



“The righteous . . . shall grow
like a cedar in Lebanon”

Psalm 92:12

Reading Companion
to the Book of
Proverbs

*“So they read in the book in the law of God . . .
and caused them to understand the reading”*

Nehemiah 8:8

By

Bill Daniels

Preface

Oh to know wisdom. Indeed true wisdom, the very wisdom of the only true and living God. It's the kind of sanctified search that might lead one to pick up a book like this. May it be a happy find for you my friend.

The beloved book of Proverbs is a training textbook, a guidebook to profitable living before God and tolerable living before men. It's a portion of God's Word that deals with down-to-earth, useful, everyday life. But Proverbs is no mere collection of human ethic and etiquette. The wise find principles here drawn from the pure reservoir of God's righteous ways. Here is God's good counsel on how best to deal with your child, your tongue, your spouse, your friend, your finance, from kings to commoners.

Through the liberal use of comparisons and contrasts careful distinction is continually drawn in the pages of Proverbs between wisdom and folly, light and darkness, sloth and diligence, health and hurt, even life and death, serving to shape and sharpen the vital life skill of discernment, a rare commodity in our modern world.

*"That the man of God may be perfect,
thoroughly furnished unto all good works."*

Bill Daniels

Our **Reading Companions** are simple commentaries, covering various books of the Bible, providing easy to follow help in understanding what you read in your Bible, without becoming overly technical. These Bible study books are earnestly taught, practically applied, and have been a blessing to many.

Reading Companions are available in this series on;

Genesis
Joshua
Ruth
I Samuel
II Samuel
Proverbs
Ecclesiastes
Song of Solomon
Isaiah
Daniel
Jonah
Habakkuk
Haggai
Zechariah
Romans
I Corinthians
II Corinthians
Galatians
Ephesians
Philippians
Colossians
Hebrews
Revelation

As well as; “Through the Beloved Book of Books
A Survey of the New Testament”

Contents

Introduction	1
Chapter 1	15
Chapter 2	25
Chapter 3	29
Chapter 4	41
Chapter 5	47
Chapter 6	51
Chapter 7	63
Chapter 8	71
Chapter 9	77
Chapter 10	83
Chapter 11	91
Chapter 12	101
Chapter 13	111
Chapter 14	117
Chapter 15	133
Chapter 16	143
Chapter 17	155
Chapter 18	163
Chapter 19	171
Chapter 20	181
Chapter 21	193
Chapter 22	203
Chapter 23	215
Chapter 24	225
Chapter 25	235
Chapter 26	245
Chapter 27	253
Chapter 28	263
Chapter 29	275
Chapter 30	287
Chapter 31	299

“The fear of the LORD
is the beginning of wisdom:
and the knowledge of the Holy
is understanding”

(Proverbs 9:10)

Introduction

The message of this beloved book of Proverbs is like a mirror in which folks of all walks of life, from kings to the poorest of commoners, can see the error of their own ways and receive warning and instruction in the way of God's eternal wisdom. The image of the ideal man and woman is on display here, bidding us to follow. This book is a fascinating study of anthropology as well as theology and ethics. My own interest in this book of Proverbs is long-standing, and I approach this study with greatest interest. In Prov. 16:27 we're taught that "*an ungodly man diggeth up evil*". In contrast may we be those who dig up eternal treasures through our study of this incredible book. How often I have found practical help here. How often I have been stung, yet stirred and encouraged through the wisdom of God found in these pages.

The Author

King Solomon contributed the three books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon to the canon of Scripture. Solomon was the third and last king over the united kingdom of Israel, after Saul and David. Under the leadership of David and then Solomon the kingdom of Israel came into its

golden age, rising to the greatest geographical extension and prosperity in all of Israel's history. It was a faint shadow of Christ's approaching earthly kingdom.

Solomon was the second son of David and Bathsheba, who had been the wife of Uriah the Hittite. When he was first born we're told that the Lord loved him and called him by the name Jedidiah, meaning *"beloved or the delight of the Lord"* (II Sam. 12:24-25). In the early years of his life and reign Solomon loved and walked with the Lord as well. While sacrificing at Gibeon the Lord appeared to this newly appointed king in a dream and suggested he ask whatever he might desire. Solomon wisely asked that he might have wisdom to lead the Lord's people (I Ki. 3:3-9). The Lord was well please with his selfless request and gave him practical understanding and discernment *"exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore"*. He was given wisdom above all men in his day (I Ki. 3:10-14; 4:29-30). Solomon knew by personal experience the truth of his words in Prov. 2:6, that *"the LORD giveth wisdom: out of His mouth cometh knowledge and understanding."* Indeed *"if any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God"* as the only proper source of such (James 1:5). And with that gift of

divine wisdom the Lord also gave Solomon all that he *might* have asked in riches and honour, such that “*his fame was in all nations round about*” (I Ki. 4:29-31). He became an expert in botany (study of plants) and zoology (study of animal life), and an author credited with 3,000 proverbs (the best of them compiled by God’s inspiration in the book of Proverbs), over 1,000 songs (Song of Solomon being the greatest), and 2 psalms (Ps. 72 & 127).

God’s gift of wisdom to this king was immediately put on display before the nation upon Solomon’s return from Gibeon to Jerusalem, with that famous case of the two harlots laying claim to the same baby (I Ki. 3:16-28).

In those glorious early years when Solomon’s heart was sensitive to the Lord his reign was characterized by the actual meaning of the name Solomon, *peaceable*. It was a day when “*Judah and Israel were many, as the sand which is by the sea in multitude, eating and drinking, and making merry*” (I Ki. 4:20). Righteousness always brings peace and joy, whether to a nation, business, church, or individual. The choice to sin always brings turmoil and heartache.

The Book

King Solomon contributed most of this collection of proverbs, these being the only ones God considered fit to be included in His Book of books. The three largest sections of this book of God's wisdom begin at 1:1, 10:1 & 25:1. Chapter 30 was apparently written by a man named Agur, and chapter 31 was written for Lemuel. Both of these men are unknowns. The whole is a remarkable collection of potent, pithy bits of wisdom and guidance from the heart of God to His people. It's a book born out of God's gracious desire to lead His people to their very best, to the excellent choices in life. The worth of the wealth of this book is absolutely immeasurable.

The basic theme of the book of Proverbs, so often stated or implied, is expressed in Prov. 9:10, "*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding*" (Compare 1:7; 2:1-5; 15:33). Prov. 14:6 tells us "*a scorner seeketh wisdom, and findeth it not*". Why? Because he's a scorner. He doesn't have the ability or software to read God's wisdom. God's software for discerning His wisdom is the fear of Him, not the scorn of Him.

It's an interesting consideration that mankind's original fall into sin was through that forbidden tree which promised "*to make one wise*" (Gen. 3:6). It was a promise of wisdom, yet at the same time thumbing the nose at the very key principle of true wisdom in "*the fear of the Lord*", fear of ever doubting or disregarding His words. Satan's effort has always been to blind our eyes from true wisdom. And even if the book of Genesis begins with man's fall from real wisdom, the record reveals God's surpassing flair for reconstruction in a man like Joseph as we come out the other end of Genesis. For in Joseph we see so much of the way of God's wisdom, later summed up in Proverbs;

- A faithful servant heart (Gen. 39:4, 6, 8; 40:4; compare Prov. 25:13).
- Self-mastery in the unbending integrity of a truly upright soul (Gen. 39; compare Prov. 25:28).
- Fear of the Lord moving him to shun evil (Gen. 39:9; 42:18; compare Prov. 9:10).
- Modesty (Gen. 41:16; compare Prov. 2:6).
- A wise counsellor before Pharaoh, being skilful in insight (41:34-36).
- One who overlooked the sins of others (his

brothers) with love (Prov. 10:12; 17:9). And when their father Jacob died the brothers discovered the true depth and sincerity of Joseph's love (Gen. 50:15-21).

God's wisdom is different from what's considered wisdom among the people of the world. The world talks about wisdom in the sense of "conventional wisdom", i.e. profitable living according to popular opinion. But the very underpinning premise of God's wisdom is the certain reality of a living, personal, majestic, almighty, holy God. And yet it must be understood that there are not really two different kinds of wisdom. The truth is that God's wisdom is the only *true* wisdom! And it is a wisdom meant for universal application, to be applied to the world as well as to believers. It's an interesting point that one doesn't find references in the wisdom literature of Job, Proverbs, or Ecclesiastes to any specific people to whom these words applied. No mention of "Israel" or "Jerusalem" can be found in God's wisdom literature, except in describing the author. Here is a wisdom that applies to all men of all times. According to God, the truly "*wise man*" is the one who walks in the Lord's way of truth and righteousness. This is the one whose life is blessed by God and is a blessing to others. Now of course making practical application of God's wisdom to

one's life will not save a soul from hell. But the unsaved can enjoy the earthly benefits of the practice of God's wisdom as well as the saved. Indeed a genuine fear of the Lord will tend to lead one to hear God's way of salvation.

A proverb, according to one definition, is a "*brief pithy saying setting forth practical wisdom*". The proverbs of Solomon (God) have to do with thoughts and conduct and character traits that reflect the righteous walk of the believer. Practical concerns are the realm of Proverbs. God is interested in our being right and attractive and a blessing to others, right down to the smallest aspects of our lives before Him; how much we talk (17:27-28), when to answer (26:5), when not to answer (26:4, 17), how we conduct ourselves early in the morning (27:14), our personal self-mastery (25:28), how we discipline our children (19:18), how we behave in the presence of an important person (25:6-7), how to keep our property or business (24:30-34), how we should handle our animals (12:10; 27:23), our attitude toward possessions (12:27), how to recognize someone you cannot trust (6:12-14), the dead end of seeking any income through dishonesty (21:6), etc.

One writer defined proverbs as "*short sentences*

*1:1 The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel;
1:2 To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of
understanding;*

drawn from long experience". But God's proverbs are so much more than this. His proverbial sayings are the distilling of His own righteous standards into basic instruction for the everyday life of everyday people. They are God's eternal words. They are manna for the soul, the sincere milk of the word, which we must desire if we would "*grow thereby*".

The Purpose

The purpose of the book of Proverbs is clearly stated in the early verses of chap. 1. Through this book God means to give wisdom in all of its many-faceted forms;

- "*To know wisdom*" (vs. 2) – "Godly cleverness and skill, which results in practical action" (Theo. Wordbook of the O.T.).
- "*And instruction*" (vs. 2) – The corrections or disciplines of God (Compare II Tim. 3:16).
- "*To perceive the words of understanding*" (vs. 2) – Perceptive insight providing the ability to

*1:3 To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment,
and equity;*
*1:4 To give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge
and discretion.*

distinguish between good and bad, or even between good, better, and best.

- *“To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity”* (vs. 3) – Toward alert, thoughtful, aware, attentive intelligence in every right and straight conclusion before God.
- *“To give subtlety to the simple”* (vs. 4) – To take the one who is naïve or gullible or easily persuaded or enticed and to bring him to prudence or sound judgment, that he might know to smile at temptation’s offer and firmly say “No thanks”, and know why.
- *“To the young man knowledge and discretion”* (vs. 4) – Intelligence and prudence in the youth.

Through the book of Proverbs the Lord is seeking to mould us into thoughtful, inquisitive, perceptive, sensitive, sound, aware believers, who are genuinely skilful in the practical matters of living life wisely

before God and men. He would equip His people to chart His perfect way of wisdom through every circumstance of life, making the finest choices, showing the finest character. Compare Luke's description of Christ as He grew "*in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man*" (Lk. 2:52). Proverbs is all about a God-given understanding of the heart of God, what's good and what's evil in *His* eyes. Again, this is not just a book of wisdom. This is a book of *God's* wisdom. The name Jehovah (LORD) is found 86 times within the few chapters of Proverbs. This is *Jehovah's* garden of luscious food for the soul of man.

Now the Hebrew word translated "proverb" (mashal), comes from the idea "*to be like, to be similar, a similtude*". Thus the idea of comparison is a fundamental characteristic of God's proverbs, laying two similar or contrasting ideas beside each other. We see comparisons of all types in God's proverbs;

- The "*like*" or "*as*" type, showing similarity (12:18; 25:14, 28; also 12:4; 16:24; 25:13, 25-26). The words "*like*" or "*as*" are commonly italicized in the King James Version of the Bible (meaning these words are not actually in the original text but are a suggestion of the sense) because the Hebrew

often just places the two phrases in parallel (25:12).

- The “*but*” type, expressing contrast, but still a form of comparison (chap. 10 [26 of 32 verses]; 11:1-6).
- The “*better than*” type (12:9, 26; 15:16-17; 16:8, 19).
- The parallel phrase type (16:13; 17:17; 16:18).
- The “*is*” or metaphor type (14:26-27; 16:22).

There is a constant contrasting of opposing concepts throughout, such as; the wise and the foolish, the quiet and the verbose, the diligent and the slack, slothful, sleeping sluggard, the alert/watchful soul and simple/naïve, riches and poverty, self-control and a hot temper, truth and falsehood, etc. All of the varying facets of obedience are contrasted with the varying, subtle shades of rebellion.

We also commonly see valuable teaching tools within the pages of Proverbs, such as illustrations, word pictures, object lessons, personifications, and rest-of-the-story’s;

- Word Pictures (graphic and effective).

- *“A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver” (25:11) – The right word at the right time, spoken in the right way is a beautiful thing to behold (compare 15:23).*
 - *“For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is a light” (6:23). Not a dark thing, but an exposing thing.*
 - *“There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword, but the tongue of the wise is health” (12:18). One is like the mugger’s blade and the other like the surgeon’s scalpel.*
 - How graphically faithful and unfaithful messengers are pictured in 25:13 & 19.
 - In such unforgettably intriguing imagery a fair, foolish woman is pictured as a pig with a nose ring (11:22). A small aspect of her is pleasant (her appearance), but the bulk of her existence is more like a sow.
- Object Lessons.
- *“I went by the field of the slothful . . .” (24:30-34).*
 - *“Go to the ant, thou sluggard . . .” (6:6-*

11).

- Committing adultery is like embracing fire or walking on red-hot coals (6:27-29).
- Personifications, such as wisdom and folly conducting street meetings (chaps. 8 & 9).
- The-rest-of-the-story's, which are so characteristic of Proverbs (5:1-14; 6:24-35; 7:5-27; 9:17-18; 14:12 & 16:25). Where the evil one tells only of the sweetness of the “*bread of deceit*”, God reveals the gritty “*afterwards*” (20:17).

Chapters 1-7 seem to be particularly written to young people, as a series of fatherly chats with the hand on the shoulder (note the first words of chaps. 3-7). We find the phrase “*my son*” 15 times within these chapters. But not only is there instruction for the young. There is a wealth of wisdom for parents in dealing with their young ones in the book. I wonder how many parents have actually ever taken a serious look. We learn of the importance of; a parent’s *example* (23:26; 4:11), a parent’s *instruction* (4:11), a parent’s *encouragement* (23:15-16), and a parent’s *discipline*;

- **13:24** – If you refuse to use a rod on your

child you prove your hatred for that one you claim to love.

- **19:18** – Begin your discipline early, and don't dare spare for their heart-wrenching tears.
- **22:15** – There is a natural leaning in every child toward evil. As the armed angel with drawn sword standing in Balaam's way, so must the wise parent be armed with the rod and standing firmly in the way of their child's natural bent.
- **23:13-14** – Your child won't die through your proper beating, but he may perish without it.
- **29:15** – Wisdom comes through the rod, and shame comes through its absence.
- **29:17** – Rest and delight are the inheritance of those who faithfully use biblical discipline.

In the portrayal of a woman of virtue in chap. 31 there is actually an acrostic in the original Hebrew in vs. 10-31. Each verse begins with a different Hebrew letter and in alphabetical order there, as a memory tool. Pictured in this portion is a united, happy family of fulfilled, praising members, honouring that woman of the home who is one of God's primary tools in shaping the very character so exalted throughout this beloved book.

Chapter 1

- 1:5 *A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels:*
1:6 *To understand a proverb, and the interpretation; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings.*
1:7 *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.*
-

Having touched on the introductory comments in 1:1-6, let's begin now with 1:7; *"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction."* The Lord always lays two contrasting ways before us, the way *toward* and the way *froward* (the opposite of toward, in departing from the Lord rather than approaching).

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" – The word *"beginning"* here is perhaps in the sense of the principal part of wisdom (marg.). As the word translated *"firstborn"* in the New Testament (N.T.) can refer to either the idea of first in *order* or first in *pre-eminence*, depending on the context, even so the word used here can speak of either first or beginning as to *order* or first in *importance*. Perhaps a bit of both, in that the *"fear of the Lord"* is the principal part of wisdom and it is the

entrance into it. There is simply no wise instruction in all of the books of all the world of all time coming close to this principal part in *“the fear of the Lord”*. Job said it first; *“Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding”* (Job 28:28). David later affirmed it; *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do His commandments: His praise endureth forever”* (Ps. 111:10). And so vital is the issue that Solomon, the wisest of them all, repeats himself; *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the holy is understanding”* (Prov. 9:10). *“The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom”* (Prov. 15:33). And this wise counsellor, having chased every earthly pursuit or purpose under the sun, gives his *“conclusion of the whole matter”* at the end of Ecclesiastes; *“Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man”* (Eccl. 12:13). It is the *sum of it all!* And then he follows there with the reason; *“For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil”* (vs. 14). Here is all of man’s duty. All of man’s joy. The principal part of his lesson. Of all knowledge, the knowledge of God is all. The picture this *“fear of the Lord”* forms is of a child of God humbly, attentively, worshipfully bowing to the will of His gracious

heavenly Father, as a lover of God more than a lover of pleasure, more than a lover of anything. And *there* is wisdom! There is the very kernel or core of *all* wisdom. It is so often not an easy thing at all to choose right and refuse evil. But fear of the Father's wrath that is so bitter and yearning after His love that is so sweet holds the power to keep a soul from evil and to move him to the excellent choices. And there is the very pith, the very principal lesson of wisdom.

