE WISE SON

These verses are self-explanatory, but we could ask ourselves, were we wise sons when we were younger? If so, in what way? If not, in what way? Maybe we should all ask ourselves if we recognise that we’re all responsible for our own actions, James 3:2.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It has often been remarked that God has given us two EYES, that we may SEE much; two EARS, that we may HEAR much; but has given us but ONE tongue, and that fenced in with teeth, to indicate that though we hear and see much, we should speak but little.’

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

‘He that thinks before he speaks, that suppresses evil if he has thought it, keeps his soul from a great deal both of guilt and grief. Many a one is ruined by an ungoverned tongue.’

‘A sluggard’s appetite is never filled, but the desires of the diligent are fully satisfied.’ Proverbs 13:4

Lazy people want things but don’t have them, while the diligent person has them. Why? Because they are willing to work for the things they want, Proverbs 21:25.

‘The righteous hate what is false, but the wicked make themselves a stench and bring shame on themselves. Righteousness guards the person of integrity, but wickedness overthrows the sinner. One person pretends to be rich, yet has nothing; another pretends to be poor, yet has great wealth. A person’s riches may ransom their life, but the poor cannot respond to threatening rebukes.’ Proverbs 13:5-8

Who likes seeing evil done to someone? Solomon tells us that both extremes are bad; the idea is that we should simply be honest and humble. We must remember we are rich in Christ, 2 Corinthians 8:9.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Those who have riches have often much trouble with them; as they had much trouble to get them, so they have much trouble to keep them. In despotic countries, a rich man is often accused of some capital crime, and to save his life, though he may be quite innocent, he is obliged to give up his riches; but the poor, in such countries, are put to no trouble.’

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Some who are really poor trade and spend as if they were rich: this is sin, and will be shame, and it will end accordingly. Some that are really rich would be thought to be poor: in this, there is want of gratitude to God, want of justice and charity to others. There are many hypocrites, empty of grace, who will not be convinced of their poverty. There are many fearing Christians, who are spiritually rich, yet think themselves poor; by their doubts, and complaints, and griefs, they make themselves poor.’

Have you ever seen the film ‘Ransom’ with Mel Gibson? In the film, Mel Gibson is rich, willing and able to pay the demanded ransom. However, he rebukes the man who wants the ransom money and refuses to pay because there is no reason to blackmail him. Our ransom has been paid by Christ, Mark 10:45.

‘The light of the righteous shines brightly, but the lamp of the wicked is snuffed out. Where there is strife, there is pride, but wisdom is found in those who take advice.’ Proverbs 13:9-10

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The light of the righteous is as that of the sun, which may be eclipsed and clouded, but will continue: the Spirit is their Light, he gives a fullness of joy: that of the wicked is as a lamp of their own kindling, easily put out.’

Have you ever met someone who is a complete know-it-all? Solomon tells us that a ‘know-it-all’ loses the value of useful and sometimes critical conversation with others. We must be willing not only to listen to advice but to put that advice into practice. Those who listen to and receive the counsel of others walk in wisdom.

‘Dishonest money dwindles away, but whoever gathers money little by little makes it grow.’ Proverbs 13:11

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Wealth that is not the result of honest industry and hard labour is seldom permanent. All fortunes acquired by speculation, lucky hits, and ministering to the pride or luxury of others, etc., soon become dissipated. They are not gotten in the way of Providence, and have not God’s blessing, and therefore are not permanent.’

Who has a savings account? Solomon tells us that obtaining money little by little is the best way. Anyone who ‘gets rich quick’, i.e. stealing, lottery, etc., is unstable and will probably lose it quickly.

‘Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life. Whoever scorns instruction will pay for it, but whoever respects a command is rewarded.’ Proverbs 13:12-13

Expectations which repeatedly fail to be realised have a way of discouraging us.

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The delay of what is anxiously hoped for is very painful to the mind; obtaining it is very pleasant. But spiritual blessings are chiefly intended.’

Those who despise the word of the teacher, the person who disregards the guidance of a wise teacher, will ruin themselves, while the person who respects the teachings of the wise will find success.

‘The teaching of the wise is a fountain of life, turning a person from the snares of death. Good judgment wins favour, but the way of the unfaithful leads to their destruction. All who are prudent act with knowledge, but fools expose their folly. A wicked messenger falls into trouble, but a trustworthy envoy brings healing. Whoever disregards discipline comes to poverty and shame, but whoever heeds correction is honoured. A longing fulfilled is sweet to the soul, but fools detest turning from evil. Walk with the wise and become wise, for a companion of fools suffers harm.’ Proverbs 13:14-20

These verses again state a basic principle of education. The one who wants to be wise will keep company with the wise, because wise people will always stimulate the development of other people who are wise. Unfortunately, the opposite is true; fools lead to fools, and sadly, there are more fools than wise men! 1 Corinthians 15:33 / 2 Timothy 2:24-26.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following concerning verse 14.

‘Never was a truer saying; most sinners have more pain and difficulty to get their souls damned, than the righteous have, with all their cross-bearings, to get to the kingdom of heaven.’

Henry, in his commentary, says the following concerning Proverbs 13:19-20.

‘There are in man strong desires after happiness; but never let those expect any thing truly sweet to their souls, who will not be persuaded to leave their sins. Multitudes are brought to ruin by bad company. And all that make themselves wicked will be destroyed.’

‘Trouble pursues the sinner, but the righteous are rewarded with good things. A good person leaves an inheritance for their children’s children, but a sinner’s wealth is stored up for the righteous. An unploughed field produces food for the poor, but injustice sweeps it away.’ Proverbs 13:21-23

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

‘When God pursues sinners, he is sure to overtake them; and he will reward the righteous. The servant of God who is not anxious about riches takes the best method of providing for his children. The poor, yet industrious, thrive, though in a homely manner, while those who have great riches are often brought to poverty for want of judgment.’

Proverbs are concerned with the general rule, but there are exceptions, like men like Job, Ecclesiastes 2:26. We also read of another illustration of the injustices done to the poor.

Even when they are productive, someone will always try to ruin their efforts. Whenever someone is successful, there is always someone else waiting in the wings to take it from them.

‘Whoever spares the rod hates their children, but the one who loves their children is careful to discipline them. The righteous eat to their hearts’ content, but the stomach of the wicked goes hungry.’ Proverbs 13:24-25

Human rights campaigners have a field day with verses like these, but this verse supports physical punishment as a proper form of parental discipline, Proverbs 10:13 / Ephesians 6:4 / Hebrews 12:7.

Here again is the simple reminder that if a person works, they will have food, but if they don’t work, they can’t expect food on the table to eat, Proverbs 10:3 / Jeremiah 44:18 / Ezekiel 4:17 / 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12.

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It is the misery of the wicked that even their sensual appetites are always craving. The righteous feeds on the word and ordinances, to the satisfying of his soul with the promises of the gospel, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Bread of life.’

CHAPTER 14

INTRODUCTION

‘The wise woman builds her house, but with her own hands the foolish one tears hers down.’ Proverbs 14:1

THE WISE WOMAN

How many married men come home after a hard day’s work only to be given grief from their wives? Solomon says the wise woman should work on being constructive, and they should understand that most men often receive enough criticism at work without getting it at home too, Ephesians 5:22-23 / Colossians 3:18.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘By her prudent and industrious management, she increases property in the family, furniture in the house, and food and raiment for her household. This is the true building of a house. The thriftless wife acts differently, and the opposite is the result.’

‘Whoever fears the LORD walks uprightly, but those who despise him are devious in their ways. A fool’s mouth lashes out with pride, but the lips of the wise protect them.’ Proverbs 14:2-3

What does devious mean? It means to be sly or cunning, to be twisted, they have an evil mind which actually hates God, Luke 19:14 / John 3:19. Solomon says that the fool’s talk gets them into trouble, Matthew 12:37.

‘Where there are no oxen, the manger is empty, but from the strength of an ox come abundant harvests.’ Proverbs 14:4

When a farmer has no oxen for ploughing the fields, his food trough for his animals will be empty. Some people don’t want to get down to real work and get their hands dirty, but what they don’t realise is that that very dirt is providing their income. If we don’t have other people in our lives, then our lives become empty and meaningless. We should serve others and share our faith.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The things that are most desirable always carry with them certain inconveniences. Rearing a family leads to all kinds of obligations, sacrifices, inconveniences and even sufferings and hardships. There’s noise where children are, and there’s uncleanness in the stall of the ox. This rendition of the second clause stresses the benefit of having oxen, even along with the dirty crib. ‘Where there is abundant produce, the strength of the ox is apparent.’ One can keep a very clean, neat office if he isn’t doing anything!’

‘An honest witness does not deceive, but a false witness pours out lies. The mocker seeks wisdom and finds none, but knowledge comes easily to the discerning.’ Proverbs 14:5-6

An honest witness has no need to deceive anyone, Acts 1:8. An honest witness never lies, whereas a false witness does. Why does a mocker who seeks wisdom never find any? Simply because they are not serious about wisdom, Deuteronomy 30:14 / Psalms 111:10.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Such may seek wisdom, but he never can find it, because he does not seek it where it is to be found; neither in the teaching of God’s Spirit, nor in the revelation of his will.’

‘Stay away from a fool, for you will not find knowledge on their lips.’ Proverbs 14:7

Have you ever listened to someone’s worldly idea of wisdom? Most of the time, it doesn’t make sense. Solomon says it’s a waste of time to stay in the presence of a fool because they will never say anything worthwhile, Proverbs 13:20.

‘The wisdom of the prudent is to give thought to their ways, but the folly of fools is deception. Fools mock at making amends for sin, but goodwill is found among the upright.’ Proverbs 14:8-9

Why don’t many people become Christians? They don’t realise they have a problem with sin, and so, because of that, they don’t feel they have to deal with their sin, Proverbs 1:29 / Proverbs 8:13. God is pleased with those who are serious and sober when it comes to their sin; they deal with it!

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘A trespass-offering (or any kind of worship) mocks all worshippers who are wilfully wicked. Expecting God’s favour, they do not get it.’

What does goodwill mean? It’s thinking the best about others. For example, when someone shouts at you or crashes into your car, how do you react?

‘Each heart knows its own bitterness, and no one else can share its joy.’ Proverbs 14:10

There is an inner self which understands its own bitterness as well as its own joy, 1 Corinthians 2:11. Outsiders cannot understand what we are experiencing; this is why we don’t always have to say, ‘I know what you are going through.’ We should say this only if and when we have gone through the same thing. If we haven’t, we don’t know!

‘The house of the wicked will be destroyed, but the tent of the upright will flourish. There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end, it leads to death.’ Proverbs 14:11-12

People are always looking for shortcuts in life, and even in religion, many people rely on their feelings and emotions to guide them in life and religion. A way which, at the time, seems like the very best way to go, may end up in death, Proverbs 16:25 / Matthew 7:13-14. Life has its inexplicable aspects; this is why we always need God’s directions, Jeremiah 10:23 / Matthew 7:21-22.

‘Even in laughter, the heart may ache, and rejoicing may end in grief. The faithless will be fully repaid for their ways, and the good rewarded for theirs.’ Proverbs 14:13-14

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Like many other Proverbs in our English version, this one cannot be taken as universally true. The first clause is often rendered, and perhaps should be, “Even in laughter the heart may be sorrowful. ‘There are two kinds of laughter and mirth. There is an innocent and proper mirth; and there is an ill-timed, guilty and sinful mirth. There is also sometimes a heavy and disconsolate heart that disguises its sorrow by a show of joy and laughter.’

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘What is implied in being filled with his own ways? Having his soul saturated with folly, sin, and disappointment.’

Cook, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The words ‘satisfied from himself’ are not in the original (Hebrew),’ rendering the passage, ‘He who falls away from God in his heart shall be filled with his own ways; and the good man shall be filled with that which belongs to him.’

Someone with no faith isn’t dependable or consistent; their actions will return to haunt them, Galatians 6:7-8.

‘The simple believe anything, but the prudent give thought to their steps. The wise fear the LORD and shun evil, but a fool is hot-headed and yet feels secure.’ Proverbs 14:15-16

A naive person is a simple person who lacks the caution and logical abilities of a prudent person. The arrogant and careless person is only concerned about their own talents and abilities.

What does it mean when it says that a fool will be reckless? It simply means they will make a lot of mistakes. Do Christians make mistakes? Yes. So, what’s the difference? Not as many.

‘A quick-tempered person does foolish things, and the one who devises evil schemes is hated. The simple inherit folly, but the prudent are crowned with knowledge. Evil-doers will bow down in the presence of the good, and the wicked at the gates of the righteous. The poor are shunned even by their neighbours, but the rich have many friends.’
Proverbs 14:17-20

Here Solomon gives an observation on the reality of life. It's not the way it ought to be, but it is the way it often is, Luke 15:11-32.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'The words, quick-tempered person is 'Ketsar appayim, 'short of nostrils:' because, when a man is angry, his nose is contracted, and drawn up towards his eyes.'

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning Proverbs 14:19.

'We have identical parallelism here, based upon the doctrine that moral goodness must in this life triumph externally over wickedness.' This was the doctrine that dominated the Book of Job, and which was strongly advocated by all of Job's friends. It should be understood in the light of what is written there. 'This describes the humbling of the wicked by the punishment of their sins.'

'It is a sin to despise one's neighbour, but blessed is the one who is kind to the needy. Do not those who plot evil go astray? But those who plan what is good find love and faithfulness. All hard work brings a profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty.' Proverbs 14:21-23

These are basic truths; we shouldn't despise our neighbour but be a blessing to them, Leviticus 19:18 / Matthew 22:39.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

'The great glory of Christianity is that it regards and honours the poor, who, alas, constitute the vast majority of mankind. 'Blessed are ye poor! Blessed are the poor in spirit!' These are the words of Christ, who, 'Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might become rich,' 2 Corinthians 8:9.'

These verses set forth a basic maxim of life: work produces more than talk does. The wise man believes in work, while a fool can talk himself into poverty, Genesis 42:1-2. We need to practice what we preach; we need to help those in need, Matthew 5:21-32 / Matthew 21:28-41.

'The wealth of the wise is their crown, but the folly of fools yields folly. A truthful witness saves lives, but a false witness is deceitful. Whoever fears the LORD has a secure fortress, and for their children it will be a refuge. The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, turning a person from the snares of death.' Proverbs 14:24-27

The true crown of a rich man is not his money, but his integrity and his faithfulness to God.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

'A witness saves lives when he tells the truth; when he tells lies, he betrays people.' 'All liars shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone'. Revelation 21:8. 'The witness has it in his power to save or murder either life or reputation.'

The fear of the Lord will keep us from fatal pitfalls, disasters and premature death along the road of life, Psalms 46:1. How can we recognise a false witness for Christ? We recognise them by their fruit, Matthew 7:15-20. Proverbs 14:27 of Moffatt's Translation of the Bible reads this way, 'Reverence for the Eternal is a fount of life; it shows how to avoid the nets of Death.'

'A large population is a king's glory, but without subjects, a prince is ruined. Whoever is patient has great understanding, but one who is quick-tempered displays folly.' Proverbs 14:28-29

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

'Here are two maxims in politics, which carry their own evidence with them: 1. That it is much for the honour of a king to have a populous kingdom; it is a sign that he rules well, since strangers are hereby invited to come and settle under his protection and his own subjects live comfortably; it is a sign that he and his kingdom are under the blessing

of God, the effect of which is being fruitful and multiplying. It is his strength, and makes him considerable and formidable; happy is the king, the father of his country, who has his quiver full of arrows; he shall not be ashamed, but shall speak with his enemy in the gate, Psalms 127:4 / Psalms 127:5. It is therefore the wisdom of princes, by a mild and gentle government, by encouraging trade and husbandry, and by making all easy under them, to promote the increase of their people. And let all that wish well to the kingdom of Christ, and to his honour, do what they can in their places, that many may be added to his church.

2. That when the people are lessened, the prince is weakened: In the want of people is the leanness of the prince (so some read it); trade lies dead, the ground lies untilld, the army wants to be recruited, the navy to be manned, and all because there are not hands sufficient. See how much the honour and safety of kings depend upon their people, which is a reason why they should rule by love, and not with rigour. Princes are corrected by those judgments which abate the number of the people, as we find, 2 Samuel 24:13.'

Have you ever seen a forest fire or a house fire? It goes out of control really fast; that's what some people's tempers are like today. The wise man knows that anger cripples their ability to make good decisions.

People with quick tempers only add more trouble, James 1:19-20. What effects does anger have on the people around us and us? It divides people, and churches and as a result, we make silly decisions.

‘A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones.’ Proverbs 14:30

Does anyone know the modern-day word that doctors and scientists now have to deal with? What causes more time off work than anything else? It's stress, and there is a definite connection between inner peace and good health. A lack of satisfaction destroys good health.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It is wrong to limit the application of this to the physical body. The great Christian ideal is, ‘A quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty,’ 1 Timothy 2:2. 1 Peter 3:4 and Acts 19:36 also echo the thoughts of this proverb.’

‘Whoever oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honours God.’
Proverbs 14:31

God has always wanted His people to look after the poor; those who have material possessions should always be looking out to help others who have little or none, Matthew 25:31-46.

‘When calamity comes, the wicked are brought down, but even in death, the righteous seek refuge in God. Wisdom reposes in the heart of the discerning and even among fools she lets herself be known. Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin condemns any people.’ Proverbs 14:32-34

Proverbs 14:32 of Keil's translation says the following: ‘When misfortune befalls him, the godless is overthrown, but the righteous remains hopeful in his death’.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This proverb teaches that, ‘There is a deep and essential distinction between the deaths of the godless and the righteous.’ There is a glimpse here of that life and immortality which are brought to greater light in the holy gospels!’

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Observe, 1. Modesty is the badge of wisdom. He that is truly wise hides his treasure, so as not to boast of it, Matthew 13:44, though he does not hide his talent, so as not to trade with it. His wisdom rests in his heart; he digests what he knows and has it ready to him, but does not unseasonably talk of it and make a noise with it. The heart is the seat of the affections, and there wisdom must rest in the practical love of it, and not swim in the head.

2. Openness and ostentation are marks of folly. If fools have a little smattering of knowledge, they take all occasions, though very foreign, to produce it, and bring it in by head and shoulders. Or the folly that is in the midst of fools is made known by their forwardness to talk. Many a foolish man takes more pains to show his folly than a wise man thinks it worth his while to take to show his wisdom.'

Righteousness means doing the right thing in any given circumstance, including morals and ethics. Notice that national righteousness and sin are being discussed!

When sin reigns in a nation, bad things are the result. We only have to look at our society today to see that sin is reigning and, as a result, more bad things are happening.

'A king delights in a wise servant, but a shameful servant arouses his fury.' Proverbs 14:35

Solomon reminds us that we can't work on our own; we need each other. Kings need skilled and competent people for difficult national affairs, Ecclesiastes 4:9-12.

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

'This shows that in a well-ordered court and government, smiles and favours are dispensed among those that are employed in public trusts according to their merits; Solomon lets them know he will go by that rule, 1. Those who behave themselves wisely shall be respected and preferred, whatever enemies they may have that seek to undermine them. No man's services shall be neglected to please a party or a favourite.

2. That those who are selfish and false, who betray their country, oppress the poor, and sow discord, and thus cause shame, shall be displaced and banished from the court, whatever friends they may make to speak for them.'

CHAPTER 15

INTRODUCTION

In the last chapter, Solomon finished by speaking about the dangers of anger. He continues this theme here in this chapter.

BE CAREFUL WHAT AND HOW YOU SPEAK

'A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. The tongue of the wise adorns knowledge, but the mouth of the fool gushes folly. The eyes of the LORD are everywhere, keeping watch on the wicked and the good. The soothing tongue is a tree of life, but a perverse tongue crushes the spirit.' Proverbs 15:1-4

Why do angry people very seldom get answers to the questions they might have? All too often, angry people are just looking for an excuse to disagree with someone.

They aren't really looking for answers. No matter who is asking the question, an answer needs to be given, but it just needs to be a gentle answer, Judges 8:1-3.

Have you ever seen anyone who has a wound where the blood is just gushing out? I remember when I worked in a residential home, and one elderly lady's womb was flowing with blood, the inside of her womb started to come out, and it was almost impossible to stop the blood from flowing. Solomon says that's what fools are like, when they speak, they just speak absolute rubbish, nonsense, it just flows through their lips, 1 Kings 12:1-16.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'This is very difficult to know: when to speak, and when to be silent; what to speak, and what to leave unspoken; the manner that is best and most suitable to the occasion, the subject, the circumstances, and the persons. Even wise counsel may be foolishly given.'

In the world we're living in, it seems as though evil and evil intentions are winning, and those who practice evil look like they are going to get away with their actions, but they need to remember that God sees everything, Ecclesiastes 12:14 / Hebrews 4:13 / Revelation 1:14.

The tree of life, Genesis 2:8-17, provides a balm and comfort, Revelation 22:1-2. This is what a Christian's words should do: they should bring comfort and healing to those who are listening.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

'The tongue is a prolific tree, and it concerns the whole community that it should be a tree of life and not of death.'

Some people may think that just because they have never raised their hands to someone, they are better than someone who shouts at someone, but when you think about it, it is no better to assault someone verbally, James 3:2-12.

'A fool spurns a parent's discipline, but whoever heeds correction shows prudence.' Proverbs 15:5

Solomon is basically saying that there are some people who hate learning wisdom, especially children, but then there are others who love to learn to be wise.

'The house of the righteous contains great treasure, but the income of the wicked brings ruin.' Proverbs 15:6

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

'In a good man's house there is ample treasure, but revenues of bad men go to wreck.' We prefer this rendition, because 'ample' signifies sufficiency rather than 'riches.' A little is often sufficient in the house of good people, and it is always preferable to great riches in a house of wickedness. See verses 16-17, which are parallel with this verse.'

What treasure do we have as Christians, and where is it stored? The Christian's treasure is stored in heaven, where nobody can steal it, Matthew 6:19-21 / 1 Peter 1:3-4. The wicked, however, is only concerned with their own selfish treasures, Psalms 17:14.

'The lips of the wise spread knowledge, but the hearts of fools are not upright. The LORD detests the sacrifice of the wicked, but the prayer of the upright pleases him.' Proverbs 15:7-8

This is one of the few proverbs that deal with worship, 1 Samuel 15:22.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

'The concept of the 'foolish' in Proverbs (and the whole Bible) is not mere intellectual dullness, but wickedness. The rich 'fool' of Luke 12:20 might very well have been a graduate of the state university, and the foolish virgins, Matthew 25:2-13, might have included the valedictorian of the local high school!'

The world needs to remember that it is God who determines where, when and how we worship, Psalms 51:16-17 / Psalms 66:1-4 / Genesis 4:4-10 / John 4:23.

‘The LORD detests the way of the wicked, but he loves those who pursue righteousness. Stern discipline awaits anyone who leaves the path; the one who hates correction will die. Death and Destruction lie open before the LORD—how much more do human hearts! Mockers resent correction, so they avoid the wise. A happy heart makes the face cheerful, but heartache crushes the spirit.’ Proverbs 15:9-13

There’s a lesson here which is often overlooked, and that is just because someone dies doesn’t mean that their sins die with them. Sometimes the effect of people’s sin can go on for a long time, even after the person who commits the sin dies.

Henry, in his commentary, says the following concerning Proverbs 15:11.

‘This confirms what was said, Proverbs 15:3; Proverbs 15:3, concerning God’s omnipresence, in order to his judging of evil and good. 1. God knows all things, even those things that are hidden from the eyes of all living: Hell and destruction are before the Lord, not only the centre of the earth, and its subterraneous caverns, but the grave, and all the dead bodies which are there buried out of our sight; they are all before the Lord, all under his eye, so that none of them can be lost or be to seek when they are to be raised again. He knows where every man lies buried, even Moses, even those that are buried in the greatest obscurity; nor needs he any monument with a Hic jacet—Here he lies, to direct him. The place of the damned in particular, and all their torments, which are inexpressible, the state of separate souls in general, and all their circumstances, are under God’s eye. The word here used for destruction is Abaddon, which is one of the devil’s names, Revelation 9:11. That destroyer, though he deceives us, cannot evade or elude the divine cognisance. God examines him whence he comes, Job 1:7, and sees through all his disguises, though he is sly, and subtle, and swift, Job 26:6.

2. He knows particularly the hearts of the children of men. If he sees through the depths and wiles of Satan himself, much more can he search men’s hearts, though they be deceitful, since they learned all their fraudulent arts of Satan. God is greater than our hearts, and knows them better than we know them ourselves, and therefore is an infallible Judge of every man’s character, Hebrews 4:13.’

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The word Abaddon occurs six times in the Old Testament, and like the word Sheol, is a place name for the realm of the dead.’

These verses also show how happiness can arise from within a person, while Proverbs 15:13, shows the same thing from without, Proverbs 17:22.

‘The discerning heart seeks knowledge, but the mouth of a fool feeds on folly. All the days of the oppressed are wretched, but the cheerful heart has a continual feast. Better a little with the fear of the LORD than great wealth with turmoil. Better a small serving of vegetables with love than a fattened calf with hatred.’ Proverbs 15:14-17

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Here are two things to be wondered at: 1. A wise man not satisfied with his wisdom, but still seeking the increase of it; the more he has the more he would have: The heart of him that has understanding, rejoices so in the knowledge it has attained to that it is still coveting more, and in the use of the means of knowledge is still labouring for more, growing in grace, and in the knowledge of Christ. Si dixisti, Sufficit, periisti—If you say, I have enough, you are undone.

2. A fool well satisfied with his folly and not seeking the cure of it. While a good man hungers after the solid satisfactions of grace, a carnal mind feasts on the gratifications of appetite and fancy. Vain mirth and sensual pleasures are its delight, and with these it can rest contented, flattering itself in these foolish ways.’

There’s a lot of talk about healthy eating in our society today, but wouldn’t it be better for society if it focused on having healthy minds? The things we read, the music we listen to, the films we watch, etc.

A lot of the mess we get ourselves into is our own doing. We need to learn to be happy and content, Philippians 4:11-13 / Hebrews 13:5 / 1 Timothy 6:6-10. It's all about our attitude towards situations, 1 Timothy 6:6.

Just because people eat good food doesn't necessarily mean that there is love in the house, Ecclesiastes 5:17 / Job 21:25. This has been proven true so many times, yet couples still do things that undermine the marriage while increasing their wealth, i.e. two jobs, etc.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning Proverbs 15:17.

'Who could miss the point here? 'Better a dish of vegetables with love than the best beef served with hatred.' A preacher said, "It's better to have a hamburger at McDonald's with someone who loves you than to be entertained at the Waldorf by someone who hates you.'

'A hot-tempered person stirs up conflict, but the one who is patient calms a quarrel.' Proverbs 15:18

The vocabulary of this verse suggests excessive litigation and legal action. The man who is quick to say, 'I will sue you,' is trouble in any community. Patience is the key, Psalms 37:7-9 / Matthew 5:9.

'The way of the sluggard is blocked with thorns, but the path of the upright is a highway. A wise son brings joy to his father, but a foolish man despises his mother. Folly brings joy to one who has no sense, but whoever has understanding keeps a straight course. Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.' Proverbs 15:19-22

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'Because he is slothful, he imagines ten thousand difficulties in the way which cannot be surmounted; but they are all the creatures of his own imagination, and that imagination is formed by his sloth.'

Some people just can't see anything but straight ahead, and that's because they have closed their minds to any other road on their journey. It is a sign of wisdom to seek advice, and it will usually prove to be a good choice, Proverbs 12:15 / Proverbs 13:10.

Henry, in his commentary, says the following concerning Proverbs 15:22.

'See here, 1. Of what ill consequence it is to be precipitate and rash, and to act without advice: Men's purposes are disappointed, their measures broken, and they come short of their point, gain not their end, because they would not ask counsel about the way. If men will not take time and pains to deliberate with themselves, or are so confident of their own judgment that they scorn to consult with others, they are not likely to bring anything considerable to pass; circumstances defeat them which, with a little consultation, might have been foreseen and obviated. It is a good rule, both in public and domestic affairs, to do nothing rashly and of one's own head. Plus vident oculi quam oculus—Many eyes see more than one. That often proves best which was least our own doing.

2. How much it will be for our advantage to ask the advice of our friends: In the multitude of counsellors (provided they be discreet and honest, and will not give counsel with a spirit of contradiction), purposes are established. Solomon's son made no good use of this proverb when he acquiesced not in the counsel of the old men, but because he would have a multitude of counsellors, regarding number more than weight, advised with the young men.'

'A person finds joy in giving an apt reply—and how good is a timely word!' Proverbs 15:23

As Christians, we often think we have the answer to most questions in life. Solomon is saying that it's not so much what you say to someone which is important, but how you say it, Colossians 4:6 / 1 Peter 3:15.

'The path of life leads upward for the prudent to keep them from going down to the realm of the dead. The LORD tears down the house of the proud, but he sets the widow's boundary stones in place.' Proverbs 15:24-25

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘There is a treble antithesis here: 1. The way of the wise, and that of the fool. 2. The one is above, the other below. 3. The one is of life, the other is of death.’

The Lord is the protector of those who need His protection. He protects us from the wicked and powerful land-grabbers, Proverbs 16:18 / 1 Corinthians 10:12. The proud will always go against the Lord, James 4:6 / 1 Peter 5:5. Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning Proverbs 15:25.

‘The background of this is the partition of the promised land among the various tribes as their perpetual inheritance. The magnificent palaces of the proud, which are, in fact, monuments to their pride and arrogance, are eventually destroyed. Nebuchadnezzar gloried in ‘Great Babylon which I have built’; but God drove him away to live with wild beasts for seven years; and at last Babylon itself was so deeply buried under the dust of centuries that the very site is uncertain.’

‘The LORD detests the thoughts of the wicked, but gracious words are pure in his sight. The greedy bring ruin to their households, but the one who hates bribes will live. The heart of the righteous weighs its answers, but the mouth of the wicked gushes evil.’ Proverbs 15:26-28

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The former part of this verse speaks of thoughts, the latter of words, but they come all to one; for thoughts are words to God, and words are judged of by the thoughts from which they proceed, so that, 1. The thoughts and words of the wicked, which are, like themselves, wicked, which aim at mischief, and have some ill tendency or other, are an abomination to the Lord; he is displeased at them and will reckon for them. The thoughts of wicked men, for the most part, are such as God hates, and are an offence to him, who not only knows the heart and all that passes and repasses there, but requires the innermost and uppermost place in it.

2. The thoughts and words of the pure, being pure like themselves, clean, honest, and sincere, are pleasant words and pleasant thoughts, well-pleasing to the holy God, who delights in purity. It may be understood both of their devotions to God (the words of their mouth and the meditations of their heart, in prayer and praise, are acceptable to God, Psalms 19:14 / Psalms 69:13) and of their discourses with men, tending to edification. Both are pleasant when they come from a pure, a purified heart.’

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘He who will be rich; troubleth his own house-he is a torment to himself and his family by his avariciousness and penury, and a curse to those with whom he deals.’

Here again, we’re reminded to think before we speak. We need to think about our answers before we give one because the words we speak will affect people, Colossians 4:6 / 1 Peter 3:15.

‘The LORD is far from the wicked, but he hears the prayer of the righteous. Light in a messenger’s eyes brings joy to the heart, and good news gives health to the bones.’ Proverbs 15:29-30

While the Lord is far from the wicked, He is near to the righteous. God hears and answers our prayers, James 4:8 / James 5:16. Light eyes or bright eyes refer to those with a positive outlook, Matthew 6:22-23. Someone with a friendly face or someone who brings good news can make almost anyone feel good inside, Proverbs 16:15 / Romans 10:15.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Nature and art are continually placing before our view a multitude of the most resplendent images, each of which is calculated to give pleasure. The man who has a correct judgment, and an accurate eye, may not only amuse, but instruct himself endlessly, by the beauties of nature and art.’

‘Whoever heeds life-giving correction will be at home among the wise. Those who disregard discipline despise themselves, but the one who heeds correction gains understanding.’ Proverbs 15:31-32

Does anyone like being told off? No one likes to be told off, but sometimes it is for our own good, sometimes it can be life-giving. The person who neglects discipline harms themselves most of all.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘That receives it gratefully and obeys it. ‘Advice is for them that will take it,’ so says one of our own old proverbs; and the meaning here is nearly the same.’

‘Wisdom’s instruction is to fear the LORD, and humility comes before honour.’ Proverbs 15:33

Here again, Solomon reminds us that humility is important, [Philippians 2:3-8](#) / [1 Peter 5:6](#), and that wisdom is for a purpose, it is to fear the Lord, [Proverbs 1:7](#) / [Proverbs 10:27](#) / [Proverbs 19:23](#) / [Job 5:17](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Much is spoken concerning this fear; 1. It is the beginning of wisdom. 2. It is also the beginning of knowledge. And, 3. It is the instruction of wisdom. Wisdom derives its most important lessons from the fear of God. He who fears God much is well taught.’

CHAPTER 16

INTRODUCTION

‘To humans belong the plans of the heart, but from the LORD comes the proper answer of the tongue. All a person’s ways seem pure to them, but motives are weighed by the LORD. Commit to the LORD whatever you do, and he will establish your plans. The LORD works out everything to its proper end—even the wicked for a day of disaster.’

Proverbs 16:1-4

MAN PROPOSES, BUT GOD DISPOSES

The limitations of mankind to plan their lives are disclosed in these verses and [Proverbs 16:9](#). Like most people, we like to make plans for the future, but we must remember that it is the Lord who makes those plans happen.

We may have pure motives for our plans, but it is the Lord who evaluates them, [1 Corinthians 4:4](#). If we commit our plan to the Lord, then the Lord will make it happen, [Psalm 37:5](#) / [Colossians 3:23](#).

Is there anything wrong with making plans? No, but we should think out our plans, but what God wants should be the determining factor.

We should ask ourselves a couple of questions before we make a decision.

1. Is what we’re about to do in line with God’s Word?

2. Is the outcome going to be pleasing to God?

God should be at the centre of everything we do, every plan we make, individually and as a church, James 4:13-17. And if we've got any worries or concerns about our plans, we should take Peter's advice and give them to God, 1 Peter 5:7.

Does God create evil people to be wicked? No! People choose to be evil, but God can use evil people in His plan. God prepared a place for the wicked even before there were any wicked people.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'He does not make the wicked or ungodly man, but when man has made himself such, even then God bears with him. But if he repents not, when the measure of his iniquity is filled up, he shall fall under the wrath of God his Maker.'

A woman once asked Adam Clarke, "Why does not God just kill all the wicked people and allow us righteous to build a heaven right here on earth"? Clarke replied, 'Lady, if God were to be so foolish as to do that, there would not be enough righteous people left to keep the lions and tigers from eating up the human race.'

The idea is that there are ultimately no 'loose ends' in God's scheme of things. Everything will be put to some use and matched with the proper outlook, Isaiah 45:7 / 2 Peter 2:12.

'The LORD detests all the proud of heart. Be sure of this: They will not go unpunished. Through love and faithfulness, sin is atoned for; through the fear of the LORD, evil is avoided. When the LORD takes pleasure in anyone's way, he causes their enemies to make peace with them. Better a little with righteousness than much gain with injustice. In their hearts, humans plan their course, but the LORD establishes their steps.' Proverbs 16:5-9

The Lord detests those who have hearts filled with pride, Proverbs 11:20-21 / James 4:6 / 1 Peter 5:5. They will certainly not go unpunished, Genesis 11:1-9. Why is pride so dangerous? Pride causes us to trust in ourselves and causes much trouble for us and within the church as a whole, James 4:10 / Proverbs 2:8 / Proverbs 3:23 / Proverbs 4:26 / Jeremiah 10:23.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning verse 6.

'Mercy and truth, no matter how diligently practised, cannot alone be the ground of salvation from sin, except in the sense that they might be a sign of true repentance and conversion to God's will.' 'What can take away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus!' This rendition: 'Through love and faithfulness sin is atoned for.' This is correct with an expanded definition of 'faithfulness'.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following concerning Proverbs 16:7.

'God is the guardian and defence of all that fear and love him; and it is truly astonishing to see how wondrously God works on their behalf, raising them up friends, and turning their enemies into friends.'

It's better to have a little righteousness than having loads of material goods through ill means, 1 Timothy 6:8. If our hearts are filled with God and not our pride, then the Lord will direct our steps and bless us, Ephesians 3:20.

'The lips of a king speak as an oracle, and his mouth does not betray justice. Honest scales and balances belong to the LORD; all the weights in the bag are of his making. Kings detest wrongdoing, for a throne is established through righteousness. Kings take pleasure in honest lips; they value the one who speaks what is right. A king's wrath is a messenger of death, but the wise will appease it. When a king's face brightens, it means life; his favour is like a rain cloud in spring. How much better to get wisdom than gold, to get insight rather than silver! The highway of the upright avoids evil; those who guard their ways preserve their lives.' Proverbs 16:10-17

Kings have the great responsibility of passing true judgment, wise judgment upon the people, Isaiah 3:2. Solomon speaks about the wheat-selling business, where they use a small basket, but the cost is extreme, Amos 8:5. The Lord owns honest and balanced scales, Proverbs 11:1; in other words, the principle of justice comes from the Lord.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning Proverbs 16:12.

‘The first clause here means that any king who commits wickedness becomes an abomination to God; and the second clause is parallel with the New Testament teaching that reveals, ‘The powers that be are ordained of God,’ Romans 13:1.

Henry, in his commentary, says the following concerning Proverbs 16:13.

‘Here is a further character of good kings, that they love and delight in those that speak right. a. They hate parasites and those that flatter them, and are very willing that all about them should deal faithfully with them and tell them that which is true, whether it be pleasing or displeasing, both concerning persons and things, that everything should be set in a true light and nothing disguised, Proverbs 29:12.

b. They not only do righteousness themselves, but take care to employ those under them that do righteousness too, which is of great consequence to the people, who must be subject not only to the king as supreme, but to the governors sent by him, 1 Peter 2 14. A good king will therefore put those in power who are conscientious, and will say that which is righteous and discreet, and know how to speak aright and to the purpose.’

Cook, in his commentary, says the following concerning Proverbs 16:14.

‘Proverbs 16:13 speaks of a king as he should be; and this one presents a king as they actually were, ‘Reminding us of the terrible rapidity with which, in the despotic monarchies of the East, death followed the royal displeasure.’ As the second clause indicates, it was the pinnacle of good judgment to avoid, at all costs, the displeasure of any king.’ The success of any kingdom is really dependent upon the people having the king’s approval and favour. His favour and approval are like a blessing of rain to his people, Numbers 6:25. Wisdom and understanding are truly more valuable than gold or silver.

Does everyone in the world know the difference between right and wrong? Most people do, and as Christians, we’re, to tell the truth, always, there are no grey areas in God’s Word, although there may be some subjects which aren’t straightforward to understand as we first think. The point is very simple, yet powerful; if we haven’t understood by now and still don’t know what the ‘upright highway’ is, it is to depart from evil.

‘Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall. Better to be lowly in spirit along with the oppressed than to share plunder with the proud.’ Proverbs 16:18-19

What do all proud people have in common? They don’t realise they suffer from pride, 1 Corinthians 10:12 / James 4:6 / 1 Peter 5:5. It is God who brings about the destruction, Proverbs 11:2 / Proverbs 15:25. The foremost problem with pride is that it conflicts with the principle of wisdom, which is to ‘fear the Lord’.

Our attitude is crucial; if dividing the spoil will promote pride and arrogance, we will be better off staying with the lowly, Proverbs 21:24 / Proverbs 22:4 / Proverbs 30:13.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This verse also teaches with regard to the humble and the proud. This mention of the proud dividing the spoil identifies them as not merely proud but wicked also.’

‘Whoever gives heed to instruction prospers and blessed is the one who trusts in the LORD.’ Proverbs 16:20

Those who give attention to God’s Word will find good, and if they trust and obey that Word, they will be blessed, Matthew 23:24.

‘The wise in heart are called discerning, and gracious words promote instruction. Prudence is a fountain of life to the prudent, but folly brings punishment to fools. The hearts of the wise make their mouths prudent, and their lips promote instruction.’ Proverbs 16:21-23

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The sweetness of the lips should be understood here as a compliment to the teacher who brings learning to another. A person who follows the Word of God will avoid many pitfalls in life, but the fool will never learn except by experience. His only correction shall be when his own folly overthrows him. Good sense makes men judicious in their talk; it adds persuasiveness to what they say.’

Wisdom will undoubtedly make a good impression on those around us. In what ways do people look for life? A lot of people look for life in so-called wise men, mediums, horoscopes, etc, but Solomon says that the one thing which leads to a fountain of life is understanding. A wise man presents arguments that are hard to disregard, Matthew 12:34.

‘Gracious words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.’ Proverbs 16:24

What are some of the signs of wisdom? It is a sign of wisdom to say nice things when we can, 1 Samuel 14:27. Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The honey of which is sweeter than that which has been expressed from it, and has a much finer flavour before it has come in contact with the atmospheric air.’

‘There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end, it leads to death. The appetite of labourers works for them; their hunger drives them on.’ Proverbs 16:25-26

When people rely on their own understanding or feelings or emotions, it can lead to death, Proverbs 14:12. Some think that if they become rich and successful, this will lead to salvation, Proverbs 14:12 / Proverbs 16:2.

A well known sports company has been on television recently, and they were exposed for owning slave labour factories where children work for pennies. Is this right?

In one sense, it is right, they are providing employment, in another sense, no, because they are taking advantage of people with cheap labour. These verses teach us the truth on the subject of motivation. We work because we have to eat, Ephesians 4:28 / Ephesians 6:7 / 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12.

‘A scoundrel plots evil, and on their lips, it is like a scorching fire. A perverse person stirs up conflict, and a gossip separates close friends. A violent person entices their neighbour and leads them down a path that is not good. Whoever winks with their eye is plotting perversity; whoever purses their lips is bent on evil.’ Proverbs 16:27-30

An evil person has a motivation also, but this is to injure someone or destroy their reputation. They have an incentive, also, a desire to create strife and division, Proverbs 17:4. Their motivation is to take advantage of their neighbour. Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘A wicked man labours as much to bring about an evil purpose, as the quarryman does to dig up stones.’

Notice that there is a relationship between mannerisms and character; they give a friendly wink, but they have evil on their mind.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Behold here the wickedness of the violent man. He is the incarnation of Unbelief. ‘He robs God, takes life without paying for it, blasphemes the Maker on his throne, stares broadly at the truth when he hears it, and flouts it as if he never heard of it. Unbelief is violence.’! ‘Such sons of the devil take pleasure in seducing the virtuous from the way of life. Just as there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repents, there is malicious joy in hell when such a seducer turns anyone from the straight and narrow way.’

‘Gray hair is a crown of splendour; it is attained in the way of righteousness.’ Proverbs 16:31

The word ‘gray’ can be translated as ‘hoary’ in some versions. The modern world idolises ‘youth’, but God’s Word places great value on old age and the wisdom and experience that comes with it, [Genesis 15:15](#) / [Genesis 25:8](#) / [Leviticus 19:32](#).

‘Better a patient person than a warrior, one with self-control than one who takes a city. The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD.’ Proverbs 16:32-33

Patience and self-control are very powerful attributes, [Proverbs 15:17](#) / [Proverbs 25:28](#) / [Galatians 5:22-23](#) / [Titus 2:11-14](#) / [2 Timothy 3:16-17](#).

The reference to the ‘lot’ is probably referring to the Urim and the Thummim, [Exodus 28:30](#), although it could be speaking about the normal way of choosing by lot, [Numbers 26:55](#) / [Joshua 14:2](#) / [1 Chronicles 24:5](#) / [Acts 1:26](#). The point is that every decision is actually made by God, [Proverbs 3:5-6](#). Can you think of any other time the Urim and Thummim were used in the Bible? [Joshua 19:51](#) / [Joshua 14:1-2](#) / [1 Chronicles 25:8](#) / [Acts 1:26](#).

CHAPTER 17

INTRODUCTION

‘Better a dry crust with peace and quiet than a house full of feasting, with strife. A prudent servant will rule over a disgraceful son and will share the inheritance as one of the family.’ Proverbs 17:1-2

SURVIVAL OF THE WISEST

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Peace and contentment, and especially domestic peace, are beyond all other blessings.’

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

‘All agree that the son in the family is more worthy than the servant, [John 8:35](#), and yet sometimes it so happens that the servant is wise, and a blessing and credit to the family, when the son is a fool, and a burden and shame to the family.’

Solomon is basically saying that anyone who operates with skill and success can overcome disadvantages such as being poor or being a slave, [Genesis 15:2-3](#) / [Proverbs 19:24](#).

‘The crucible for silver and the furnace for gold, but the LORD tests the heart.’ Proverbs 17:3

We can find out the value of gold and silver, but only God can determine the true quality of our hearts. What does it take to melt gold or silver? It takes intense heat to remove all the impurities.

Trials in our Christian life do the same thing: they purify our hearts. In the tense heat of the moment, we find out what we’re really like; we can lose our temper or say the wrong thing, [James 1:2-4](#) / [1 Peter 1:7](#).

‘A wicked person listens to deceitful lips; a liar pays attention to a destructive tongue.’ Proverbs 17:4

Gossiping has always been a problem in every community, Ephesians 4:29. The reason for this? There are always those willing to listen.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘When silver is mixed, or suspected to be mixed, with base metal, it must be subjected to such a test as the cupel to purify it. And gold also must be purified by the action of the fire. So, God tries hearts. He sends afflictions which penetrate the soul, and give a man to see his state, so that he may apply to the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning, to destroy what cannot stand the fire, to separate and burn up all the dross.’

‘Whoever mocks the poor shows contempt for their Maker; whoever gloats over disaster will not go unpunished.’
Proverbs 17:5

There are always people who will turn themselves into this type of ‘monster’. They actually enjoy the weaknesses and problems of others. Why do people like to make fun of others? They think they are better, and it makes them feel good, Luke 18:31-33.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘He who is pleased to hear of the misfortune of another will, in the course of God’s just government, have his own multiplied.’

‘Children’s children are a crown to the aged, and parents are the pride of their children.’ Proverbs 17:6

The ideal family is one of harmony and mutual admiration; there is no ‘generation gap’ here.

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

1. It is an honour to parents when they are old to leave children, and children’s children, growing up, who tread in the steps of their virtues, and are likely to maintain and advance the reputation of their families. It is an honour to a man to live so long as to see his children’s children, Psalms 128:6 / Genesis 50:23, to see his house built up in them, and to see them likely to serve their generation according to the will of God. This crowns and completes their comfort in this world.

2. It is an honour for children to have wise and godly parents, and to have them continue to them even after they have themselves grown up and settled in the world. Those are unnatural children who reckon their aged parents a burden to them, and think they live too long; whereas, if the children be wise and good, it is as much their honour as can be that thereby they are comforts to their parents in the unpleasant days of their old age.’

‘Eloquent lips are unsuited to a godless fool—how much worse lying lips to a ruler!’ Proverbs 17:7

There are some things that do not belong together, but when they are together, something is amiss!

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This proverb is suitable to those who affect, in public speaking, fine language, which neither comports with their ordinary conversation, nor with their education. Often fine words are injudiciously brought in, and are as unbecoming and irrelevant as a cartwheel among clockwork.’

‘A bribe is seen as a charm by the one who gives it; they think success will come at every turn.’ Proverbs 17:8

Unfortunately, a bribe is a powerful and effective tool. The wise person mustn’t close their eyes to the sad ability of its usage in government and business, in all areas of life. To charm literally means, ‘stone of favour’. In other words, this is the person’s ‘lucky charm’, their ‘ace in the hole’, that they will use to get their way.

Is Solomon teaching us that bribery is alright? Not at all, there are numerous passages which teach against offering and receiving a bribe, Exodus 23:8 / Matthew 28:11-15.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Both the offering and the receiving of bribes is sinful; but this proverb states a shameful truth that in our work-a-day world, ‘Bribes get the job done’! There is no endorsement here either of giving or receiving bribes. The many renditions and various readings indicate uncertainties in the text, but the RSV is probably dependable: “A bribe is like a magic stone in the eyes of him who gives it; wherever he turns he prospers.”

‘Whoever would foster love covers over an offence, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends.’ Proverbs 17:9

Tolerance and sensitivity, as well as being forgiving, are the pillars of every true friendship, Ephesians 5:11. We should be willing to forgive those who sin against us, Ephesians 4:32. Can a marriage survive if couples aren’t willing to forgive each other? Some people bring up the past all the time; all this does is bring about destruction.

‘A rebuke impresses a discerning person more than a hundred lashes a fool.’ Proverbs 17:10

A rebuke is to use only words, and a hundred blows is speaking about physical force.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Though the rod, judiciously applied, is a great instrument of knowledge, yet it is of no use where incurable dullness or want of intellect prevails. Besides, there are generous dispositions on which counsel will work more than stripes.’

‘Evildoers foster rebellion against God; the messenger of death will be sent against them.’ Proverbs 17:11

Solomon says that evildoers will find evil, it will come to them, Matthew 26:52 / Galatians 6:7-8.

Deane, in his commentary, says the following.

‘An evil man seeks many things that do not exactly fit the term ‘rebellion’; but from the viewpoint of an Eastern potentate (like Solomon), any prominent crime by a subject would have been considered rebellion.’ The cruel messenger would be the king’s response to it.’

‘Better to meet a bear robbed of her cubs than a fool bent on folly.’ Proverbs 17:12

Solomon is teaching us that there is great danger in the presence of a fool, a wicked man, because of the conflict which would incur.

‘Evil will never leave the house of one who pays back evil for good.’ Proverbs 17:13

We do truly reap what we have sown, Proverbs 13:21 / Galatians 6:7-8. David especially experienced the second part of this verse, 1 Samuel 25:21.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘As many persons are guilty of the sin of ingratitude, and of paying kindness with unkindness, and good with evil, it is no wonder we find so much wretchedness among men; for God’s word cannot fail; evil shall not depart from the houses and families of such persons.’

‘Starting a quarrel is like breaching a dam; so, drop the matter before a dispute breaks out.’ Proverbs 17:14

This is good advice concerning quarrels: stop them before they start! If not, the ‘dam will break’, and irreparable damage will be done.

‘Acquitting the guilty and condemning the innocent—the LORD detests them both.’ Proverbs 17:15

The background to this verse is legal proceedings; God hates injustice of any kind, [Proverbs 6:16-19](#) / [Proverbs 17:13](#) / [Isaiah 10:1-3](#).

‘Why should fools have money in hand to buy wisdom, when they are not able to understand it?’ Proverbs 17:16

A university student has their tuition money in their hand, but it will do no good if they lack the ability and discipline to learn how to use it wisely.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This is a down-to-earth recognition that teaching can be wasted on a fool. This is not a snobbish remark, because, as always in Proverbs, the fool gets himself into his situation by his own stubbornness and wickedness.’

‘A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for a time of adversity.’ Proverbs 17:17

Are friends and brothers a parallel here? If so, real friendship has a strong and enduring quality, even during crises, [1 Corinthians 13:4-7](#). What is the greatest evidence of friendship? Loyalty and sacrifice, [John 15:13-15](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Equally in adversity as in prosperity. And a brother, according to the ties and interests of consanguinity, is born to support and comfort a brother in distress.’

‘One who has no sense shakes hands in pledge and puts up security for a neighbour. Whoever loves a quarrel loves sin; whoever builds a high gate invites destruction.’ Proverbs 17:18-19

Here we have another very stern warning against becoming another man’s guarantor or security. This is all about common sense; the person who builds their gate is a sign of someone who is proud and relies on their own strength, [Ephesians 6:10](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Possibly, the gate is here taken for the mouth; and the exalting of the gate may mean proud boasting and arrogant speaking, such as has a tendency to kindle and maintain strife. And this interpretation seems to agree better with the scope of the context.’

‘One whose heart is corrupt does not prosper; one whose tongue is perverse falls into trouble.’ Proverbs 17:20

Solomon is saying that there is nothing pure in people with corrupt hearts; they make everything dirty.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The first clause here speaks of a certain type of cynical, bitter men who cannot see good in anything or anyone. ‘The literal Hebrew regarding the ‘perverse tongue’ in the second clause is, ‘He who turns himself about with his tongue’; that is, he says one thing at one time, and something quite contrary at another.’

‘To have a fool for a child brings grief; there is no joy for the parent of a godless fool.’ Proverbs 17:21

A foolish child who is godless, that is, without any wisdom and rejects God, [Psalm 14:1](#), only brings grief to their parents. This verse, along with [Proverbs 17:6](#), gives the two sides of parenthood: joy and sorrow.

‘A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones. The wicked accept bribes in secret to pervert the course of justice.’ Proverbs 17:22-23

There's nothing like hanging around with people who make us laugh; they make us feel good, Psalm 32:1-4. On the other hand, when we spend time with others who are always complaining and moaning about something, this can become disheartening. Solomon says that anyone who accepts a bribe, Proverbs 17:8, either openly or secretly, is wicked, especially if the bribe is used to pervert the course of justice.

‘A discerning person keeps wisdom in view, but a fool's eyes wander to the ends of the earth.’ Proverbs 17:24

Solomon is speaking about how wisdom comes to the person who is able to concentrate and stay focused. They are able to give their attention to the task. Is there anything wrong with having dreams and expectations? No, as long as we don't try to put them before God, 1 John 5:14.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Faithful and successful living require that one give close attention to the work at hand, that he diligently take care of the present business; but, ‘A fool fritters away the powers and opportunities that might have blessed him, having his attention continually diverted by a hundred different things.’

‘A foolish son brings grief to his father and bitterness to the mother who bore him.’ Proverbs 17:25

The idea behind this verse is that the parents of the child may wish they had never brought their child into the world, Proverbs 17:21.

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

1. Wicked children are an affliction to both their parents. They are an occasion of anger to the father (so the word signifies), because they contemn his authority, but of sorrow and bitterness to the mother, because they abuse her tenderness. The parents, being joint sufferers, should therefore bring mutual comfort to bear them up under it, and strive to make it as easy as they can, the mother to mollify the father's anger, the father to alleviate the mother's grief.
2. That Solomon often repeats this remark, probably because it was his own case; however, it is a common case.

‘If imposing a fine on the innocent is not good, surely to flog honest officials is not right.’ Proverbs 17:26

The lesson here is very clear: we must never condemn an innocent person, Matthew 27:19 / Revelation 6:10-11. Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘To fall out with the ruler of the people, and to take off his head under the pretence of his not being a just or equitable governor, is unjust. To kill a king on the ground of justice is a most dreadful omen to any land. Where was it ever done that it promoted the public prosperity? No experiment of this kind has ever yet succeeded, howsoever worthless the king might be.’

‘The one who has knowledge uses words with restraint, and whoever has understanding is even-tempered. Even fools are thought wise if they keep silent, and discerning if they hold their tongues.’ Proverbs 17:27-28

Once again, we're reminded to think before we speak! An even-tempered person is a composed, controlled person who is able to deal with emotional issues. Intelligence is like a river; the deeper it flows, the less noise it makes.

This is ironic humour. Even fools can come across as wise if they remain quiet. The lesson is simple enough: do not talk so much. What are the benefits of saying nothing? Sometimes we have nothing worthwhile to say, but the real benefits are that we can listen and learn. This helps to make us wise, James 1:19.

Harris, in his commentary, says the following.

‘There are two badges of a wise man: reticence and calmness of temper. This is the message of these verses; they reveal that even a fool who exhibits reticence may be mistaken for a wise man.’