In contrast, the fool will “*despise wisdom and instruction*”. As David sang in Ps. 36, the transgressions of the wicked proclaim “*that there is no fear of God before his eyes*”. Even just his delighting in evil and devising of “*mischiefs upon his bed*”, even just the fact that “*he abhorreth not evil*”, though never actually practicing it, proclaims the same – “*no fear of God before his eyes*”. The fear of the Lord is what turns us on to divine instruction and turns us off to evil's corruption. This is not merely right *thinking*, but right *relation* to the Lord. To be rightly related to God is the very principal part of true wisdom and knowledge, the beginning of its entrance. For a man to leave out this core element in his pursuit of learning is to receive only distorted “knowledge”, and to actually be found a fool at the last for all of his labours, wise only in his

1:8 *My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother:*
 1:9 *For they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck.*
 1:10 *My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.*
 1:11 *If they say, Come with us, let us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause:*
 1:12 *Let us swallow them up alive as the grave; and whole, as those that go down into the pit:*

own estimation (3:7; Rom. 1:19-22).

Vs. 8 – As we turn to the first words of this verse we’re reminded that this section, through to the end of chap. 9, is as a father earnestly appealing to his son;

- Exalting wisdom before his child (1:8-9).
- Illustrating temptation’s approach (1:10-14).
- Demanding her refusal (1:10 & 15).
- Exposing the final outcome (1:18). Of temptation he says in 5:4, *“but her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword”*.

Temptation’s way always comes with a flashier, fleshier surface promise. It comes with assurance of quick wealth (vs. 13) or power or immediate pleasures or being a part of the “in” crowd (note the

*1:13 We shall find all precious substance, we shall fill our
houses with spoil:
1:14 Cast in thy lot among us; let us all have one purse:
1:15 My son, walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy
foot from their path:
1:16 For their feet run to evil, and make haste to shed blood.
1:17 Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird.
1:18 And they lay wait for their own blood; they lurk privily
for their own lives.*

focus on “us”, “we”, “with us”, “among us” in vs. 11-14). And the immature or simple one begins to imagine himself a person of wealth and status, standing on his own and no longer held under the rule of another. But wisdom would teach that he really only becomes a person used and bruised, for temptation’s promise is only on the surface, only at the front end. As the scorpion, her sting is in her tail. But the comparatively plain beauty of wisdom’s way pays its good dividends in the end, in honour and authority. Wisdom’s pay-off is in her tail, like good wages paid at the end of a season of labour. And remember that the pure clothing of humility before authority will be attractive only to the wise. The rebel will always see such an “*ornament of grace*” as restrictive and ridiculous. It takes eyes of faith to believe God for wisdom’s eventual pay-off, to endure, to refrain, to refuse some benefit *now* in view of some eventual return *then*. But remember Joseph honouring God in the

*1:19 So are the ways of every one that is greedy of gain; which
taketh away the life of the owners thereof.
1:20 Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the
streets:
1:21 She crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings
of the gates: in the city she uttereth her words, saying,
1:22 How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the
scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate
knowledge?*

gritty trenches of life where the fire is hot, and then later honoured by God and before men for his resolute integrity. Compare Boaz's refusal of Naomi's fleshly offer of Ruth at the threshing floor (Ruth 3), and they rising together to honour and fame in the end. Contrast Samson's (and even Solomon's) end in dishonour, falling into the fleshpot of sin. Be wise to see the true "*ornament of grace*".

Vs. 20 – Wisdom now stands and conducts her first street meeting. Lifted to personhood, wisdom passionately appeals to the simple like a street preacher (we'll see her preaching again, particularly in chap. 8). I want you to notice some things about this sermon. See how her offer of wisdom is to the man on the street (vs. 21-22), not just to the scholar in the halls of learning. What she offers relates to the everyday business of everyday people down on the street where real life is lived, not to the

*1:23 Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit
 unto you, I will make known my words unto you.
 1:24 Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out
 my hand, and no man regarded;
 1:25 But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none
 of my reproof:
 1:26 I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your
 fear cometh;
 1:27 When your fear cometh as desolation, and your
 destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and
 anguish cometh upon you.*

untried theories of the academics. And notice her approach;

- She exposes folks for what they are (vs. 22).
- She demands repentance (vs. 23).
- She gives promise of her eternal treasures (vs. 23).
- She gives severe warning of the folly of refusing her (vs. 24-32). The certainty of calamity is assumed. She does not say “if”, but “when” (vs. 26-27). And the *magnitude* of the predicted fall is underscored repeatedly (vs. 27).
- She again returns to a promise of grace to those who will listen (vs. 33).

Her approach shows all the elements of good

1:28 Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me:

1:29 For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD:

1:30 They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof.

1:31 Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.

1:32 For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them.

1:33 But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil.

preaching;

- The exposing of man's sinful heart, through the preaching of God's righteous standard.
- The divine demand of repentance.
- God's promise of grace to the penitent.
- God's warning of judgment to the arrogant.
- With earnest passion in the appeal.

Vs. 26 – *"I also will laugh at your calamity"* – The laughter here is troubling. Perhaps this should not be seen as an expression of heartlessness as much as strictest justice. "You ignored when I called, so I'll ignore when you call". Man ignores as the Lord knocks at the door of his heart all the days of his life on earth, therefore the Lord will ignore man's

pleas for mercy when at last his judgment falls (Rev. 3:20; Lk. 16:19ff). See how God rejects a repentance of convenience. “*Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God*”. God’s severity arrives when His goodness is refused. As well, vs. 26 expresses the absolutely laughable folly of choosing the way of rejection over the way of repentance. Compare in Ps. 2:4 He who sits in the heavens laughing at the last with the raging of little man gathered against Him. Far from stirring the resentment of the rebel’s heart in us, this should stir dread of ever being found in such a position. And don’t make the mistake of not seeing the unsaved as God sees them. They are laughable in the foolishness of their rejection of Him, and they are lining themselves up for ruin. Can we continue to live comfortably with the lost without some effort to lead them to life, as if this were not the true picture of their condition?

“For the LORD giveth wisdom:
out of His mouth cometh
knowledge and understanding”

(Proverbs 2:6)

Chapter 2

- 2:1 My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee;*
2:2 So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding;
2:3 Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding;
2:4 If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures;
2:5 Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God.
2:6 For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.
-

This chapter has long been one of my favourite portions. It's a great “*if . . . then*” statement. ***If*** you will make God's word and wisdom your greatest treasure and pursuit, ***then***;

- You will find right relation to God (vs. 5).
- You will find true wisdom (vs. 6-7).
- The Lord will keep you in His perfect paths (vs. 8-11, 20-21).
- The Lord will keep you out of Satan's traps (vs. 12-19);
 - The trap of the evil man (vs. 12-15), who delights both in his own perversity

2:7 *He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: he is a
 buckler to them that walk uprightly.*
 2:8 *He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way
 of his saints.*
 2:9 *Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment,
 and equity; yea, every good path.*
 2:10 *When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is
 pleasant unto thy soul;*
 2:11 *Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep
 thee:*
 2:12 *To deliver thee from the way of the evil man, from the
 man that speaketh froward things;*

and in that of others (vs. 14).

- The trap of the evil woman (vs. 16-19), who,
 - “*Flatters*” her prey (vs. 16). The literal phrase in the Hebrew is, “*she made smooth her words*”.
 - “*Forsakes*” her husband (vs. 17).
 - “*Forgets*” her God.
 - Is unfaithful to man and God.
 - Whose house literally “*sinks down unto Hades*” (vs. 18-19). As one writer put it, she “offers a taste of life, and sells you death.” It’s the rest of the story.

2:13 *Who leave the paths of uprightness, to walk in the ways of darkness;*
2:14 *Who rejoice to do evil, and delight in the frowardness of the wicked;*
2:15 *Whose ways are crooked, and they froward in their paths:*
2:16 *To deliver thee from the strange woman, even from the stranger which flattereth with her words;*
2:17 *Which forsaketh the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God.*

God lays before us a choice of ways. Note the prominence of the words “*ways*” and “*paths*” here in chap. 2 (11 times in vs. 8-20).

We see from the opening verses of chap. 2 that God’s wisdom is a hard-fought gain. It comes of crying after and searching for truth and enduring temptation’s tug-o’-war with our passions. But the gains are absolutely immeasurable. And behold here the flip side of 1:20ff, where wisdom is crying after the simple. Here the seeker is now crying after wisdom. It’s the difference between the simple and the seeker. Consider the nature of the quest;

- Its focus is God’s revelation (“*My words . . . My commandments*”, vs. 1).
- It involves both a usage of what I know or what is readily available (vs. 1-2), and a pleading search for more or what is not obvious (vs. 3-4). Smart miners don’t cast

2:18 For her house inclineth unto death, and her paths unto the dead.

2:19 None that go unto her return again, neither take they hold of the paths of life.

2:20 That thou mayest walk in the way of good men, and keep the paths of the righteous.

2:21 For the upright shall dwell in the land, and the perfect shall remain in it.

2:22 But the wicked shall be cut off from the earth, and the transgressors shall be rooted out of it.

away the gold on the surface to get to that underneath. If they're really interested in gold, then they process what's available and dig for more. If you won't apply what you know, you'll get no deeper with God.

- It involves both what I *"find"* (vs. 5) and what the Lord *"giveth"* (vs. 6-7), both my part and His part. The combination of discovery and revelation are always two sides of the same coin of true wealth.
- Its goal is not just academic (vs. 5), but it gathers manna both for the heart (*"the fear of the Lord"*) as well as for the head (*"the knowledge of God"*).

Chapter 3

3:1 My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments:

3:2 For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee.

3:3 Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart:

The very germ of the wheat kernel of chap. 3 is vs. 5-6. Yet the trust described there is based on what we find in the first 4 verses in the remembrance and keeping of God's Word. Where is trust without a word from God, without His promise? True trust or faith stands upon the promise of God.

Vs. 3 – The vivid terms here, “*bind them . . . write them*”, refer to holding close, memorizing, meditating upon, and applying the things of God. Compare Phil. 4:8, where we're commanded to make it our practice or habit to be thinking on God's excellent things. In response to the warning of 1:24-25 we should rather receive, regard, value, and respond! Compare 1:33. Our response *now* is the whole issue with God.

There's an interesting marginal note at vs. 4,

3:4 So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the
sight of God and man.
3:5 Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto
thine own understanding.
3:6 In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy
paths.

suggesting the alternative rendering, “So shalt Thou find favour and good success in the sight of God and man”. The Hebrew word (*sekel*) translated “understanding” here (KJV) is a word that can mean either the idea of prudence/shrewdness or the idea of success/prosperity, depending on its context. It points up how the two ideas of divine *shrewdness* and *success* go hand in hand. Compare again Christ’s development as He lived in and lived out God’s Word (Lk. 2:52). Compare the similarity of this section with 3:21-26 & 4:10-13.

Vs. 5 – “Trust” and “lean” are very similar ideas.

Vs. 6 – The notion underlying the word “acknowledge” is “to be acquainted” or “to turn the mind to”. Thus if you should find that you cannot turn your mind to the Lord in what you’re doing, then you likely shouldn’t be doing it.

The word “direct” communicates a touch more than just guidance. It is literally “make straight” in the

3:7 *Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil.*
3:8 *It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones.*
3:9 *Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase:*
3:10 *So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.*

sense of levelling and freeing the way of obstacles. How often we find promise that God will make the way easier and lead to a proper sense of prosperity every soul who walks in right relation to Him.

Vs. 7-8 – Note here the *physical* results of a right relation to the Lord in mending (marg. “medicine”) and moistening, like a refreshing drink to the bones. Obviously the opposite would be true as well. To forsake the Lord and choose evil will bring damage even to one’s physical well-being. How many a health problem could be traced to wrong relation with the only true and living God?

Vs 9-10 – To “*acknowledge*” God in our financial “*ways*” is to see that we always “*honour the LORD*” in our finances; by giving Him the first share (firstfruits) not the leftovers, and out of a grateful heart (Deut. 26:9-11), and out of a simple trust that He can and will take care of us (vs. 5). Giving our firstfruits to the Lord when it seems “*impossible*” is

*3:11 My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction:
3:12 For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.
3:13 Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding.*

perhaps one of faith's best tests. I wonder how many of us would pass that test. Don't miss the very tangible terms of God's promise here (bulging barns and overflowing presses). How does God expect us to understand His words except according to a normal reading? How many have ever really believed Him for this?

.....

On the Side

The term "*new wine*" obviously refers to what we would call grape juice in this context. You don't "press" wine as we understand the term "wine" today (alcoholic). Alcoholic wine comes of the process of fermentation. Grape juice comes out of presses.

.....

Wisdom is now held up high in vs. 11-26 as the prize above all others, comparable to nothing else,

3:14 *For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold.*
3:15 *She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her.*
3:16 *Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour.*

to be sought above all else, even when it becomes necessary to hammer it into us (vs. 11-12). Compare the response of the psalmist when he admitted, *“It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn Thy statutes”* (Ps. 119:71).

Vs. 11 - Don’t *“be weary”* or shrink away from God’s correction. To ever shrink or run from His hand, even His chastening hand, would be;

- To walk away from the commands of 3:5-6.
- To show that we really don’t want or trust His input into our lives.
- To show that we are not rightly related to Him.
- To display that we’re really wanting to run our *own* show in our life before Him.

These verses are explained further in Heb. 12:5-11.

Vs. 14-15 – Wisdom’s comparisons. Wisdom makes

3:17 Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.
3:18 She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy is every one that retaineth her.
3:19 The LORD by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens.
3:20 By his knowledge the depths are broken up, and the clouds drop down the dew.
3:21 My son, let not them depart from thine eyes: keep sound wisdom and discretion:
3:22 So shall they be life unto thy soul, and grace to thy neck.

one far richer than mere money ever could.

Vs. 13, 16-18 – Wisdom’s results. Oh how happy the man who finds and keeps her! (vs. 18). God’s wisdom is a life-giver.

Vs. 19-20 – Even our very creation comes of God’s wisdom!

Vs. 21-26 – That one who possesses God’s wisdom is such a picture of life and grace and security and rest and confidence, just an image of calm dignity! From the human side wisdom comes through wise management born out of God’s principles applied. From God’s side it is He who “*shall keep thy foot from being taken*” (vs. 26). Compare the two sides of King Hezekiah’s success;

- Whatever his endeavour, the man laboured

3:23 Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble.

3:24 When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid: yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet.

3:25 Be not afraid of sudden fear, neither of the desolation of the wicked, when it cometh.

3:26 For the LORD shall be thy confidence, and shall keep thy foot from being taken.

3:27 Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it.

3:28 Say not unto thy neighbour, Go, and come again, and to morrow I will give; when thou hast it by thee.

with all of his heart and prospered (II Chron. 31:20-21).

- The Lord was with him and prospered him in all that he did (II Ki. 18:6-7).

Notice how the words of vs. 25 run our thoughts back to 1:27; there the resulting fear for the wicked in the day of God's judgment; here life without fear for the one following God's wisdom. It's a reminder of the two ways, "*the way of life, and the way of death*", and their results.

3:27-28 – Handling people. Much of the essence of God's proverbs is just simple justice or fairness applied to life's practical details, and moving the honest soul to respond with something like, "Yes, I suppose that would be the fair thing to do". If

payment is due to someone and it's in your possession, then give it to them! Don't hold people off from what is rightfully theirs. This is the sense of the phrase "*them to whom it is due*" (literally "from its owner"). It highlights not only the annoyance of foot-dragging in paying up, but the unfairness of it. If somebody did a job for you, pay them what became theirs from the moment they finished the job (compare Lev. 19:13; Deut. 24:14-15). "No, but those who owe me don't pay for a month or two" you say? So what! Two wrongs don't make a right. If you have it and it's due, pay up! Do you see any conditions mentioned here? Remember the golden rule that "*as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise*" (Lk. 6:31). Again, Jesus mentioned no conditional ideas in this practical rule either. It is to be followed regardless of whether others do the same in return.

Do you see the simple justice here, filtering down to the practical details of life? And this portion could be applied far beyond timely payments. The term in vs. 27 is "*good*". Don't hold back "*good*" (not just money) from those deserving it, if it's in the power of your hand to give it. If someone is being unjustly abused, do them the good turn of standing with them. If someone is slandered, stand up for them.

*3:29 Devise not evil against thy neighbour, seeing he dwelleth
securely by thee.
3:30 Strive not with a man without cause, if he have done thee
no harm.*

If you've wronged someone, that good work of your humble confession is due them. Don't withhold it. If someone has confronted you with wrong and you have pridefully, dishonestly denied it, they are due your good response of admitting your wrong. Where you have any power or voice to preserve good to others or to deliver them from evil, take action. Don't be an uninvolved bystander. It's part of loving your neighbour as yourself.

Consider the application of this principle to our witness. Has the unsaved world been offered the good news of salvation, the good gift of eternal life from God? Yes! And has that "good" been given to us, as God's messengers, to be carried to them in their need? Yes! It's due them through God's gracious purpose, and He has commissioned us to make delivery. God has spoken brother! *"Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it."*

3:29-30 – Wisdom now moves from the thought of withholding good to plotting evil. Don't fabricate

*3:31 Envy thou not the oppressor, and choose none of his ways.
3:32 For the froward is abomination to the LORD: but his
secret is with the righteous.*

evil or seek contention with your neighbour. As Paul said in Rom. 12:18, “*as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men*”. Here is the peaceable nature of heavenly wisdom (James 3:17). A truly wise man will be more like a high-pressure system in driving away the bad weather of strife, than a low-pressure system in always bringing or attracting storms. I find it so much easier to tolerate annoying people when I make the effort to get to know them and pray and strive for their souls’ salvation. Make them your mission field and they won’t be a war zone.