CHAPTER 18

INTRODUCTION

‘An unfriendly person pursues selfish ends and, against all sound judgment, starts quarrels. Fools find no pleasure in understanding but delight in airing their own opinions.’ Proverbs 18:1-2

WORDS, WORK AND RELATIONSHIPS

Most people who are unsociable care only about their own selfish concerns. They are against everything, even good, solid suggestions.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The Hebrew text of the O.T. here yields no satisfactory sense.’ Hooke preferred this: ‘A man who wishes to separate from friends seeks excuses; but at all times he will be liable to reproach.’ Another reading is, ‘The alienated friend seeks an occasion of quarrel to stir up strife.’ We shall paraphrase the apparent meaning here: ‘When any man wishes to separate himself from former friends, he will seek some pretext for doing so; but his behaviour is altogether reprehensible.’

A fool isn’t interested in trying to understand things. What they really want to do is tell you what they think. Understanding takes more work than the fool is willing to invest.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It is a fact that most vain and foolish people are never satisfied in company, but in showing their own nonsense and emptiness.’

‘When wickedness comes, so does contempt, and with shame comes reproach.’ Proverbs 18:3

Solomon here describes the path of wickedness; it ends in disgrace. This tells us that even a wicked man will be despised by other wicked people.

‘The words of the mouth are deep waters, but the fountain of wisdom is a rushing stream.’ Proverbs 18:4

We know that wisdom comes from God, and so because it comes from God, the wise person has a continual source of wisdom.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Deep waters in the Old Testament are associated with the thought of darkness and mystery, Psalm 59:2 / Ecclesiastes 7:24 / Proverbs 20:3.’ On the other hand, the true wisdom (God’s Word) is like the happy sparkling waters of a flowing brook. Christ seems to have had this passage in mind, John 7:37-38, on that last day of the feast.’

‘It is not good to be partial to the wicked and so deprive the innocent of justice.’ Proverbs 18:5

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘We must not, in judicial cases, pay any attention to a man’s riches, influence, friends, offices, etc., but judge the case according to its own merits. But when the wicked rich man opposes and oppresses the poor righteous, then all those things should be utterly forgotten.’

When I was at school, the most popular kids were the ones who were always in trouble. People foolishly choose the most popular people to be their friends with, even though they may be wicked.

‘The lips of fools bring them strife, and their mouths invite a beating. The mouths of fools are their undoing, and their lips are a snare to their very lives. The words of a gossip are like choice morsels; they go down to the inmost parts.’
Proverbs 18:6-8

The fool’s mouth constantly gets them into trouble; they attract hostility and retaliation, Proverbs 26:22. Their very own words backfire on them and get them into trouble, Romans 3:13-14.

Who likes chocolate? Once you take a bite of a chocolate bar, you just want another one and another. This is like gossip; once we hear one part of a story, we just want to hear more and more. This is the desire for gossip. We may forget the good things we hear about people, but we easily remember the bad things and ‘whisper’ them to others who are eager to devour them.

‘One who is slack in his work is brother to one who destroys.’ Proverbs 18:9

This verse means of the same class and sharing the same nature, Proverbs 15:19.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘One by failing to get and the other by wasting what he has are brothers in that both their actions lead to poverty.’

‘The name of the LORD is a fortified tower; the righteous run to it and are safe. The wealth of the rich is their fortified city; they imagine it a wall too high to scale.’ Proverbs 18:10-11

Ross, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This is the only place in Proverbs where ‘the name of the LORD’ is found; it signifies the attributes of God, here the power to protect, cf. Exodus 34:5-7.’

The Name of the Lord is like a strong tower; the righteous person who runs to the Lord will find security in Him, which is provided by a fortified tower. This security is not accessible to the dangers below.

What we see here is strength.

In contrast, remember the film ‘Dam Busters’! Some things look impressive and may even give some sort of security, things like money, wealth or a big house, but they can be taken, destroyed or stolen, Proverbs 10:15. God’s power never ceases; it can’t be broken.

‘Before a downfall, the heart is haughty, but humility comes before honour.’ Proverbs 18:12

The haughty means someone who thinks they can proudly control everything. This is to their downfall, Proverbs 11:2 / Proverbs 15:33 / Proverbs 16:18. The word ‘humility’ perhaps means that once someone learns that they cannot control everything, they are humble. Humility leads to greatness, Matthew 18:1-5 / Philippians 2:1-10.

‘To answer before listening—that is folly and shame. The human spirit can endure in sickness, but a crushed spirit who can bear? The heart of the discerning acquires knowledge, for the ears of the wise seek it out. A gift opens the way and ushers the giver into the presence of the great. In a lawsuit, the first to speak seems right, until someone comes forward and cross-examines.’ Proverbs 18:13-17

What we're being told here is that we shouldn't answer anyone until we hear the whole statement and know what is involved. It pays to listen before talking. We have probably learned this 'a thousand times', yet we still have a tendency to judge before all the facts are known.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'There are many also that give judgment before they hear the whole of the cause, and express an opinion before they hear the state of the case. How absurd, stupid, and foolish!'

A broken spirit means that if the spirit is crushed, a person's sickness is fatal because the inner source of resistance is gone. Physical weakness can be counterbalanced by the determination of the spirit, i.e. mind and will.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

'Spirit in this passage is the inner being of a man, the seat of his vigour and courage. Men with a strong spirit are able to overcome misfortunes and even serious illness, but without such inner determination, faith and courage, it is much more difficult, or even impossible.'

We've heard a lot in Proverbs about being silent, but this text tells us that there are times when we do not merely listen, we inquire! 1 Corinthians 8:2.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'Any man may, in the first instance, make out a fairy tale, because he has the choice of circumstances and arguments. But when the neighbour cometh and searcheth him, he examines all, dissects all, swears and cross-questions every witness, and brings out truth and fact.'

People let peace into someone's life because of the gift. However, money, when properly used, can gain entrance into the circles of high society and great influence.

A gift can be the simplest of things; a cup of water in Jesus' Name can do wonders, Matthew 10:42 / Mark 9:41. The just are the righteous. This shows the value of close examination, especially concerning false witnesses! These verses teach us that there are three things we need to remember in decision-making.

1. We need to remember there are two sides to a story before we make a judgment about someone or something.
2. We need to know the facts before we make a judgment about someone or something.
3. We need to be open to people and their ideas.

'Casting the lot settles disputes and keeps strong opponents apart.' Proverbs 18:18

This is a reference to legal cases, particularly those whose investigations are drawn out and indecisive. In such situations, a settlement by the use of the casting of lots is commendable because it will settle what we cannot or will not decide by normal legal procedures, Proverbs 16:33.

'A brother wronged is more unyielding than a fortified city; disputes are like the barred gates of a citadel.' Proverbs 18:19

The bars of a castle mean it's difficult to break down. When someone is offended, their backs are usually up, and so it's difficult to break down their pride.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘If we take the words according to the common version, we see them express what, alas! We know it to be too generally true: that when brothers fall out, it is with extreme difficulty that they can be reconciled. And fraternal enmities are generally strong and inveterate.’

‘From the fruit of their mouth a person’s stomach is filled; with the harvest of their lips they are satisfied. The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit.’ Proverbs 18:20-21

When we go for a job interview, we know we have to say what they want to hear, and some have a talent for doing this, Matthew 12:37. The idea seems to be that proper speech can put a person in a position to earn a living. However, we need to be careful not to talk too much. Because of the tongue’s power, it is imperative to use it properly, James 3:9-12.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This may apply to all men. Many have lost their lives by their tongue, and some have saved their lives by it: but it applies most forcibly to public pleaders; on many of their tongues hangs life or death.’

In the film ‘Gladiator’, we see the emperor has the power to allow a gladiator to live or die, and so he will give the thumbs up to live, thumbs down to die. The way we use our tongue also has the power to give life or destroy it. If we live by the sword, we die by the sword, Matthew 26:52 / Galatians 6:7-8.

‘He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favour from the LORD.’ Proverbs 18:22

Marriage was God’s design for mankind, Genesis 2:21-25, and married life is great only if we find the right husband or wife, someone who is willing to work on their marriage through good times and bad times. The Proverbs believe in the benefits of marriage despite its obvious hazards, Proverbs 21:9.

‘The poor plead for mercy, but the rich answer harshly.’ Proverbs 18:23

The poor person has to worry about properly asking for help; the rich person doesn’t.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Here we have a proverb that states one of the realities of our earthly lives, although by no means a desirable one.

‘The poor man has to request things respectfully, hoping for help in his impoverished condition; but the rich man does not have to worry about the tone of his voice.’ Sometimes a wealthy man will display a haughty attitude with little or no regard for the way in which his words may be received by others.’

‘One who has unreliable friends soon comes to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.’ Proverbs 18:24

Most people I know don’t like to be lonely; we were created to have relationships with others. Sadly, some friendships are not good for us, especially if those friends are unreliable.

In most cases, our church family can easily become closer to us than our physical families. There is a friendship which endures more strongly and loyally than one’s own relatives. These are genuine friends, John 15:14-15 / Romans 12:15.

CHAPTER 19

INTRODUCTION

‘Better the poor whose walk is blameless than a fool whose lips are perverse.’ Proverbs 19:1

WISDOM FOR WALKING AND TALKING A WISE LIFE

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The upright poor man is always to be preferred to the rich or self-sufficient fool.’

The second part of this proverb seems to indicate that the fool is trying to swindle their way into wealth by speech, which takes advantage of others. What’s best, to be blameless in life or to be wealthy? Remember, being blameless doesn’t mean we are sinless; being blameless means to do what God has required for us to be right with Him, [Philippians 3:6](#).

‘Desire without knowledge is not good—how much more will hasty feet miss the way!’ Proverbs 19:2

The impulsive person who acts without thinking will fall into sin. The saying is true, ‘fools rush in where the devil dares to tread’. The apostle Paul was zealous for the right reasons when he persecuted the church, but after he received knowledge from Christ, he had even more zeal because of the knowledge he received, [Philippians 3:1-6](#).

‘A person’s own folly leads to their ruin, yet their heart rages against the LORD.’ Proverbs 19:3

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It is a foolish thing for us to fall into difficulty (due to our own stubbornness or foolishness) and then to blame God for our calamities which we have brought upon ourselves.’

The new catchphrase on television is ‘no blame, no claim’; the idea is that lawyers won’t take on a claim case if they don’t think they can win it for you. Everyone needs to take responsibility for their own actions. We cannot blame God for our faults, [Genesis 3:12-13](#) / [Ezekiel 18:20](#).

‘Wealth attracts many friends, but even the closest friend of the poor person deserts them.’ Proverbs 19:4

In a materialistic world, people want to be seen with other people with lots of other materialistic goods; it’s an attraction, [Proverbs 14:20](#) / [Luke 18:1-9](#). Solomon was realistic about wealth. This is not the way it ought to be, even though in reality it is the way it is.

‘A false witness will not go unpunished, and whoever pours out lies will not go free. Many curry favour with a ruler, and everyone is the friend of one who gives gifts.’ Proverbs 19:5-6

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

1. The sins threatened, bearing false witness in judgment and speaking lies in common conversation. Men could not arrive at such a pitch of impiety as to bear false witness (where to the guilt of a lie is added that of perjury and injury) if they had not advanced to it by allowing themselves to speak untruths in jest and banter, or under the pretence of doing good. Thus men teach their tongues to speak lies, [Jeremiah 9 5](#). Those who will take the liberty to tell lies in discourse are in a fair way to be guilty of the greater wickedness of false-witness-bearing, whenever they are tempted

to it, though they seem to detest it. Those who can swallow a false word debauch their consciences, so that a false oath will not choke them.

2. The threatening itself: They shall not go unpunished; they shall not escape. This intimates that that which emboldens them in the sin is the hope of impunity, it being a sin which commonly escapes punishment from men, though the law is strict, Deuteronomy 19:18-19. But it shall not escape the righteous judgment of God, who is jealous, and will not suffer his name to be profaned; we know where all liars will have their everlasting portion.’

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Any Christian can receive a personal demonstration of how true this is by giving a liberal gift to some institution, political party or social welfare group. He will soon have his mailbox stuffed full of appeals from ‘friends’ far and near.’

Isn’t it hard to see who your real friends are sometimes? Solomon is probably showing the difficulty a rich man has in distinguishing those who are his friends from those who want to use him and his wealth.

‘The poor are shunned by all their relatives—how much more do their friends avoid them! Though the poor pursue them with pleading, they are nowhere to be found. The one who gets wisdom loves life; the one who cherishes understanding will soon prosper.’ Proverbs 19:7-8

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘They shun him as they do the person they hate. They neither hate him positively, nor love him: they disregard him; they will have nothing to do with him. The word ‘Sana’ signifies not only to hate, but to show a lesser degree of love to one than another. So, Jacob loved Rachel, but hated Leah, showing her less affection than he did to Rachel.’

We shouldn’t try to attain wisdom; we must keep it and put it into practice. The idea here is that anyone who develops their mind is their own best friend, Proverbs 29:24. In other words, we are to look after ourselves both spiritually and physically.

‘A false witness will not go unpunished, and whoever pours out lies will perish. It is not fitting for a fool to live in luxury—how much worse for a slave to rule over princes!’ Proverbs 19:9-10

Once again, we are reminded that God’s people must be truthful; otherwise, like the false witness, we will be punished, Proverbs 19:5. What’s Solomon saying here? The ancients believed there should be a correlation between social order and moral order, Ecclesiastes 10:5-7.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘A remarkably effective illustration of what is taught here is that of Gideon’s son Abimelech by a concubine. Another Biblical example of the same thing is that of Felix, Acts 23:27-33. ‘He exercised the authority of a prince, but he had the heart of a slave.’

‘A person’s wisdom yields patience; it is to one’s glory to overlook an offence.’ Proverbs 19:11

We live in a society that considers it a virtue to be quick to fight for your rights and refuse to allow a personal offence to go unanswered. The Bible teaches Christians are to act otherwise, Ephesians 4:32 / Colossians 3:13 / James 1:19.

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

‘A wise man will observe these two rules about his anger: 1. Not to be over-hasty in his resentments: Discretion teaches us to defer our anger, to defer the admission of it till we have thoroughly considered all the merits of the provocation, seen them in a true light and weighed them in a just balance; and then to defer the prosecution of it till

there be no danger of running into any indecencies. Plato said to his servant, 'I would beat thee, but that I am angry.' Give it time, and it will cool.

2. Not to be over-critical in his resentments. Whereas it is commonly looked upon as a piece of ingenuity to apprehend an affront quickly, it is here made a man's glory to pass over a transgression, to appear as if he did not see it, Psalm 38:13, or, if he sees fit to take notice of it, yet to forgive it and meditate no revenge.'

'A king's rage is like the roar of a lion, but his favour is like dew on the grass. A foolish child is a father's ruin, and a quarrelsome wife is like the constant dripping of a leaky roof. Houses and wealth are inherited from parents, but a prudent wife is from the LORD.' Proverbs 19:12-14

Many people are aware of how loud a lion's roar is, thankfully not many people have been eaten by one. We don't want to anger the king, but seek his favour, Proverbs 15:14-16.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'There is nothing more dreadful than the roaring of this tyrant of the forest. At the sound of it, all other animals tremble, flee away, and hide themselves. The king who is above law, and rules without law, and whose will is his own law, is like the lion.'

Do you ever thank God for your husband or wife? We should thank God daily for our husband or wife. Wise men recognise there is a considerable amount of uncertainty in the choice of a wife. Thus, a good wife is accredited to God.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'The man who has got such a wife is like a tenant who has got a cottage with a bad roof, through every part of which the rain either drops or pours. He can neither sit, stand, work, nor sleep without being exposed to these droppings. God help the man who is in such a case, with house or wife!'

We may inherit many good things from our parents, but only the Lord can provide a prudent wife, Proverbs 18:22.

'Laziness brings on deep sleep, and the shiftless go hungry.' Proverbs 19:15

A person who is lazy is always lethargic and bored; they would rather go hungry than feed themselves, Proverbs 23:21 / 2 Thessalonians 3:10.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'Sloth renders a man utterly unconscious of all his interests. Though he has frequently felt hunger, yet he is regardless that his continual slothfulness must necessarily plunge him into more sufferings.'

'Whoever keeps commandments keeps their life, but whoever shows contempt for their ways will die.' Proverbs 19:16

We're not sure what these commandments are referring to; it could be the commandments of the teacher or the father. We all have certain traits of our fathers or mothers, good and bad. Whatever the commandments are referring to, they are to be obeyed, or death will follow.

'Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will reward them for what they have done.' Proverbs 19:17

The obligation to care for the poor is stressed here. God takes care of the needy and repays the man who helps them, Hebrews 6:10 / Matthew 25:31-46.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘O what a word is this! God makes himself debtor for everything that is given to the poor! Who would not advance much upon such credit? God will pay it again. And in no case has he ever forfeited his word.’

‘Discipline your children, for in that there is hope; do not be a willing party to their death.’ Proverbs 19:18

We must discipline our children while there is still time to influence the life of a child. But there must also be a limit to the discipline, Ephesians 6:4.

‘A hot-tempered person must pay the penalty; rescue them, and you will have to do it again. Listen to advice and accept discipline, and in the end, you will be counted among the wise. Many are the plans in a person’s heart, but it is the LORD’s purpose that prevails.’ Proverbs 19:19-21

A hot-tempered person only finds trouble, Galatians 5:23, and if anyone helps them get out of the mess they have created, they just do it again. If people listen to advice and accept discipline, they will become wiser in life, and the Lord’s will, will be done, James 4:13-15.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘In the run of a lifetime, a man hears all kinds of philosophies and all kinds of theories and teachings, but it is only the word of the Lord that shall stand the test of time and eternity. ‘Heaven and earth shall pass away,’ the Lord says, ‘But my word shall not pass away, Matthew 24:35.’

What does Solomon mean here? Sometimes we have to let people fall, because if we help them not to make mistakes all the time, they will never learn from their mistakes. God’s purposes are worked out regardless of the plans and purposes of men.

‘What a person desires is unfailing love, better to be poor than a liar.’ Proverbs 19:22

The real measure of a person is their character, not what they own.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This rendition attempts to pair two desirable things thus: ‘What is desirable in a person is loyalty, and it is better to be poor than a liar.’ Another: ‘Mercy is a fruit to a man, and a poor man is better than a rich liar.’

‘The fear of the LORD leads to life; then one rests content, untouched by trouble.’ Proverbs 19:23

There is a measure of security for the person who fears God. Fear of the Lord can bring sweet, peaceful sleep. Is Solomon saying that Christians will have a trouble-free life? No, he’s saying we will have a better life because of wiser decisions, wiser living, wiser benefits.

‘A sluggard buries his hand in the dish; he will not even bring it back to his mouth! Flog a mocker, and the simple will learn prudence; rebuke the discerning, and they will gain knowledge.’ Proverbs 19:24-25

What does He mean when he says this? This was the custom of the time, 2 Kings 21:13; this is a lazy person who won’t even feed themselves, Proverbs 26:15. A person who has understanding is the person who needs no such process of learning, such as seeing the punishment of others. They can accept and utilise correction directly.

The punishment given to a person provides a learning opportunity for another person. We could learn something even if someone is telling us off for something we have said or done.

‘Whoever robs their father and drives out their mother is a child who brings shame and disgrace. Stop listening to instruction, my son, and you will stray from the words of knowledge.’ Proverbs 19:26-27

People today feel that this is a modern problem only where their kids bring trouble to them, but Solomon says it was like this in his day, Exodus 20:12 / Proverbs 1:8 / Proverbs 17:2. If we stray from the truth of God and the wisdom we're reading about every week, we will have to pay the consequences, Joshua 1:7-8.

‘A corrupt witness mocks at justice, and the mouth of the wicked gulps down evil. Penalties are prepared for mockers, and beatings for the backs of fools.’ Proverbs 19:28-29

Someone who spreads evil loves it because evil is their favourite food, 1 Kings 21:10 / 1 Kings 21:13. Notice that the word penalties is plural; this implies that all types of punishments are available and will be used for these types of people, Romans 13:1-5.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Profane and wicked men expose themselves to the punishments denounced against such by just laws. Avoid, therefore, both their company and their end.’

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The judgments and ‘stripes’ mentioned here do not refer to punishments meted out by a court of justice, but they always refer to the judgments of God, although inflicted by human instrumentality.’ Regardless of the laws of men, it is God who condemns scoffers, and also that class of wicked men called, invariably in Proverbs, ‘fools’.

CHAPTER 20

INTRODUCTION

‘Wine is a mocker and beer a brawler; whoever is led astray by them is not wise. A king’s wrath strikes terror like the roar of a lion; those who anger him forfeit their lives.’ Proverbs 20:1-2

FROM DRUNKARDS TO GOSSIPERS

Is drinking wine or beer sinful? Yes/No Why? When does it become sinful? It becomes sinful when it leads to drunkenness. It’s not wise to get drunk because we cannot act wisely when we are drunk, Proverbs 16:14-15 / Proverbs 23:32. Drunkenness is a symptom of overindulgence and a loss of self-discipline, Proverbs 23:20-21 / Proverbs 23:29-35 / Proverbs 31:4-7.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It deceives by its fragrance, intoxicates by its strength, and renders the intoxicated ridiculous.’

The roar of a lion is very frightening to people; likewise, those who are drunk are very frightening to people, Proverbs 19:12. The normal use of wine on festal occasions was accepted, Proverbs 3:9-10 / Psalms 104:14-15. But there were constant warnings concerning its use, Amos 6:6 / Hosea 7:5 / Ephesians 5:18. Wisdom teachers know of its dangers, Proverbs 23:29-30.

‘It is to one’s honour to avoid strife, but every fool is quick to quarrel. Sluggards do not plough in season; so, at harvest time they look but find nothing.’ Proverbs 20:3-4

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘There is no greater damage to human personality than that which is accomplished by a quarrelsome disposition, Proverbs 19:11. It is a characteristic of the sluggard that they don’t work when they are supposed to, but they look for a harvest of crops anyway, Genesis 8:22. They know what they want but lack the energy and planning in order to obtain it.’

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It is seldom that there is a season of very cold weather in Palestine; very cold days sometimes occur, with wind, rain, and sleet. They begin their ploughing in the latter end of September, and sow their early wheat by the middle of October. And this is often the case in England itself. The meaning of the proverb is: the slothful man, under the pretence of unfavourable weather, neglects cultivating his land till the proper time is elapsed.’

What kind of people would you call a sluggard in today’s society? Someone at college who doesn’t study but still wants the certificate. Someone who wants a new car but doesn’t save up for it.

‘The purposes of a person’s heart are deep waters, but one who has insight draws them out.’ Proverbs 20:5
Deepwater isn’t easily seen or grasped, but those who draw it out have the ability to do so.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘There is no moral content in this proverb. A man’s real purpose may be hard to fathom. The allusion is to men’s disposition to conceal their plans. A clever man will try to discover them by shrewd inquiries and guesses.’ ‘Deep water,’ as already noted, is an idiom for things mysterious or difficult to find out.’

‘Many claim to have unfailing love, but a faithful person who can find?’ Proverbs 20:6

Many people claim they are good and have unfailing love, but a faithful person doesn’t claim they are good or proclaim their goodness to others. True friendship is rare, but many people have many superficial friends. The apostle Paul writes something similar in Romans 3:9.

‘The righteous lead blameless lives; blessed are their children after them.’ Proverbs 20:7

Children will be blessed if their parents live godly lives because they receive the benefits of their parents’ character.

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

‘A good man is not liable to uneasiness in contriving what he shall do, or in reflecting on what he has done, as those who walk in deceit. And his family fare better for his sake.’

‘When a king sits on his throne to judge, he winnows out all evil with his eyes.’ Proverbs 20:8

Those in authority sift out the evidence of the legal cases before them in order to make the right judgment, Isaiah 11:3 / 1 Corinthians 2:15.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The truth of this proverb hinges upon the character of the king. What is said here is true only of a wise and righteous monarch.’

‘Who can say, ‘I have kept my heart pure; I am clean and without sin?’ Proverbs 20:9

The answer to these questions is simply, no one, 1 Kings 8:46 / Job 14:4 / Job 15:14 / Ecclesiastes 7:20 / Romans 3:23 / 1 John 1:8.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘No man. But thousands can testify that the blood of Jesus Christ has cleansed them from all unrighteousness. And he is pure from his sin, who is justified freely through the redemption that is in Jesus.’

‘Differing weights and differing measures—the LORD detests them both. Even small children are known by their actions, so is their conduct really pure and upright?’ Proverbs 20:10-11

This is all about honesty, fairness and justice; this is the way God wants businesses to run, [Proverbs 11:1](#) / [Proverbs 20:10](#) / [Proverbs 20:23](#). Verbal professions and external appearances are not decisive. Performance is essential, and this again is a very good verse for us to put into practice today.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘We may easily learn from the child what the man will be. In general, they give indications of those trades and callings for which they are adapted by nature. And, on the whole, we cannot go by a surer guide in preparing our children for future life than by observing their early propensities. The future engineer is seen in the little handicraftsman of two years old.’

‘Ears that hear and eyes that see—the LORD has made them both. Do not love sleep or you will grow poor; stay awake, and you will have food to spare.’ Proverbs 20:12-13

When we use our ears and eyes properly, we have the necessities of life.

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

‘All our powers and faculties are from God and are to be employed for him.’

Wisdom teachers were early risers and were concerned about sleeping too much, [Proverbs 6:9-11](#).

‘It’s no good, it’s no good!’ says the buyer—then goes off and boasts about the purchase. Gold there is, and rubies in abundance, but lips that speak knowledge are a rare jewel.’ Proverbs 20:14-15

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘How apt are men to decry the goods they wish to purchase, in order that they may get them at a cheaper rate; and, when they have made their bargain and carried it off, boast to others at how much less than its value they have obtained it! Are such honest men?’

Here again, we’re reminded that wisdom is worth more than any wealth, [Proverbs 3:15-16](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Gold is valuable, silver is valuable, and so are jewels; but the teachings of sound knowledge are more valuable than all.’

‘Take the garment of one who puts up security for a stranger; hold it in pledge if it is done for an outsider.’ Proverbs 20:16

This could have two meanings.

1. The lender is advised to be stricter with forgiveness than with Israelites, [Exodus 22:26-27](#) / [Deuteronomy 15:1-3](#).
2. If you are dealing with a person who is a bad credit risk, particularly if they are liable for debts of forgiveness, get security for yourself, i.e. take their garments.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This rendition seems to catch the idea here: ‘Anyone stupid enough to promise to be responsible for a stranger’s debts ought to have his own property held to guarantee payment.’

‘Food gained by fraud tastes sweet, but one ends up with a mouth full of gravel.’ Proverbs 20:17

Here is a simple warning against dishonesty. The satisfaction of dishonesty may be sweet for a while, but it does not last, 1 Samuel 30:16 / 1 Kings 1:9.

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Wealth gotten by fraud may be sweet, for the carnal mind takes pleasure in the success of wicked devices; but it will be bitter in the reflection.’

‘Plans are established by seeking advice; so, if you wage war, obtain guidance.’ Proverbs 20:18

No one should try to conduct a military campaign by themselves; they need the counsel and guidance of others, Luke 14:31.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Perhaps there is not a precept in this whole book so little regarded as this. Most of the wars that are undertaken are wars of injustice, ambition, aggrandisement, and caprice, which can have had no previous good counsel.’

‘A gossip betrays a confidence; so, avoid anyone who talks too much.’ Proverbs 20:19

The gossip will not keep confidences, so do not associate with him, Proverbs 11:13 / Proverbs 18:8.

‘If someone curses their father or mother, their lamp will be snuffed out in pitch darkness.’ Proverbs 20:20

God warned His people against cursing their parents, Exodus 20:12 / Matthew 15:4 / Ephesians 6:2. Children need to honour them. Interestingly, this says nothing about legal punishment and the person who curses their parents will bring an appropriate punishment upon themselves, Exodus 21:17 / Leviticus 20:9.

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

‘An undutiful child will become very miserable. Never let him expect any peace or comfort.’