3:31-32 – Appreciation of oppression. The word translated “*choose*” here in vs. 31 has at its root the idea of delight or approval. Don’t look upon those who wrong or oppress others with any kind of envy or appreciation or approval, such that you might choose to follow their ways (cf. Ps. 37:1). Now apply this divine command to your television and movie viewing. Are you and your children only ever found appreciating morally excellent characters? By desiring or appreciating or inwardly approving the

*3:33 The curse of the LORD is in the house of the wicked: but he
blesseth the habitation of the just.
3:34 Surely he scorneth the scorners: but he giveth grace unto
the lowly.
3:35 The wise shall inherit glory: but shame shall be the
promotion of fools.*

ways of the perverse, we choose what the Lord hates rather than His intimacy. For “*secret*” in vs. 32 expresses familiar acquaintance. How much incredibly better to have the Lord than what perversity brings.

.....

Consider the two ways and their results;

- 3:32 – The perverse are abhorred by the Lord, while the righteous are taken into His confidence.
- 3:33 – The home of the wicked is cursed, while that of the just is blessed.
- 3:34 – Mockers receive the Lord’s mocking, while the lowly receive His grace or favour.
- 3:35 – Fools are promoted to shame, while the wise inherit honour.

“Keep thy heart with
all diligence;
for out of it
are the issues of life”

(Proverbs 4:23)

Chapter 4

4:1 Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding.

4:2 For I give you good doctrine, forsake ye not my law.

4:3 For I was my father's son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother.

4:4 He taught me also, and said unto me, Let thine heart retain my words: keep my commandments, and live.

4:5 Get wisdom, get understanding: forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth.

4:6 Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee.

Still the father pleads with his son. Learn from his gracious approach. He speaks of his own example, of his own father who taught him the same things. Do you see wisdom spanning three generations here? And we're reminded that the godly heritage of God's wisdom is the greatest thing one could leave to his children and his children's children. And see how these are things passed on by personal influence. It's a father talking, even pleading with his children. It's the essence of good preaching and teaching. And note the earnestness in the father's persuasion. If it means little to you, can it mean much of anything to them? And this father's words are affectionate rather than harsh, pleading rather than demanding. He speaks with persuasion,

4:7 *Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding.*
 4:8 *Exalt her, and she shall promote thee: she shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her.*
 4:9 *She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee.*
 4:10 *Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings; and the years of thy life shall be many.*
 4:11 *I have taught thee in the way of wisdom; I have led thee in right paths.*
 4:12 *When thou goest, thy steps shall not be straitened; and when thou runnest, thou shalt not stumble.*

knowing that if he does not get to the heart and will of his child all of his outward forcing will accomplish little. He uses a good balance of both positive and negative thoughts (in fact more “do’s” than “don’ts”). It’s all about convincing that child that *here* is the way of real life (4:4, 13, 22) and honour and promotion (vs. 8) and glory (vs. 9). Here is the good and right path (4:2, 11). The repeated encouragement to “*get*” (vs. 5, 7) indicates that this is not a brain or ability thing, but a will or choice or decision thing.

4:13 – Instruction “is your life”. There is such attention here to the matter of our attention to instruction (4:1, 10, 13, 20). A vital part of godliness is careful *attention* to well-known truths. Pride wants to *tell* rather than to *listen* or attend to the instruction of another. It demands the role of

4:13 *Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go: keep her; for she is thy life.*
4:14 *Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men.*
4:15 *Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away.*
4:16 *For they sleep not, except they have done mischief; and their sleep is taken away, unless they cause some to fall.*
4:17 *For they eat the bread of wickedness, and drink the wine of violence.*

teacher, refusing input from others, especially in what it perceives as its own field of expertise. Here was the problem of the Pharisees with Jesus. Their pride made them the worst of listeners or learners. Good listening takes humility. Compare 13:1 & 20:12, where we find that a “*hearing ear*” is the Lord’s making. Oh Lord, make one or two for me.

4:14-19 – Now it’s what to avoid. *Don’t even get close!!* (vs. 14-15). The thought behind the command “*avoid it*” is to “let go” or “let slip through the fingers”. Just let go of those opportunities to do evil. Let them slip right through your fingers without grasping hold of them (compare 5:8 & 7:8). In fact, try to completely avoid any situation that might give opportunity for wrong choices.

Note well here the nature of the heartless. They can’t even sleep unless they cause some to fall (vs. 16). They eat and drink evil and violence (vs. 17).

4:18 *But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.*
4:19 *The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble.*
4:20 *My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings.*
4:21 *Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart.*
4:22 *For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh.*

Do you see the dark depths to which wrong choices take us? *It comes to this!*

Vs. 18-19 – A vision of two paths, the one arising to greater and greater glory like the sun rising to full day, and the other stumbling in darkness (Jer. 23:12).

Vs. 22 – Note again here the beneficial *physical* effects of attending to God's words. Here is true holistic medicine, from the inside out. Compare the crucial commands in the first half of Philippians 4.

4:23-27 – The heart and its outflow.

Vs. 23 – Above every guarded thing, **keep your heart**, for it is the source of all of life's issues. Compare Matt. 12:33-35.

*4:23 Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the
issues of life.
4:24 Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips
put far from thee.
4:25 Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look
straight before thee.
4:26 Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be
established.
4:27 Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot
from evil.*

Vs. 24 – The outflow of the mouth or lips. God's wisdom fits a muzzle to us. Compare James 3 on the fiery tongue.

Vs. 25 – The outflow of the eyes. Contrast the open-faced, straightforward look of the sincere with the shifty look of the wicked in 6:12-14 (or his superior look in 6:17). The straight-on look of the sincere is a picture of the sight fixed upon right (vs. 27) with no vacillating double mind. Compare this singleness of heart sadly missing in Lot's wife (Gen. 19:16-26; Lk. 17:32).

“Drink waters out of
thine own cistern,
and running waters out of
thine own well”

(Proverbs 5:15)

Chapter 5

- 5:1 *My son, attend unto my wisdom, and bow thine ear to my understanding:*
5:2 *That thou mayest regard discretion, and that thy lips may keep knowledge.*
5:3 *For the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil:*
5:4 *But her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword.*
5:5 *Her feet go down to death; her steps take hold on hell.*
5:6 *Lest thou shouldest ponder the path of life, her ways are moveable, that thou canst not know them.*
5:7 *Hear me now therefore, O ye children, and depart not from the words of my mouth.*
-

Warnings and instructions for marriage.

5:3-14 – More on the “*strange woman*”. This one is temptation personified (2:16-19). Her appearance and approach is graphically pictured here with lips like dripping honey and mouth smoother than oil (vs. 3). Behold her trademark flattering speech (sample at 7:14-21). “*Her end*” is greatly emphasized in vs. 4-14. Here is God’s warning and wake-up call, “*for surely there is an end*” (23:18). This is now the price of immorality and infidelity. God is faithful to not allow us to forget what comes afterward, either in blessing or blasting. Wisdom’s answer to vs. 3 is found in vs. 4, where bitter as

5:8 *Remove thy way far from her, and come not nigh the door
 of her house:*
 5:9 *Lest thou give thine honour unto others, and thy years unto
 the cruel:*
 5:10 *Lest strangers be filled with thy wealth; and thy labours
 be in the house of a stranger;*
 5:11 *And thou mourn at the last, when thy flesh and thy body
 are consumed,*
 5:12 *And say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart
 despised reproof;*
 5:13 *And have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined
 mine ear to them that instructed me!*
 5:14 *I was almost in all evil in the midst of the congregation
 and assembly.*

wormwood answers to sweet as honey, and sharp as a two-edged sword is the contrast of smoothness. Tasty turns nasty, and smooth goes all points and razor edges, *afterward!* Don't miss it. Involvement with this one is the way "*down*" (vs. 5, cf. 2:18). Again, don't trust yourself to even get close (vs. 8). Stay right out of her way. Compare the N.T. echoes in I Cor. 6:18 & II Tim. 2:22. Consider the practical ramifications of this principle in our thought life, work adjustments, route home (7:8), subscription cancellations, etc. Messing with a "*strange woman*" will bring loss of honour (vs. 9), loss of your best years (vs. 9), loss of wealth (vs. 10, cf. 6:26 & 29:3), loss of joy (vs. 11, "*mourn*"), loss of health (vs. 11, AIDS?), etc. In vs. 11-14 we hear the moaning end of refusing to "attend" to wisdom in this matter.

*5:15 Drink waters out of thine own cistern, and running waters
out of thine own well.
5:16 Let thy fountains be dispersed abroad, and rivers of
waters in the streets.
5:17 Let them be only thine own, and not strangers' with thee.
5:18 Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of
thy youth.
5:19 Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her
breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished
always with her love.
5:20 And why wilt thou, my son, be ravished with a strange
woman, and embrace the bosom of a stranger?
5:21 For the ways of man are before the eyes of the LORD, and
he pondereth all his goings.*

5:15-20 – Turn your heart toward home. The Lord now highlights the lasting, valid pleasures of a faithful marriage. As some portions of the Song of Solomon, the language here is quite frank and physical. Within marriage is where sexual pleasure is to be freely enjoyed, undefiled (Heb. 13:4). Indeed, God's command here is to *drink* from that well (vs. 15), and to drink from *that* well, to be satisfied there, yea to be “*ravished*” or intoxicated with her love.

5:21 – Our thoughts are directed again to the Lord who weighs our ways.

5:22 – The binding effect of sin, as if tying the sinner fast with ropes.

*5:22 His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he
shall be holden with the cords of his sins.
5:23 He shall die without instruction; and in the greatness of
his folly he shall go astray.*

5:23 – Here is sexual impurity’s pay-day. The same Hebrew word translated “*ravished*” or intoxicated in vs. 19-20 is translated “*go astray*” in this verse. The notion is something like “in the greatness of his foolishness he shall be unlawfully intoxicated”, running headlong after illicit sexual pleasure, and brought to death at the last for his lack of discipline.

Chapter 6-7

- 6:1 *My son, if thou be surety for thy friend, if thou hast stricken thy hand with a stranger,*
6:2 *Thou art snared with the words of thy mouth, thou art taken with the words of thy mouth.*
6:3 *Do this now, my son, and deliver thyself, when thou art come into the hand of thy friend; go, humble thyself, and make sure thy friend.*
6:4 *Give not sleep to thine eyes, nor slumber to thine eyelids.*
6:5 *Deliver thyself as a roe from the hand of the hunter, and as a bird from the hand of the fowler.*
-

6:1-5 – Now a word concerning the matter of standing surety. To become surety for someone is to agree to be liable for his debt. With such earnestness wisdom counsels us away from this arrangement, for it is an invitation to financial ruin. Compare 11:15; 17:18; 20:16; 27:13. Beyond simply lending money to someone in need, becoming surety is the blank cheque of a promise to cover any debt the other fails to pay. This could end up costing the incautious one everything, landing him and family into complete financial bondage. Therefore the intense, urgent commands here in vs. 3;

- Diligence – “Go”, now! Before nightfall.
- Humility – “*Prostrate yourself*”.

6:6 *Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise:*
 6:7 *Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler,*
 6:8 *Provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest.*
 6:9 *How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep?*

- Urgency – “*Be urgent on your friend*”. Note the life or death comparison in vs. 5.
 - Persistence – As the importunate widow with the unjust judge (Lk. 18:1-8).
-

On the Side

Don't miss the implication here that by our word and a shake of hands God considers the contract binding enough to snare us (vs. 2). There's repetitive emphasis here on this score. See how important (obligatory) God considers our word. Even as He makes His own words utterly sure and trustworthy, so He expects ours to be the same. He is not pleased when we are not people of our word. Compare Deut. 23:21-23.

6:6-11 – Concerning diligence. In vs. 6 is our first

6:10 *Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep:*
 6:11 *So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man.*
 6:12 *A naughty person, a wicked man, walketh with a froward mouth.*
 6:13 *He winketh with his eyes, he speaketh with his feet, he teacheth with his fingers;*
 6:14 *Frowardness is in his heart, he deviseth mischief continually; he soweth discord.*
 6:15 *Therefore shall his calamity come suddenly; suddenly shall he be broken without remedy.*

glimpse of the “*sluggard*”. Compare vs. 9; 10:26; 13:4; 15:19; 19:15; 24:30; 31:27. A string of commands are levelled at this idler (“*go*”, “*consider*”, “*be wise*”), yet one wonders concerning the impact. This command to “*consider*” is a touch stronger than just the idea of looking with attention. The word behind the English suggests the notion of learning or understanding as well. And note how it takes only “*a little*” laxity to come to poverty (vs. 10). Note the 5-times focus on “*sleep*” in vs. 9-10, and the 3-times focus on just “*a little*” too much of it. Highlighted in vs. 11 is the resulting poverty, the loss of both earthly wealth and heavenly reward. Wisdom’s lessons to be learned from the lowly ant are self-motivation and redeeming the time or opportunities.

6:12-15 – The sly worthless one. The Hebrew word

6:16 *These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him:*
6:17 *A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood,*
6:18 *An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief,*

translated “*naughty*” (KJV) in vs. 12 is *belial* or worthless. The word translated “*wicked*” here has at its root the idea of vanity or emptiness. With the slightest effort, merely a perverse comment or two, a wink of the eye behind the back here, the hint of a nod or insinuating gesture there, and this hollow soul can stir a storm of trouble and sow a harvest of strife. Until God at last sees to the sudden ruin of this one (vs. 15, repetitive focus).

6:16-19 – Seven hateful things;

- The lofty eyes of a superior look. The inward attitude of arrogance becomes visible on the face, particularly through those little windows of the soul.
- A tongue that lies. The outward indication of inward hate (26:28).
- Hands that murder. The Bible reveals that even to hate another is to commit murder in the heart (I Jn. 3:15).

6:19 *A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.*

6:20 *My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother:*

- A filthy thought life, describing the inward wish for evil or the plotting of wicked words or actions or the secret thrill in the hope of things forbidden. Compare Gen. 6:5, where *“every imagination of the thoughts [same Heb. word] of his heart was only evil continually”*.
- Feet quick to chase trouble. It speaks of an eagerness to hurt without the least hindrance of conscience.
- A lying witness (shading the truth in court) – Double focus on less than honest words here among the Lord’s top hateful things.
- A conflict stirrer among friends.

6:20 – We find again here the proverbial father pleading with his son. And always the theme is the same – keep, *keep*, keep my words. Keep them and don’t forsake them. And as in 3:3 & 7:3, so in 6:21, *“Bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck”*. This is not to be taken in an ultra-literal sense as do the orthodox Jews in the

6:21 Bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck.

6:22 When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee.

6:23 For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life:

tying of their phylacteries onto their arms and foreheads. Rather it speaks of the most careful focus, meditation, and application of wisdom's precious words of life. And note how 6:23, 4:13, and 7:2 all present the same promise of well-being and life through obedience to the words of God and parents.

6:23 – The Hebrew word translated “*commandment*” has the root idea of something prohibited. Thus God’s “don’ts” or prohibitions are good and bright things, more enlightening than shackling. “Don’ts” are only tedious or burdensome to a haughty heart. Only the proud don’t do “don’ts”, for pride is angered by any authority above its own. But God indicates that the prohibition of wrong by His divine authority “*is a lamp*” in a dark world. “*The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes*” (Ps. 19:8). That happy attitude of willing obedience of the commandments of the Lord promises well-being (Deut. 5:29) and prolonged life

6:24 *To keep thee from the evil woman, from the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman.*

(Deut. 6:2), for it honours the Lord by demonstrating the settled conviction that He knows what is best for His people. The man who says with the Psalmist *“I will delight myself in Thy commandments, which I have loved”* (Ps. 119:47) is called *“blessed”* above all men. *“Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in His commandments”* (Ps. 112:1).

6:24 – Note the pattern developing;

<u>Keep My Words</u>	<u>To Keep you from the Strange Woman</u>
6:20-23	6:24-26
2:1-11	2:16-19
5:1-2	5:3-14
7:1-4	7:5-27

Clearly one of the primary reasons for keeping God’s words is toward our deliverance from temptation’s appeal. *“Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto*

according to Thy word” (Ps. 119:9).

With our thoughts turned again to the “*strange woman*”, let’s pull together a description of this temptress of whom we see so much in this book. And in so doing we’ll gather a character sketch of temptation, for she is the very personification of temptation to evil;

- 2:16 – The first we learn of her is of her flattering words.
- 2:17 – She forsakes the guide of her youth (unfaithful to father and husband).
- 2:17 – She forgets the covenant of her God (no fear of God).
- 2:18 – She’s the way to death.
- 2:19 – The corrupting effect of her influence is *permanent*.
- 5:3 – She’s sweet and smooth of tongue. Again, at the top of the list is the fetching nature of her words.
- 5:4 – Her outcome is bitterness and butchery.
- 5:5 – She’s the way to death and hell.
- 5:9-11 – She’s the way of *loss*; of honour, of your best years, of wealth, joy, and health.

6:25 *Lust not after her beauty in thine heart; neither let her take thee with her eyelids.*

Job understood this (Job 31:9-12).

- 5:23 – She’s the way of greatest foolishness.
- 6:24 – Again, her flattering tongue (literally “smoothness”). When she begins to wax smooth of words with you, *let the warning lights be flashing in your heart!* And if she has such power in her tongue for evil, then the wise hold in their tongues the same power for good.
- 6:25 – She’s attractive. She’s much too easy to look at. Remember how the original temptation in the garden was “*pleasant to the eyes*” as well. Even the word translated “eyelids” here has the idea of active motion behind it, suggesting the flutter of eyelashes. N.B. God’s attention to detail. It’s all a part of the alluring package she presents. Like those practiced, extra wiggles and jiggles she purposefully adds to other parts of her anatomy. Any good fisherman knows the value, not only of the right bait, but of just the right way to move it.

6:26 *For by means of a whorish woman a man is brought to a piece of bread: and the adulteress will hunt for the precious life.*
6:27 *Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned?*
6:28 *Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned?*

“Lust not after her beauty” – See how God’s enlightening prohibition comes long before the actual fall to temptation. The sin of disobedience begins with even *desiring* to have what’s forbidden. And again, where would the pornography business, Hollywood, and much of advertising be if this one were honoured? The desire entertained is a sin of the same nature as the desire obtained. Remember Christ’s words in Matt. 5:28, that if one even looks upon a woman to lust after her he has already committed adultery with her in his heart. Here is the pure enlightening prohibition of God, *“Thou shalt not covet . . . anything that is thy neighbour’s”* (Ex. 20:17).

- 6:26 – She brings the worth of a man down to *bread level*.

6:29 *So he that goeth in to his neighbour's wife; whosoever toucheth her shall not be innocent.*
6:30 *Men do not despise a thief, if he steal to satisfy his soul when he is hungry;*
6:31 *But if he be found, he shall restore sevenfold; he shall give all the substance of his house.*

On the Side

Thoughts concerning adultery in 6:27-35;

- It's like embracing fire (6:27). Hugging something much hotter than a warm body!
- It's like walking on hot coals (6:28). Play with this kind of fire and you're sure to get badly burned!!
- "*Whosoever toucheth her*" will not go unpunished (6:29). See how the Lord warns of danger from the *first touch*. For there is where our intention is fully displayed. Everyone touching her will be touched by God, for "*the Lord is the avenger of all such*" (I Thess. 4:6).
- Adultery allows for no margin of pity, as we might have for a hungry thief (vs. 30).
- It costs a terrible price (vs. 31).

6:32 *But whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding: he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul.*
 6:33 *A wound and dishonour shall he get; and his reproach shall not be wiped away.*
 6:34 *For jealousy is the rage of a man: therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance.*
 6:35 *He will not regard any ransom; neither will he rest content, though thou givest many gifts.*

- It displays a lack of sense (vs. 32).
- It is self-destruction (vs. 32). Adultery brings ruin of *soul* as well as *substance*. For the adulterer hurts that spouse who is a part of him/her (Eph. 5:28-31).
- Adultery inflicts a wound and dishonour (vs. 33).
- It brings permanent reproach (vs. 33). Nobody fully returns from this kind of fall (2:19).
- It puts the adulterer into the unsparing hands of her husband, who won't be bought or bribed (vs. 34-35).

Compare the experiences of;

- Reuben (Gen. 49:3-4). His dishonour was publicly exposed at the last, and paid devastating dividends ("*you shall not excel*").

7:1 *My son, keep my words, and lay up my commandments
with thee.*
 7:2 *Keep my commandments, and live; and my law as the
apple of thine eye.*
 7:3 *Bind them upon thy fingers, write them upon the table of
thine heart.*
 7:4 *Say unto wisdom, Thou art my sister; and call
understanding thy kinswoman:*
 7:5 *That they may keep thee from the strange woman, from the
stranger which flattereth with her words.*
 7:6 *For at the window of my house I looked through my
casement,*

- Samson (Judges 16). He lost his ability to influence his world.
-

- 7:5 – *Always* her crowning attribute is her flattery (example of her words in vs. 14-20). Contrast the godly woman of chap. 31, who speaks only with wisdom and kindness (31:26). The strange woman uses her tongue as a primary weapon, like a bird of prey uses its talons.
- 7:10 – She wears the attire of a harlot. This of course would be a long, loose fitting dress, falling at least to below the knees, right? No, you know it wouldn't! What do you suppose her attire would look like in our day? The essence of modern fashion perhaps? It must

7:7 And beheld among the simple ones, I discerned among the youths, a young man void of understanding,
7:8 Passing through the street near her corner; and he went the way to her house,
7:9 In the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night:
7:10 And, behold, there met him a woman with the attire of an harlot, and subtil of heart.

involve form-displaying clothing, either through tightness or thinness of material or scarcity of it altogether. Now take a good look at the typical, modern sweetheart on the street, with form-hugging top and jeans, and tell me what you see. Your daughter perhaps? *“The attire of an harlot”* is outward adorning that reads, “looking for attention here”.

- 7:10 – She’s subtle of heart. She’s no dunce, brother!
- 7:11 – She’s *“loud”* – Tumultuous, impetuous. She’s the very opposite of the quiet, gentle, restrained modesty of a truly godly woman (I Tim. 2:9-12; I Pet. 3:3-4). The Lord begins to pull the curtain back for us to catch a glimpse beneath her charming veneer.
- 7:11 – She’s *“stubborn”* – A woman who has cast off restraint, without discipline, a self-willed rebel.

*7:11 (She is loud and stubborn; her feet abide not in her house:
 7:12 Now is she without, now in the streets, and lieth in wait at
 every corner.)
 7:13 So she caught him, and kissed him, and with an impudent
 face said unto him,
 7:14 I have peace offerings with me; this day have I payed my
 vows.*

- 7:11 – She’s not content at home. She needs some action, for her pleasure is not fixed in the Eternal One.
- 7:12 – She’s out there right now, “lying in wait” (like a lioness) on every corner of the street. A similar term in 6:26 is translated “*hunt*”, speaking of lying in wait or laying snares.
- 7:13 – She’s utterly shameless and bold as brass.
- 7:13 – She’s outwardly affectionate and sensual. She uses touch freely. God is giving indicators here.
- 7:13 – She has an impudent face, a hard, defiant sort of look.
- 7:14 – She presents a show of religion, having performed her religious duties. Yes, there’s even a sanctimonious scent of purity about her.

7:15 *Therefore came I forth to meet thee, diligently to seek thy face, and I have found thee.*
 7:16 *I have decked my bed with coverings of tapestry, with carved works, with fine linen of Egypt.*
 7:17 *I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon.*
 7:18 *Come, let us take our fill of love until the morning: let us solace ourselves with loves.*

- 7:14-20 – She’s persuasive. “*You . . . you . . . you*”, is the theme of her syrupy song (vs. 15). See how effectively a hotly pursuing interest wins his heart. It’s what a man likes. The temptress comes with an “I want you!” approach, which can often be part of what he’s missing at home.
- 7:16-17 – She made her bed comfortable, beautiful, and sweet-smelling. She appeals to every sense. Oh she paints a picture! But again, note how the implication is that it’s all “for you” (vs. 15). As if she had made careful forethought and preparations just for him. How difficult she makes it for him to turn her down, for now it’s not only a question of desire but a matter of potential insult.
- 7:18 – She boldly invites him to sexual gratification. She can sense by his attentive lingering that the time is right to spring the trap. And note how she carefully hides the

7:19 *For the goodman is not at home, he is gone a long journey:*
7:20 *He hath taken a bag of money with him, and will come home at the day appointed.*
7:21 *With her much fair speech she caused him to yield, with the flattering of her lips she forced him.*
7:22 *He goeth after her straightway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks;*

animal nature of her intent by using a word (“*love*”) far more honourable than the *lust* that it is.

- 7:19-20 – She cleverly removes all fear of interruption or exposure. She touches on every interest and concern except the moral wrongness of what she proposes!

Her speech indicates that she was expecting him. It can only be that she has seen him cruising her pavement before! Be wise to recognize what you’re doing when you find yourself hovering, touching, dabbling with little intimacies, finding cause to put yourself near, half-hopeful (Job 31:9). Oh this one knows what she wants, and what he half wants. And over the whole deadly dance comes the whisper of our Father’s clear command, “*My son, if sinners entice thee consent thou not*” (1:10).

7:21-27 – Another rest-of-the-story. “*With her much*

7:23 *Till a dart strike through his liver; as a bird hasteth to the
snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life.*
7:24 *Hearken unto me now therefore, O ye children, and
attend to the words of my mouth.*
7:25 *Let not thine heart decline to her ways, go not astray in
her paths.*

fair [persuasive] speech” she brought him to the point of yielding. She caused him to turn after her “*straightway*” or “suddenly” or “all at once”, expressing that point of spilling over from indecision to full surrender. *Sweet* surrender!? *Are you kidding!*? Look well at the punishment pictures to follow, relating the end of the simple man. Butchered bovine (vs. 22)! Fettered fool (vs. 22)! Lanced liver (vs. 23)! Bagged bird (vs. 23)!

7:25 – Again the encouragement is here to keep your heart (above every guarded thing, 4:23). Our feet follow the paths into which our thoughts are allowed to wander. Don’t allow yourself even the wish for her intoxication.

7:26-27 – It’s a reminder of Samson and Solomon here, men who were strong in differing ways, yet both brought to ruin. Look beyond her attractive front garden to the bone pile out back. Don’t miss the triple reminder in vs. 25-27 that she is the

*7:26 For she hath cast down many wounded: yea, many strong
men have been slain by her.
7:27 Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers
of death.*

stairway “*down*”!

I find amazing and instructive the supreme prominence of this matter of sexual sin in God’s counsel to the youth in these early chapters. Obviously this is a desperately important issue, certainly one of the most prominent matters of concern among both young and old.

“Blessed is the man
that heareth me,
watching daily at my gates,
waiting at the posts
of my doors”

(Proverbs 8:34)

Chapter 8

8:1 Doth not wisdom cry? and understanding put forth her voice?

8:2 She standeth in the top of high places, by the way in the places of the paths.

8:3 She crieth at the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in at the doors.

8:4 Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of man.

Chapters 7 & 8 are contrasting accounts of two “women”, both presented in very dramatic form. The “strange woman” is the focus of chap. 7 with her appeal to evil, and “wisdom” is the focus of chap. 8 with her appeal to all that is truth and right. We will see them contrasted further in chap. 9. It’s a bit like we’ve been leaning toward chapter 8 from the beginning of the book. Earlier glimmers of wisdom’s exaltation like scattered sunbeams now suddenly break forth into the full light of day, and all is aimed at moving the reader to the decision for wisdom.

8:1-5 – Wisdom’s Appeal. Again she’s on the street, publicly appealing to everyone passing by (1:20-21). The focus of her attention is again particularly to the simple, those easily persuaded or enticed to evil, and to fools (vs. 5; cf. 1:22). The indication is that

8:5 O ye simple, understand wisdom: and, ye fools, be ye of an understanding heart.

8:6 Hear; for I will speak of excellent things; and the opening of my lips shall be right things.

8:7 For my mouth shall speak truth; and wickedness is an abomination to my lips.

8:8 All the words of my mouth are in righteousness; there is nothing froward or perverse in them.

8:9 They are all plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge.

8:10 Receive my instruction, and not silver; and knowledge rather than choice gold.

8:11 For wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it.

8:12 I wisdom dwell with prudence, and find out knowledge of witty inventions.

God's wisdom is able to be grasped by the simplest of men. And the fundamental representation here of wisdom appealing to the will of every man implies man a free agent, able to respond to God's earnest offer. The sincere seeker (vs. 17 & 34) is sure to find, since he is so diligently pursued from the divine side.

8:5 – She offers understanding to those who don't possess it, indicating that the cherished “understandings” or pet views of all outside of *true* understanding are foolishness. It takes humility to acknowledge this, to turn from human devised folly and embrace true understanding.

8:13 The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate.
8:14 Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom: I am understanding; I have strength.
8:15 By me kings reign, and princes decree justice.
8:16 By me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth.
8:17 I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me.
8:18 Riches and honour are with me; yea, durable riches and righteousness.
8:19 My fruit is better than gold, yea, than fine gold; and my revenue than choice silver.
8:20 I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment:
8:21 That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasures.

8:6-9 – Wisdom’s Purity. She’s excellent and right or straight (vs. 6). She is truth and shuns wickedness or falsehood (vs. 7). She is righteous and void of frowardness or perverseness (vs. 8). Her way is plain and right (vs. 9). It’s a contrast of straight and crooked ways. Wisdom is the picture of purity, particularly of mouth and lips.

8:10-11 – Wisdom’s Priority. She is to be sought above silver, gold, rubies, and everything precious.

8:12-21 – Wisdom’s Promise. It’s a picture of shrewdness, even craftiness in a positive sense (vs. 12). Compare Joshua at Ai (Josh. 8) and Nathan in reproving David (II Sam. 12). Those who fear the

8:22 *The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way,
before his works of old.*
 8:23 *I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever
the earth was.*
 8:24 *When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when
there were no fountains abounding with water.*
 8:25 *Before the mountains were settled, before the hills I
brought forth:*
 8:26 *While as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor
the highest part of the dust of the world.*
 8:27 *When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a
compass upon the face of the depth:*
 8:28 *When he established the clouds above: when he
strengthened the fountains of the deep:*
 8:29 *When he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should
not pass his commandment: when he appointed the
foundations of the earth:*

Lord hate evil (vs. 13). Wisdom can lead to wealth, but what she offers is far beyond earthly riches (vs. 18-19, 21). Her promise is to keep a seeker *“in the middle of the paths of right”* (vs. 20), in the very centre of God’s will, unswerving to right or left.

8:22-31 – Wisdom’s Pre-eminence. She was before all things and the basis of creation. Such words sound as if Jesus Christ could be the One speaking here (Col. 1:17). She was *“possessed”* (vs. 22), erected or *“set up”* (vs. 23), and *“brought forth”* as if in birth (vs. 24-25). Even so Jesus had pre-existence and yet was *“made of a woman”*. She is the source of joy (vs. 30-31), rejoices *“always”* in God, and delights in men (vs. 31). God made all

8:30 *Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I
 was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him;*
 8:31 *Rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my
 delights were with the sons of men.*
 8:32 *Now therefore hearken unto me, O ye children: for
 blessed are they that keep my ways.*
 8:33 *Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not.*
 8:34 *Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my
 gates, waiting at the posts of my doors.*
 8:35 *For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour
 of the LORD.*
 8:36 *But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all
 they that hate me love death.*

things through wisdom, therefore we must attempt nothing without her.

8:32-36 – Wisdom’s Plea. Behind her appeal Wisdom has the credentials of creation, the promise of true joy, and the power of life and death (vs. 35-36). The idea behind “*sinneth against*” in vs. 36 is “to miss”. Here is a contrast between those finding (vs. 35) and those missing (vs. 36).

Note the crescendo of Wisdom’s appeal in vs. 32-34, with a 3-fold appeal to listen and a double promise of blessing.

“Stolen waters are sweet,
and bread eaten in secret
is pleasant”

(Proverbs 9:17)

Chapter 9

- 9:1 *Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars:*
9:2 *She hath killed her beasts; she hath mingled her wine; she hath also furnished her table.*
9:3 *She hath sent forth her maidens: she crieth upon the highest places of the city,*
9:4 *Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him,*
9:5 *Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled.*
-

9:1-3 – Proverbs 9 is again Lady Wisdom proclaiming her message from “*the highest places of the city*”. And now with a new feature, for like Esther she has prepared a feast, and has even “*sent forth her maidens*” (her disciples). Sound familiar? This is likely the background for Christ’s parable of the marriage feast (Matt. 22:1-14; Lk. 16:16-24).

9:4 – Her message is again to the simple, those so commonly mentioned in this book. Again, these are those who are void of understanding and too easily persuaded or enticed, at least when it comes to evil.

9:5-6 – The heart of her message consists of a string of commands (six);

9:6 *Forsake the foolish, and live; and go in the way of understanding.*

- *“Come”*.
- *“Eat of my bread”*.
- *“Drink of my wine”* (compare Isa. 55:1-2).
- *“Forsake the foolish”* – Leave off the silly ones. Not only does she demand our choice for her company, but our choice against wrong company as well.
- *“Live”* – A reminder of Wisdom’s continual promise of life and plea to choose it (3:2, 16, 18, 22; 4:4, 10, 13, 22; 6:23; 7:2; 8:35; 9:11), and her constant assurance that to forsake her and choose evil is the way to death (1:32; 2:18-19; 5:5; 7:22-23, 26-27; 8:36; 9:18). *“As righteousness tendeth to life: so he that pursueth evil pursueth it to his own death”* (11:19).
- *“Go* (go straight) *in the way of understanding”*.

Hear the echo of her message in Christ’s words;

- *“Come unto Me . . .”* (Matt. 11:28).
- *“Whoso eateth My flesh, and drinketh My*

9:7 *He that reproveth a scorner getteth to himself shame: and he that rebuketh a wicked man getteth himself a blot.*
9:8 *Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee: rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee.*

blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day” (Jn. 6:54). This expresses the eternal results of attending *this* feast.

- *“Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst”* (Jn. 4:14).
- *“If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink”* (Jn. 7:37).
- His parable of invitation to the feast.

Seems Christ’s heart was filled with images from God’s book of wisdom. He allowed God’s eternal words to dwell in Him richly in all wisdom (Col. 3:16).

9:7-12 – The attention now swings to the audience, highlighting the two basic types or responses of people on the street;

- Vs. 7-8 – Here is the closed-minded scorner, who ever refuses the penetration of instruction. Since *“reproofs of instruction are the way of life”* (6:23), yet rejected by this one,

*9:9 Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser:
teach a just man, and he will increase in learning.
9:10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the
knowledge of the holy is understanding.
9:11 For by me thy days shall be multiplied, and the years of
thy life shall be increased.*

his is the way of death. Compare 10:17. Perhaps this is not as much a prohibition against speaking rebuke to the scorner as it is a warning of what the reprover is up against and in for. Jesus rebuked the scorning Jewish leaders and it put Him in a grave.

- Vs. 8-12 – Here is the one wisely teachable, who is ever increasing in wisdom.

Note how the way to life or death is not merely a matter of a momentary decision or simply saying a sinner's prayer. It is rather a heart attitude of either accepting or rejecting the input (reproofs) of God's Word. It's not so much a momentary decision as it is a plunge into another way.