‘An inheritance claimed too soon will not be blessed at the end. Do not say, ‘I’ll pay you back for this wrong!’ Wait for the LORD, and he will avenge you.’ Proverbs 20:21-22

It can be a blessing to receive an inheritance, but it can also be someone’s downfall, Luke 15:12.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Gotten by speculation; by lucky hits; not in the fair progressive way of traffic, in which money has its natural increase. All such inheritances are short-lived; God’s blessing is not in them, because they are not the produce of industry; and they lead to idleness, pride, fraud, and knavery.’

This is simply saying that personal retaliation is not up to man, Deuteronomy 32:35 / Romans 12:17-19.

‘The LORD detests differing weights, and dishonest scales do not please him. A person’s steps are directed by the LORD. How then can anyone understand their own way?’ Proverbs 20:23-24

Different weights and scales refer to cheating and dishonesty, Proverbs 20:10. We may never understand why someone would want to cheat us, but the point is, God doesn’t, Proverbs 16:11, so we shouldn’t worry about finding out why but just trust God to take care of it.

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

‘A bargain made by fraud will prove a losing bargain in the end. How can we form plans and conduct business, independently of the Lord?’

‘It is a trap to dedicate something rashly and only later to consider one’s vows.’ Proverbs 20:25

We should count the cost before we commit ourselves or our property to God, Ecclesiastes 5:4-7 / Deuteronomy 23:21-23 / Matthew 5:33-37 / Matthew 23:16-22. In Judges 11, Jephthah made a rash vow when he told God he would sacrifice as a burnt offering the first thing which came out of his house, which turned out to be his daughter, Judges 11:30-40.

‘A wise king winnows out the wicked; he drives the threshing wheel over them. The human spirit is the lamp of the LORD that sheds light on one’s inmost being.’ Proverbs 20:26-27

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Everyone knows that grain was separated from its husks, in Palestine, by the feet of the oxen trampling among the sheaves, or bringing a rough-shod wheel over them. Asiatic kings often threshed their people, to bring out their property; but this is not what is intended here.’

There are a couple of meanings for Proverbs 20:27.

1. Man is made in God’s image and functions like Him, Genesis 2:7.
2. Nothing is hidden from divine scrutiny.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘God has given to every man a mind, which he so enlightens by his own Spirit, that the man knows how to distinguish good from evil; and conscience, which springs from this, searches the inmost recesses of the soul.’

‘Love and faithfulness keep a king safe; through love his throne is made secure.’ Proverbs 20:28

The king needs the support of the people, and he himself must manifest these same qualities, Proverbs 20:26.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following concerning love and faithfulness.

‘These are the brightest jewels in the royal crown; and those kings who are most governed by them have the stablest government.’

‘The glory of young men is their strength, gray hair the splendour of the old.’ Proverbs 20:29

Young men are generally stronger than older men, but the beauty of old age is, unfortunately, a lost element today.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Youth is not better than old age, nor is old age better than youth. Each has a glory of its own, and each has its handicaps and temptations, also its triumphs and discouragements in a well-ordered life.’ Nothing is more ridiculous than an old person pretending to be young again! It also should be remembered that ‘the hoary head’ is the glory of old age, only if it be found ‘in the way of righteousness’.

‘Blows and wounds scrub away evil, and beatings purge the inmost being.’ Proverbs 20:30

This is simply saying that punishment is good for our character, Hebrews 12:11.

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Severe rebukes sometimes do a great deal of good. But such is the corruption of nature that men are loath to be rebuked for their sins. If God uses severe afflictions to purify our hearts and fit us for his service, we have cause to be very thankful.’

CHAPTER 21

INTRODUCTION

‘In the LORD’s hand the king’s heart is a stream of water that he channels toward all who please him.’ Proverbs 21:1

UNDER GOD’S CONTROL

The king needs to realise that he too is under the control of God, [Isaiah 10:6-7](#) / [Isaiah 41:2-4](#) / [Ezra 7:21](#) / [Daniel 4:17](#) / [1 Timothy 2:1](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The Lord is the only ruler of princes. He alone can govern and direct their counsels. But there is an allusion here to the Eastern method of watering their lands. Several canals are dug from one stream, and by opening a particular sluice, the husbandman can direct a stream to whatever part he pleases: so the king’s heart, wherever it turns; i.e., to whomsoever he is disposed to show favour. As the land is enriched with the streams employed in irrigation, so is the favourite of the king, by the royal bounty: and God can induce the king to give that bounty to whomsoever he will.’

‘A person may think their own ways are right, but the LORD weighs the heart. To do what is right and just is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice.’ Proverbs 21:2-3

We all do things because we think it is right at the time, but our motives are not always pure, [Proverbs 16:2](#) / [Matthew 23:23](#). The good news is that God knows what our real motives are, [1 Samuel 15:22](#). Sacrifices are secondary to more essential qualities, [Isaiah 1:11-31](#) / [Luke 10:30-36](#).

‘Haughty eyes and a proud heart—the unploughed field of the wicked—produce sin.’ Proverbs 21:4

Solomon is saying that an attitude of this kind makes sacrifices unacceptable. God hates pride and arrogance, [Proverbs 15:8](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The prosperity and posterity of the wicked; is sin—it is evil in the seed, and evil in the root, evil in the branch, and evil in the fruit. They are full of sin themselves, and what they do is sinful.’

‘The plans of the diligent lead to profit as surely as haste leads to poverty.’ Proverbs 21:5

Sometimes it takes a while to complete our plans, but if we take our time, it will be worth it in the end. The word ‘haste’ implies that we might think of some things as ‘quick fixes’.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘One may become so busy and so diligent in a selfish direction that he overlooks spiritual matters of far greater importance; and, it is that which seems to be referred to here.’

‘A fortune made by a lying tongue is a fleeting vapour and a deadly snare. The violence of the wicked will drag them away, for they refuse to do what is right. The way of the guilty is devious, but the conduct of the innocent is upright. Better to live on a corner of the roof than share a house with a quarrelsome wife.’ Proverbs 21:6-9

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This shows the folly of those that hope to enrich themselves by dishonest practices, by oppressing and over-reaching those with whom they deal, by false-witness-bearing, or by fraudulent contracts, of those that make no scruples of lying when there is anything to be got by it. They may perhaps heap up treasures by these means, that which they make their treasure; but,

1. They will not meet with the satisfaction they expect. It is a vanity tossed to and fro; it will be disappointment and vexation of spirit to them; they will not have the comfort of it, nor can they put any confidence in it, but will be perpetually uneasy. It will be tossed to and fro by their own consciences, and by the censures of men; let them expect to be in a constant hurry.

2. They will meet with destruction they do not expect. While they are seeking wealth by such unlawful practices, they are really seeking death; they lay themselves open to the envy and ill-will of men by the treasures they get, and to the wrath and curse of God, by the lying tongue wherewith they get them, which he will make to fall upon themselves and sink them to hell.’

The wicked often use violence to get what they want, and they do it without any thought about what is right.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning Proverbs 21:7.

‘We may read this as an imperative for every intelligent society, after the manner of Genesis 9:6, where the Divine order for society to execute murderers. This verse states what ought to be, not what actually is. It must be pointed out that a society which rejects this Divine injunction is writing its own death-warrant.’

Henry, in his commentary, says the following concerning Proverbs 21:8.

‘This shows that as men are, so is their way. 1. Evil men have evil ways. If the man be froward, his way also is strange; and this is the way of most men, such is the general corruption of mankind. They have all gone aside, Psalms 14:2-3; all flesh has perverted their way. But the froward man, the man of deceit, that acts by craft and trick in all he does, his way is strange, contrary to all the rules of honour and honesty. It is strange, for you know not where to find him nor when you have him; it is strange, for it is alienated from all good and estranges men from God and his favour. It is what he beholds afar off, and so do all honest men.

2. Men that are pure are proved to be such by their work, for it is right, it is just and regular; and they are accepted of God and approved of men. The way of mankind in their apostasy is froward and strange; but as for the pure, those that by the grace of God are recovered out of that state, of which there is here and there one, their work is right, as Noah’s was in the old world, Genesis 7:1.’

Sharing a home with a quarrelsome wife is not a well-equipped and comfortable house, Proverbs 12:4 / Proverbs 19:13-14 / Proverbs 18:22 / Proverbs 21:19.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The meaning here is clear enough and needs no comment; but this rendition is an interesting variation: ‘It is better to dwell in an attic on the roof, than in a double bedroom with a nagging wife.’ In fairness, it should be stated that the corollary here is applicable also to a nagging husband.’

‘The wicked crave evil; their neighbours get no mercy from them. When a mocker is punished, the simple gain wisdom; by paying attention to the wise, they get knowledge. The Righteous One takes note of the house of the wicked and brings the wicked to ruin. Whoever shuts their ears to the cry of the poor will also cry out and not be answered.’ Proverbs 21:10-13

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

‘See here the character of a very wicked man. 1. The strong inclination he has to do mischief. His very soul desires evil, desires that evil may be done and that he may have the pleasure, not only of seeing it, but of having a hand in it. The root of wickedness lies in the soul; the desire that men have to do evil, that is the lust which conceives and brings forth sin.

2. The strong aversion he has to do good: His neighbour, his friend, his nearest relation, finds no favour in his eyes, cannot gain from him the least kindness, though he be in the greatest need of it. And, when he is in the pursuit of the evil his heart is so much upon, he will spare no man that stands in his way; his next neighbour shall be used no better than a stranger, than an enemy.’

‘There are two ways by which the simple may be made wise, Proverbs 19:25.

1. By the punishments that are inflicted on those who are incorrigibly wicked.

Let the law be executed upon a scorner, and even he that is simple will be awakened and alarmed by it, and will discern, more than he did, the evil of sin, and will take warning by it and take heed.

2. By the instructions that are given to those who are wise and willing to be taught:

When the wise is instructed by the preaching of the word, he (not only the wise himself, but the simple that stands by) receives knowledge. It is no injustice at all to take a good lesson for ourselves which was designed for another.’

Solomon teaches that we must learn from the mistakes of others, Proverbs 21:12, and we must be willing to help those around us in need, 1 John 3:17.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘See the conduct of the priest and Levite to the man who fell among thieves; and let every man learn from this, that he who shuts his ear against the cry of the poor, shall have the ear of God shut against his cry. The words are quite plain; there is no difficulty here.’

‘A gift given in secret soothes anger, and a bribe concealed in the cloak pacifies great wrath.’ Proverbs 21:14

What does Solomon have in mind here? He’s saying that the wisdom teachers are not promoting pacifying all the time, but they know that occasionally this technique is necessary.

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

1. The power that is commonly found to be in gifts. Nothing is more violent than anger. O the force of strong wrath! And yet a handsome present, prudently managed, will turn away some men’s wrath when it seemed implacable, and disarm the keenest and most passionate resentments. Covetousness is commonly a master sin and has command of other lusts. Thus, Jacob pacified Esau and Abigail David.

2. The policy that is commonly used in giving and receiving bribes. It must be a gift in secret and a reward in the bosom, for he that takes it would not be thought to covet it, nor known to receive it, nor would he willingly be beholden to him whom he has been offended with; but, if it be done privately, all is well. No man should be too open in giving any gift, nor boast of the presents he sends; but, if it be a bribe to pervert justice, that is so scandalous that those who are fond of it are ashamed of it.’

‘When justice is done, it brings joy to the righteous but terror to evildoers. Whoever strays from the path of prudence comes to rest in the company of the dead. Whoever loves pleasure will become poor; whoever loves wine and olive oil will never be rich. The wicked become a ransom for the righteous, and the unfaithful for the upright.’ Proverbs 21:15-18

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

1. It is a pleasure and satisfaction to good men both to see justice administered by the government they live under, right taking place and iniquity suppressed, and also to practise it themselves, according as their sphere is. They not only do justice, but do it with pleasure, not only for fear of shame, but for love of virtue.
2. It is a terror to wicked men to see the laws put in execution against vice and profaneness. It is destruction to them; as it is also a vexation to them to be forced, either for the support of their credit or for fear of punishment, to do judgment themselves. Or, if we take it as we read it, the meaning is, there is true pleasure in the practice of religion, but certain destruction at the end of all vicious courses.’

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning Proverbs 21:16-17.

‘The man that wanders out of the way of understanding is the man who rejects his obligation to love and obey the Creator. The assembly of the dead is a reference, first of all, to that cessation of mortality to which all men are appointed; and, secondly, it is that ultimate assembly of that incorrigibly wicked company to which the King shall say, ‘Depart ... I never knew you,’ Matthew 7:21-23.

Another rendition: ‘The man who wanders from the path of wisdom will rest in the assembly of the Shades.’ ‘Every word of the second line here is charged with irony. The rebel who insists upon roaming anywhere he will is only hastening to lose his mobility (shall rest), his independence (in the assembly) and his life (of the dead).’

‘The pleasure-lover strikes out for joy, but finds only poverty; but Proverbs 21:16 has just sounded the warning that more than pleasure is at stake.’ The stakes in the game of life on earth are very high indeed: Eternal Life or Eternal Death.’

Perhaps the meaning of Proverbs 21:18, is that the wicked person gets into the trouble they had actually planned for the righteous, Proverbs 22:4.

‘Better to live in a desert than with a quarrelsome and nagging wife. The wise store up choice food and olive oil, but fools gulp theirs down.’ Proverbs 21:19-20

Here again, we’re reminded of having a quarrelsome, nagging wife, Proverbs 21:9, instead of a godly wife, Ephesians 5:22-24 / Colossians 3:18. The wise man knows how to possess and preserve wealth. The rest of the verse deals with saving for the future. Saving is something that a lot of people don’t do, and as a result, we’re living in a bankrupt society.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This is the common viewpoint of Proverbs that the wise are wealthy and the fool is in poverty. There is a limited sense in which this is true; ‘But in the spiritual warfare, earthly wisdom avails nothing at all, 1 Corinthians 1:5-16 and 2 Corinthians 10:4.’

‘Whoever pursues righteousness and love finds life, prosperity and honour.’ Proverbs 21:21

Pursuing is an ongoing word; we must always pursue these things because this shows an energetic and urgent action, Matthew 5:6. When we pursue these things, we find life, prosperity and honour.

‘One who is wise can go up against the city of the mighty and pull down the stronghold in which they trust.’ Proverbs 21:22

Solomon is saying that wisdom, that is, intelligent action, is better than military fortification, Proverbs 24:5-6 / Ephesians 6:10.

‘Those who guard their mouths and their tongues keep themselves from calamity.’ Proverbs 21:23

Once again, we’re reminded of the dangers of our tongues. If we can control our tongue, we can have a good defence against trouble. Disciplined speech is necessary, Proverbs 13:3 / Proverbs 18:21 / James 3:5-12.

‘The proud and arrogant person—‘Mocker’ is his name—behaves with insolent fury. The craving of a sluggard will be the death of him, because his hands refuse to work. All day long he craves for more, but the righteous give without sparing.’ Proverbs 21:24-26

Notice that the proud and arrogant are personified with the name ‘Mocker’, and everything about their behaviour is against God and His will, Exodus 5:2. It is desire that kills the mocker because they don’t possess the discipline to work to fulfil their desires.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Religious acts done with wrong intentions are hateful to God, along with pride, laziness and selfish desires.’

Solomon is saying that the wicked are constantly craving more, Ephesians 4:28, while the righteous are so blessed that they have enough for themselves, and some left over to bless others with.

‘The sacrifice of the wicked is detestable—how much more so when brought with evil intent! A false witness will perish, but a careful listener will testify successfully.’ Proverbs 21:27-28

In what way is the sacrifice wicked and detestable? Simply because they are trying to bribe God, 1 Samuel 15:22.

How do people do that today? If God helps them out, they will commit more to Him and His ways.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The thought here is very similar to that of Proverbs 21:3. The Anchor Bible has it this way: ‘A sacrifice offered by wicked men is an abomination, all the more so if one brings it with a shameful purpose.’ Some of the shameful purposes that may prompt the wicked to offer a sacrifice are: (1) to receive approval and praise of men, (2) to deceive others with his hypocrisy, or (3) in the vain delusion that he can ‘buy God off.’

There are severe consequences for a false witness, Matthew 26:60, but a good listener is a good witness.

‘The wicked put up a bold front, but the upright give thought to their ways. There is no wisdom, no insight, no plan that can succeed against the LORD. The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but victory rests with the LORD.’ Proverbs 21:29-31

The wicked set their course in wickedness, but the upright think about their plans first.

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

1. The presumption and impudence of a wicked man: He hardens his face—brazens it, that he may not blush—steels it, that he may not tremble when he commits the greatest crimes; he bids defiance to the terrors of the law and the checks of his own conscience, the reproofs of the word and the rebukes of Providence; he will have his way and nothing shall hinder him, Isaiah 57:17.

2. The caution and circumspection of a good man: As for the upright, he does not say, What would I do? What have I a mind to? And that will I have; but, what should I do? What does God require of me? What is duty? What is prudence? What is for edification? And so he does not force his way, but direct his way by a safe and certain rule.’

The remaining verses seem to be addressed to the political and military confidence of men in positions of leadership who relied on their own planning. As the horse is made ready for battle, an army must have a commanding officer;

they must listen to and obey his every command, and take his part and the Lord's part. Working together for the victory.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

'Proverbs 21:30 warns men not to fight against God, and Proverbs 21:31 warns them not to fight without him.' This does not forbid the use of earthly resources, but it condemns reliance upon them. It is God who gives the victory.

'The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong.' Ecclesiastes 9:11.'

'Solomon here taught better than he practised, because he provided 40,000 horses even though God had expressly forbidden the kings of Israel to multiply horses unto themselves, lest their hearts should be drawn away from the hope of Israel. This proverb verified the evil consequences of Solomon's change in the management of Israel's affairs, because Israel never again cut such a figure in war as they had done previously.'

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'We often give the credit of a victory to man, when those who consider the circumstances see that it came from God. Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: 'The Lord knows those who are his,' and, 'Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness,' 2 Timothy 2:19.'

CHAPTER 22

INTRODUCTION

'A good name is more desirable than great riches; to be esteemed is better than silver or gold. Rich and poor have this in common: The LORD is the Maker of them all.' Proverbs 22:1-2

IT HAS TO BE THE HEART

In the ancient culture, it was a terrible thing to bring shame upon the family name, Isaiah 43:4. Many today couldn't care less about their reputation as long as they have money.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

'Riches are greatly esteemed in the world; and, wisely managed, they serve many valuable purposes; but they do not contribute as much to genuine tranquillity and happiness of life as do the esteem and love of one's neighbours. Paul's qualifications for elders did not require them to be rich, but to have a good name among Christians and even among the heathen.'

Solomon says that whether a person is rich or poor, the one thing they have in common is that God made them both.

'The prudent see danger and take refuge, but the simple keep going and pay the penalty. Humility is the fear of the LORD; its wages are riches and honour and life.' Proverbs 22:3-4

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘God in mercy has denied man the knowledge of futurity, but in its place he has given him hope and prudence. By hope, he is continually expecting and anticipating good; by prudence, he derives and employs means to secure it. His experience shows him that there are many natural evils in the current state, the course of which he can neither stem nor divert: prudence shows him beforehand the means he may use to step out of their way and hide himself. The simple – the inexperienced, headstrong, giddy, and foolish, rush on in the career of hope, without prudence to regulate, chastise, and guide it; thus they commit many faults, make many miscarriages, and suffer often in consequence; and the commission of crimes leads to punishment.’

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The Bible gives blind optimism its right name. It is not faith but folly. This was mentioned in Proverbs 14:15-16, and will be repeated in even stronger language in Proverbs 27:12.’

The reward of humility is the fear of the Lord, riches, honour, and life. Humility and fear should always go together. God doesn’t force people to bow down to Him, but it comes naturally to the humble.

‘In the paths of the wicked are snares and pitfalls, but those who would preserve their life stay far from them. Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old, they will not turn from it.’ Proverbs 22:5-6

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

1. The way of sin is vexatious and dangerous: In the way of the froward, that crooked way, which is contrary to the will and word of God, thorns and snares are found, thorns of grief for past sins and snares entangling them in further sin. He that makes no conscience of what he says and does will find himself hampered by that imaginary liberty, and tormented by his pleasures. Froward people, who are soon angry, expose themselves to trouble at every step.

Everything will fret and vex him who will fret and vex at everything.

2. The way of duty is safe and easy: He that keeps his soul, that watches carefully over his own heart and ways, is far from those thorns and snares, for his way is both plain and pleasant.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Chanac, which we translate train up or initiate, signifies also dedicate; and is often used for the consecrating anything, house, or person, to the service of God. Dedicate, therefore, in the first instance, your child to God; and nurse, teach, and discipline him as God’s child, whom he has entrusted to your care.’

By considering the child’s tendencies and temperament, each child needs individual attention. Sometimes we need to let them make their own decisions so that they can gain wisdom for themselves, Proverbs 19:27 / Luke 15:11-32.

‘The rich rule over the poor, and the borrower is slave to the lender.’ Proverbs 22:7

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This states an unhappy fact, but without any approval of it (See the first two verses). The apostolic injunction to ‘Owe no man anything’, Romans 13:8, is the way to avoid the servitude mentioned in the second line. Of course, this involves doing without many things while the money to acquire the things needed is being earned. The widespread practice of young married couples buying everything they want on credit is an infallible method of remaining poor for a lifetime.’

Can Christians borrow from other people or banks? Yes, as long as we can pay it back.

‘Whoever sows injustice reaps calamity, and the rod they wield in fury will be broken. The generous will themselves be blessed, for they share their food with the poor.’ Proverbs 22:8-9

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The crop must be according to the seed. If a man sow thistle seed, is it likely he shall reap wheat? If he sow to the flesh, shall he not of the flesh reap destruction?’

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

1. The description of a charitable man; he has a bountiful eye, opposed to the evil eye, Proverbs 23:6, and the same with the single eye, Matthew 6:22, an eye that seeks out objects of charity, besides those that offer themselves, an eye that, upon the sight of one in want and misery, affects the heart with compassion, an eye that with the alms gives a pleasant look, which makes the alms doubly acceptable. He also has a liberal hand: He gives of his bread to those that need his bread, the bread appointed for his own eating. He will rather abridge himself than see the poor perish for want; yet he does not give all his bread, but of his bread; the poor shall have their share with his own family.

2. The blessedness of such a man. The loins of the poor will bless them, all about him will speak well of him, and God himself will bless him, in answer to many a good prayer put up for him, and he shall be blessed.

These verses are used in contrast to one another; the generous person will be blessed.

‘Drive out the mocker, and out goes strife; quarrels and insults are ended.’ Proverbs 22:10

This is a good Old Testament commentary on Romans 16:17. If we get rid of the troublemaker, we have rid ourselves of the trouble, Proverbs 26:20.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Disagreement and bad blood sometimes arise, not from the facts of a situation, but from a person with a wrong attitude, who makes mischief. This proverb says that, ‘What an institution sometimes needs is not reforms, but the expulsion of a member.’

‘One who loves a pure heart and who speaks with grace will have the king for a friend.’ Proverbs 22:11

The king will approve of those with reliable speech and reliable character, 1 John 1:6-7, and will promote those in his kingdom.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘He that loveth pureness of heart – Who aims to be what God would have him to be – the King of kings shall be his Friend. There is no class of men that values uprightness more than kings; as none stand so much in need of it in their servants.’

‘The eyes of the LORD keep watch over knowledge, but he frustrates the words of the unfaithful.’ Proverbs 22:12

Keep watch means to keep, retain. God will not allow the words of evil men to succeed. The word ‘knowledge’ refers to those who have knowledge. It takes courage and discipline to live life God’s way, but if we try our best, God will reward us and protect us.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This first clause says that God oversees and protects the man who knows God and walks in his ways, and uses his means and abilities for the good of others.’ The second clause means that, ‘God frustrates the intentions of the treacherous man by turning them in another direction.’ It is of interest that the Septuagint renders the passage thus: ‘The eyes of the Lord preserve discretion; but the transgressor despises wise words.’

‘The sluggard says, ‘There’s a lion outside! I’ll be killed in the public square!’ Proverbs 22:13

This reason for not going to work is absurd, but so are most of the excuses of lazy people, Proverbs 26:13.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘But why does he say so? Because he is a slothful man. Remove his slothfulness, and these imaginary difficulties and dangers will be no more. He will not go abroad to work in the fields, because he thinks there is a lion in the way; he will not go out into the town for employment, as he fears being assassinated in the streets! From both these circumstances, he seeks total cessation from activity.’

‘The mouth of an adulterous woman is a deep pit; a man who is under the LORD’s wrath falls into it.’ Proverbs 22:14

The mouth refers to using seductive words, Proverbs 23:27. Only those going in the wrong direction will fall into this pit.

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This is designed to warn all young men against the lusts of uncleanness. As they regard the welfare of their souls, let them take heed of strange women, lewd women, whom they ought to be strange to, of the mouth of strange women, of the kisses of their lips, Proverbs 7:13, of the words of their lips, their charms and enticements.’

‘Dread them; have nothing to do with them; for, 1. Those who abandon themselves to that sin give proof that they are abandoned by God: it is a deep pit, into which those fall who are abhorred of the Lord, who leaves them to themselves to enter into that temptation, and takes off the bridle of his restraining grace, to punish them for other sins. Value not thyself upon thy being in favour with such women, when it proclaims thee under the wrath of God.’

2. It is seldom that they recover themselves, for it is a deep pit; it will be hard getting out of it, it so besots the mind and debauches the conscience, by pleasing the flesh.’

‘Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far away.’ Proverbs 22:15

Some children love to get into trouble. They have foolishness so deeply ingrained in them that it will not be removed easily. The reason some children are foolish is that they don’t understand the consequences of their actions, Proverbs 13:24 / Proverbs 22:6 / Proverbs 29:15 / Proverbs 29:21.

‘One who oppresses the poor to increase his wealth and one who gives gifts to the rich—both come to poverty.’
Proverbs 22:16

There’s nothing wrong with being wealthy; it’s all about what we do with that wealth.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘He who, in order to obtain the favour of the rich and great, either robs or cheats the poor, to make those men presents; or gives in presents to them, for the sake of honour and reputation, what he should have given to the poor, shall surely come to want.’

THIRTY SAYINGS OF THE WISE

‘Pay attention and turn your ear to the sayings of the wise; apply your heart to what I teach, for it is pleasing when you keep them in your heart and have all of them ready on your lips. So that your trust may be in the LORD, I teach you today, even you. Have I not written thirty sayings for you, sayings of counsel and knowledge, teaching you to be honest and to speak the truth, so that you bring back truthful reports to those you serve?’ Proverbs 22:17-21

SAYING 1

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘There is a break here, and from this Proverbs 22:17 through the end of Proverbs 24, we have the words of the wise men. Some call these ‘The Thirty Words’ (consisting of two verses each), but other words of wise men are added after the ‘thirty.’

We must pay attention and listen to wisdom, Proverbs 4:20-27. We must also apply them to our hearts, that is, put them into practice.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The pleasure and profit which may be derived from an attentive hearing.’

1. They should be laid up in the heart-stored, treasured up within thee.
2. This will yield high satisfaction and happiness to the soul: ‘For it is a pleasant thing if thou keep them within thee.’
3. The man who thus attends to the teachings of wisdom shall gain an experimental knowledge of them, so as to be able to speak of them suitably, pertinently and persuasively. ‘They shall withal be fitted in thy lips’.

The first saying is about the importance of being honest and telling the truth. How do we answer people who ask us about our religion? Christians must be honest and speak truth to those around us, 2 Corinthians 8:21 / Ephesians 4:15.

SAYING 2

‘Do not exploit the poor because they are poor and do not crush the needy in court, for the LORD will take up their case and will exact life for life.’ Proverbs 22:22-23

We don’t want to take a case where God Himself is defending the one we oppressed. Many countries have unjust leaders, and many people are unable to defend themselves, but the hope is that God will take up their case, Exodus 22:21-27 / Psalms 82:3-4.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Woe, therefore, to them that oppress them, for they will have God, not the poor, to deal with.’