The wise are not faultless, for they are often in need of rebuke as well, but their characteristic virtue is their willingness to hear (and even love) the reprover, for they see reproof as the way to greater

9:12 *If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself: but if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it.*
9:13 *A foolish woman is clamorous: she is simple, and knoweth nothing.*
9:14 *For she sitteth at the door of her house, on a seat in the high places of the city,*
9:15 *To call passengers who go right on their ways:*

wisdom (10:8). But the scoffer, by his superior attitude, stands in the way of his own progress. He fancies himself among the “*ninety and nine righteous persons who need no repentance*” and therefore is willing to hear no suggestion of fault. He’s already up there looking down on all else. What could those below possibly offer him?

9:12 – This is not to suggest that a man is without influence upon others, but that ultimately the *individual* is the one who wins or loses through his choices.

9:13-18 – The other party. One of the interesting features of this chapter is this rival feast to which the foolish woman boldly bellows her invitation. Her opening words are nearly the same as wisdom’s (compare vs. 4 & 16). Always Satan’s method is to counterfeit the Lord’s message and methods. But instead of drawing a man to higher things, she (he) appeals rather to the lower desires of the flesh, the

*9:16 Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: and as for him
that wanteth understanding, she saith to him,
9:17 Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is
pleasant.
9:18 But he knoweth not that the dead are there; and that her
guests are in the depths of hell.*

sweetness of things forbidden (vs. 17). The literal phrase in vs. 17 is “bread of secrecies”, expressing the need for concealment since her invitation involves things against God’s law and proper decency. Compare 20:17.

The fact is, this would-be teacher has no qualification above her hearers, for God says “*she is simple*”, as mindless and heartless as those she would teach (vs. 13 & 16).

Chapter 10

- 10:1 The proverbs of Solomon. A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother.*
10:2 Treasures of wickedness profit nothing: but righteousness delivereth from death.
10:3 The LORD will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish: but he casteth away the substance of the wicked.
10:4 He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand: but the hand of the diligent maketh rich.
10:5 He that gathereth in summer is a wise son: but he that sleepeth in harvest is a son that causeth shame.
-

With chapter 10 we enter into the main, central portion of the book of Proverbs. We will find here a bit of a change in style, with less of paragraphs and more individual statements of contrast in expressing the various shades of darks and lights, wrongs and rights.

10:1 – Wise son, smiling father, foolish son, sorrowing mother. It's a repeated wish and warning.

10:2-3 – Security's true source. Ill-gotten gains will never ultimately profit. But the Lord profits the righteous. Compare Matt. 6:24-34.

10:4-5 – The human side in diligence. The idea

*10:6 Blessings are upon the head of the just: but violence
covereth the mouth of the wicked.
10:7 The memory of the just is blessed: but the name of the
wicked shall rot.
10:8 The wise in heart will receive commandments: but a
prating fool shall fall.*

behind the word “*diligent*” is to be sharp or keen. Here is the balance of vs. 3. Wisdom has much to say of the great value of human diligence (12:24; 13:4; 21:5; 22:29; compare 6:6-11). Compare again the reason for blessing from both sides of King Hezekiah’s success;

- Human side – He did what he did with all of his heart, and prospered (II Chron. 31:20-21).
- Divine side – The Lord was with him and prospered him (II Ki. 18:6-7). Compare Prov. 10:22, where “*the blessing of the LORD*” is emphasized, as if to exclude any other source of prosperity. “*Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain who build it*” (Ps. 127:1).

The word translated “*wise*” in vs. 5 describes the idea of an attentive, circumspect prudence that brings success.

10:6 – The Lord now turns a strong spotlight on our

10:9 *He that walketh uprightly walketh surely: but he that
 perverteth his ways shall be known.*
 10:10 *He that winketh with the eye causeth sorrow: but a
 prating fool shall fall.*
 10:11 *The mouth of a righteous man is a well of life: but
 violence covereth the mouth of the wicked.*
 10:12 *Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins.*
 10:13 *In the lips of him that hath understanding wisdom is
 found: but a rod is for the back of him that is void of
 understanding.*

words (lips, mouth, tongue). No other chapter in this book refers so often to our mouth or parts thereof (13 times). And no other chapter speaks so often of the righteous, those who are uncompromisingly committed to what is right (13 times). Therefore a prominent theme here is *the mouth of the righteous*, as opposed to that of the wicked. Concerning the mouth of the righteous;

- Vs. 11 – It is a fountain of life (compare 13:14; 16:22).
- Vs. 13 – It is where understanding can be found.
- Vs. 19 – It knows restraint.
- Vs. 20 – It is as choice silver.
- Vs. 21 – It is a feeder of many.
- Vs. 31 – It brings forth wisdom. *“Bringeth*

10:14 Wise men lay up knowledge: but the mouth of the foolish is near destruction.

10:15 The rich man's wealth is his strong city: the destruction of the poor is their poverty.

10:16 The labour of the righteous tendeth to life: the fruit of the wicked to sin.

10:17 He is in the way of life that keepeth instruction: but he that refuseth reproof erreth.

10:18 He that hideth hatred with lying lips, and he that uttereth a slander, is a fool.

forth” is literally “to germinate or sprout out”, describing the fruit-bearing nature of a righteous tongue. It is a priceless tool of productivity in God’s fertile field of service.

- Vs. 32 – It knows what is acceptable.

Concerning the mouth of the wicked;

- Vs. 6 & 11 – It is covered with violence.
- Vs. 8, 10 & 19 – It foolishly, sinfully runs without restraint. The phrase in vs. 8 & 10, “*a prating fool*”, is literally “a fool of lips”, speaking of one talking foolishly and far too much.
- Vs. 14 – It is near destruction.
- Vs. 18 – It hides hatred with lies.
- Vs. 18 – It slanders. The two responses of vs.

10:19 In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise.
10:20 The tongue of the just is as choice silver: the heart of the wicked is little worth.
10:21 The lips of the righteous feed many: but fools die for want of wisdom.
10:22 The blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it.
10:23 It is as sport to a fool to do mischief: but a man of understanding hath wisdom.

18 depend on whose face is spoken to.

- Vs. 31 – It shall be cut out.
- Vs. 32 – It speaks perversity.

Further on the righteous;

- Vs. 6 – Blessings upon their heads.
- Vs. 7 – Their memory is blessed.
- Vs. 9 – They walk uprightly. The Hebrew word behind “*the upright*” or “*uprightly*” carries the idea of innocence or simplicity. It speaks of the complete absence of hateful or hurtful designs. Note the opposite in the sly actions of vs. 10.
- Vs. 9 – They walk surely, with nothing to fear.
- Vs. 16 – Their labour tends to life.

10:24 The fear of the wicked, it shall come upon him: but the desire of the righteous shall be granted.
10:25 As the whirlwind passeth, so is the wicked no more: but the righteous is an everlasting foundation.
10:26 As vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes, so is the sluggard to them that send him.
10:27 The fear of the LORD prolongeth days: but the years of the wicked shall be shortened.
10:28 The hope of the righteous shall be gladness: but the expectation of the wicked shall perish.

- Vs. 24 – Their desire shall be granted.
- Vs. 25 – They are an everlasting foundation.
- Vs. 28 – Their hope (expectation) shall be gladness.
- Vs. 29 – The Lord’s way is their strength. The wicked may consider the upright, who are void of craft or evil purposes, a weak and easy prey, but their unseen defender is plenty big enough.
- Vs. 30 – They shall never be removed.

Further on the wicked;

- Vs. 7 – Their name shall rot.
- Vs. 8 & 10 – They shall fall.
- Vs. 9 – They shall be known or discovered. It’s perversion’s inevitable unveiling.

*10:29 The way of the LORD is strength to the upright: but
destruction shall be to the workers of iniquity.
10:30 The righteous shall never be removed: but the wicked
shall not inhabit the earth.
10:31 The mouth of the just bringeth forth wisdom: but the
froward tongue shall be cut out.
10:32 The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable: but
the mouth of the wicked speaketh frowardness.*

- Vs. 16 – Their fruit is sin.
- Vs. 20 – Their heart is of little worth.
- Vs. 21 – They die for lack of wisdom. Hearts void of wisdom and worth, yet with so much to say (vs. 8 & 10)!
- Vs. 23 – It is their sport to do a wicked deed. The idea is stronger here than just getting up to a bit of “*mischievous*”.
- Vs. 24 – Their fear shall come upon them. What is their ultimate fear but the Judge of all men, that One before whom they all must ultimately stand?
- Vs. 25 – As with a passing whirlwind they are suddenly gone.
- Vs. 27 – Their years shall be shortened.
- Vs. 28 – Their expectation shall perish.

- Vs. 29 – Destruction shall be to them.
- Vs. 30 – They shall not inhabit the earth.

Chase the matter of wealth in chapter 10 (vs. 2-4, 15, 22).

Chapter 11

11:1 A false balance is abomination to the LORD: but a just weight is his delight.

11:2 When pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly is wisdom.

11:3 The integrity of the upright shall guide them: but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them.

11:4 Riches profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivereth from death.

11:5 The righteousness of the perfect shall direct his way: but the wicked shall fall by his own wickedness.

11:1 – Scales set purposely to deceive. The same principle would be true of any intentionally deceptive design or false front, such as false-advertisement or any shading of the truth to gain or retain finances. And note the Lord’s strongest feelings in both directions. Fairness and honesty are no small matters with Him.

11:2 – The wise lowly. The term translated “*lowly*” is uncommon (only here and Micah 6:8), referring to an unassuming submissiveness. The thought is worlds apart from the self-important swellings of pride.

11:3-9 – Righteousness delivers. Uprightness and righteousness are sure guides, while the crooked

*11:6 The righteousness of the upright shall deliver them: but transgressors shall be taken in their own naughtiness.
11:7 When a wicked man dieth, his expectation shall perish: and the hope of unjust men perisheth.
11:8 The righteous is delivered out of trouble, and the wicked cometh in his stead.
11:9 An hypocrite with his mouth destroyeth his neighbour: but through knowledge shall the just be delivered.*

dealings of the treacherous are sure to fail (vs. 3 & 5-6). *Heaven's* currency is righteousness (vs. 4).

11:8 – The picture of the wicked taken in their own trap laid for the righteous is a common one in the Bible. Compare Pharaoh's army drowned in the sea they were attempting to use against God's people (Ex. 14). Compare Darius's underlings becoming the lion's lunch they had wished on Daniel (Dan. 6). Compare Haman filling Mordecai's appointment at his own gallows (Esther 7).

11:10-11 – The circle of blessing widens. The godless despise the influence of the righteous and do not even realize the preserving nature of that influence among them. It was certainly a sad day for Sodom when the remaining righteous walked away. And it will be the tilt into earth's very worst plummet when the preserving salt of the church is raptured out before the Great Tribulation.

*11:10 When it goeth well with the righteous, the city rejoiceth:
and when the wicked perish, there is shouting.*

*11:11 By the blessing of the upright the city is exalted: but it is
overthrown by the mouth of the wicked.*

*11:12 He that is void of wisdom despiseth his neighbour: but a
man of understanding holdeth his peace.*

*11:13 A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful
spirit concealeth the matter.*

11:9 & 12 – Handling neighbours. A “*hypocrite*” is one who uses his mouth for his neighbour’s hurt. Vs. 12 gives the reason behind vs. 9. To “*despise*” is to hold in contempt or belittle. Never does God allow for us to diminish the dignity of our neighbour. In fact He insists upon quite the opposite in His second great commandment to love our neighbour as ourselves. Rather than looking down on others God’s children are to be esteeming others “*better than themselves*” (Phil. 2:3). And note how 14:21 goes a step further, making neighbour despising not only *senseless* but *sin*. What does 11:12 say of the racist?

11:13 – The literal Hebrew phrase translated “*talebearer*” here is “one walking about to slander”. This one circulates for the purpose of spreading scandal, telling things that don’t need to be told. And more than just recklessness, there is maliciousness in this tattler’s travelling tongue (Lev.

*11:14 Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude
of counsellors there is safety.
11:15 He that is surety for a stranger shall smart for it: and he
that hateth suretiship is sure.
11:16 A gracious woman retaineth honour: and strong men
retain riches.
11:17 The merciful man doeth good to his own soul: but he that
is cruel troubleth his own flesh.*

19:16; Ezek. 22:9). Therefore 20:19 warns against revealing secrets to such a one. In contrast a faithful friend can keep your secrets. At the very least they won't use them against you.

11:14 – Success in much council. Here is sound advice gained through the receptive attitude in the wise toward input (9:7-12). Compare 12:15; 15:22; 20:18; 24:6; 27:9.

11:15 – There is trouble in standing surety, while there is rest in its avoidance (compare 6:1-5).

11:16 – A woman of grace obtains honour, while a man of violence obtains mere wealth. How easily and silently the seemingly weak gain what the seemingly strong never can.

11:17-19 – The boomerang's return. What goes around comes around. Both those given to sowing

*11:18 The wicked worketh a deceitful work: but to him that
soweth righteousness shall be a sure reward.
11:19 As righteousness tendeth to life: so he that pursueth evil
pursueth it to his own death.
11:20 They that are of a froward heart are abomination to the
LORD: but such as are upright in their way are his delight.*

kindness and those given to sowing cruelty reap a harvest of the same upon their own souls (vs. 17). Again, here's a common biblical theme (Matt. 6:12; Luke 6:38; II Cor. 9:6; James 2:13), comparable to what we saw in 11:8. In vs. 18 is the contrast of the vain gain of wickedness with the sure reward (sage wage?) of righteousness.

11:20 – Abominable and enjoyable. Again we hear expressed here the same strong divine feelings as in vs. 1. The Lord despises a twisted heart (the exact sense of the Hebrew word here), while delighting in the upright.

Note the prominence of the *upright* in these two chapters;

- 10:9 – “*uprightly*” – They walk surely.
- 10:29 – “*the upright*” – Their strength is in the way of the Lord.
- 11:3 – “*integrity*” – They have a guide.

*11:21 Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be
unpunished: but the seed of the righteous shall be
delivered.*

*11:22 As a jewel of gold in a swine's snout, so is a fair woman
which is without discretion.*

- 11:5 – “*the perfect*” – Their righteousness straightens out their way.
- 11:20 – “*upright*” – They are the Lord’s delight.

11:21 – “*Though hand join in hand*” – The phrase may perhaps picture something passed from hand to hand or from generation to generation, thus meaning through all the ages. Or the idea may possibly be that of shaking hands in confirming a promise. Either way this seems to be an expression of assurance, something like, “You can most surely count on it that never shall the wicked escape punishment, and never shall the righteous fail to escape!”

11:22 – Fine swine. The picture presented is shocking in its audacity. Yet how much more gripping and instructive for the strong image. And in this is evidence of divine authorship, for man would not put it so strongly. Men are impressed with beauty and tend to think it only a bit of a

11:23 The desire of the righteous is only good: but the expectation of the wicked is wrath.
11:24 There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty.
11:25 The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.

shame that a beautiful woman would lack perceptive discernment. But rather than merely a touch regrettable, rather than beauty being a large part of one's worth, see how the Lord relegates outward beauty to the value of only a golden nose ring on a pig, quite insignificant and useless and even out of place. In God's estimation the larger issue is her grotesque, beast-like lack of discretion. We saw the opposite in vs. 16, where for her graciousness she obtains honour.

11:23 – The righteous wish only for good, while the wicked can expect only the outpouring of God's wrath. Compare vs. 31.

11:24-28 – Principles of giving.

- Vs. 24-25 – The Lord presents the example of the scatterer, who bestows largely or liberally to others and yet is increased. The same word translated “scattereth” is found in Ps. 112:9 (“dispersed”), describing the giving of a

11:26 He that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him: but blessing shall be upon the head of him that selleth it.
11:27 He that diligently seeketh good procureth favour: but he that seeketh mischief, it shall come unto him.
11:28 He that trusteth in his riches shall fall; but the righteous shall flourish as a branch.

godly man. And then the opposite side is presented here, of one holding back more than is right in his giving, yet coming to lack. The point is that the wealth of the liberal giver does not decrease as we might naturally expect, while the possessions of the tight-fisted do. *It is written!* Do you believe it? If so, prove it! And the Lord underscores the positive promise in vs. 25, running it to overflowing. The KJV “*fat*” means abundantly filled or satisfied (shades of vs. 17). The same principle holds for the giving of a life (John 12:24-25).

- Vs. 26 – Grace insists that we make available what we have when there’s a need, rather than selfishly holding out for a better price.
- Vs. 27 – A right heart will always earnestly seek what is best for others. And the right-hearted, with the evil, are sure to reap what they sow.

*11:29 He that troubleth his own house shall inherit the wind:
and the fool shall be servant to the wise of heart.
11:30 The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that
winneeth souls is wise.*

- Vs. 28 – The miser’s motive in misplaced trust. God is the One who prospers us. To trust possessions over the All-powerful One is idolatry. Compare Job 31:24-28 & I Tim. 6:9, where the same resulting “*fall*” is forewarned.

11:29 – Poor shepherding. One who does not wisely maintain the happiness of those under him (“*his own house*”) is a fool, receives nothing in the end, and forfeits his position to a better shepherd.

11:30 – “*The fruit of the righteous*”. Compare “*the root of the righteous*”, as immoveable (12:3) as it is fruitful (12:12).

This term “*the tree of life*” appears often throughout the Bible, from the Eden of Genesis to the New Jerusalem of Revelation. It seems to represent the idea of eternal life, or that which renews or extends the life of one forever. Compare its occurrences in Proverbs;

- 3:18 – The exaltation of God’s wisdom as that

*11:31 Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth:
much more the wicked and the sinner.*

which brings eternal life to those who find it.

- 11:30 – The fruit (or result) of righteous lives (those wise with God’s wisdom) is to lead others to eternal life.
- 13:12 – When our long delayed expectation finally comes, *“it is a tree of life”*.

11:31 – Fitting recompense.

Chapter 12

12:1 Whoso loveth instruction loveth knowledge: but he that hateth reproof is brutish.

12:2 A good man obtaineth favour of the LORD: but a man of wicked devices will he condemn.

12:3 A man shall not be established by wickedness: but the root of the righteous shall not be moved.