SAYING 3

‘Do not make friends with a hot-tempered person, do not associate with one easily angered, or you may learn their ways and get yourself ensnared.’ Proverbs 22:24-25

The hot-tempered person will get us into trouble and, as a result, we may not live long. If we spend a lot of time in bad company, we will usually take on some of their traits, 1 Corinthians 15:33.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘From those with whom we associate we acquire habits, and learn their ways, imbibe their spirit, show their tempers and walk in their steps. We cannot be too choosy of our company, for we may soon learn ways that will be a snare to our soul.’

SAYING 4

‘Do not be one who shakes hands in pledge or puts up security for debts; if you lack the means to pay, your very bed will be snatched from under you.’ Proverbs 22:26-27

These seem to be hasty pledges without seriously considering the consequences, [Proverbs 6:1](#) / [Proverbs 11:15](#). When I read these verses, I think of the bailiffs coming to someone’s house because they haven’t kept up the payments. We shouldn’t pledge what we cannot pay, or we could say, ‘do not get in over your head,’ [Romans 13:8](#).

SAYING 5

‘Do not move an ancient boundary stone set up by your ancestors.’ Proverbs 22:28

In [Joshua 13-21](#), we see the land which God promised was marked out with landmarks for each tribe. But even before that time, Moses had warned the people about doing this, [Deuteronomy 19:14](#) / [Deuteronomy 27:17](#). Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Do not take the advantage, in ploughing or breaking up a field contiguous to that of thy neighbour, to set the dividing stones farther into his field than thou mayest enlarge thy own. Take not what is not thy own in any case. Let all ancient divisions, and the usages connected with them, be held sacred.’

SAYING 6

‘Do you see someone skilled in their work? They will serve before kings; they will not serve before officials of low rank.’ Proverbs 22:29

If people want to get good, secure, high-paying jobs, they need to get the skills to do so. In our world today, it appears that the more skills we have, the better-paid job we will get.

Please note that there’s nothing wrong with having a low-paid job because it is God who gives us all the skills we have, [Exodus 31:6](#) / [Exodus 38:23](#). Whatever job we have, we should thank God for it and serve Him in the process, [Colossians 3:23](#) / [Romans 12:4-8](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The general meaning of the proverb is, ‘Every diligent, active man shall be at once independent and respectable.’

CHAPTER 23

INTRODUCTION

Solomon continues with his thirty sayings of the wise, which all relate to the heart; they begin in [Proverbs 22:17](#) and continue to [Proverbs 24:24](#).

SAYING 7

‘When you sit to dine with a ruler, note well what is before you, and put a knife to your throat if you are given to gluttony. Do not crave his delicacies, for that food is deceptive.’ Proverbs 23:1-3

Wisdom teachers wanted their students to know that manners are logically linked to character, discipline, self-respect and upbringing. It appears that manners are not considered so important in our society today. How sad!

We could say, do not ‘make a pig of yourself’, because it will make a bad impression. We may be under examination, or there may be an ulterior motive. These verses appear to be telling us to be careful when we eat with important people because they want something from us.

DeHoff, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Proper etiquette in eating is encouraged. One’s table manners are important. When invited to the table of one’s betters, he should eat moderately and not as half-starved. It is better not to eat and drink those things to which one is not accustomed.’

SAYING 8

‘Do not wear yourself out to get rich; do not trust your own cleverness. Cast but a glance at riches, and they are gone, for they will surely sprout wings and fly off to the sky like an eagle.’ Proverbs 23:4-5

There have always been and will continue to be those who are obsessed with wealth. There is a saying which says, ‘easy come, easy go,’ which would apply here.

Many people have won millions on the lottery or as part of an inheritance, but sadly, many of those people have blown it all away, and their life has come to ruin, Hebrews 13:5.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Paul warned against the desire to be rich, and here we have a warning in the Old Testament. The heart of Paul’s warning, 1 Timothy 6:9-10, centred upon moral and spiritual damage to the seeker, and here the warning stresses the nature of riches. They have the startling ability to leave their possessor ‘holding the bag.’ Ask any man who has experienced great loss (1) by the death of a trusted partner, a stock market crash, an earthquake, a flood, a tornado, a hurricane, a drought, a revolution, a robbery, embezzlement, fraud, some changing fashion, or any one of a thousand other ways that riches can make themselves wings and fly away. ‘There is an ancient proverb: ‘Possessions are like sparrows, or locusts, in flight that can find no place to alight.’

SAYING 9

‘Do not eat the food of a begrudging host, do not crave his delicacies; for he is the kind of person who is always thinking about the cost. ‘Eat and drink,’ he says to you, but his heart is not with you. You will vomit up the little you have eaten and will have wasted your compliments.’ Proverbs 23:6-8

Here, this hospitality is described as grudgingly given. We would be better off not being there. Eating and drinking imply that the host is counting the cost with each of the bites he takes. They don’t really want to give us anything, because their hearts aren’t right towards us.

It is as if we would say, ‘this is very good’, but then we vomit up the food. There are two possible meanings to this phrase.

1. It is sickening to be in the company of such people, or
2. Everything will be lost when you vomit up their expensive food.

SAYING 10

‘Do not speak to fools, for they will scorn your prudent words.’ Proverbs 23:9

Some things are a complete waste of time, and speaking to fools is one of them. They scorn our words simply because they don’t want to understand, Matthew 7:6.

SAYING 11

‘Do not move an ancient boundary stone or encroach on the fields of the fatherless, for their Defender is strong; he will take up their case against you.’ Proverbs 23:10-11

Boundaries were put in place for a reason: to stop people from going into the fields to steal crops. This was the sin of coveting more land and more crops, Deuteronomy 19:14 / Deuteronomy 27:17. God is the One who does the defending.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The fatherless and widows were in the greatest danger of suffering damage by the fraudulent removal of a landmark; and the passage states that God, as their Champion, will defend them.’

SAYING 12

‘Apply your heart to instruction and your ears to words of knowledge.’ Proverbs 23:12

We must learn not only to listen to what God says in His Word, but we must remember to apply what we learn from His Word to our lives, James 1:22.

SAYING 13

‘Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you punish them with the rod, they will not die. Punish them with the rod and save them from death.’ Proverbs 23:13-14

A wayward child is sometimes ‘straightened out’ by being ‘bent over’ even though all of their yelling and screaming may sound as if they are dying, Deuteronomy 31:18-21 / 1 Corinthians 5:5 / 3 John 4.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘A proper correction of children was a favourite point of discipline with Solomon. We have already seen how forcibly he speaks on this subject.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The following rendition obscures the true meaning: ‘Do not hesitate to discipline a youth; Though you beat him with a stick, he will not die; Indeed, you should beat him with a stick, and so save his life from Sheol.’

SAYING 14

‘My son, if your heart is wise, then my heart will be glad indeed; my inmost being will rejoice when your lips speak what is right.’ Proverbs 22:15-16

The implication is that the son will not only survive but that he will survive because of the discipline. These verses show that people were afraid to discipline for fear of hurting the child. Caution and control have to be exercised with the discipline, Proverbs 23:14, because it will show that the teacher succeeded in their job.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘We have here a tender and beautiful expression of a father’s devout and earnest ambition for his son, and a statement of what joy and happiness a truly upright son will bring to his father.’

SAYING 15

‘Do not let your heart envy sinners, but always be zealous for the fear of the LORD. There is surely a future hope for you, and your hope will not be cut off.’ Proverbs 23:17-18

It’s easy to envy sinners because they appear to have so much, but we must remember that we’re not living our lives to please others or ourselves; we’re to live a life which pleases God, Ecclesiastes 12:9.

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Here is, 1. A necessary caution against entertaining any favourable thoughts of prospering profaneness: “Let not thy heart envy sinners; do not grudge them either the liberty they take to sin or the success they are to be pitied rather than envied. Their prosperity is their portion, Psalms 12:14, nay, it is their poison,” Proverbs 1:32. We must not harbour in our hearts any secret discontent at the providence of God, though it seems to smile upon them, nor wish ourselves in their condition. ‘Let not thy heart imitate sinners’ (so some read it); do not as they do; walk not in the way with them; use not the methods they take to enrich themselves, though they thrive by them.

2. An excellent direction to maintain high thoughts of God in our minds at all times: Be thou in the fear of the Lord every day and all the day long. We must be in the fear of the Lord as in our employment, exercising ourselves in holy adorings of God, in subjection to his precepts, submission to his providences, and a constant care to please him; we must be in it as in our element, taking a pleasure in contemplating God’s glory and complying with his will. We must be devoted to his fear, Psalms 119:38; and governed by it as our commanding principle in all we say and do. All the days of our life, we must constantly keep up an awe of God upon our spirits, must pay a deference to his authority, and have a dread of his wrath. We must always be so in his fear as never to be out of it.

3. A good reason for both of these: Surely there is an end, an end and expectation, as Jeremiah 29:11. There will be an end of the prosperity of the wicked, therefore do not envy them, Psalms 73:17; there will be an end of thy afflictions,

therefore be not weary of them, an end of thy services, thy work and warfare will be accomplished, perfect love will shortly cast out fear, and thy expectation of the reward not only will be not cut off, or disappointed, but it will be infinitely outdone. The consideration of the end will help to reconcile us to all the difficulties and discouragements of the way.'

SAYING 16

'Listen, my son, and be wise, and set your heart on the right path: Do not join those who drink too much wine or gorge themselves on meat, for drunkards and gluttons become poor, and drowsiness clothes them in rags.' Proverbs 23:19-21

The writer says there is only one way, and that is the right way. Notice that there are crowds involved with eating, [Philippians 3:19](#), and drinking, [Ephesians 5:18](#). Why is this the wrong crowd? The answer is obvious: we become like them, [1 Corinthians 15:33](#).

SAYING 17

'Listen to your father, who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old. Buy the truth and do not sell it—wisdom, instruction and insight as well. The father of a righteous child has great joy; a man who fathers a wise son rejoices in him. May your father and mother rejoice; may she who gave you birth be joyful!' Proverbs 23:22-25

Children should always try to please their parents, [Exodus 20:12](#) / [Ephesians 6:2](#). Truth, wisdom, instruction and insight are all priceless, and all should be taught by parents to their children. These are all invaluable treasures to help us through life.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

'The words 'buy the truth' do not mean that it can be purchased with money. That teaching which one gladly receives, believes and accepts as completely trustworthy is thus 'bought' in the sense of this passage.'

The teacher, that is, the parent, again calls for their son's undivided attention. The parents are also offering themselves as examples, [1 Corinthians 11:1](#) / [Ephesians 5:1](#).

SAYING 18

'My son, give me your heart and let your eyes delight in my ways, for an adulterous woman is a deep pit, and a wayward wife is a narrow well. Like a bandit, she lies in wait and multiplies the unfaithful among men.' Proverbs 23:26-28

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'This is the speech of God to every human soul; give thy affections to God, so as to love him with all thy heart, soul, mind, and strength. And let thine eyes observe my ways – Be obedient to me in all things. My son, thou believest that I Am, and that I Am the Fountain of all good. Give me thy heart; it is I alone who can make thee happy. Observe my

ways – follow me; do what is right in my sight. This exhortation contains three words: Believe, Love, Obey! This is the sum of God’s counsels to every child of man.’

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘In Proverbs 23:27, the two lines introduce the two classes of unchaste women, the harlot and the adulteress; but the same destructive character is ascribed to both.’ Although Toy and others dispute it, we feel that Deane is correct in making Wisdom personified the speaker in Proverbs 23:26. In Proverbs 23:28, the unchaste woman is said to increase the treacherous among men. A better rendition is, ‘She increases the faithless among men.’ How is this so? ‘The harlot causes her victim to be faithless to God, to his parents, to his wife, to his family, and to himself.’ A deep pit is a place where you might become stuck firmly in its mud, Proverbs 22:14. This is the consequence of neglecting God’s ways.

SAYING 19

‘Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaints? Who has needless bruises? Who has bloodshot eyes? Those who linger over wine, who go to sample bowls of mixed wine. Do not gaze at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it goes down smoothly! In the end, it bites like a snake and poisons like a viper. Your eyes will see strange sights, and your mind will imagine confusing things. You will be like one sleeping on the high seas, lying on top of the rigging. ‘They hit me,’ you will say, ‘but I’m not hurt! They beat me, but I don’t feel it! When will I wake up so I can find another drink?’ Proverbs 23:29-35

Notice that they mixed wine with water and honey; this possibly implies that they didn’t intend to become drunk.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘There were two ways of ‘mixing’ wine. One way was diluting it with water; another way was to mix spices with it to increase its potency; and that is the type of ‘mixing’ mentioned here.’ The wine was red, which implies it’s attractive to the eye; it’s also smooth, which implies it’s attractive to the taste. The truth about those who are drunk is that they often say things they wouldn’t normally say.

Notice that the drunk person ‘feels no pain’. They don’t even care about their life, hence they sleep on the top of the rigging of a ship. Even in those days, alcohol easily became an addiction, hence why it’s the first thing on their mind when they wake up, Ephesians 5:18.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Sin makes a man contemptible in life, miserable in death, and wretched to all eternity. Is it not strange, then, that men should love it?’

CHAPTER 24

INTRODUCTION

Solomon continues with his thirty sayings of the wise, which all relate to the heart; they begin in Proverbs 22:17 and finish in Proverbs 24:24.

SAYING 20

‘Do not envy the wicked, do not desire their company; for their hearts plot violence, and their lips talk about making trouble.’ Proverbs 24:1-2

We can’t say that those around us don’t affect our lives; if we do, we are in denial. We become like them, 1 Corinthians 15:33.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Another admonition against envy is in Proverbs 23:17. Envy is not merely destructive of the personality of the envious, but it also provides a motive for many kinds of wickedness. One is foolish indeed to envy wicked people, who, regardless of their earthly status, are doomed to eternal death. There is a strange attractiveness about evil.

‘Young people, and sometimes older people, are fascinated by the glamour and aura of success and power which sometimes clings to evil men.’ The wise should look beyond all of that and consider the ultimate fate of all wicked men.’

SAYING 21

‘By wisdom a house is built, and through understanding it is established; through knowledge its rooms are filled with rare and beautiful treasures.’ Proverbs 24:3-4

Wisdom and understanding are the blueprints for our house; without them, our homes would be chaotic.

DeHoff, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The passage is a metaphor of the fact that righteous and godly living are required to build a family, a good name, and to establish them.’

SAYING 22

‘The wise prevail through great power, and those who have knowledge muster their strength. Surely you need guidance to wage war, and victory is won through many advisers.’ Proverbs 24:5-6

These verses are simply telling us that wisdom is more powerful than any human power.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘His wisdom enables him to construct a great variety of machines, by which, under his own influence, he can do the labour of a hundred or even a thousand men. But in all cases, wisdom gives power and influence, and he who is wise to salvation can overcome even Satan himself. The Septuagint has: ‘The wise is better than the strong; and the man who has prudence, than a stout husbandman’.’

The second line of Proverbs 24:6 is identical to that in Proverbs 11:14. This proverb stresses the superiority of wisdom over physical strength.

SAYING 23

‘Wisdom is too high for fools; in the assembly at the gate they must not open their mouths.’ Proverbs 24:7

We must go to the high places in order to grasp wisdom. There is nothing wrong with asking for advice from certain people about a decision we need to make, whether it is a new job or moving to a new place to live.

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Wisdom is too high for him; he thinks it so, and therefore, despairing to attain it, he will take no pains in the pursuit of it, but sit down content without it. And really it is so; he has no capacity for it, and therefore the advantages he has for getting it are all in vain to him. It is no easy thing to get wisdom; those that have natural parts good enough, yet if they be foolish, that is, if they be slothful and will not take pains, if they be playful and trifling, and given to their pleasures, if they be viciously inclined and keep bad company, it is too high for them; they are not likely to reach it. And, for want of it, they are unfit for the service of their country: They open not their mouth in the gate; they are not admitted into the council or magistracy, or, if they are, they are dumb statues, and stand for cyphers; they say nothing, because they have nothing to say, and they know that if they should offer any thing it would not be heeded, nay, it would be hissed at. Let young men take pains to get wisdom, that they may be qualified for public business, and do it with reputation.’

SAYING 24

‘Whoever plots evil will be known as a schemer. The schemes of folly are sin, and people detest a mocker.’ Proverbs 24:8-9

We normally understand folly as a sin, but here it’s related to merely thinking about it. Sin starts in your mind, and then it grows, and before you know it, it has caused a lot of devastation, [James 1:15](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Fool is here taken for a wicked man, who is not only evil in his actions, but every thought of his heart is evil, and that continually. A simple thought about foolishness, or about sin itself, is not sinful; it is the purpose or device, the harbouring evil thoughts, and devising how to sin, that is criminal.’

A wicked man is not only despised as a fool is, but detested, [Psalms 35:15](#) / [Nehemiah 2:19](#).

SAYING 25

‘If you falter in a time of trouble, how small is your strength! Rescue those being led away to death; hold back those staggering toward slaughter. If you say, ‘But we knew nothing about this,’ does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who guards your life know it? Will he not repay everyone according to what they have done?’

Proverbs 24:10-12

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘In times of trial, we should endeavour to be doubly courageous; when a man loses his courage, his strength avails him nothing.’

We must be willing to help those who are struggling, James 5:19-20 / Galatians 6:1 / 2 Timothy 4:5 / Jude 1:23. The words, ‘if you say’, imply this may be an excuse to not be involved. With opportunity comes responsibility; if we can help someone, we had better do so, James 2:14-15.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘There are three situations here where a true man, instead of avoiding his duty, should discharge it. These are the crisis, Proverbs 24:10, the near-hopeless task, Proverbs 24:11, and pardonable ignorance. Such difficult, unanticipated and near-hopeless situations are to be expected in the Christian life, Acts 14:22.’

SAYING 26

‘Eat honey, my son, for it is good; honey from the comb is sweet to your taste. Know also that wisdom is like honey for you: If you find it, there is a future hope for you, and your hope will not be cut off.’ Proverbs 24:13-14

Wisdom is referred to as honey; it’s sweet and good for us. When we do, we have hope, eternal hope, Psalms 19:10.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Note the word IF. The teaching here is that one’s eternal hope depends upon one’s finding wisdom. The wisdom that saves the soul is found only in the Holy Bible; and therefore, an apostle has commanded us to study to show thyself approved unto God, 2 Timothy 2:15.’

SAYING 27

‘Do not lurk like a thief near the house of the righteous, do not plunder their dwelling place; for though the righteous fall seven times, they rise again, but the wicked stumble when calamity strikes.’ Proverbs 24:15-16

We all know that a thief’s intentions are never good. We need to rise again and keep fighting the good fight, 1 Timothy 6:11-16.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Though God permit the hand of violence sometimes to spoil his tent, temptations to assail his mind, and afflictions to press down his body, he constantly emerges; and every time he passes through the furnace, he comes out brighter and more refined.’

‘Seven times’ is normally enough to defeat someone, but a righteous man will continue to get up, Matthew 18:21-22.

SAYING 28

‘Do not gloat when your enemy falls; when they stumble, do not let your heart rejoice, or the LORD will see and disapprove and turn his wrath away from them.’ Proverbs 24:17-18

It’s so easy to boast and rejoice when someone we don’t like falls, but we must remember that vengeance is the Lord’s, Obadiah 12 / Romans 12:19. When God sees our joy, will He turn His anger toward us instead? We should never rejoice in someone else’s misfortunes, even though what they did was wrong, 2 Samuel 1:11-12.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The implication of the passage is that God might be more concerned with punishing his disobedient follower than that of the outright wicked.’

SAYING 29

‘Do not fret because of evildoers or be envious of the wicked, for the evildoer has no future hope, and the lamp of the wicked will be snuffed out.’ Proverbs 24:19-20

The warning is clear here: if we want to have a hope for the future, we mustn’t become like those evildoers.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Some have thought that this text intimates the annihilation of sinners; but it refers not to being, but to the state or condition of that being. The wicked shall be, but they shall not be HAPPY.’

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The prosperity of the wicked is only temporary; they are detested by God, Proverbs 3:32, and are doomed, Proverbs 24:20.’ The second line of Proverbs 24:20 is identical with that of Proverbs 13:9.’

SAYING 30

‘Fear the LORD and the king, my son, and do not join with rebellious officials, for those two will send sudden destruction on them, and who knows what calamities they can bring?’ Proverbs 24:21-22

Here we read about the Lord and the king and the importance of submitting and respecting them both. Romans 13:1-7 / 1 Peter 2:17.

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

1. Religion and loyalty must go together. As men, it is our duty to honour our Creator, to worship and reverence him, and to be always in his fear; as members of a community, incorporated for mutual benefit, it is our duty to be faithful and dutiful to the government God has set over us, Romans 13:1-2. Those who are truly religious will be loyal in conscience towards God; the godly in the land will be quiet in the land; and those who are not truly loyal, or will be so no longer than is for their interest, that are not religious. How should he be true to his prince that is false to his God? And, if they come into competition, it is an adjudged case; we must obey God rather than men.

2. Innovations in both are to be dreaded. Have nothing to do, he does not say, with those that change, for there may be cause to change for the better, but those that are given to change, that affect change for change-sake, out of a peevish discontent with that which is and a fondness for novelty, or a desire to fish in troubled waters: Meddle not with those that are given to change either in religion or in a civil government; come not into their secret; join not with them in their cabals, nor enter into the mystery of their iniquity.

3. Those that are of restless, factious, turbulent spirits, commonly pull mischief upon their own heads ere they are aware: Their calamity shall rise suddenly. Though they carry on their designs with the utmost secrecy, they will be discovered and brought to condign punishment when they little think of it. Who knows the time and manner of the ruin which both God and the king will bring on their contemners, both on them and those that meddle with them?’

This concludes the thirty sayings of the wise.

FURTHER SAYINGS OF THE WISE

‘These also are sayings of the wise: To show partiality in judging is not good: Whoever says to the guilty, ‘You are innocent,’ will be cursed by peoples and denounced by nations. But it will go well with those who convict the guilty, and rich blessing will come on them. An honest answer is like a kiss on the lips.’ Proverbs 24:23-26

Here we are reminded that God shows no favouritism, [Acts 10:34](#), and that He always wants to help the helpless, [Leviticus 19:9-37](#) / [James 2:1-11](#).

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘These verses are an example of some magistrate’s respect for the person of a wicked man, saying, ‘Thou art righteous.’ The hatred of peoples and nations for such behaviour is certain to follow, but all mankind honours sound and righteous judgment, and the blessing of God attends it.’

Why is an honest answer like a kiss on the lips? It’s a sign of true friendship, trust and honesty. Honesty is always the best policy.

‘Put your outdoor work in order and get your fields ready; after that, build your house.’ Proverbs 24:27

Here we are reminded of our priorities: get your life in order before trying to settle down, [Haggai 1:4-6](#) / [Matthew 6:33](#) / [Luke 14:28ff](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Do nothing without a plan. In winter, prepare seed, implements, tackle, gears, etc., for seed-time and harvest.’

‘Do not testify against your neighbour without cause—would you use your lips to mislead? Do not say, ‘I’ll do to them as they have done to me; I’ll pay them back for what they did.’ Proverbs 24:28-29

We mustn’t look for any old excuse to say something against anyone; we especially shouldn’t tell lies about them just to get our way, [Ephesians 4:25](#). Have you ever been angry with someone? What does that anger want you to do? That anger pushes us to get them back, sometimes like little children, but that’s the way the world works, not Christians. Again, this is the problem of vengeance, [Romans 12:17](#) / [Ephesians 4:25](#) / [Ephesians 4:29](#) / [1 Thessalonians 5:15](#).

PROCRASTINATION

‘I went past the field of a sluggard, past the vineyard of someone who has no sense; thorns had come up everywhere, the ground was covered with weeds, and the stone wall was in ruins. I applied my heart to what I observed and learned a lesson from what I saw: A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest—and poverty will come on you like a thief and scarcity like an armed man.’ Proverbs 24:30-34

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This, of course, is another denunciation of sloth and a warning against it. This ranks as one of the favourite subjects in Proverbs. It has already been treated in [Proverbs 10:26](#) / [Proverbs 12:11](#) / [Proverbs 12:24](#) / [Proverbs 12:27](#) / [Proverbs 13:4](#) / [Proverbs 14:4](#) / [Proverbs 14:23](#) / [Proverbs 15:19](#) / [Proverbs 16:26](#) / [Proverbs 18:9](#) / [Proverbs 19:15](#) / [Proverbs 19:24](#) / [Proverbs 20:4](#) / [Proverbs 20:13](#) / [Proverbs 21:25](#) / [Proverbs 22:13](#).’

We all suffer from procrastination at times; we’re all very good at putting things off until a later date. This attitude doesn’t surprise the wise person because it is what they had expected to find from the sluggard, [Ecclesiastes 11:3-4](#).

CHAPTER 25

INTRODUCTION

‘These are more proverbs of Solomon, compiled by the men of Hezekiah king of Judah’ Proverbs 25:1

Hezekiah was one of the few kings who actually honoured God, 2 Chronicles 31:20-21. This verse has given scholars much to think about. Did Hezekiah do the following?

1. Transcribe from one book to another, 2. Translate, 3. Collate? What effect does this have on our understanding of inspiration? None. All were inspired by God, 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It seems that the remaining part of this book contains proverbs which had been collected by the order of King Hezekiah, and were added to the preceding book as a sort of supplement, having been collected from traditional sayings of Solomon. And as the men of Hezekiah may mean Isaiah, Shebna, and other inspired men, who lived in that time, we may consider them as of equal authority with the rest, else such men could not have united them to the sacred book. The chronological notes in the margin of this and the five following chapters denote the time when the proverbs contained in them were collected together in the reign of Hezekiah, about two hundred and seventy years after the death of Solomon.’

NOTHING IS HIDDEN FROM GOD

‘It is the glory of God to conceal a matter; to search out a matter is the glory of kings. As the heavens are high and the earth is deep, so the hearts of kings are unsearchable. Remove the dross from the silver, and a silversmith can produce a vessel; remove wicked officials from the king’s presence, and his throne will be established through righteousness.’
Proverbs 25:2-5

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Proverbs 25:2 is not a reference to academic or scientific research, but it praises administrative probes. A king should know what is going on. Proverbs 25:3 is just another way of saying that nobody knows what any king is liable to do. The kings of Israel were a constant illustration of this truth. Proverbs 25:5 sets forth the requirement that if a king’s throne is to be established in righteousness, he must have proven and trustworthy servants and advisors. There prevailed among ancient kings the delusion that they ruled by Divine Right, and one may detect traces of this conceit in these verses.’

Prophecy is a perfect example of inspiration. It’s partially concealed until its fulfilment, then the glory of God’s wisdom and providence can be seen, Deuteronomy 29:29. There are so many things man does not know, Job 38-41. How many times have our leaders listened to bad advice? Only when the kings, presidents and ministers are wise and good, will the government be established in righteousness, 1 Kings 12:1-17.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘You cannot have a pure silver vessel till you have purified the silver; and no nation can have a king a public blessing till the wicked-all bad counsellors, wicked and interested ministers, and sycophants-are banished from the court and cabinet.’

‘Do not exalt yourself in the king’s presence, and do not claim a place among his great men; it is better for him to say to you, ‘Come up here,’ than for him to humiliate you before his nobles.’ Proverbs 25:6-7

Everyone needs a taste of humility from time to time, **Philippians 2:3-8**. If we won’t humble ourselves, then God will humble us, **James 4:10 / Luke 14:7-11**.

‘What you have seen with your eyes do not bring hastily to court, for what will you do in the end if your neighbour puts you to shame? If you take your neighbour to court, do not betray another’s confidence, or the one who hears it may shame you and the charge against you will stand.’ Proverbs 25:8-10

Once again, we’re reminded that we must obtain all of your information first before making any judgments on anyone else, **1 Corinthians 6:1-8**. We must understand all of the facts accurately, **Matthew 18:15 / Luke 12:57-59**.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘After squandering your money away upon lawyers, both they and the judge will at last leave it to be settled by twelve of your fellow citizens! OH, the folly of going to law! OH, the blindness of men, and the rapacity of unprincipled lawyers!’

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Another translation clarifies the passage: ‘Don’t be too quick to go to court about something you have seen; if another witness later proves you wrong, what will you do then? If you and your neighbour have a difference of opinion, settle it between yourselves and do not reveal any secrets. Otherwise, everyone will learn that you can’t keep a secret, and you will never live down the shame.’

‘Like apples of gold in settings of silver is a ruling rightly given. Like an earring of gold or an ornament of fine gold is the rebuke of a wise judge to a listening ear. Like a snow-cooled drink at harvest time is a trustworthy messenger to the one who sends him; he refreshes the spirit of his master.’ Proverbs 25:11-13

This could be a gold earring or a gold nose ring.

McGee, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The apples of gold were probably oranges.’ However, the mention of ornaments such as an ear-ring in the parallel verse probably means that the ‘apples of gold’ were some kind of beautiful ornament.’

Cook, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This is probably a reference to some kingly gift that Hiram, king of Tyre, had presented to Solomon. People gazed upon the cunning work and admired it, but the wise king saw in the costly rarity a parable of something higher.’

The point is that gold pleases the eye, and a cool drink pleases the heart. Normally, harvest time is a hot and sweaty time. The cool snow is a welcome change. It is refreshing to find an honest and faithful messenger, in other words, someone you trust.

‘Like clouds and wind without rain is one who boasts of gifts never given.’ Proverbs 25:14

These clouds are not worth much, nor is this person. This person boasts how good they are, **Acts 5:1-11**, but when it is time to produce the results, there is nothing. We must keep our promises, **2 Peter 2:17**.

‘Through patience a ruler can be persuaded, and a gentle tongue can break a bone.’ Proverbs 25:15

Once again, we’re reminded of the tremendous power of the tongue; it can be used for good or bad, **Luke 18:1-8 / James 3:3-6**.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Jesus may have had this in mind when he spoke of the ‘unjust judge’, **Luke 18:6**. The American Standard Version marginal reading allows ‘judge’ here instead of ruler.’

‘If you find honey, eat just enough—too much of it, and you will vomit.’ **Proverbs 25:16**

Solomon is basically saying that we should be moderate with all of our enjoyments, don’t overindulge.

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

1. We are allowed a sober and moderate use of the delights of sense: Hast thou found honey? It is not forbidden fruit to thee, as it was to Jonathan; thou mayest eat of it with thanksgiving to God, who, having created things grateful to our senses, has given us leave to make use of them. Eat as much as is sufficient, and no more. Enough is as good as a feast.

2. We are cautioned to take heed of excess. We must use all pleasures as we do honey, with a check upon our appetite, lest we take more than does us good and make ourselves sick with it. We are most in danger of surfeiting upon that which is most sweet, and therefore those that fare sumptuously every day have need to watch over themselves, lest their hearts be at any time overcharged. The pleasures of sense lose their sweetness by the excessive use of them and become nauseous, as honey, which turns sour in the stomach; it is therefore our interest, as well as our duty, to use them with sobriety.’

‘Seldom set foot in your neighbour’s house—too much of you, and they will hate you.’ **Proverbs 25:17**

Here we’re reminded not to impose on our neighbour. In other words, everyone needs some privacy, **Matthew 26:36-46**.

‘Like a club or a sword or a sharp arrow is one who gives false testimony against a neighbour. Like a broken tooth or a lame foot is reliance on the unfaithful in a time of trouble. Like one who takes away a garment on a cold day, or like vinegar poured on a wound, is one who sings songs to a heavy heart.’ **Proverbs 25:18-20**

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

1. The sin condemned is bearing false witness against our neighbour, either in judgment or in common conversation, contrary to the law of the ninth commandment.

2. That which it is here condemned for is the mischievousness of it; it is in its power to ruin not only men’s reputation, but their lives, estates, families, all that is dear to them. A false testimony is everything that is dangerous; it is a maul (or club to knock a man’s brains out with), a flail, which there is no fence against; it is a sword to wound near at hand and a sharp arrow to wound at a distance; we have therefore need to pray, Deliver my soul, O Lord! from lying lips, **Psalm 120:2**.’

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning **Proverbs 25:19**.

‘It would be hard for anyone to imagine two more uncomfortable conditions than those mentioned in line two. The more serious, of course, would be the foot out of joint (‘broken’ in some translations); because in loss of mobility one would be unable to flee from danger. To paraphrase the proverb it says that, ‘Trusting an unfaithful man in a crisis is both extremely painful and dangerous.’

When someone is sad, they don’t usually appreciate laughing and joking. Such actions do not make sense given the circumstances, **Romans 12:15**.

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

1. The absurdity here censured is singing songs to a heavy heart. Those who are in great sorrow are to be comforted by sympathising with them, condoling with them, and concurring in their lamentation. If we take that method, the

moving of our lips may assuage their grief, **Job 16:5**; but we take a wrong course with them if we think to relieve them by being merry with them, and endeavouring to make them merry; for it adds to their grief to see their friends so little concerned for them; it puts them upon ripping up the causes of their grief, and aggravating them, and makes them harden themselves in sorrow against the assaults of mirth.

2. The absurdities this is compared to are taking away a garment from a man in cold weather, which makes him colder, and pouring vinegar upon nitre, which, like water upon lime, puts it into a ferment; so improper, so incongruous, is it to sing pleasant songs to one that is of a sorrowful spirit. Some read it in a contrary sense: As he that puts on a garment in cold weather warms the body, or as vinegar upon nitre dissolves it, so he that sings songs of comfort to a person in sorrow refreshes him and dispels his grief.'

'If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; if he is thirsty, give him water to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head, and the LORD will reward you. Like a north wind that brings unexpected rain is a sly tongue—which provokes a horrified look.' Proverbs 25:21-23

This verse is quoted in **Romans 12:20**. We should always go the extra mile to help others, even our enemies, **2 Kings 6:22** / **Matthew 5:40-48** / **Romans 12:14-21**.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

'Heaping coals of fire upon the head of an enemy' is a metaphor referring to the pangs of conscience that an enemy will experience upon receiving such undeserved treatment.'

When you find out that someone has been talking about you 'behind your back', it certainly does not bring smiles!

'Better to live on a corner of the roof than share a house with a quarrelsome wife.' Proverbs 25:24

The husband has to go to the corner of the attic to get away from his wife, **Proverbs 21:9**. Solomon should know with his many wives, **1 Kings 11:3** / **Proverbs 21:9**.

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

1. How those are to be pitied that are unequally yoked, especially with such as are brawling and contentious, whether husband or wife; for it is equally true of both. It is better to be alone than to be joined to one who, instead of being a meet-help, is a great hindrance to the comfort of life.

2. How those may sometimes be envied that live in solitude; as they want the comfort of society, so they are free from the vexation of it. And as there are cases which give occasion to say, 'Blessed is the womb that has not borne,' so there are cases which give occasion to say, 'Blessed is the man who was never married, but who lies like a servant in a corner of the house-top.'

'Like cold water to a weary soul is good news from a distant land. Like a muddied spring or a polluted well are the righteous who give way to the wicked. It is not good to eat too much honey, nor is it honourable to search out matters that are too deep. Like a city whose walls are broken through is a person who lacks self-control. Proverbs 25:25-28

We all love a cool drink on a hot day, and we all love to hear nothing but good news, but there are times when we waste that good news on those who are just not interested, **Matthew 10:14**.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning **Proverbs 25:26**.

'Just as a corrupted source of water for a community brings sorrow to them all, so the tragic overthrow of a righteous man is a heartache to the surrounding neighbours and friends.'

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following concerning **Proverbs 25:27**.

‘He that searches too much into mysteries, is likely to be confounded by them. I really think this is the meaning of the place, and shall not puzzle either myself or my reader with the discordant explanations which have been brought forward with the hope of illustrating this passage.’

These verses are basically describing someone we cannot depend upon to stay within their limits. In other words, this is someone who, what we would say, just ‘flies off the handle,’ **Ephesians 4:26**.

CHAPTER 26

INTRODUCTION

‘Like snow in summer or rain in harvest, honour is not fitting for a fool. Like a fluttering sparrow or a darting swallow, an undeserved curse does not come to rest. A whip for the horse, a bridle for the donkey, and a rod for the backs of fools! Do not answer a fool according to his folly, or you yourself will be just like him. Answer a fool according to his folly, or he will be wise in his own eyes. Sending a message by the hands of a fool is like cutting off one’s feet or drinking poison.’ **Proverbs 26:1-6**

THE FOOL

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘In **Proverbs 25:13**, the cold of snow during harvest time was mentioned as a welcome blessing, but here, snow in summer is considered undesirable. Why? The cold of snow in **Proverbs 25:13** was from snow stored up from the previous winter; here the reference is to a snowfall in summer.’

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘As the sparrow flies about the house, and the swallow emigrates to strange countries; so an undeserved malediction may flutter about the neighbourhood for a season: but in a short time it will disappear as the bird of passage; and never take effect on the innocent person against whom it was pronounced.’

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

1. Wicked men are compared to the horse and the ass, so brutish are they, so unreasonable, so unruly, and not to be governed but by force or fear, so low has sin sunk men, so much below themselves. Man indeed is born like the wild ass’s colt, but as some by the grace of God are changed, and become rational, so others by custom in sin are hardened, and become more and more sottish, as the horse and the mule, **Psalm 32:9**.

2. Direction is given to use them accordingly. Princes, instead of giving honour to a fool (**Proverbs 26:**), must put disgrace upon him, instead of putting power into his hand, must exercise power over him. A horse unbroken needs a whip for correction, and an ass a bridle for direction and to check him when he would turn out of the way; so a vicious man, who will not be under the guidance and restraint of religion and reason, ought to be whipped and bridled, to be rebuked severely, and made too smart for what he has done amiss, and to be restrained from offending any more.’

Why do some honour fools in the eyes of the people? Why do some honour a lot of movie stars, athletes, rock stars, etc.? Most people look to them as ‘gods’ as if they have it made, and they know everything.

Like sparrows, they flutter around without setting any real goals. Like the horse, donkey and roe, they never reach their intended target because an innocent person is being attacked. They require compulsive discipline.

Solomon is saying that we shouldn’t take a foolish person seriously and try to reason with their empty arguments. There are times a fool should be answered, and times they shouldn’t be answered. These proverbs would be applied differently depending on the circumstances.

The messenger took the place of the one sending him. Sending by such a person is utterly useless. They are not fit to be entrusted with any business, not fit to go on an errand.

‘Like the useless legs of one who is lame is a proverb in the mouth of a fool. Like tying a stone in a sling is the giving of honour to a fool. Like a thorn bush in a drunkard’s hand is a proverb in the mouth of a fool. Like an archer who wounds at random, is one who hires a fool or any passer-by. As a dog returns to its vomit, so fools repeat their folly. Do you see a person wise in their own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for them.’ Proverbs 26:7-12

A proverb is useless to a fool because they don’t understand and cannot apply it to themselves. Tying a stone to a sling is useless because it cannot be slung, which is dangerous.

We shouldn’t give a place of honour to a fool. A fool is injured by it in ways they wouldn’t be if they were sober. A drunken person doesn’t feel any pain, and so they wouldn’t know that their condition is serious. It is not only irresponsible, but also crazy.

The fool never learns, and, like this dog, they continue to do the things that will not work. They have difficulty learning from experience. Peter uses this proverb in [2 Peter 2:22](#) to speak about those who fall away. The ‘know-it-all’ is the egotist; they are the worst type of person.

THE PROBLEM OF LAZINESS

‘A sluggard says, ‘There’s a lion in the road, a fierce lion roaming the streets!’ As a door turns on its hinges, so a sluggard turns on his bed. A sluggard buries his hand in the dish; he is too lazy to bring it back to his mouth. A sluggard is wiser in his own eyes than seven people who answer discreetly.’ Proverbs 26:13-16

Here Solomon gives another ‘lame’ excuse for those who don’t want to work. He says the sluggard uses the excuse that there is a lion on the road, a fierce lion roaming the streets. This would be impossible as lions don’t roam around populated.

Notice that both a door and a sluggard move, but neither goes anywhere. Despite their laziness, the sluggard considers themselves wise, even wiser than a team of seven competent people who are trained to give answers to difficult questions.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Seven here only means perfection, abundance, or multitude. He is wiser in his own eyes than a multitude of the wisest men.’

‘Like one who grabs a stray dog by the ears is someone who rushes into a quarrel not their own. Like a maniac, shooting flaming arrows of death is one who deceives their neighbour and says, ‘I was only joking!’ Without wood, a fire goes out; without a gossip, a quarrel dies down. As charcoal to embers and as wood to fire, so is a quarrelsome

person for kindling strife. The words of a gossip are like choice morsels; they go down to the inmost parts. Like a coating of silver dross on earthenware are fervent lips with an evil heart.’ Proverbs 26:17-23

Here Solomon reminds us to mind our own business, [Luke 12:14](#). Remember that most dogs were not domestic pets in Biblical times; they were wild, therefore, to grasp a dog by the ears was a sure way to get bitten.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘There is no Christian virtue any higher than that of refraining from meddling with other men’s quarrels. If one wonders what it is like to take a dog by the ears, he should try it once. He will never try it again! It is the sure way to be bitten by a dog. There might be an exception to this in a small lap dog, but ‘The dog in Palestine was not a domesticated animal; and to seize any dog was dangerous’.

They have no concern for the deadly consequences. He reminds us not to be a ‘practical joker’.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘How many hearts have been made sad, and how many reputations have been slain, by this kind of sport! ‘I designed no harm by what I said;’ ‘It was only in jest,’ Sportive as such persons may think their conduct to be, it is as ruinous as that of the madman who shoots arrows, throws firebrands, and projects in all directions instruments of death, so that some are wounded, some burnt, and some slain.’

We’re not to ‘add fuel to the fire’ by continuing to gossip, [Proverbs 18:8](#), if we hear gossip, we shouldn’t repeat it to someone else, [James 3:6](#). They take a situation that might otherwise die out and turn it into a major conflict, [Deuteronomy 19:15](#) / [2 Corinthians 13:1](#) / [1 Timothy 5:19](#). Smooth lips may cover an evil heart like glaze covers the rough earthenware of a piece of pottery, [Psalms 12:2](#).

THE SECRET, MALICIOUS ATTITUDES

‘Enemies disguise themselves with their lips, but in their hearts, they harbour deceit. Though their speech is charming, do not believe them, for seven abominations fill their hearts. Their malice may be concealed by deception, but their wickedness will be exposed in the assembly.’ Proverbs 26:24-26

Solomon speaks of a man who hates another but flatters him with a view to finding some way to destroy him. The number seven is an illustration of something being full; in other words, this is a perfect degree of hate and malice. A group will be able to see through their disguise and reveal their real nature.

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

1. Not to be so foolish as to suffer ourselves to be imposed upon by the pretensions of friendship. Remember to distrust when a man speaks fair; be not too forward to believe him unless you know him well, for it is possible there may be seven abominations in his heart, a great many projects of mischief against you, which he is labouring so industriously to conceal with his fair speech. Satan is an enemy that hates us, and yet in his temptations speaks fair, as he did to Eve, but it is madness to give credit to him, for there are seven abominations in his heart; seven other spirits does one unclean spirit bring more wicked than himself.

2. Not to be so wicked as to impose upon any with a profession of friendship; for, though the fraud may be carried on plausibly awhile, it will be brought to light.’

‘Whoever digs a pit will fall into it; if someone rolls a stone, it will roll back on them.’ Proverbs 26:27

Solomon is basically saying, those who set traps for others will fall into their own traps as a boomerang returns to the hand which throws it, Esther 7:10 / Daniel 6:24-28.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘In ancient warfare, heavy stones were rolled to the top of some eminence, where they could be released to cause damage or destruction to an attacker. Such a trap, set for others, could also, under some change of circumstance, destroy the one that set it.’

‘A lying tongue hates those it hurts, and a flattering mouth works ruin.’ Proverbs 26:28

Here again, we’re warned about the use of our tongues, James 3:2-12. When people use their tongues to tell lies, we shouldn’t believe a word they tell us.

‘Everyone lies to their neighbour; they flatter with their lips but harbour deception in their hearts. May the LORD silence all flattering lips and every boastful tongue.’ Psalm 12:2-3.

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

‘There are two sorts of lies equally detestable: 1. A slandering lie, which avowedly hates those it is spoken of: A lying tongue hates those that are afflicted by it; it afflicts them by calumnies and reproaches because it hates them and can thus smite them secretly where they are without defence; and it hates them because it has afflicted them and made them its enemies. The mischief of this is open and obvious; it afflicts, it hates, and owns it, and everybody sees it.

2. A flattering lie, which secretly works the ruin of those it is spoken to. In the former, the mischief is plain, and men guard against it as well as they can, but in this, it is little suspected, and men betray themselves by being credulous of their own praises and the compliments that are passed upon them. A wise man, therefore, will be more afraid of a flatterer that kisses and kills than of a slanderer that proclaims war.’

CHAPTER 27

INTRODUCTION

‘Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring.’ Proverbs 27:1

TOMORROW MAY NEVER COME

This verse reminds us of the limitations of human planning, Psalms 30:6-7. We should plan, but do so with the realisation of our lack of ultimate control, James 4:13-17.

‘Let someone else praise you, and not your own mouth; an outsider, and not your own lips.’ Proverbs 27:2

The wise person doesn’t try to build their reputation by praising themselves. In other words, never praise yourself, but let others do it.

‘Stone is heavy and sand a burden, but a fool’s provocation is heavier than both. Anger is cruel and fury overwhelming, but who can stand before jealousy?’ Proverbs 27:3-4

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

‘These two verses show the intolerable mischief, 1. Of ungoverned passion. The wrath of a fool, who, when he is provoked, cares not what he says and does, is more grievous than a great stone or a load of sand. It lies heavily upon himself. Those who have no command of their passions do themselves even sink under the load of them. The wrath of a fool lies heavily upon those he is enraged at, to whom, in his fury, he will be in danger of doing some mischief. It is therefore our wisdom not to give provocation to a fool, but, if he be in a passion, to get out of his way.

2. Of rooted malice, which is as much worse than the former as coals of juniper are worse than a fire of thorns. Wrath (it is true) is cruel, and does many a barbarous thing, and anger is outrageous; but a secret enmity at the person of another, an envy at his prosperity, and a desire of revenge for some injury or affront, are much more mischievous. One may avoid a sudden heat, as David escaped Saul’s javelin, but when it grows, as Saul’s did, to a settled envy, there is no standing before it; it will pursue; it will overtake. He that grieves at the good of another will be still contriving to do him hurt and will keep his anger forever.’

Nothing is harder to bear than the uncontrolled and misguided anger of a fool. The question asked here is a question which assumes there is no answer. We cannot adequately protect ourselves from anger and fury, but with the Lord’s help, we can.

‘Better is open rebuke than hidden love. Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses.’
Proverbs 27:5-6

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following concerning an open rebuke.

‘Yet it is a rough medicine, and none can desire it. But the genuine open-hearted friend may be intended, who tells you your faults freely but conceals them from all others.’

It’s better to have a friend whose honest confrontations leave their wounds than kisses from those who hate us. Real friendship cannot exist when a person must be constantly restrained and timed. This was how Judas betrayed Christ, Matthew 26:49. True friendship should have room for constructive criticism, Romans 12:9-10.

‘One who is full loathes honey from the comb, but to the hungry even what is bitter tastes sweet.’ Proverbs 27:7

The application here is far-reaching. Need creates desire, while an abundance may lead to the rejection of that which is wholesome and good.

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Solomon here, as often in this book, shows that the poor have in some respects the advantage of the rich; for, 1. They have a better relish of their enjoyments than the rich have. Hunger is the best sauce. Coarse fare, with a good appetite to it, has a sensible pleasantness in it, which those are strangers to whose hearts are overcharged with surfeiting. Those who fare sumptuously every day nauseate even delicate food, as the Israelites did the quails; whereas those who have no more than their necessary food, though it be such as the full soul would call bitter, to them it is sweet; they eat it with pleasure, digest it, and are refreshed by it.

2. They are more thankful for their enjoyments: The hungry will bless God for bread and water, while those who are full think the greatest dainties and varieties scarcely worth giving thanks for.’ The Virgin Mary seems to refer to this when she says, Luke 1:53. The hungry, who know how to value God’s blessings, are filled with good things, but the rich, who despise them, are justly sent empty away.’

‘Like a bird that flees its nest is anyone who flees from home.’ Proverbs 27:8

This is an observation of the stress and strain of moving. Leaving the familiar can be traumatic, Genesis 4:12-16.

‘Perfume and incense bring joy to the heart, and the pleasantness of a friend springs from their heartfelt advice.’
Proverbs 27:9

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Anointing the head and various parts of the body with aromatic oil is frequent in the East, and fumigating the beards of the guests at the conclusion of an entertainment is almost universal; as is also sprinkling rose-water, and water highly odoriferous.’

Solomon is saying that friendship is better than the joy that sweet perfumes bring.

‘Do not forsake your friend or a friend of your family, and do not go to your relative’s house when disaster strikes you—better a neighbour nearby than a relative far away.’ Proverbs 27:10

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘A well and long tried friend is invaluable. Him that has been a friend to thy family never forget, and never neglect.’

‘Nearby’ implies near enough to help a neighbour on the day of calamity. Sometimes our friend or our father’s friend can do more for us than a relative.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Two other proverbs are concerned with the admonition we have here. They are Proverbs 17:17 and Proverbs 18:24. Also, Proverbs 19:7 explains how it is that brothers may hate each other. What is related here is a sad fact that brothers (or sisters) may sometimes be quite unwilling to aid each other in times of misfortune or distress. Cook revised the proverb here as follows: ‘Better is the neighbour who is really ‘near’ in heart and spirit than a brother who is ‘near’ by blood but ‘far off in brotherly feeling’.’

‘Be wise, my son, and bring joy to my heart; then I can answer anyone who treats me with contempt.’ Proverbs 27:11

Solomon is simply saying that sometimes a teacher can answer critics by pointing to the accomplishments of their students.

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Children are here exhorted to be wise and good, 1. That they may be a comfort to their parents and may make their hearts glad, even when the evil days come, and so recompense them for their care, Proverbs 23:15.

2. That they may be a credit to them: “That I may answer him that reproaches me with having been over-strict and severe in bringing up my children, and having taken a wrong method with them in restraining them from the liberties which other young people take.’

‘The prudent see danger and take refuge, but the simple keep going and pay the penalty. Take the garment of one who puts up security for a stranger; hold it in pledge if it is done for an outsider.’ Proverbs 27:12-13

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

1. Evil may be foreseen. Where there is temptation, it is easy to foresee that if we thrust ourselves into it there will be sin, and as easily to foresee that if we venture upon the evil of sin, there will follow the evil of punishment; and, commonly, God warns before he wounds, having set watchmen over us, Jeremiah 6:17.

2. It will be well or ill with us according as we do or do not improve the foresight we have of evil before us: The prudent man, foreseeing the evil, forecasts accordingly, and hides himself, but the simple is either so dull that he does not foresee it or so wilful and slothful that he will take no care to avoid it, and so he passes on securely and is punished. We do well for ourselves when we provide for the hereafter.

3. It shows who those are that are hastening to poverty, those that have so little consideration as to be bound for everybody that will ask them and those that are given to women. Such as these will take up money as far as ever their credit will go, but they will certainly cheat their creditors at last, nay, they are cheating them all along. An honest man may be made a beggar, but he is not honest who makes himself one.

4. It advises us to be so discreet in ordering our affairs as not to lend money to those who are manifestly wasting their estates, unless they give very good security for it. Foolish lending is an injustice to our families. He does not say, 'Get another to be bound with him,' for he that makes himself a common voucher will have those to be his security who are as insolvent as himself; therefore, take his garment.'

If we are this type of person, Proverbs 22:3 / Proverbs 20:16, we need to take what security we can, while we can, because even that will soon be gone, 1 Thessalonians 5:22.

'If anyone loudly blesses their neighbour early in the morning, it will be taken as a curse.' Proverbs 27:14

This is appealing to common sense, i.e. do not call at 6 A.M.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'The picture of the ostentatious flatterer going at daybreak to pour out blessings on his patron. For any good that he does, for any thanks he gets, he might as well utter curses.'

'A quarrelsome wife is like the dripping of a leaky roof in a rainstorm; restraining her is like restraining the wind or grasping oil with the hand. As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.' Proverbs 27:15-17

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'Here, as in the marginal reference, the flat, earthen roof of Eastern houses, always liable to cracks and leakage, supplies the groundwork of the similitude.'

Nobody likes a nag, especially when that's all they do. We become dull without the sharpening of our minds and character in studying with and associating with others.

We need our friends, but not those who constantly nag us; we need good friends so that we can run ideas and understanding by each other and so grow in our knowledge.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'The proverb expresses the gain of mutual counsel as found in clear, well-defined thoughts. Two minds, thus acting on each other, become more acute. This is better than to see in 'sharpening' the idea of provoking, and the point of the maxim in the fact that the quarrels of those who have been friends are bitter in proportion to their previous intimacy.'

'The one who guards a fig tree will eat its fruit, and whoever protects their master will be honoured.' Proverbs 27:18

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

'Just as the fig-tree requires constant care, but also yields abundant fruit, so the ministrations of a faithful servant will not be without their due reward.'

We make the mistake of rebuking the wrong people. We talk to those who come to church about the importance of coming to church, whilst at the same time those who don't come to church never hear those same words spoken to them, etc, John 12:26 / 1 Corinthians 9:7 / 2 Timothy 2:6.

‘As water reflects the face, so one's life reflects the heart. Death and Destruction are never satisfied, and neither are human eyes. The crucible for silver and the furnace for gold, but people are tested by their praise.’ Proverbs 27:19-21

We begin to know ourselves through our relationships with others. This is an observation of the nature of our heart's desire; we never have enough of anything we really want.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘As we see our own face when we look in the mirror-like surface of the water, so in every heart of man we may see our own likeness. In spite of all diversities, we come upon the common human nature in which we all alike share. Others see in the reference to the reflection in the water the thought that we judge others by ourselves, find them faithful or the reverse, as we ourselves are.’

‘Hades, the world of the dead, and Destruction (Death, the destroying power, personified) have been at all times and in all countries thought of as all-devouring, insatiable (compare the marginal reference). Yet one thing is equally so, the lust of the eye, the restless craving which grows with what it feeds on, Ecclesiastes 1:8.’

Our character is cultivated by the praise we accept from others. Also, we are judged by what others praise us for. Who likes receiving praise? We all do. The problem comes when that praise takes over and goes to our heads.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘As silver and gold are tried by the art of the refiner, so is a man's heart by the praise he receives. If he feels it not, he deserves it; if he be puffed up by it, he is worthless.’

‘Though you grind a fool in a mortar, grinding them like grain with a pestle, you will not remove their folly from them.’ Proverbs 27:22

Even though the imagery is unclear, the message is not. It is almost impossible to remove folly from a fool.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘To pound wheat in a mortar with a pestle, in order to free the wheat from its husks and impurities, is to go through a far more elaborate process than threshing. But the folly of the fool is not thus to be got rid of. It sticks to him to the last; all discipline, teaching, experience seem to be wasted on him.’

THE BENEFITS OF TAKING CARE OF OUR ‘EQUIPMENT’

‘Be sure you know the condition of your flocks, give careful attention to your herds; for riches do not endure forever, and a crown is not secure for all generations. When the hay is removed, and new growth appears, and the grass from the hills is gathered in, the lambs will provide you with clothing, and the goats with the price of a field. You will have plenty of goats' milk to feed your family and to nourish your female servants.’ Proverbs 27:23-27

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The directions to the end of the chapter refer chiefly to pastoral and agricultural affairs. Do not trust thy flocks to the shepherd merely; number them thyself; look into their condition; see how they are tended; and when, and with what, and in what proportion, they are fed.’