12:4 A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband: but she that maketh ashamed is as rottenness in his bones.

12:1 – Reaction’s revelation. True knowledge-lovers will love and look for correction. One avoiding correction, not only hates knowledge but has none. The word “*brutish*” means stupid, like cattle. Compare 12:15. Compare King Nebuchadnezzar leaving beasthood and standing up like a man when finally bowing before the Lord in Daniel 4.

12:2-3 – Here is a reminder that the good will be both esteemed and established by the Lord, but wickedness is no security. Nobody really achieves security through any form of evil.

12:4 – This is the first mention of this “*virtuous woman*” (greater focus is coming up in chap. 31). The Hebrew word translated “*virtuous*” expresses the idea of strength and ability (compare 31:17, 25).

12:5 The thoughts of the righteous are right: but the counsels of the wicked are deceit.
12:6 The words of the wicked are to lie in wait for blood: but the mouth of the upright shall deliver them.
12:7 The wicked are overthrown, and are not: but the house of the righteous shall stand.
12:8 A man shall be commended according to his wisdom: but he that is of a perverse heart shall be despised.
12:9 He that is despised, and hath a servant, is better than he that honoureth himself, and lacketh bread.

Such a woman of worth lifts her husband's honour with her own, which is perhaps the idea of 31:23 as well.

12:5 – The plans reveal the planner. A man thinks and plans according to his character.

12:6 – One mouth captures, while the other delivers. Compare 14:3.

12:7-8 – The wicked are gone and good riddance, while the righteous remain and glad for them.

12:9 – Quiet contentment. Better the one who has enough with lowly status than the one boasting himself of high things, yet having few real assets. The first one has little, but at least enough to support a servant. The second really has nothing, but displays a veneer of wealth. Better the one who

*12:10 A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast: but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.
12:11 He that tilleth his land shall be satisfied with bread: but he that followeth vain persons is void of understanding.
12:12 The wicked desireth the net of evil men: but the root of the righteous yieldeth fruit.
12:13 The wicked is snared by the transgression of his lips: but the just shall come out of trouble.*

is what he appears to be than the one who wishes to appear what he is not. Better the one living in his own shack than one living in a bank-owned palace. See how the Lord gets under the surface to the real value of things.

12:10 – The righteous care, even for their animals. Such folks are naturally mindful of others, while the wicked are selfish, caring only for what serves them.

12:11 – Worthless pursuits earn no bread. “*Vain persons*” here (KJV) could also include vain *things*. The contrast is between the one chasing empty rainbows (frivolous or questionable means of income or people, leisure, waste-of-time activities, etc.) and the one responsibly earning his keep. The near copy is in 28:19, except that the expected result (“*poverty*”) is given.

12:13-14 – Two tongue types.

12:14 A man shall be satisfied with good by the fruit of his mouth: and the recompence of a man's hands shall be rendered unto him.
12:15 The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise.
12:16 A fool's wrath is presently known: but a prudent man covereth shame.
12:17 He that speaketh truth sheweth forth righteousness: but a false witness deceit.
12:18 There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword: but the tongue of the wise is health.

- Vs. 13 – A tongue long enough for a noose. Indulging in sinful words can put you in real danger, but the righteous will hold their tongue, preserving their soul (14:3).
- Vs. 14 – A tongue able to produce.

12:15 – The wise are wise because they're not wise in their own eyes. For this cause there is in them a fundamental willingness for input.

12:16 – Again it's the exaltation of self-control. The prudent cover shame in their willingness to ignore insults.

12:17-20 & 22 – A word about words.

- Vs. 17 – Faithful and fraudulent.
- Vs. 18 – Hurtful and helpful. Compare the

12:19 The lip of truth shall be established for ever: but a lying tongue is but for a moment.
12:20 Deceit is in the heart of them that imagine evil: but to the counsellors of peace is joy.
12:21 There shall no evil happen to the just: but the wicked shall be filled with mischief.
12:22 Lying lips are abomination to the LORD: but they that deal truly are his delight.

healthy effect of an encouraging word in vs. 25.

- Vs. 19 – Truth is eternal, but lying won’t last.
- Vs. 22 – It’s the reason for vs. 19. Do you see any clearance here for “little white lies” in the word “*abomination*”? No lie could be called “good”, “right”, or “white”. And righteous people feel the same way about lying as our righteous God does (13:5).

.....
 ..

Consider the Lord’s “*delights*” (sometimes translated “*favour*”), things that make God smile;

- 8:35 – One finding wisdom.
- 11:1 – A just weight.
- 11:20 – The upright.
- 12:2 – A good man.

*12:23 A prudent man concealeth knowledge: but the heart of
fools proclaimeth foolishness.*

- 12:22 – Those dealing truly.
 - 15:8 – The prayer of the upright.
 - 18:22 – One finding a wife.
-

12:23 – The prudent man holds in reserve what he has, while the fool rashly proclaims what he has not. Compare 12:16 & 13:16).

.....

Consider the “*prudent*”;

- 12:16 – He ignores an insult.
- 12:23 – He does not vaunt his knowledge.
- 14:8 – He acts with knowledge.
- 14:15 – He looks where he’s going.
- 14:18 – He is crowned with knowledge.
- 22:3 & 27:2 – He sees and avoids danger.

Knowing and seeing are characteristic of the prudent.

12:24 The hand of the diligent shall bear rule: but the slothful shall be under tribute.

.....

12:24 – Self-rulers rule. Only one who rules himself can effectively rule others. It's self-evident that the slothful one needs a pusher since he refuses to push himself. And who's going to push him when he's the boss? Obviously only the diligent are really fit to rule. It's one of those items the sluggard desires but can never have or keep for long (13:4).

.....

Consider the “*diligent*”;

- 10:4 – His hand makes rich.
 - 12:24 – He will bear rule or tend toward leadership.
 - 12:27 – His substance is precious.
 - 13:4 – His soul shall be abundantly satisfied.
 - 21:5 – His thoughts tend only to plenteousness.
-

*12:25 Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop; but a
good word maketh it glad.
12:26 The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour: but
the way of the wicked seduceth them.*

12:25 – Here is the power of an encouraging word gladdening a depressed soul weighed down with some anxious care. Compare 12:18 & “*a word fitly spoken*” in 25:11.

12:26 – A choice of ways. Regardless of the way things may appear to the senses, in every way the righteous man excels the wicked. He’s a child of God rather than a child of the Devil. By faith he has been cleansed and clothed with God’s own righteousness, replacing the filth of his sin. He has been “*accepted in the beloved*” rather than dwelling in the camp of God’s enemy. His eternity is fixed in heaven rather than in the torments of hell. In contrast the way of the wicked is as darkness (4:19), leading him to blunder on to his sure destruction. The first line here is difficult in the Hebrew. Some suggest “searches out” rather than “*is more excellent*” (KJV), thus recommending careful examination of potential friends. The corrupting influences of the wicked in the second line offer good reason for caution. Compare 14:7.

*12:27 The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in
hunting: but the substance of a diligent man is precious.
12:28 In the way of righteousness is life: and in the pathway
thereof there is no death.*

12:27 – Waste not, want not. This is not suggesting that the diligent look too highly upon their material possessions, but only that they look down upon waste.

12:28 – Righteousness is life itself. A theme we've seen repeatedly.

“The soul of the sluggard
desireth, and hath nothing:
but the soul of the diligent
shall be made fat”

(Proverbs 13:4)

Chapter 13

*13:1 A wise son heareth his father's instruction: but a scorner
heareth not rebuke.*

*13:2 A man shall eat good by the fruit of his mouth: but the soul
of the transgressors shall eat violence.*

*13:3 He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life: but he that
openeth wide his lips shall have destruction.*

*13:4 The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing: but
the soul of the diligent shall be made fat.*

13:1 – The opening verse here is similar to that of chapter 12. It's a common theme (1:20-33; 12:1, 15; 13:18), and the contrasting statement all too common in life.

13:2 – Compare 12:14.

13:3 – Kept mouth, kept soul. Compare 12:13; 18:21; 21:23. Vital considerations for the wise;

- Wait until you've heard the matter (18:13).
- Study how to answer before speaking (15:28).
- Wisdom tends to hold anger back and speak softly (15:1).

13:4 – Sorry sluggard and satisfied diligent. The industrious shall be abundantly satisfied, while the

*13:5 A righteous man hateth lying; but a wicked man is loathsome, and cometh to shame.
13:6 Righteousness keepeth him that is upright in the way: but wickedness overthroweth the sinner.
13:7 There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing: there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches.
13:8 The ransom of a man's life are his riches: but the poor heareth not rebuke.*

object of the slothful man's desire is lost through inaction. Though God is the One who prospers us He never said this frees us from the responsibility to labour as though all depends on our efforts. God most often prospers us through our diligent, dependent labours.

13:5 – Compare 12:22.

13:7-8 – The rich and the poor.

- Vs. 7 – A reminder of who is the Enricher. Compare 11:24.
- Vs. 8 – Poverty's rewards. The idea seems to be that the riches of the rich bring the need to deal with the wolves following the smell of their money. But the poor have little to keep, and thus don't tend to face such threats. They at least have that for their poverty.

13:9 The light of the righteous rejoiceth: but the lamp of the wicked shall be put out.
13:10 Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised is wisdom.
13:11 Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished: but he that gathereth by labour shall increase.
13:12 Hope deferred maketh the heart sick: but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life.

13:9 – The righteous shine with joyful brightness, while the wicked grope in darkness. Compare 4:18-19.

13:10 – To hear or not to hear. Strife is the stench of pride's presence. Contention arises with pride's refusal to receive input. Would this be true of Paul and Silas' disagreement of Acts 15:36-41 as well?

13:11 – The gambler's verse. It seems that only wealth gotten by solid labour has real staying power.

13:12 – Delayed expectation. It's disheartening when something you're looking forward to is long drawn out. Compare the slow maturing of God's harvest discussed in James 5:7-11, requiring steadfast endurance to remain encouraged in the Lord. But when that desired thing comes it brings life ("*a tree of life*"). And what is our great desire

13:13 Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed: but he that feareth the commandment shall be rewarded.
13:14 The law of the wise is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.
13:15 Good understanding giveth favour: but the way of transgressors is hard.
13:16 Every prudent man dealeth with knowledge: but a fool layeth open his folly.
13:17 A wicked messenger falleth into mischief: but a faithful ambassador is health.

above all but the “*desire of all nations*” (Hag. 2:7), the Lord Jesus Christ. With Christ’s coming “*the hope of the righteous shall be gladness*” (10:28).

13:13 – What think ye of the Word? Always the Lord’s most vital concern is how we respond to His words, for this equals our response to Him personally.

13:14 – Compare 10:11.

13:15 – Sin’s way is hard. The way of life and righteousness may be narrow and difficult, but it’s still the easiest way by far.

13:16 – Fool on display. The KJV “*layeth open*” speaks of spreading out on display, as a merchant spreads out his wares. Compare 12:23.

13:18 Poverty and shame shall be to him that refuseth instruction: but he that regardeth reproof shall be honoured.

13:19 The desire accomplished is sweet to the soul: but it is abomination to fools to depart from evil.

13:20 He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.

13:21 Evil pursueth sinners: but to the righteous good shall be repayed.

13:22 A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children: and the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just.

13:17 – Beware who you employ. Depending on the character of your messenger, he could bring you trouble or refreshment. This is a common theme (10:26; 25:13, 19; 26:6).

13:18 – Honoured hearers, shamed rejecters. Compare 13:1.

13:20 – We become like the company we choose. Compare 12:26; 14:7.

13:21-22 – Pay-day someday. What better inheritance for children and grandchildren than the wealth of a godly heritage. And the righteous are heirs of the sinner's wealth.

13:23 – Better is poverty with prudence, than a riches-to-ruin story through indiscretion.

13:23 Much food is in the tillage of the poor: but there is that is destroyed for want of judgment.

13:24 He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.

13:25 The righteous eateth to the satisfying of his soul: but the belly of the wicked shall want.

13:24 – A different definition of love. God’s selfless love desires the best for the other, and knows instinctively that a child left to himself will ultimately share his mother’s shame (29:15). Thus true love overcomes the obstacle of over-sensitivity and demands right. The one indulging his child, tolerating wrong when he should be strong, is not given to his child’s best. And this is just another form of hate. God’s love is expressed in chastening (3:12; Heb. 12:5-11). The KJV “*betimes*” means either early or earnestly (or both?).

13:25 – Compare 10:3. Illustrated in Haggai 1:6.

Chapter 14

14:1 Every wise woman buildeth her house: but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands.

14:2 He that walketh in his uprightness feareth the LORD: but he that is perverse in his ways despiseth him.

14:3 In the mouth of the foolish is a rod of pride: but the lips of the wise shall preserve them.

14:4 Where no oxen are, the crib is clean: but much increase is by the strength of the ox.

14:1 – Wisdom builds, while folly destroys.

14:2 – Fear walks right. Compare John 3:19-21 for another revelation of the real reason men despise God. Men choose to walk according to the light of God's right because they fear Him. Men choose to despise God and His ways because they love their perversion. Rejection of truth is an internal problem, never an external one.

14:3 – Wield or shield. A fool uses his mouth as one would threaten with a stick, but the lips of the wise are their means of preservation rather than their weapon of attack.

14:4 – Mess the price of success. The principle here seems to be that there is less mess without an ox,

14:5 A faithful witness will not lie: but a false witness will utter lies.

14:6 A scorner seeketh wisdom, and findeth it not: but knowledge is easy unto him that understandeth.

14:7 Go from the presence of a foolish man, when thou perceivest not in him the lips of knowledge.

but less produce as well. Applications;

- Isolation is more tidy perhaps, but less productive.
- Having children can be a bother, but blessed is the one with full quiver of straight arrows to let fly at the enemy into the next generation (Psalm 127:3-5).
- Involving others and dealing with people can be a difficult business (leadership can be messy), but how much more is accomplished through the strength of others.

14:5 – Faithful and false witness. Compare 6:19; 12:17; 14:25; 19:5, 9.

14:6 – Wisdom can be elusive or easy. The scorner doesn't have the software to perceive wisdom, which can only be found in "*the fear of the Lord*" (1:7; 9:10). To deny God is to deny true wisdom. The scorner cannot have one without the other. To

14:8 The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way; but the folly of fools is deceit.
14:9 Fools make a mock at sin: but among the righteous there is favour.
14:10 The heart knoweth his own bitterness; and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy.
14:11 The house of the wicked shall be overthrown: but the tabernacle of the upright shall flourish.

receive the Lord is to easily perceive His wisdom.

14:7 – More on the company you keep (13:20), but this time with the strength of a command.

14:8-9 – Fools and wise.

- Vs. 8 – Characteristic of the wise is an eyes-open awareness of where their way is taking them. In contrast the fool is not merely an idiot but *dishonest*, with himself and others.
- Vs. 9 – Fools mock at sin or guilt. Their conscience being seared past feeling, they laugh at any effort to attach blame to them.

14:10 – Our innermost sorrows and joys cannot be fully known by another.

14:11 – Dweller determines durability. The stout and permanent (“house”) falls, while the flimsy and

14:12 There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.

14:13 Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful; and the end of that mirth is heaviness.

temporary (“*tabernacle*” or tent) stands and even flourishes. It all depends on who lives within.

14:12 – Things are not always as they seem. Compare the exact copy at 16:25. The only answer is to “*lean not unto thine own understanding*” (3:5), but to rely wholly upon God through His eternal words. Human opinion (yes, even your own) is untrustworthy, and is often a flimsy fortress standing against God’s will and way. Only what God says is sure and true for time and eternity.

14:13 – Laughter covers and ends in sorrow. Some degree of sorrow is always with man, even in and after laughter. Perhaps the implied answer is only in the lasting joy found in God’s presence, for there is where sorrow will meet its ultimate defeat (Rev. 21:3-4; 7:17; Isa. 25:8).

14:14 – The pay of our way. The reward of a wandering heart is to wander away from the Lord and His blessing (similar statement in 1:31). The good man will also find reward for his way (II Tim.

14:14 *The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways:
and a good man shall be satisfied from himself.*
14:15 *The simple believeth every word: but the prudent man
looketh well to his going.*

4:7-8).

14:15-16 – *Thoughtful* and *thoughtless*.

- Vs. 15 – Gullible and watchful. “*Going*” (KJV) is literally “step”. The thought goes beyond only the general way of the prudent to his individual steps.

.....
Consider the simple;

- 1:4 – He’s in need of “*subtlety*”.
- 1:22 – He loves his simplicity.
- 1:32 – His turning away shall slay him.
- 7:7 – He went the way to the harlot and got caught.
- 8:5 & 9:4 – He’s the object of wisdom’s invite.
- 9:16 – He’s the object of the foolish woman’s invite.
- 14:15 – He blindly “*believes every word*”.

- 22:3 & 27:12 – Without foresight he walks right into trouble.

Further observations concerning the simple;

- They are without fixed principles and therefore are unable to judge or discern for themselves (suggesting at the root a rebellious rejection of God's standard).
- They devote no attention to detail.
- They do not try or examine things properly.
- They are convinced by hearsay, and do not consider that there is always another side of the story.
- They see no need to verify what they hear before believing, and are thus gullible.
- They fail to recognize that we live in a world full of true and untrue, good and evil, valuable and worthless.
- They are seemingly unaware of the seriousness of false steps, and are thus unmindful of the real danger of foolish choices.
- They are impulsive, not taking the time to think about what might come of their decisions.

14:16 A wise man feareth, and departeth from evil: but the fool rageth, and is confident.

- They are easily persuaded or enticed.
- They are moved by every wind of doctrine (Eph. 4:14).

In contrast the prudent are aware and attentive to detail, not only with their way in general, but with their “*step*”. Being mindful of the possibility of a false step, they do nothing without careful forethought (vs. 8).

.....