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The money which men may steal, or waste, is contrasted with the land of which the owner is not so easily deprived. Nor will the crown (both the ‘crown of pure gold’ worn on the mitre of the high priest, [Exodus 29:6](#) / [Exodus 39:30](#); and the kingly diadem, the symbol of power generally) be transmitted (as flocks and herds had been) “from one generation to another.”

‘Stress is laid on the regular succession of the products of the earth. The ‘grass’ (‘hay’) of the first clause is (compare [Psalm 37:2](#) / [Psalm 90:5](#) / [Psalm 103:15](#) / [2 Kings 19:26](#)) the proverbial type of what is perishable and fleeting. The verse gives a picture of the pleasantness of the farmer’s calling; compared with this, what can wealth or rank offer? With this, there mingles (compare [Proverbs 27:23](#)) the thought that each stage of that life in its season requires care and watchfulness.’

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It seems that bread, with goat’s milk, was the general article of food for the master and his family; and for the servant maids who assisted in the household work, and performed the operations required in the dairy.’

This is all about thinking ahead, preparing, and not neglecting our future responsibilities. We need to work to feed our families and pay the bills. The idea is simply this: Will we have enough food in the house to feed our families next week? [Genesis 2:15](#).

CHAPTER 28

INTRODUCTION

‘The wicked flee though no one pursues, but the righteous are as bold as a lion.’ Proverbs 28:1

PLENTY OF NOTHING

Why would the wicked flee even though no one is after them? Guilt! Fear of God’s wrath!

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

‘What continual frights those are subject to that go on in wicked ways. Guilt in the conscience makes men a terror to themselves, so that they are ready to flee when none pursues; like one that absconds for debt, who thinks everyone he meets a bailiff. Though they pretend to be easy, there are secret fears which haunt them wherever they go, so that they fear where no present or imminent danger is, [Psalm 53:5](#). Those that have made God their enemy, and know it, cannot but see the whole creation at war with them, and therefore can have no true enjoyment of themselves, no confidence, no courage, but a fearful looking for of judgment. Sin makes men cowards.’

How can the righteous be bold? Even when external danger really threatens, they are bold and courageous like a young lion, because their strength is in God, Ephesians 6:10. Think of Paul and his boldness when he stood firm in front of those who wanted to kill him, Acts 22:30-23:35.

‘When a country is rebellious, it has many rulers, but a ruler with discernment and knowledge maintains order.’
Proverbs 28:2

When I read this verse, the phrase, ‘too many chiefs and not enough Indians’, comes to mind. When the land is in trouble, its rulers will not last long. We need godly people to preserve the kingdom.

Jeremiah sought for a righteous man, and because he could not find one, the kingdom was destroyed, Jeremiah 5:1-6. King after king was murdered or killed because they wouldn’t listen to God, 2 Kings 15:8-15.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Nations, as nations, cannot be judged in a future world; therefore, God judges them here. And where the people are very wicked, and the constitution very bad, the succession of princes is frequent; they are generally taken off by an untimely death. Where the people know that the constitution is in their favour, they seldom disturb the prince, as they consider him the guardian of their privileges.’

‘A ruler who oppresses the poor is like a driving rain that leaves no crops.’ Proverbs 28:3

Note that some translations have these words, ‘A needy man that oppreseth the poor is (like) a sweeping rain which leaveth no food.’

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Scholars admit that this is a fair rendition of the Hebrew text, but what is said here does not correspond with certain facts. Throughout the Old Testament, a poor man is nowhere presented as an oppressor of the poor; and furthermore, it could not add to the distress of the poor that the oppressor was one of their own class. This has led to various renditions. ‘A wicked ruler who oppresses the poor is a beating rain that leaves no food.’ ‘A tyrant oppressing the poor is like a flood that leaves no food.’ If the standard renditions are followed, we might cite Abimelech, the son of Gideon, as the type of ‘poor man’ oppressor intended by the Hebrew text.’

Floods were frequent in the east, sometimes flocks, crops and houses were carried away with them. Those in positions of authority must be careful, Matthew 18:28.

‘Those who forsake instruction praise the wicked, but those who heed it resist them. Evil-doers do not understand what is right, but those who seek the LORD understand it fully.’ Proverbs 28:4-5

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

1. Those who praise the wicked make it appear that they do themselves forsake the law, and go contrary to it, for that curses and condemns the wicked. Wicked people will speak well of one another, and so strengthen one another’s hands in their wicked ways, hoping thereby to silence the clamours of their own consciences and to serve the interests of the devil’s kingdom, which is not done by anything so effectually as by keeping vice in reputation.

2. Those that do indeed make conscience of the law of God themselves will, in their places, vigorously oppose sin, and bear their testimony against it, and do what they can to shame and suppress it. They will reprove the works of darkness and silence the excuses which are made for those works, and do what they can to bring gross offenders to punishment, that others may hear and fear.’

The idea here is that if it feels good, do it. If it is right for us, it is good, Romans 1:18-32. Usually, those who accept this philosophy are lawbreakers. God is just; He can't simply overlook our sins. We should know what justice means; this is also true in spiritual matters, 1 John 2:20 / 1 John 2:27. They know the truth, James 1:23-24.

‘Better the poor whose walk is blameless than the rich whose ways are perverse.’ Proverbs 28:6

Solomon is simply saying that wholeness of character is better than money, Proverbs 19:1.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This is a variation of Proverbs 19:1. There, the righteous poor man is better than a fool; here, he is better than a wealthy wicked man. It's true both ways.’

‘A discerning son heeds instruction, but a companion of gluttons disgraces his father. Whoever increases wealth by taking interest or profit from the poor amasses it for another, who will be kind to the poor. If anyone turns a deaf ear to my instruction, even their prayers are detestable.’ Proverbs 28:7-9

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

1. Religion is true wisdom, and it makes men wise in every relation. He that conscientiously keeps the law is wise, and he will be particularly a wise son, that is, will act discreetly towards his parents, for the law of God teaches him to do so.

2. Bad company is a great hindrance to religion. Those who are companions of riotous men, who choose such for their companions and delight in their conversation, will certainly be drawn from keeping the law of God and drawn to transgress it, Psalms 119:115.

3. Wickedness is not only a reproach to the sinner himself, but to all that are akin to him. He that keeps rakish company, and spends his time and money with them, not only grieves his parents, but shames them; it turns to their disrepute, as if they had not done their duty to him. They are ashamed that a child of theirs should be scandalous and abusive to their neighbours.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following concerning Proverbs 28:8.

‘By taking unlawful interest for his money; lending to a man in great distress, money, for the use of which he requires an exorbitant sum.’

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning Proverbs 28:9.

‘Hearing the law (here) is not a reference merely to hearing it read. It means ‘accepting and obeying the law.’ If a man is disobedient to God, even his prayer is an abomination to God. The same thing is said of the wicked man's sacrifice, Proverbs 15:1, and even of his very thoughts, Proverbs 15:26. That God indeed refuses to hear some prayers is mentioned by Isaiah, Isaiah 1:15.’

Would it make any difference if this person were a member of the church? Of course not. What's the point in praying for forgiveness if we intend to deliberately sin again? Not even Moses' prayer could be answered when it was against God's law, Numbers 12:13.

‘Whoever leads the upright along an evil path will fall into their own trap, but the blameless will receive a good inheritance. The rich are wise in their own eyes; one who is poor and discerning sees how deluded they are. When the righteous triumph, there is great elation; but when the wicked rise to power, people go into hiding.’ Proverbs 28:10-

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘When the wicked succeed in tempting the righteous, Vice seems to win a triumph. But the triumph is suicidal. The tempter will suffer the punishment he deserves, and the blameless, if true to themselves, will be strengthened and ennobled by the temptation.’

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Poor men know what rich men really are. The rich may fool themselves into thinking they are really wise and good, but poor people see through the masks to their true worth.’

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘When true religion is no longer persecuted, and the word of God duly esteemed, there is great glory; for the word of the Lord has then free course, runs, and is glorified: but when the wicked rise – when they are elevated to places of trust, and put at the head of civil affairs, then the righteous man is obliged to hide himself; the word of the Lord becomes scarce, and there is no open vision.’

We need to be careful that we practice what we preach; all of us have choices, but some Christians have no choice. Under communism, for example, wicked men force Christians to worship in secret.

‘Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy.’ Proverbs 28:13

Merely admitting we are sinful is not worth anything! There’s nothing wrong with admitting we have done something wrong as long as we learn from it, [Romans 14:11](#) / [Romans 15:9](#) / [James 5:16](#) / [1 John 1:9](#).

‘Blessed is the one who always trembles before God, but whoever hardens their heart falls into trouble. Like a roaring lion or a charging bear is a wicked ruler over a helpless people. A tyrannical ruler practices extortion, but one who hates ill-gotten gain will enjoy a long reign.’ Proverbs 28:14-16

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The ‘fear’ here is not so much reverential awe, as anxious, or ‘nervous’ sensitiveness of conscience. To most men, this temperament seems that of the self-tormentor. To him who looks deeper, it is a condition of blessedness, and the callousness which is opposed to it ends in misery. The form of political wretchedness, when the poverty of the oppressed subjects not only embitters their sufferings but exasperates the brutal ferocity of the ruler.’

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Two things are here intimated to be the causes of the mal-administration of princes: 1. The love of money, that root of all evil; for hating covetousness here stands opposed to oppression, according to Moses’s character of good magistrates, men fearing God and hating covetousness. [Exodus 18:21](#), not only not being covetous, but hating it, and shaking the hands from the holding of bribes. A ruler that is covetous will neither do justly nor love mercy, but the people under him shall be bought and sold.

2. Want of consideration: He that hates covetousness shall prolong his government and peace, shall be happy in the affections of his people and the blessing of his God. It is as much in the interest as the duty of princes to reign in righteousness. Oppressors, therefore, and tyrants are the greatest fools in the world; they want understanding; they do not consult their own honour, ease, and safety, but sacrifice all to their ambition of an absolute and arbitrary power. They might be much happier in the hearts of their subjects than in their necks or estates.’

It’s more blessed to have God as our ruler than it is to have a tyrannical, cruel leader, who desires unjust gain, which is covetousness, [Daniel 7:1-8](#) / [Luke 12:15](#).

‘Anyone tormented by the guilt of murder will seek refuge in the grave; let no one hold them back.’ Proverbs 28:17

Nero killed so many close friends and relatives that he did not have anyone left to trust. Let the law set the penalty and then enforce it, i.e., the death penalty, 2 Chronicles 26:20. If someone won't repent of their ways, they will die in their sins, Luke 13:3 / Acts 2:38.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘He who either slays the innocent, or procures his destruction, may flee to hide himself, but let none give him protection. The law demands his life, because he is a murderer; and let none deprive justice of its claim.’

‘The one whose walk is blameless is kept safe, but the one whose ways are perverse will fall into the pit. Those who work their land will have abundant food, but those who chase fantasies will have their fill of poverty. A faithful person will be richly blessed, but one eager to get rich will not go unpunished.’ Proverbs 28:18-20

Here we read about having plenty of nothing.

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

1. Those who are honest are always safe. He that acts with sincerity, that speaks as he thinks, has a single eye, in everything, to the glory of God and the good of his brethren, that would not, for a world, do an unjust thing if he knew it, that in all manner of conversation walks uprightly, he shall be saved hereafter. We find a glorious company of those in whose mouth was found no guile, Revelation 14:5. They shall be safe now. Integrity and uprightness will preserve men, will give them a holy security in the worst of times; for it will preserve their comfort, their reputation, and all their interests. They may be injured, but they cannot be hurt.

2. Those that are false and dishonest are never safe: He that is perverse in his ways, that thinks to secure himself by fraudulent practices, by dissimulation and treachery, or by an estate ill-got, he shall fall, nay, he shall fall at once, not gradually, and with warning given, but suddenly, without previous notice, for he is least safe when he is most secure. He falls at once, and so has neither time to guard against his ruin nor to provide for it; and being a surprise upon him, it will be so much the greater terror to him.’

The blessings mentioned are both physical, Mark 10:30, and spiritual, Revelation 2:10. If we're in a hurry to be rich, not only is it foolish, but it is also sinful, Luke 18:18-23.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Paul admonished Christians in the strongest language against striving to be rich, 1 Timothy 6:6-10. The lifestyle that is most compatible with the hope of receiving at last the crown of life that never fades away is one that stresses industry, contentment, kindness and a genuine concern for the welfare of others as well as that of one's own family.’

‘To show partiality is not good—yet a person will do wrong for a piece of bread. The stingy are eager to get rich and are unaware that poverty awaits them. Whoever rebukes a person will, in the end, gain favour rather than one who has a flattering tongue. Whoever robs their father or mother and says, ‘It's not wrong,’ is a partner to one who destroys.’
Proverbs 28:21-24

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Dishonest partiality leads men who have enslaved themselves to it to transgress, even when the inducement is altogether disproportionate. A ‘piece of bread’ was proverbial at all times as the most extreme point of poverty.’

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

1. Flatterers may please those for a time who, upon second thoughts, will detest and despise them. If ever they come to be convinced of the evil of those sinful courses they were flattered in, and to be ashamed of the pride and vanity which were humoured and gratified by those flatteries, they will hate the fawning flatterers as having had an ill design upon them, and the fulsome flatteries as having had an ill effect upon them and become nauseous.

2. Reprobers may displease those at first who, yet afterwards, when the passion is over, and the bitter physic begins to work well, will love and respect them. He that deals faithfully with his friend, in telling him of his faults, though he may put him into some heat for the present, and perhaps have hard words, instead of thanks, for his pains, yet afterwards he will not only have the comfort in his own bosom of having done his duty, but he also whom he reproved will acknowledge that it was a kindness, will entertain a high opinion of his wisdom and faithfulness, and look upon him as fit to be a friend. He that cries out against his surgeon for hurting him when he is searching his wound will yet pay him well, and thank him too, when he has cured it.'

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'The father's property is as much his own, in reference to the child, as that of the merest stranger. He who robs his parents is worse than a common robber; to the act of dishonesty and rapine, he adds ingratitude, cruelty, and disobedience. Such a person is the compatriot of a destroyer; he may be considered as a murderer.'

So often we do not feel the responsibility for the money borrowed from a relative, but a debt is a debt, and we need to pay it, Judges 17:2 / Mark 7:10-13.

'The greedy stir up conflict, but those who trust in the LORD will prosper. Those who trust in themselves are fools, but those who walk in wisdom are kept safe.' Proverbs 28:25-26

Note that some translations use the word 'fat' instead of 'prosper'.

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

1. Those make themselves lean, and continually unquiet, that are haughty and quarrelsome, for they are opposed to those that shall be made fat: He that is of a proud heart, that is conceited of himself and looks with a contempt upon all about him, that cannot bear either competition or contradiction, he stirs up strife, makes mischief, and creates disturbance to himself and everybody else.

2. Those who make themselves fat, and always easy, that live in a continual dependence upon God and his grace: He who puts his trust in the Lord, who, instead of struggling for himself, commits his cause to God, shall be made fat. He saves the money which others spend upon their pride and contentiousness; he enjoys himself, and has abundant satisfaction in his God; and thus, his soul dwells at ease, and he is most likely to have plenty of outward good things. None live so easily, so pleasantly, as those who live by faith.'

The Bible does not endorse the saying, 'let your conscience be your guide.' If a conscience were biblically trained, then it would properly guide us, Matthew 7:24-27. Those who are self-reliant need to be very careful, Jeremiah 17:9.

'Those who give to the poor will lack nothing, but those who close their eyes to them receive many curses. When the wicked rise to power, people go into hiding; but when the wicked perish, the righteous thrive.' Proverbs 28:27-28

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

'The sentiment of the first line here is reiterated in the New Testament, 2 Corinthians 9:6-11. God today blesses liberal and generous Christians. The reference to 'curses' in line 2 reflects the extreme bitterness of poor people who are suffering for lack of the bare necessities of life, which are denied to them by people wallowing in affluence and luxury.'

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

'This is to the same purport as what we had, Proverbs 28:12. 1. When bad men are preferred, that which is good is clouded and run down. When power is put into the hands of the wicked, men hide themselves; wise men retire into privacy, and decline public business, not caring to be employed under them; rich men get out of the way, for fear of

being squeezed for what they have; and, which is worst of all, good men abscond, despairing to do good and fearing to be persecuted and ill-treated.

2. When bad men are disgraced, degraded, and their power taken from them, then that which is good revives again, then the righteous increase; for, when they perish, good men will be put in their room, who will, by their example and interest, countenance religion and righteousness. It is well with a land when the number of good people increases in it; and it is therefore the policy of all princes, states, and potentates, to encourage them and to take special care of the good education of youth.’

Jesus didn’t have a problem meeting with the poor, and neither should we. The righteous will always come out on top, [Luke 4:16-19](#) / [Revelation 6:12-17](#).

CHAPTER 29

INTRODUCTION

‘Whoever remains stiff-necked after many rebukes will suddenly be destroyed—without remedy.’ Proverbs 29:1

THE STIFF NECKED

In what ways do we become stiff-necked? We become stiff-necked by making the same mistake over and over again, [Proverbs 13:18](#) / [Proverbs 15:10](#). We refuse to learn or listen; those who harden their neck are stubborn, [Exodus 33:3-5](#) / [Acts 7:51-53](#). Christians should not take the Lord’s discipline lightly because if we harden ourselves to it, we will be broken on judgment day, [Proverbs 6:15](#).

‘When the righteous thrive, the people rejoice; when the wicked rule, the people groan. A man who loves wisdom brings joy to his father, but a companion of prostitutes squanders his wealth.’ Proverbs 29:2-3

God’s ways are always the best because when we just do our own thing, then terrible things happen, [Proverbs 28:28](#). Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

1. The people will have cause to rejoice or mourn according as their rulers are righteous or wicked; for, if the righteous be in authority, sin will be punished and restrained, religion and virtue will be supported and kept in reputation; but, if the wicked get power in their hands, wickedness will abound, religion and religious people will be persecuted, and so the ends of government will be perverted.

2. The people will actually rejoice or mourn according as their rulers are righteous or wicked. Such a conviction are even the common people under of the excellency of virtue and religion that they will rejoice when they see them preferred and countenanced; and, on the contrary, let men have ever so much honour or power, if they be wicked and vicious, and use it ill, they make themselves contemptible and base before all the people (as those priests, [Malachi 2:9](#)) and subjects will think themselves miserable under such a government.’

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This proverb is only a slight variation from at least a dozen others that stress the same truth. ‘Licentiousness is put as the opposite of wisdom in Proverbs 2:10 / Proverbs 2:16 / Proverbs 5:1-3 / Proverbs 6:23-24 / Proverbs 9:1 / Proverbs 9:13. Additionally, the first line is found in Proverbs 10:1 / Proverbs 23:13 / Proverbs 23:24 / Proverbs 27:11; and line two is similar to Proverbs 5:9-10.’

Prostitutes were common in Bible times, but they all had one thing in common: they did it for the money, not the joy.

‘By justice, a king gives a country stability, but those who are greedy for bribes tear it down. Those who flatter their neighbours are spreading nets for their feet.’ Proverbs 29:4-5

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘A policy of excessive taxation has usually been the primary cause of every fallen government in the history of the world. ‘A king by justice gives stability to a land, but he whose exactions are excessive ruins it.’ This rendition is applicable, not merely to excessive taxation, but to bribery by the ‘exaction of gifts.’ ‘By justice a king gives stability to the land, but one who exacts gifts ruins it’.

Beware of the flatterer! They are not trying to please us but to deceive us so that they can get what they want from us later.

‘Evildoers are snared by their own sin, but the righteous shout for joy and are glad. The righteous care about justice for the poor, but the wicked have no such concern.’ Proverbs 29:6-7

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘While the offence of the wicked, rising out of a confirmed habit of evil, becomes a snare for his destruction, the righteous, even if he offend, is forgiven and can still rejoice in his freedom from condemnation. The second clause is taken by some as entirely contrasted with the first; it expresses the joy of one whose conscience is void of offence, and who is in no danger of falling into the snare.’

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘There is no test that separates the wicked from the righteous as effectively as this one. Christ himself said, ‘Blessed are ye poor’; and to ignore the rights and necessities of the poor, in all dispensations of God’s love, is the invariable hallmark of the wicked.’

The righteous person knows to whom they belong. Every human being has rights, but wicked people look only at their poverty and despise the righteous.

‘Mockers stir up a city, but the wise turn away anger. If a wise person goes to court with a fool, the fool rages and scoffs, and there is no peace. The bloodthirsty hate a person of integrity and seek to kill the upright.’ Proverbs 29:8-

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

1. Who are the men that are dangerous to the public—scornful men. When such are employed in the business of the state they do things with precipitation, because they scorn to deliberate, and will not take time for consideration and consultation; they do things illegal and unjustifiable, because they scorn to be hampered by laws and constitutions; they break their faith, because they scorn to be bound by their word, and provoke the people, because they scorn to please them. Thus, they bring a city into a snare by their ill conduct, or (as the margin reads it) they set a city on fire; they sow discord among the citizens and run them into confusion. Those are scornful men that mock at religion, the obligations of conscience, the fears of another world, and everything that is sacred and serious. Such men are the

plagues of their generation; they bring God's judgments upon a land, set men together by the ears, and so bring all to confusion.

2. Who are the men that are the blessings of a land—the wise men who, by promoting religion, which is true wisdom, turn away the wrath of God, and who, by prudent counsels, reconcile contending parties and prevent the mischievous consequences of divisions. Proud and foolish men kindle the fires which wise and good men must extinguish.'

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'All modes of teaching, the stern rebuke or the smiling speech, are alike useless with the 'foolish' man; there is 'no rest.' The ceaseless cavilling goes on still.'

The fool cannot appreciate the wise person's argument, and so the wise person becomes exhausted trying to convince them. They are concerned for their life because people of bloodshed come after them, 1 John 3:12.

'Fools give full vent to their rage, but the wise bring calm in the end.' Proverbs 29:11

A fool has no control and loses their temper, whereas the wise calm the arguments down.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'A man should be careful to keep his own secret, and never tell his whole mind upon any subject, while there are other opinions yet to be delivered; else, if he speaks again, he must go over his old ground; and as he brings out nothing new, he injures his former argument.'

'If a ruler listens to lies, all his officials become wicked.' Proverbs 29:12

This is the idea of knowing what the king likes to listen to, and so his officials tell him falsehoods.

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

1. It is a great sin in any, especially in rulers, to hearken to lies; for thereby they not only give a wrong judgment themselves of persons and things, according to the lies they give credit to, but they encourage others to give wrong information. Lies will be told to those who will hearken to them, but the receiver, in this case, is as bad as the thief.

2. Those who do so will have all their servants wicked. All their servants will appear wicked, for they will have lies told of them; and they will be wicked, for they will tell lies to them. All that have their ear will fill their ear with slanders and false characters and representations; and so if princes, as well as people, will be deceived, they shall be deceived, and, instead of devolving the guilt of their own false judgments upon their servants that misinformed them, they must share in their servants' guilt, and on them will much of the blame lie for encouraging such misinformation and giving countenance and ear to them.'

'The poor and the oppressor have this in common: The LORD gives sight to the eyes of both.' Proverbs 29:13

The poor and the oppressor both receive life from Him, Proverbs 22:2 / Matthew 5:45 / Romans 1:19-21, and He will judge them both, Acts 17:31.

'If a king judges the poor with fairness, his throne will be established forever. A rod and a reprimand impart wisdom, but a child left undisciplined disgraces its mother.' Proverbs 29:14-15

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

'Proverbs 16:12 and Proverbs 25:12 are similar. Throughout Proverbs, it is taught that 'The perpetual duration of a dynasty depends not upon intellectual or physical superiority, but upon moral character.'

There are two types of discipline: 1. The rod, which is physical, and 2. Reproof, which is verbal. We should never stop punishing our children when they deserve it, Proverbs 13:24 / Proverbs 23:13.

Toy, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The mother might have been mentioned here (1) because she is charged with the principal duty of rearing the child, or (2) merely for rhetorical purposes.’

‘When the wicked thrive, so does sin, but the righteous will see their downfall.’ Proverbs 29:16

Here we have a perfect example of what happened to Sodom and Gomorrah, Genesis 19:1-30 / 2 Peter 2:8.

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

1. The more sinners there are, the more sin there is: When the wicked, being countenanced by authority, grow numerous, and walk on every side, no marvel if transgression increases, as a plague in the country is said to increase when still more and more are infected with it. Transgression grows more impudent and bold, more imperious and threatening, when there are many to keep it in countenance. In the old world, when men began to multiply, they began to degenerate and corrupt themselves and one another.

2. The more sin there is, the nearer is the ruin threatened. Let not the righteous have their faith and hope shocked by the increase of sin and sinners. Let them not say that they have cleansed their hands in vain, or that God has forsaken the earth, but wait with patience; the transgressors shall fall, the measure of their iniquity will be full, and then they shall fall from their dignity and power, and fall into disgrace and destruction, and the righteous shall have the satisfaction of seeing their fall, Psalms 37:34, perhaps in this world, certainly in the judgment of the great day, when the fall of God’s implacable enemies will be the joy and triumph of glorified saints, Isaiah 66:24 / Genesis 19:28.’

‘Discipline your children, and they will give you peace; they will bring you the delights you desire.’ Proverbs 29:17

Not all correction is with a rod; the punishment we give our children must be determined when it is needed, but we do need to correct our children, Proverbs 29:15. When done so correctly, our children will give us peace and be our delight.

‘Where there is no revelation, people cast off restraint; but blessed is the one who heeds wisdom’s instruction.’
Proverbs 29:18

If anyone tries to live without God’s truth, restraint is cast away. In other words, anything goes.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Where Divine revelation, and the faithful preaching of the sacred testimonies, are neither revered nor attended, the ruin of that land is at no great distance.’

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The felicity of a people that have not only a settled, but a successful ministry among them, the people that hear and keep the law, among whom religion is uppermost; happy are such a people and every particular person among them. It is not having the law, but obeying it, and living up to it, that will entitle us to blessedness.’

‘Servants cannot be corrected by mere words; though they understand, they will not respond. Do you see someone who speaks in haste? There is more hope for a fool than for them.’ Proverbs 29:19-20

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘A slave, whose obedience is reluctant. He may ‘understand’ the words, but they produce no good effect. There is still a lack of the true ‘answer’ of obedience.’

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning Proverbs 29:20.

‘This is the same as Proverbs 26:12, except there it is the man ‘who is wise in his own conceit’ who is more hopeless than a fool. Here it is the man who is hasty in his words.’

There are times when words just won’t work, and so action needs to be taken when it comes to correcting some people. The lesson here is simple: be slow to speak and quick to listen, James 1:19.

‘A servant pampered from youth will turn out to be insolent.’ Proverbs 29:21

Solomon says we need to be willingly obedient.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Such persons are generally forgetful of their obligations, assume the rights and privileges of children, and are seldom good for anything.’

‘An angry person stirs up conflict, and a hot-tempered person commits many sins. Pride brings a person low, but the lowly in spirit gain honour.’ Proverbs 29:22-23

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

‘See here the mischief that flows from an angry, passionate, furious disposition. 1. It makes men provoking to one another: An angry man stirs up strife, is troublesome and quarrelsome in the family and in the neighbourhood, blows the coals, and even forces those to fall out with him that would live peaceable and quietly by him.

2. It makes men provoking to God: A furious man, who is wedded to his humours and passions, cannot but abound in transgressions. Undue anger is a sin which is the cause of many sins; it not only hinders men from calling upon God’s name, but it occasions their swearing, cursing, and profaning God’s name.’

Although pride is meant to lift us up, it really brings us down, Proverbs 11:2 / Proverbs 16:18-19 / James 4:6-10 / 1 Peter 5:5.

‘The accomplices of thieves are their own enemies; they are put under oath and dare not testify.’ Proverbs 29:24

These accomplices won’t tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. If we hear that a person broke the law, do not remain silent, Leviticus 5:1.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘On the first discovery of the theft, the person wronged, Judges 17:2, or the judge of the city (marginal reference), pronounced a solemn curse on the thief and on all who, knowing the offender, were unwilling to give evidence against him. The accomplice of the thief hears that curse, and yet is silent, and so falls under it, and “destroys his own soul.”