- Vs. 16 – Fear and folly. Here is good fear that turns one from evil choices, contrasted with arrogant anger unchecked by fear. Some fitting illustrations;
 - o David’s refusal to touch King Saul (I Sam. 24 & 26).
 - o Nabal’s ignorance the equal of his confidence (I Sam. 25).
 - o Belshazzar’s final arrogance, a man unafraid to touch what should have stirred fear in him (Dan. 5).

14:17 He that is soon angry dealeth foolishly: and a man of wicked devices is hated.

14:18 The simple inherit folly: but the prudent are crowned with knowledge.

14:19 The evil bow before the good; and the wicked at the gates of the righteous.

14:17 – Hot-headed idiot and hated schemer. While one quick to blow up in anger is sure to play the fool, he’s generally not hated, perhaps even pitied for his lack of control (the flip side is in vs. 29, compare I Sam. 20:33). But the scheming stalker, given to craftily devised vengeance, will never be pitied for his calculating, slow-burning hate (compare “*the man bringing wicked devices to pass*” in Ps. 37:7). This one is the very opposite of the sincere “upright” one, who harbours never a malicious design. Compare Absalom’s way with his brother (II Sam. 13) and father (II Sam. 15), and Judas Iscariot’s infamous reputation as one deserving the hottest hell.

14:18 – Movements. Simplicity slides to foolishness, while prudence advances to knowledge. A crown speaks of honours earned through their knowledge. Note how the hothead (vs. 17) and the simple (vs. 18) come to the same foolish end.

14:19 – Bad bows at the last. Ultimately the good

14:20 The poor is hated even of his own neighbour: but the rich hath many friends.

14:21 He that despiseth his neighbour sinneth: but he that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he.

will rise supreme above the evil, though the latter may be lordly in this life (Luke 16:19-31). Compare Ps. 112:9-10. Remember the promise of 13:22, that the righteous will inherit the sinner's wealth.

14:20-21 – Attitudes toward others.

- Vs. 20 – Plenty yet empty. Here are the hollow friendships money brings. Wisdom counsels that we not be surprised by “friends” lost in poverty or gained in wealth.
- Vs. 21 – Blessing on the benevolent. To “*despise*” others is to think oneself above, yet never does God give us warrant to look down in pride on another. The real problem with despising others is given here. It's sin! And the refusal to bless is a refusal to *be* blessed.

See how poverty displays good hearts and true friends. It's the difference between loving another out of duty to God, and “loving” another for the personal advantage they bring to you. The same principle would be true of popularity. One's

*14:22 Do they not err that devise evil? but mercy and truth
shall be to them that devise good.
14:23 In all labour there is profit: but the talk of the lips
tendeth only to penury.*

attitude toward those outside the “in” crowd
displays their attitude toward the Lord.

.....

Consider attitudes toward rich and poor;

- 14:31 & 17:5 – As you handle the poor so you handle their Maker.
 - 19:17 – Pitying the poor is lending to the Lord, and will be repaid.
 - 22:2 – Rich and poor levelled in the same Maker.
 - 28:8 – From user to loser, while one pitying the poor ultimately gains.
 - Compare Job 31:5 & James 2:5.
-

14:22 – Is it not so that the evil find error and the good find good?

14:23 – Workers and idlers. Here are selfless

14:24 The crown of the wise is their riches: but the foolishness of fools is folly.
14:25 A true witness delivereth souls: but a deceitful witness speaketh lies.

labourers and shovel-leaners, leading respectively to “*profit*” and “*penury*” or poverty. And here is God’s promise again that earnest, honest labour will always produce positive results in one way or another. And consider that a talker requires a listener, robbing both of productivity. Compare “*a man full of talk*” in Job 11:2.

14:24 – Foolishness reaps only foolishness. Riches are the crown on the head of wisdom (8:18). When riches are combined with wisdom not only is there heightened opportunity but the discretion to use it to best effect. But while wisdom’s opportunity is raised through wealth a fool’s foolishness will always be just foolishness, whether with riches or no.

14:25 – Firm and infirm integrity. It’s a courtroom scene here (12:17; 14:5). A faithful testimony will deliver the appropriate souls, and visa versa (as with Potiphar’s wife). Consider the application of this principle to the conscientious and courageous carrier of the true gospel message.

14:26 In the fear of the LORD is strong confidence: and his children shall have a place of refuge.
14:27 The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.
14:28 In the multitude of people is the king's honour: but in the want of people is the destruction of the prince.
14:29 He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding: but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly.

14:26-27 – On the fear of the Lord.

- Vs. 26 – In it is a sure firmness and following.
- Vs. 27 – It is the way from death to life, particularly from the snares or traps leading to death. Compare 2:12-19.

14:28 – Prospering sheep point to good shepherding.

14:29 – Slow and quick anger. Here is the positive side of vs. 17a. As well, slow anger appeases strife (15:18) and shows one better than the mighty (16:32). Compare James’ “*swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath*” (James 1:19). The “*hasty of spirit*” is similar to “*soon angry*” in vs. 17, with similar results.

14:30 – Physical effects. Calm heart, healthy body – disturbed heart, decayed bones. A relaxed, quiet,

14:30 A sound heart is the life of the flesh: but envy the rottenness of the bones.
14:31 He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker: but he that honoureth him hath mercy on the poor.
14:32 The wicked is driven away in his wickedness: but the righteous hath hope in his death.
14:33 Wisdom resteth in the heart of him that hath understanding: but that which is in the midst of fools is made known.

tranquil heart gives prosperity to the whole body, while harbouring grudges has just the opposite physical effect. Compare other comments on physical effects in 4:22 & 17:22. Bitterness hurts only you!!

14:31 – The Most High in the person of the most low. As you handle the lowly so you handle the Most High (Matt. 25:40). “*Poor*” refers to those weak or less noble.

14:32 – Thrust away or trust always. Here are those rushed to destruction and those rescued in death. Compare again the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16), where one was cast away and the other comforted in death.

14:33 – Wisdom held in, foolishness spilled out. A man of understanding does not make a show of his wisdom, while a fool is seldom miserly with his folly.

14:34 Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.

14:35 The king's favour is toward a wise servant: but his wrath is against him that causeth shame.

He parades all within him, and little enough it is. The wise are known for their guarded reserve with what they know, while a fool cannot keep to himself what he thinks he knows. A common theme (12:23).

14:34 – Right and wrong government. Right raises a nation while sin disgraces a nation. Prevailing, unhindered, even legalized sin is what actually brings a nation down. Compare 16:12, where “*the throne*” or head of a nation is established by righteousness. History continually confirms this principle, for where are the evil nations of the past? Here is the true greatness of a people and the assurance of their continuance. The same principle applies whether individual, business, church, or nation. The individual version of the same is found in 14:11. Unrighteousness preserves nothing though it may often seem the best policy on the ground for preservation. Righteousness is the only way to lasting influence.

14:35 – Highest favour or anger, through discretion

or scandal. Compare the Babylonian and Medo-Persian kings with Daniel, Nehemiah, and Haman.

“Better is little
with the fear of the LORD
than great treasure
and trouble therewith”

(Proverbs 15:16)

Chapter 15

15:1 *A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.*

15:2 *The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright: but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness.*

15:3 *The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.*

15:1-2 – On the skilful use of words.

- Vs. 1 – A fit word. There is a time to “*answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceits*” (26:5). There’s a time to confront passion with passion, as Christ in Matt. 23 and Stephen in Acts 7. Yet there must ever be a sweet reasonableness about us (Phil. 4:5; II Tim. 2:24-25). The strongest are not always those who bravely meet anger with anger, but rather those able to rein in their wrath, turning away first their own anger, and then that of others with gracious words.
- Vs. 2 – While a wise tongue knowingly handles a situation well, a fool’s mouth can only gush forth the folly within him. Compare vs. 23 & 28.

15:4 A wholesome tongue is a tree of life: but perverseness therein is a breach in the spirit.

15:5 A fool despiseth his father's instruction: but he that regardeth reproof is prudent.

15:6 In the house of the righteous is much treasure: but in the revenues of the wicked is trouble.

15:3 – Divine omniscience. Every shade of evil or good is accurately observed by the Lord. Note the similar thought in vs. 11. Here is good cause for either cheer or fear (II Cor. 5:10; Ps. 139).

15:4 – Helpful or harmful tongue. “*Wholesome*” refers to healing ability. Here is the contrast of a health-giving, life-giving tongue with one destructive (literally “breaking”) through crookedness.

15:5 – Discarders and regards. Compare 12:1 & 13:1, 18.

15:6 – Better the riches of the righteous than the troubled treasures of the wicked. Put this together with vs. 16-17. The point does not concern wicked gains but the gains of the wicked, which do nothing to alleviate their disturbing troubles. But the peacefully blessed life of the righteous is treasure enough, for their life of love is a continual feast. As Paul put it, “*godliness with contentment is great gain*” (I Tim. 6:6).

15:7 The lips of the wise disperse knowledge: but the heart of the foolish doeth not so.
15:8 The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD: but the prayer of the upright is his delight.
15:9 The way of the wicked is an abomination unto the LORD: but he loveth him that followeth after righteousness.
15:10 Correction is grievous unto him that forsaketh the way: and he that hateth reproof shall die.

15:7 – Compare 4:23.

15:8-9 & 26 – The Lord’s loathing and love. The wicked are abhorred by the Lord in their sacrifice (vs. 8), way (vs. 9), and thoughts (vs. 26). Such strong, plain terms shut off all access to undoing our evil through good, no matter how great the personal costs (Isa. 64:6). The upright are the Lord’s delight in their prayer (vs. 8), pursuit of right (vs. 9), and words (vs. 26). Note how those upright in heart don’t even need sacrifice to win God’s delight. Compare 21:3, 27 & I Sam. 15:22. In vs. 9 “*followeth*” is written with a touch of intensity in the Hebrew behind the English, describing the Lord’s particular delight in those *earnestly* pursuing righteousness. The point is that the value of what we do before the Lord depends on our relation to Him.

15:10 – Those most in need are most intolerant. To

*15:11 Hell and destruction are before the LORD: how much
 more then the hearts of the children of men?
 15:12 A scorner loveth not one that reproveth him: neither will
 he go unto the wise.
 15:13 A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance: but by
 sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken.
 15:14 The heart of him that hath understanding seeketh
 knowledge: but the mouth of fools feedeth on foolishness.
 15:15 All the days of the afflicted are evil: but he that is of a
 merry heart hath a continual feast.*

forsake the guideposts is to forsake the right way, leading on to death. Compare vs. 5.

15:11 – See similar thought in vs. 3. Compare Heb. 4:13.

15:12 – A scorner's select society. He won't tend to hang with those who see through his cherished views and expose them. Compare Ahab shunning the disapproving voice of the prophet Micaiah while basking in the approval of his 400 yes-men (I Kings 22).

15:13 & 15 – Glad or sad heart.

- Vs. 13 – An encouraged heart shows on the face while a discouraged heart crushes the spirit (17:22; 18:14).
- Vs. 15 – Those discouraged can see no good

15:16 Better is little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble therewith.

while those encouraged can see no bad. The inward cheerfulness of a habitually happy heart is like a forever feast. It's a matter of inward attitude not outward circumstance. Some comparisons;

- True repentance made even the smelly belly of a fish a house of praise for Jonah (Jonah 2).
- Naomi's bitter outlook (Ruth 1:20-21) contrasted with Ruth's quiet acceptance.
- Joseph's happy servanthood though so abused by his brothers (Gen. 39-40).
- Habakkuk's best of attitudes in the worst of times (Hab. 3:17-18).

15:14 – Pursuits. The goal of the wise is knowledge, while the delight of fools is foolishness. Don't miss the fact that folly is the fool's by choice not by heredity.

15:16 – See vs. 6.

15:17 *Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox
and hatred therewith.*
15:18 *A wrathful man stirreth up strife: but he that is slow to
anger appeaseth strife.*
15:19 *The way of the slothful man is as an hedge of thorns: but
the way of the righteous is made plain.*
15:20 *A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish man
despiseth his mother.*

15:17 – Better a poor man’s meal with affection than the finest fare with friction. Here is the proper result of the positive side of vs. 13 & 15.

15:18 – Contentious and calm. In 28:25 we find what moves the strife-stirrer (confirming 13:10). Note that the key is in the *man* not the *moment*. Contention follows a man given to wrath like a bad smell, while one not easily provoked is a blessed peacemaker (Matt. 5:9). Remember the peacemaker’s method in vs. 1.

15:19 – Hard way, easy way. “*Made plain*” (KJV) is likely in the sense of “made level” (3:6). The man of ease really takes the hard way, while the upright find their way made easy.

15:20 – Be wise my son! Compare a similar thought in 10:1. But here is the added thought that to despise your mother, thinking her a fool, actually makes you the fool. And notice that no conditional

15:21 Folly is joy to him that is destitute of wisdom: but a man of understanding walketh uprightly.
15:22 Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established.
15:23 A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth: and a word spoken in due season, how good is it!
15:24 The way of life is above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath.

“if’s” or “but’s” are allowed for here. Her character doesn’t seem to matter.

15:21 – With or without understanding. Compare the first half with vs. 14. The Hebrew word translated “*foolishness*” speaks of trifling nonsense, that which the mouth of fools both feed on (vs. 14) and pour out (vs. 2). Compare the second half with vs. 19. Behind the word “*uprightly*” here is the idea of “straight”. God makes a man of understanding to walk a straight and level way (3:6).

15:22 – Confirmation in counsellors (11:14). Why do we hesitate to get a second doctor’s opinion in the light of such counsel? Wanting to preserve Doc’s fragile ego to our own detriment?

15:23 – A good answer benefits both. A good answer spoken at the appropriate time is not only a joy to the wise *receiver* but to the wise *giver*.

15:25 The LORD will destroy the house of the proud: but he will establish the border of the widow.

15:26 The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the LORD: but the words of the pure are pleasant words.

15:27 He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house; but he that hateth gifts shall live.

15:28 The heart of the righteous studieth to answer: but the mouth of the wicked poureth out evil things.

15:24 – The way above.

15:25 – The arrogant and their prey. The Lord is the protector of the oppressed and the destroyer of the oppressor. He will take from the proud the very things (house and land) that they sought to remove from the helpless widow.

15:26 – See vs. 8-9.

15:27 – Achan's sin. "*Gain*" (KJV) may refer to *unjust* gain, bringing Achan's sin and judgment to mind. He too troubled more than just himself. Or it could refer to an inappropriate desire for gain, bringing to mind I Tim. 6:9-10. "*Gifts*" refers to bribes. Wise is the one who hates their corrupting, self-destructive influence (Eccl. 7:7; Ex. 23:8; Deut. 16:19).

15:28 – Words *careful* and *careless*. "*Studieth*"

*15:29 The LORD is far from the wicked: but he heareth the
prayer of the righteous.
15:30 The light of the eyes rejoiceth the heart: and a good
report maketh the bones fat.
15:31 The ear that heareth the reproof of life abideth among the
wise.*

speaks of meditating or musing over an appropriate answer. Compare the second half to vs. 2. In contrast to the wicked (or the fool, vs. 2), the righteous will not dare to turn his tongue loose before carefully pondering the best approach and words.

15:29 – Far and hear. Not only is the heart of the wicked far from the Lord, He is far removed from them as well. Their prayer wouldn't even reach the Lord, while His ears are ever listening for the prayers of the righteous. Compare Rom. 5:2; Heb. 10:19-22; I Pet. 3:12; I John 5:14-15. And much more than simply hearing, vs. 8 describes the Lord's delight.

15:30 – Happy things. Here is the encouraging influence of a cheerful friend and good news. Apply to Romans 10:15.

15:31-33 – On handling instruction.

15:32 *He that refuseth instruction despiseth his own soul: but
he that heareth reproof getteth understanding.*
15:33 *The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom; and
before honour is humility.*

- Vs. 31 – An ear willing to hear correction will find a home among the wise.
- Vs. 32 – To refuse instruction is to despise yourself (8:36). The Hebrew word translated “*refuse*” might even lean to the idea of merely to “neglect” or “overlook”.
- Vs. 33 – The very entrance into wisdom in “*the fear of the Lord*” is through instruction. And the key to a receptive heart (which is the key to all else) is a lowly mind. The way to honour is humility. The way up is down. Compare 18:12; 22:4; Phil. 2:5-11. Contrast 16:18.

Chapter 16

16:1 The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the LORD.

16:2 All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the LORD weigheth the spirits.

16:1 & 9 – Free will, sovereign God.

- Vs. 1 – The statement here is that to a man belongs the counsels or plans of the heart, but to the Lord belongs even the tongue's answer. Compare Caiaphas's involuntary prophecy in John 11:49-52.
- Vs. 9 – While man thinks out his way, the Lord directs or aims his steps. One direction may be planned yet God brings another to pass.

Here is God's gracious working behind the scenes, He who sees the bigger picture and knows what is best. In light of God's sovereign control, how much better for man to give up pride's self-confidence and to give himself up to God's will and guidance.

16:2 – One final Judge. While a man may think his ways right, the Lord knows accurately and to the

16:3 Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established.

16:4 The LORD hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.

16:5 Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD: though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished.

core. Again, wisdom would lead us only to cast ourselves upon the Lord and to compare ourselves with His righteous standard.

16:3 – Casting all your care upon Him. “Commit” is literally “roll” in the original (also Ps. 37:5). Commit to God whatever you propose to do, and in this way your purposes shall be established. By rolling all the burden of our doings and obligations and concerns onto the Lord, all anxiety and perplexity will be gone as the Lord levels and clears the way before us. Compare 3:6 & 15:19.

16:4 – All things for His purposes. It’s not that God authors evil, but that He incorporates *all things* (even man’s free will) into His plan. The point is that God even uses man’s evil for His glory. Man was made with the capacity for evil, has made his choice, and is thus liable for God’s judgment, and yet even this is used by the Lord to highlight His holiness and display His glory (Rom. 9:22-23).