‘Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is kept safe.’ Proverbs 29:25

We shouldn’t be afraid of people because they can’t do eternal harm, 1 Samuel 15:24 / Matthew 10:28 / Luke 12:4-5.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Saul, Aaron, and Peter are examples of men who were stained by the fear of man. “How often has this led weak men, though sincere in their general character, to deny their God, and abjure his people!”

‘Many seek an audience with a ruler, but it is from the LORD that one gets justice.’ Proverbs 29:26

A person may not be punished by the law of the land, but God will not let him go unpunished, 1 Corinthians 4:4. Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘To be screened from the punishment determined by the law; but should he grant the favour sought, and pardon the criminal, this takes not away his guilt in the sight of God, from whom all just judgment proceeds.’

‘The righteous detest the dishonest; the wicked detest the upright.’ Proverbs 29:27

Here we see the contestant clash in our society, Genesis 3:15 / Proverbs 29:10. This is good versus evil; God versus the devil, Cain versus Abel, and Christians versus non-Christians, Genesis 3:15 / Jeremiah 6:16.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The words point out not only the antagonism between the doers of good and evil, but the instinctive antipathy which the one feels toward the other.’

CHAPTER 30

INTRODUCTION

‘The sayings of Agur son of Jakeh—an inspired utterance. This man’s utterance to Ithiel: ‘I am weary, God, but I can prevail.’ Proverbs 30:1

PROVERBS OF AGUR

We know nothing about Agur except what is recorded in this prayer, where he asked for deliverance from economic extremes, Proverbs 30:1 / Proverbs 30:8-9. Agur is presumed to be a wise man of some reputation, but of unknown date.

We know that whatever he was going through, he was struggling, but his trust was in God to help him prevail. Note that some translations have the names Ithiel and Ucal, but again, no one knows who these people were, 1 Kings 4:30-31.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘From this introduction, from the names here used, and from the style of the book, it appears evident that Solomon was not the author of this chapter; and that it was designed to be distinguished from his work by this very preface, which specifically distinguishes it from the preceding work. I believe Agur, Jakeh, Ithiel, and Ucal to be the names of persons who did exist, but of whom we know nothing but what is here mentioned. Agur seems to have been a public teacher, and Ithiel and Ucal to have been his scholars.’

‘Surely, I am only a brute, not a man; I do not have human understanding. I have not learned wisdom, nor have I attained to the knowledge of the Holy One. Proverbs 30:2-3

God and His ways are always a mystery to men. Agur shows his wisdom by confessing his ignorance, Psalms 73:22 / Job 25:6 / Amos 7:14-15. He appears to use sarcasm here because he knows that no one knows the answers to these questions except God Himself.

‘Who has gone up to heaven and come down? Whose hands have gathered up the wind? Who has wrapped up the waters in a cloak? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is his name, and what is the name of his son? Surely you know!’ Proverbs 30:4

Guzik, in his commentary, says the following.

‘In a section that sounds much like Job 38-39, Agur called men and women to understand their limitations in understanding God and His creation. The wise and humble answer to each of these questions is God, and not man.’
‘After challenging his readers regarding the natural world, Agur finished with a challenge regarding man’s limitations in spiritual knowledge. One can only know what His name (God’s nature, character) and His Son’s name are by God’s own revelation. In all these things, we humbly depend on God’s revelation for our knowledge.’

‘Agur knew there was something special about the Son of God. We don’t know to what extent he prophetically anticipated the Messiah, God the Son, Jesus Christ, but Agur knew that God had a Son, and the Son had a name.’

‘Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. Do not add to his words, or he will rebuke you and prove you a liar.’ Proverbs 30:5-6

Once again, we’re reminded that God’s word doesn’t need adjusting; it doesn’t need words taken from it or added to, Deuteronomy 4:2 / 1 Corinthians 4:6 / Revelation 22:18-19 / 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

Henry, in his commentary, says the following concerning God’s word.

1. It is sure, and therefore we must trust to it and venture our souls upon it. God in his word, God in his promise, is a shield, a sure protection, to all those who put themselves under his protection and put their trust in him. The word of God, applied by faith, will make us easy in the midst of the greatest dangers, Psalms 46:1-2.

2. It is sufficient, and therefore we must not add to it.’

‘Two things I ask of you, LORD; do not refuse me before I die: Keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, ‘Who is the LORD?’ Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonour the name of my God.’ Proverbs 30:7-9

This prayer by Agur is the only prayer found in the Book of Proverbs. His prayer consists of three requests.

1. He wants falsehood and lies far from him.

Truthfulness should always come out of our lips.

2. He doesn’t want to be poor or rich.

Too much money can be as dangerous as not having enough. Too much money may lead to us disowning God and self-reliance, 1 Chronicles 4:10, and not enough money may lead to us stealing to survive and dishonouring God.

3. He wants just enough food for each day.

We need to trust God on a daily basis to take care of our daily needs, Lamentations 3:22-23 / Matthew 6:11 / Matthew 6:25-34.

‘Do not slander a servant to their master, or they will curse you, and you will pay for it.’ Proverbs 30:10

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Do not bring a false accusation against a servant, lest thou be found guilty of the falsehood, and he curse thee for having traduced his character, and in his turn traduce thine. In general, do not meddle with other people’s servants.’

‘There are those who curse their fathers and do not bless their mothers; those who are pure in their own eyes and yet are not cleansed of their filth; those whose eyes are ever so haughty, whose glances are so disdainful; those whose

teeth are swords and whose jaws are set with knives to devour the poor from the earth and the needy from among mankind.’ Proverbs 30:11-14

We now enter into a series of tetrads, which is a wise saying with four lines or four elements.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘In all of these sequences of three things, yea, four, it is the climactic fourth that is emphasised.’ This was a commonly accepted teaching device among the Jews. The first two chapters of Amos are an example of this method. Harris noted that Jesus also utilized the same device, as for example, in the Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount, where one finds two tetrads, Matthew 5:3-6 and Matthew 5:7-10. The evil character of the generation described here strongly resembles that which is described in the prophecy of Amos.’

There are those who curse fathers and don’t bless their mothers, Exodus 20:12 / Ephesians 6:2. There are those who think they are pure in their own eyes, Proverbs 3:7 / Proverbs 12:15, but have never been cleansed, Isaiah 1:16 / Matthew 23:27.

There are those with haughty eyes, that is, full of themselves, James 4:6 / 1 Peter 5:5, who look down on others. Notice the words, teeth and jaw, swords, and knives; these people are dangerous and take advantage of the poor for greed.

‘The leech has two daughters. ‘Give! Give!’ they cry. ‘There are three things that are never satisfied, four that never say, ‘Enough!’: the grave, the barren womb, land, which is never satisfied with water, and fire, which never says, ‘Enough!’ ‘The eye that mocks a father, that scorns an aged mother, will be pecked out by the ravens of the valley, will be eaten by the vultures.’ Proverbs 30:15-17

The blood-sucking horse-leech was common in Palestine, and they had two suckers to suck the blood from their prey; the people described here were just like them. However, this also reveals a common human problem, which is greed. Some people are never satisfied with what they have; they always desire more.

Those who say, ‘give, give’ are those who are always asking for favours. The eye that mocks, scorns, this is a sneering, scornful, defiant look of rebellion. Such a person will be denied a burial and their body left for the vulture birds to eat. Note that some translations have ‘eagles’.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The raven, those which frequent the places where dead carcasses and offal are most likely to be found. ‘The mother eagle shall scoop out such an eye, and carry it to the nest to feed her young. Many of the disobedient to parents have come to an untimely end, and, in the field of battle, where many a profligate has fallen, and upon gibbets, have actually become the prey of ravenous birds.’

‘There are three things that are too amazing for me, four that I do not understand: the way of an eagle in the sky, the way of a snake on a rock, the way of a ship on the high seas, and the way of a man with a young woman.’ Proverbs 30:18-19

The eagle is a reference to its graceful flight. The serpent is without legs, yet it still moves. The way of a ship means to stay afloat. The way of a man in the process of courtship. Each reaches its objectives in wonderful and sometimes mysterious ways. Each one has to navigate difficult situations, including the presence of a young girl.

‘This is the way of an adulterous woman: She eats and wipes her mouth and says, ‘I’ve done nothing wrong.’ Proverbs 30:20

This is a description of the person who acts like an adulterous woman. They are unconcerned and claim innocence; she regards sexual intercourse as casually as eating a meal, Proverbs 9:17; she is totally unconcerned about her conduct.

‘Under three things the earth trembles, under four it cannot bear up: a servant who becomes king, a godless fool who gets plenty to eat, a contemptible woman who gets married, and a servant who displaces her mistress.’ Proverbs 30:21-23

This is dealing with the imbalances which occur in society with intolerable consequences. Some believe these are sarcastic words and not to be taken seriously.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘A slave, when he comes to bear rule, is an unprincipled tyrant. The intellectually weak man, who has everything at his command, has generally manners which none can bear and, if a favourite with his master, he is insupportable to all others.’

‘An ill-tempered woman, when she gets embarrassed with domestic cares, is beyond bearing. A servant maid, when, either through the death of the mistress, or the sin of the husband, she is in fact exalted to be head over the family, is so insolent and impudent, as to be hateful to everyone, and execrated by all.’

The reference to the unloved woman possibly refers to her as unloved because she was unattractive and unpopular. When she gets a husband, she appears to become arrogant, Genesis 16:5 / Genesis 21:10.

‘Four things on earth are small, yet they are extremely wise: Ants are creatures of little strength, yet they store up their food in the summer; hyraxes are creatures of little power, yet they make their home in the crags; locusts have no king, yet they advance together in ranks; a lizard can be caught with the hand, yet it is found in kings’ palaces.’
Proverbs 30:24-28

The focus in these verses isn’t for scientific purposes, but to observe the lessons relevant to human life. Each is small but great; these tiny creatures demonstrate great wisdom!

Notice each line begins with a limitation which, in turn, overcomes. The ants are used in reference to preparation. The hyraxes are used in reference to building. The locusts are used in reference to co-operation and order. The lizards are used in reference to fearlessness.

Note that some translations have the word ‘badgers’ for ‘conies’ or ‘hyraxes’ or ‘rock-rabbits,’ ‘mormats,’ or ‘the rabbit.’ Some also have the word ‘spider’ instead of ‘lizard’. These creatures are skilful and resourceful in gaining security. They are organised and disciplined, not dependent on external forces to make them work.

Each of these, in its own way, set forth a positive example of leadership. In other words, the lesson here is that foresight and planning are needed to meet our future needs.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

1. The ant.

The ants show their wisdom by preparing their meat in the summer; seeking for it and storing it when it may be had; not for winter consumption, for they sleep all that time; but for autumn and spring. Proverbs 6:6. The ants are a people; they have their houses, towns, cities, public roads, c. I have seen several of these, both of the brown and large black ant.’

2. The rabbit.

The rabbits act curiously enough in the construction of their burrows, but the word shaphan probably does not here mean the animal we call coney or rabbit. It is most likely that this is what Dr Shaw calls the Daman-Israel; a creature very like a rabbit, but never burrowing in the ground, but dwelling in clefts and holes of rocks.’

3. The locusts.

These surprising animals we have already met and described. Though they have no leader, yet they go forth by troops, some miles in circumference, when they take wing.

4. The spider.

This is a singularly curious animal, both in the manner of constructing her house, her nets, and taking her prey. But the habits of these and such like must be sought in works on natural history.

‘There are three things that are stately in their stride, four that move with stately bearing: a lion, mighty among beasts, who retreats before nothing; a strutting rooster, a he-goat, and a king secure against revolt.’ Proverbs 30:29-31

This chapter closes with another warning to the person who has allowed themselves or will soon allow themselves to become proud and over-confident. There are four examples given: a lion, a strutting cock, a he-goat and a king.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

1. Nothing can be more majestic than the walk of the lion.

It is deliberate, equal, firm, and in every respect becomes the king of the forest.

2. The greyhound.

The girt in the loins, but what this beast is we do not distinctly know. It is most likely that this was the greyhound, which in the East is remarkably fine and very fleet. Scarcely anything can be conceived to go with greater fleetness, in full chase, than a greyhound with its prey in view: it seems to swim over the earth.

3. The goat.

This is generally allowed to be the he-goat; and how he walks, and what state he assumes, in the presence of his part of the flock, everyone knows, who has at all noticed this animal. The ram, also, which some suppose to be intended, is both fierce and majestic at the head of the sheep.

4. A king.

And a king, against whom there is no rising up. That is, a king whose court, counsels, and troops are so firmly united to him as to render all hopes of successful conspiracy against him utterly vain. He walks boldly and majestically about, being safe in the affections of his people.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Strutting cock’ replaces ‘greyhound’ in many of the ancient versions, and the RSV has followed them. However, ‘greyhound’ and ‘war-horse’ are also legitimate renditions.’

‘If you play the fool and exalt yourself, or if you plan evil, clap your hand over your mouth! For as churning cream produces butter, and as twisting the nose produces blood, so stirring up anger produces strife.’ Proverbs 30:32-33

Agur is simply saying, we need to shut up, or someone will give you a bloody nose. The point is simply this: do not provoke others because it will result in serious trouble and conflict, [Proverbs 27:3](#).

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Forcing wrath’ is a reference to ‘harping on a matter,’ continual complaining, criticising, or in any other manner prosecuting another with exhibitions of one’s displeasure or animosity. To do such a thing brings forth violence and strife just as naturally as churning brings forth butter, or wringing the nose makes it bleed. The antidote for this type of disaster is in the first three lines: ‘Lay thy hand upon thy mouth.’ Many an altercation, and some which have issued

in fatal consequences, could have been easily avoided if all men could learn the wisdom of keeping their mouths shut. This proverb is an eloquent plea for exactly that grace to be adopted and practised by men.'

CHAPTER 31

INTRODUCTION

'The sayings of King Lemuel—an inspired utterance his mother taught him.' Proverbs 31:1

We have had the benefit of studying the 'father to son' proverbs, but here we have the benefit of studying some of the 'mother to son' proverbs, **2 Timothy 1:5**. We know nothing about Lemuel except that he was an unknown king who wrote the words his mother taught him.

Some of the early Jewish rabbis identified Lemuel with Solomon. Other scholars believe he was Hezekiah or even an anonymous Arabian prince. Some also suggest that the name Lemuel is another name for Solomon, but we do not know for sure. We do know that the name Lemuel means 'belonging to God' or 'dedicated to God.'

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'There is no evidence whatever that Muel or Lemuel means Solomon; the chapter seems to be much later than his time, and the several Chaldaisms which occur in the very opening of it are no mean proof of this. If Agur was not the author of it, it may be considered as another supplement to the book of Proverbs. Most certainly Solomon did not write it.'

'Listen, my son! Listen, son of my womb! Listen, my son, the answer to my prayers! Do not spend your strength on women, your vigour on those who ruin kings.' Proverbs 31:2-3

Listen and listen again seems to be a continual call, are we listening? is the question. She lets him know that 1. He matters to her, and 2. She vowed him to God. The strength given to women is both physical and financial, **1 Samuel 1:11**. Note that some translations use the word 'vow' instead of 'prayer'.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

'This suggests that He was given to his mother in response to her vows, as was Samuel, **1 Samuel 1:11**.'

History shows us that adultery ruins kings, such as Napoleon. It is possible that this refers to the commonly large harem, such as the one that destroyed Solomon, **1 Kings 11:10 / 2 Samuel 11-12**.

'It is not for kings, Lemuel—it is not for kings to drink wine, not for rulers to crave beer, lest they drink and forget what has been decreed, and deprive all the oppressed of their rights. Let beer be for those who are perishing, wine for those who are in anguish! Let them drink and forget their poverty and remember their misery no more.' Proverbs 31:4-7

Kings and rulers really need to avoid strong, intoxicating alcohol. An intemperate man is ill-fitted to hold the reins of government, **Ecclesiastes 10:16-17**.

Only God could know the tremendous and widespread damage alcohol has caused when influencing a man of power. Alcohol is considered to have its uses, **Psalms 104:15 / Proverbs 3:10**, not as an intoxicating beverage but for medicinal purposes, **Matthew 27:34 / 1 Timothy 5:23**.

People should never use alcohol to forget their problems; it simply causes a diversion, it takes their minds away from their problems and doesn't deal with those problems.

‘Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.’ Proverbs 31:8-9

In every society, we find people who are unable to defend themselves in a courtroom, but the wise in society should speak up on their behalf; they should speak up for those who are poor and needy. Lemuel is simply saying that a king must have justice and equity in his kingdom.

EPILOGUE: THE WIFE OF NOBLE CHARACTER

‘A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies. Her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value.’ Proverbs 31:10-11

In Hebrew, each verse of the remaining text of this chapter begins with the appropriate letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘There follows next in this final chapter an acrostic, ‘An alphabetical poem on the Virtuous Woman; and the alphabet here is regular, unlike the acrostics in Lamentations and Psalm 119, where minor reversals of certain letters and a few other irregularities are found.’

Bear in mind, she isn't an actual woman, but it's a description of a woman that King Lemuel's mother advised him to seek. There are a few lessons we can learn from this woman.

‘A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies.’ Proverbs 31:10

1. Her worth.

Some translations have the words, ‘Who can find a virtuous wife?’ but the point is clear, she is a woman of power and strength, Proverbs 12:4. Her husband, who is noble, knows that she is more than capable.

Her husband knows that she is strong and therefore valuable, which makes her rare like rubies, Proverbs 3:15 / Proverbs 8:11. In other words, she is worth more than your annual income. Her husband trusts her because she has earned his trust.

And I'm wondering if that's how we husbands think about our wives. When was the last time you told your wife how much you value her? Paul tells us that we should love them as Christ loves the church, Ephesians 5:25. That is, to love her sacrificially, unselfishly, and purposely.

‘Her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value. She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life.’ Proverbs 31:11-12

2. Her Faithfulness.

In a world where adultery and fornication are rife, here is a woman who can be trusted to be faithful to her husband. Her husband isn't going to run off with some rich woman in a love affair. Oh no, he's got a wife who is worth way more than that, way more than any ruby that could be found.

Her husband trusts her because she has earned his trust. He's got a wife who will do nothing but good for him all the days of her life. He's got a wife who submits to him and lives with purity and reverence, 1 Peter 3:1-2. She has her husband's good in view constantly, recommending his kindness through her good deeds.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Her good is not capricious; it is constant and permanent, while she and her husband live.’

She likes to work and enjoys what she does. It wasn’t that long ago when women were taught to hate ‘hard work’, and they stayed at home in the enslaving atmosphere of the housewife.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘And all her labour is a cheerful service; her will, her heart, is in it.’

“She selects wool and flax and works with eager hands. She is like the merchant ships, bringing her food from afar. She gets up while it is still night; she provides food for her family and portions for her female servants. She considers a field and buys it; out of her earnings, she plants a vineyard. She sets about her work vigorously; her arms are strong for her tasks. She sees that her trading is profitable, and her lamp does not go out at night.’ Proverbs 31:13-18

3. Her Work Ethic.

Someone once said, ‘Don’t tell me you love me, show me.’ And her commitment to her husband and her love for him are shown in her actions and attitudes. This isn’t a lazy woman claiming benefits, this isn’t a stay-at-home mum.

She diligently works and enjoys what she does, **Proverbs 10:4**. She gets up in the morning and gets things done. She was a businesswoman, and she was more than happy to go out into the world and trade with merchants and buyers. She knows how to use her talents to provide for her family. She plants a vineyard, that she may have wine for a beverage, for medicine, and for sacrifice. When her goods are selling, she works into the night to maintain production. She is self-motivated and stays busy. Her eye is always open to business opportunities, especially in real estate.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘She does not restrict herself to the bare necessities of life; she is able to procure some of its comforts. She plants a vineyard, that she may have wine for a beverage, for medicine, and for sacrifice. This is also procured of her own labour.’

She takes care of her own strength and health by useful labour and exercise, avoiding that which might ensnare or weaken.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘She takes care of her own health and strength, not only by means of useful labour, but by healthy exercise. She avoids what might enervate her body, or soften her mind-she is ever active, and girt ready for every necessary exercise. Her loins are firm, and her arms strong.’

When her goods are selling, she works into the night to maintain production.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘She takes care to manufacture the best articles of the kind, and to lay on a reasonable price that she may secure a ready sale. Her goods are in high repute, and she knows she can sell as much as she can make. And she finds that while she pleases her customers, she increases her own profits.’

‘In her hand, she holds the distaff and grasps the spindle with her fingers. She opens her arms to the poor and extends her hands to the needy.’ Proverbs 31:19-20

4. Her Generosity.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The spindle and distaff are the most ancient of all the instruments used for spinning or making thread. The spinning-wheel superseded them in these countries; but still they were in considerable use till spinning machinery superseded both them and the spinning-wheels in general.’

One of her talents was making thread with the distaff and the spindle. She is a very hard worker and businesswoman, but she didn’t forget about those who were vulnerable.

She is interested in those who are vulnerable; she cares about the poor and the needy, **Psalm 82:3**. In fact, her arms were always open to help them. She was willing to feed those who needed to be fed, clothe those who needed clothing and protect those who needed to be protected.

Here is a woman who knows not only her own worth, but the worth of others, regardless of their status in life. She always put the interests of others ahead of her own, **Philippians 2:3-4**.

‘When it snows, she has no fear for her household, for all of them are clothed in scarlet. She makes coverings for her bed; she is clothed in fine linen and purple.’ Proverbs 31:21-22

5. Her Family.

Scarlet is a symbol of quality, and purple is the colour that was expensive, **Acts 16:14**. Her other activities do not prevent her from caring for the needs at home. Her most repeated quality is her care for her household, **Titus 2:4-5**. She knows how to use her strengths to her advantage, and she knows why she is doing it; she wants to support her family. Her most repeated quality is her care for her household.

And that’s a lesson we all must learn because we all can spend so much time on work that we neglect those closest to us, **Song of Songs 1:6**. We get so busy with life, we often neglect not only our relationship with our spouses but also our relationship with God, **Revelation 2:4**.

‘Her husband is respected at the city gate, where he takes his seat among the elders of the land.’ Proverbs 31:23

6. Her Husband’s Reputation.

Often, a husband’s public image depends upon his wife. Some scholars think this is because she dresses her husband well. One of the best reputations a man can have is to be known as the husband of a good wife. As long as a husband has an industrious wife, there is no need to worry about the future.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘She is a loving wife and feels for the respectability and honour of her husband. He is respected not only on account of the neatness and cleanliness of his person and dress, but because he is the husband of a woman who is justly held in universal esteem. And her complete management of household affairs gives him full leisure to devote himself to the civil interests of the community.’

Her husband is not only a noble man but also an elder. Someone once said, ‘Behind every great man stands a great woman.’ The reason her husband has a good reputation is that she has a good reputation.

She cares for her husband’s reputation, and she works hard so that her husband can carry out the role God has given him to do. An elder has a huge task, and even in the Old Testament.

He had the responsibility of sorting out the affairs of the community he served. Yes, she was wealthy, and yes, her husband had an important role to play. But she never lost sight of the value of having a good reputation, **Proverbs 22:1**.

‘She makes linen garments and sells them, and supplies the merchants with sashes. She is clothed with strength and dignity; she can laugh at the days to come. She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue. She watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness.’ Proverbs 31:24-27

7. Her Confidence In The Future.

Although she works hard, she can laugh at the future. And the reason she can laugh is that she is strong, dignified, and honest in her dealings with others. She’s not like the religious leaders who used dishonest scales to rip off people, **Proverbs 11:1**.

Her reputation was worth way more than any deceitful profit she could gain from anyone. Her words are characterised by wisdom and faithful instruction. She is alert to the needs of her family, and she knows that idleness can lead to sin.

That’s why she is so energetic in meeting her family’s needs. She knows that idleness leads to vice. Therefore, she is energetic in meeting her family’s needs. Notice that when she talks, people listen! **Proverbs 21:23**.

I don’t know about you, but when it comes to studying with other groups, I have a secret weapon which I often like to unleash. That secret weapon is called my wife, and if these people thought I knew a little about the Scriptures, they would be silenced when they met my wife.

The point is, when my wife speaks, people stop to listen. And the reason people stop to listen is that more often than not, she speaks wisdom. We all need to learn to be wise and handle the Word of God correctly because when we do, people will listen to us, **2 Timothy 2:15**.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This is the most distinguishing excellence of this woman. There are very few of those who are called managing women who are not lords over their husbands, tyrants over their servants, and insolent among their neighbours. But this woman, with all her eminence and excellence, was of a meek and quiet spirit. Blessed woman!’

‘Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: ‘Many women do noble things, but you surpass them all.’ Proverbs 31:28-29

8. Her Reward.

This is the reward for being a virtuous woman.

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

1. Her children grow up in her place, and they call her blessed. They give her their good word, they are themselves a commendation to her, and they are ready to give great commendations of her; they pray for her, and bless God that they had such a good mother. It is a debt which they owe her, a part of that honour which the fifth commandment requires to be paid to father and mother; and it is a double honour that is due to a good father and a good mother.

2. Her husband thinks himself so happy in her that he takes all occasions to speak well of her, as one of the best of women. It is no indecency at all, but a laudable instance of conjugal love, for husbands and wives to give one another their due praises.’

Her family will speak highly of her, and her children and her husband call her blessed and simply praise her. I wonder how many children today say these kinds of words to their mothers? I wonder how many husbands today say these kinds of words to their wives?

Oh, how we need children and husbands to encourage their wives like this today. Lots of women do many noble things, but his wife, well, she surpasses all of them. In other words, she is in a league of her own.

‘Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.’ Proverbs 31:30

9. Her Fear.

Deceptive means to be vain. When we get older, we understand that we don’t keep the beauty we once had when we were younger. Charm and beauty are deceitful in the sense that they do not reveal the true person and are fleeting.

We all know people who appear charming and physically beautiful. And many women use their charm and beauty to take advantage of others. But the real worth of this woman is seen in the fact that she fears the LORD.

The real worth of a woman isn’t seen in what she wears. It’s inwardly in her gentle and quiet spirit; it’s seen in her devotion to God, **1 Peter 3:3-4**. The real worth of a woman is her devotion to God. Such a woman, endowed with the virtues outlined in this poem, deserves praise.

She is no slave to a master husband, but a person in her own right who takes and fulfils an honoured place in the life of the home and her community. While all of this is good, the key is her fearing the Lord! **Proverbs 1:7**. The Proverbs start and finish with this crucial concept.

‘Honour her for all that her hands have done, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate.’ Proverbs 31:31

10. Her Honour.

The woman deserves to be honoured and praised for all her hard work at the city gates. The city gates, where the elders met to discuss the affairs of the city, were where people arrived and left. She knows that being the wife of an elder who met at the city gates is only going to help her husband in his role to help others in the community.

Praising her at the city gates gives us the idea of a memorial for her and all that she has done. In other words, all her acts of kindness and generosity have left a legacy among the community she worked in.

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Some are praised above what is their due, but those that praise her do but give her of the fruit of her hands; they give her that which she has dearly earned and which is justly due to her; she is wronged if she has it not.’

The woman described in all these verses is the woman who deserves recognition so others will follow her example, **1 Peter 3:1-7**. Husbands are to honour their wives, and we do that by recognising that she too has a share in your gracious life, **1 Peter 3:7**.

Let me encourage the married women, model your life after the woman described in **Proverbs 31**. Let me encourage you, husbands, to cherish your wife, bless her and be proud of her.

Let me encourage you, young women, if you plan to marry one day, let me encourage you to strive to be like this woman. Let me encourage you, young men, if you plan to marry one day, let me encourage you to strive to be like the husband we read about.

CONCLUSION

The Book of Proverbs is very challenging, to say the least, especially when it comes to putting them into practice, but they are given that we may live our lives in such a way which pleases God. It’s clear that the authors, Solomon, Agur and Lemuel knew exactly what they were talking about and wanted us to learn from their mistakes, **Romans 15:4**.