16:6 By mercy and truth iniquity is purged: and by the fear of the LORD men depart from evil.
16:7 When a man's ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.
16:8 Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues without right.

16:5 – Abominable pride. A lofty heart tops the Lord's hate list (6:16-17), with assured punishment. See 11:21 for the same expression of assurance.

16:6 – Living faith works. Not that sin is purged through good works, but that good works indicate true repentance. The second half of the verse agrees with this understanding. When the heart is right, good will tend to replace evil (compare James 2:13-26). Perhaps the idea is also expressed here that evil is to be overcome with good (Rom. 12:21). Compare as well 10:12 & I Pet. 4:8.

16:7 – Please the Lord, not men. The point is that when we are the Lord's delight, He can turn all potential enemies to friends. Compare Isaac with Abimelech in Gen. 26:26-31. We need never fear people when we're right with God (Matt. 10:28). In 29:25 is the added factor that we *dare* not fear people.

16:8 – Better poverty with right than profits without

16:9 *A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps.*
 16:10 *A divine sentence is in the lips of the king: his mouth transgresseth not in judgment.*
 16:11 *A just weight and balance are the LORD's: all the weights of the bag are his work.*
 16:12 *It is an abomination to kings to commit wickedness: for the throne is established by righteousness.*

right. Such profits don't really profit (14:4) and they don't really satisfy (15:16). "*Godliness with contentment*" is the greatest gain by far (I Tim. 6:6).

16:9 – See vs. 1.

16:10-15 – On fair leadership.

- Vs. 10 – Leadership's heightened responsibility. Because a king is considered to speak with an authority approaching God's (Acts 12:22), he is warned away from unfaithful words in judgment.
- Vs. 11 – The Lord lays claim to all matters of justice, therefore it's *His* business to authorize right scales of measure. This principle of fairness runs to all aspects of man's dealing with man. Compare 11:1.
- Vs. 12 – Warning and promise. Here is the key to a strong nation. Leaders are warned

16:13 Righteous lips are the delight of kings; and they love him that speaketh right.

16:14 The wrath of a king is as messengers of death: but a wise man will pacify it.

16:15 In the light of the king's countenance is life; and his favour is as a cloud of the latter rain.

away from wickedness in the strongest terms because of their higher level of influence, with promise that the preservation of their rule is through righteousness (compare 14:34).

- Vs. 13 – A king's proper delight. Either the king delights in that which the King of kings holds dear or he shows himself wicked (17:4).
- Vs. 14 – The king and his subjects. Wise is the one appeasing rather than provoking the ruler, for with his responsibility comes the authority to execute his will ("*for he beareth . . . the sword*", Rom. 13:4; compare 20:2). This does not cancel the need to confront even a king when he's in the wrong. Compare the man of God in II Sam. 12, Nathan in I Kings 13, and Micaiah in I Kings 22.
- Vs. 15 – Leadership holds the power of blessing as well as wrath. The contrast of vs. 14.

16:16 How much better is it to get wisdom than gold! and to get understanding rather to be chosen than silver!
16:17 The highway of the upright is to depart from evil: he that keepeth his way preserveth his soul.
16:18 Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.

.....

Consider God's counsel for rulers. He brings a solemn reminder to all leaders, from the throne on down, that they are merely presidents executing God's policies. They are held accountable to the King of kings;

- To speak faithfully in judgment (vs. 10).
 - To maintain fairness (vs. 11).
 - To shun wickedness (vs. 12).
 - To delight in uprightness (vs. 13).
-

16:16 – Compare 3:13-15; 8:11, 19.

16:17 – The blessing of the watchful. The highway of soul preservation is the watchful avoidance of wrong.

16:18-19 – On the lofty and lowly.

16:19 Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud.

16:20 He that handleth a matter wisely shall find good: and whoso trusteth in the LORD, happy is he.

16:21 The wise in heart shall be called prudent: and the sweetness of the lips increaseth learning.

- Vs. 18 – The way down is up. The contrast of 15:33. Compare vs. 5 & 18:12. It has been pointed out that this is the centre verse of the book of Proverbs. It's a pivotal verse on a couple counts.
- Vs. 19 – Lowly spirit and society is better than profits with the proud. A reminder to avoid the proud and their profits at all cost. Compare the wise decision of Moses (Heb. 11:25).

16:20 – Rich in the Word. The Hebrew word (dabar) translated “*matter*” (KJV) could also be translated “word”. Could the thought here perhaps be that one attending or understanding the word shall find good, for such a one shows himself happily trusting in the Lord?

16:21 – Rising reputation. The wise will be known for their intelligence (as Solomon), and their gracious ability to express the wealth of their

16:22 Understanding is a wellspring of life unto him that hath it: but the instruction of fools is folly.

16:23 The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips.

16:24 Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones.

wisdom will contribute toward the increase of learning (10:13). Compare the personal benefit in vs. 23.

16:22 – Health and hiding. Good sense, like wise counsellors, is a source of life, while a fool shall receive the “instruction” of punishment for his own foolishness (1:30; 14:14).

16:23-24 – On wisdom of words.

- Vs. 23 – A heart-taught mouth. A wise heart shapes intelligent, skilful speech.
- Vs. 24 – Refreshing words of encouragement. The word translated “*pleasant*” carries the idea of suitable or becoming (also 15:26). The reference is not to falsely sweet words of flattery, but to words fittingly spoken, helpful to both soul and body. Compare other references to the healthy effect of encouraging words in 12:25; 15:30. Compare the uplifting words of Boaz with Ruth (Ruth 2:8-12).

*16:25 There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the
end thereof are the ways of death.
16:26 He that laboureth laboureth for himself; for his mouth
craveth it of him.
16:27 An ungodly man diggeth up evil: and in his lips there is
as a burning fire.*

Whenever Boaz spoke to Ruth it was with sustaining words of encouragement. The Lord does this with His own, speaking not of our worth but of His love.

16:25 – Compare the exact same at 14:12. The importance is underscored through repetition.

16:26 – Lack motivates. Appetite is an excellent incentive for labour. Here is good practical counsel for parents, for what motive does an older child have for honest labour if all is provided for him. It's God who conditions eating upon working. Paul is a bit more blunt in II Thess. 3:10-12.

16:27-30 – The plotting perverse.

- Vs. 27 – Scheming ways and scorching lips. The KJV “*ungodly man*” is literally “man of belial” or man of worthlessness. “*Diggeth*” is from the idea of digging pits for the entrapment of others, and thus the thought of

16:28 *A froward man soweth strife: and a whisperer
separateth chief friends.*
16:29 *A violent man enticeth his neighbour, and leadeth him
into the way that is not good.*

plotting. The worthless plot evil and scorch others with their words. See the contrast vs. in 24. Compare James 3:6, where we hear that “*the tongue is a fire*”.

- Vs. 28 – Perverse whisperers stir strife, even between friends. The KJV “*froward*” is perverse or fraudulent. Elsewhere the “*wicked*” (10:32) and the “*violent*” (16:30) speak and plan perversity. “*Whisperer*” pictures one chattering in low tones, speaking words against someone and behind their back, thus backbiting. Compare the same word translated “*talebearer*” in 18:8; 26:20 & 22.

.....

Consider the emphasis on contentions in this beloved book. Wisdom informs us that contentions are excited by the wicked (6:14), the wrathful (15:18; 29:22), the perverse (16:28), those loving sin (17:19), scorers (22:10), drunkards (23:29), whisperers (26:20; 16:28), and the proud (28:25).

*16:30 He shutteth his eyes to devise froward things: moving
his lips he bringeth evil to pass.
16:31 The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the
way of righteousness.
16:32 He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he
that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.*

And contentiousness is a particular point of warning for women (21:9 & 19; 25:24; 27:15).

.....

- Vs. 29 – Seductive power of bad company. Behold again the danger of the wrong kind of friends (1:10-19).
- Vs. 30 – The Plotter. He closes his eyes and talks to himself in a contemplative picture of one in the act of scheming evil.

16:31 – The grey crown of the righteous. In 20:29 the grey hair of the old is called beautiful and a crown. I like that. A “crown” speaks of a noble ornament of dignity. The KJV “if” is supplied but necessary. Some type of conditional idea is involved here, for the wicked wear the same crown in their older years, yet without the honour.

16:32 – Excelling heroism. Self-control involves

16:33 The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD.

greater courage than war-like heroism. Not only does temperance show surpassing heroism but it shows great understanding as well (14:29). Without self-control is foolishness (14:17) and defencelessness (25:28). Compare James 1:19-20.

16:33 – Nothing by chance. By the casting of lots conclusions were drawn on controversial matters were settled. Compare in the case of Jonah, Achan (Josh. 7:14-18), and Jonathan (I Sam. 14:40-42). But it was understood that the Lord was working out His will through the lots.

Chapter 17

- 17:1 Better is a dry morsel, and quietness therewith, than an house full of sacrifices with strife.*
- 17:2 A wise servant shall have rule over a son that causeth shame, and shall have part of the inheritance among the brethren.*
- 17:3 The fining pot is for silver, and the furnace for gold: but the LORD trieth the hearts.*
-

17:1 – Festivals of contention. “*Sacrifices*” refers to feasts or festivals involving feasting. The thought is similar to 15:16-17 (“*fear of the Lord*”, “*love*”) & 16:8 (“*righteousness*”). Poverty with peace beats double with trouble. Don’t think you’re “missing out” on what the anxious, empty jet-set have. God bids us to look on the world’s treasures and tumults without envy.

17:2 – Understanding succeeds over shame. Even family privilege is of lesser value than faithful prudence. Compare Solomon’s own experience with Jeroboam (I Ki. 11:28ff).

17:3 – Judge of all hearts. The Lord’s examination is for the purpose of transformation. He is for human hearts what the refiner’s fire is for gold or silver (Mal. 3:2-3). In Ps. 139:23-24 David eagerly

17:4 A wicked doer giveth heed to false lips; and a liar giveth ear to a naughty tongue.

17:5 Whoso mocketh the poor reproacheth his Maker: and he that is glad at calamities shall not be unpunished.

17:6 Children's children are the crown of old men; and the glory of children are their fathers.

invites this great work of God.

17:4 – You are what you regard. The Hebrew words translated “*give heed*” and “*give ear*” at their root suggest the sharpening or picking up of ears (of animals) when attentive. What’s in you or what you are is what pricks your ears up. False or hurtful words reach and interest only lying evil-doers. Compare also the self-deceived heretic (Titus 3:10-11).

17:5 – As you handle the poor, so you handle the Lord. Heartlessness at their misfortune will be punished. Compare 14:31 & 22:2.

17:6 – Happy family circle. Children and grandchildren are God’s blessing (Ps. 127 & 128). Children are the decoration of their parents as much as parents decorate their children. What better inheritance than the good name of good parents?

*17:7 Excellent speech becometh not a fool: much less do lying
lips a prince.
17:8 A gift is as a precious stone in the eyes of him that hath it:
whithersoever it turneth, it prospereth.
17:9 He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that
repeateth a matter separateth very friends.*

17:7 – Inconsistencies. “*Excellent*” words of pretension in a fool are as out of place as dishonesty in a nobleman. The one has the least of which to boast, and the other has the most to preserve in his good name. Small men shouldn’t make themselves great, and great men shouldn’t make themselves small.

17:8 – The power of presents. “*Gift*” here may refer to bribery, certainly to giving for the purpose of gaining some advantage. The giving of gifts is not always a negative concept and is perhaps not so here. Generosity opens doors. Compare 18:16, and perhaps 19:6. Compare Jacob’s gifts to Esau (Gen. 32) and Joseph (Gen. 43:11).

17:9 – Overlooking or ever-looking at wrong. Contrasted here are those who through love are willing to overlook wrong in others (10:12; 19:11; I Pet. 4:8), and those who will never let them forget it. The results being union or division.

*17:10 A reproof entereth more into a wise man than an
hundred stripes into a fool.
17:11 An evil man seeketh only rebellion: therefore a cruel
messenger shall be sent against him.
17:12 Let a bear robbed of her whelps meet a man, rather than
a fool in his folly.
17:13 Whoso rewardeth evil for good, evil shall not depart from
his house.*

17:10 – Receptive and resistant. One sharp word gets farther with a wise one than a hundred strokes ever accomplish in a fool. Compare wisdom’s exaltation of sensitivity to input and the impervious wicked (9:7-8, 12:1; 13:1; 15:5).

17:11-15 – Shades of evil.

- Vs. 11 – The rebellious strive only for evil, and they shall meet their match.
- Vs. 12 – A fool armed with his folly is more dangerous than an enraged bear.
- Vs. 13 – Beyond mere ingratitude. Compare David’s trouble after causing faithful Uriah’s death (II Sam. 12:10). Compare King Joash’s trouble after his treachery (II Chron. 24:15-26). See the blessed contrast in Rom. 12:17-21 & I Pet. 3:9.
- Vs. 14 – Snip strife in the bud. “*Letteth out*” pictures a bursting dam or sluice gate fully

*17:14 The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water:
therefore leave off contention, before it be meddled with.
17:15 He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the
just, even they both are abomination to the LORD.
17:16 Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get
wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it?
17:17 A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for
adversity.*

opened. “*Leave off*” is written as a command in the Hebrew. Put a stop to ascending strife before it bursts out of control. Compare the praise of such in 20:3.

- Vs. 15 – God hates injustice. Compare His warning in Ex. 23:7 that there is no justifying of the wicked in Him. God despises both the justifying of the vile and the vilifying of the just. Compare as well His insistence on justice in 11:1; 16:11; 20:10 & 23.

17:16 – Tuition without volition. Why this money in the fool’s hand to buy wisdom, yet with no heart or will in him for wisdom (18:2)? It’s a case of the jannee of the double-minded man. He wants but yet he doesn’t want.

17:17 – A true friend always loves. Distress displays who our friends are, and a good brother was born to stand by us in our time of need.

*17:18 A man void of understanding striketh hands, and
becometh surety in the presence of his friend.
17:19 He loveth transgression that loveth strife: and he that
exalteth his gate seeketh destruction.
17:20 He that hath a froward heart findeth no good: and he
that hath a perverse tongue falleth into mischief.
17:21 He that begetteth a fool doeth it to his sorrow: and the
father of a fool hath no joy.
17:22 A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken
spirit drieth the bones.*

Compare God's long-suffering and long-pursuit of the unsaved.

17:18 – Compare 6:1-5. Here is the blunter statement of the foolishness of standing surety for anyone.

17:19 – Contentious and pretentious. Trespass lovers are trouble lovers, while ostentation is the pursuit of devastation. Here are two forms of self-centeredness.

17:20 – Reading through your own lens. The perverted see only perversion, for the bad can see no good. Compare Titus 1:15. As well, the one playing tongue games with the truth will fall into evil.

17:21 – Sorry father of a fool. It's a common lament

*17:23 A wicked man taketh a gift out of the bosom to pervert
the ways of judgment.
17:24 Wisdom is before him that hath understanding; but the
eyes of a fool are in the ends of the earth.
17:25 A foolish son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to her
that bare him.
17:26 Also to punish the just is not good, nor to strike princes
for equity.*

in these chapters (10:1; 15:20; 17:25; 19:13).

17:22 – Happy heart, healthy body. Your disposition is your best physician. Note similar prescriptions at 4:20-22 & 16:24. Compare 14:30; 15:13 & 18:14.

17:23 – On bribery. The scene of a bribe being passed is pictured, and its purpose is stated; to pervert justice.

17:24 – Singleness of eye. Wisdom is the one aim and focus of those with understanding (literally “near the face”), while a fool’s interests are divided everywhere (*else!*). His thoughts are scattered to everything but the one thing most vital.

17:25 – Son of grief. The word translated “*grief*” is stronger than the “*sorrow*” of vs. 21.

*17:27 He that hath knowledge spareth his words: and a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit.
17:28 Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding.*

17:26 – Punishment must fall only on those to whom it is due. Compare vs. 15. Contrast 18:5.

17:27-28 – On restraint of words.

- Vs. 27 – A cool-spirited man. “*Excellent*” here (KJV) is literally “cool” in the sense of dignified or composed.
- Vs. 28 – A touch of divine irony.

Compare elsewhere on restraint with our words in 10:19; 13:3; 14:33; 15:28. Compare with the “*gracious woman*” of 11:16.

Chapter 18

18:1 Through desire a man, having separated himself, seeketh and intermeddleth with all wisdom.

18:2 A fool hath no delight in understanding, but that his heart may discover itself.

18:3 When the wicked cometh, then cometh also contempt, and with ignominy reproach.

18:4 The words of a man's mouth are as deep waters, and the wellspring of wisdom as a flowing brook.

18:1 – The isolationist. Through his own particular view or interest one isolates himself (or perhaps lives only for himself) and argues with all sound counsel.

18:2 – Slow to hear, swift to speak. “Discover” (KJV) is perhaps in the sense of “reveal” here. The fool has no interest in coming to a right understanding, only in revealing or expressing what he thinks he knows. Compare 12:23; 13:16; 15:2.

18:3 – Bad-tempered bedfellows. Contempt, shame, and scorn arrive with the wicked.

18:4 – “Deep waters” here seems to refer to what is hidden in a man’s heart or behind his words. Perhaps the contrast is between a man’s secretive

*18:5 It is not good to accept the person of the wicked, to
overthrow the righteous in judgment.
18:6 A fool's lips enter into contention, and his mouth calleth
for strokes.
18:7 A fool's mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare
of his soul.
18:8 The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go
down into the innermost parts of the belly.
18:9 He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is
a great waster.*

way and wisdom's wide-open forthrightness.

18:5 – On partiality. Again a focus on fair judgment.
Compare 17:26.

18:6-7 – Enemy of all, himself included.

- Vs. 6 – A fool lives for strife, not realizing that with his quarrelsome mouth he calls for his own hiding or punishment.
- Vs. 7 – Beyond a mere hiding, the fool's mouth forms a noose of destruction.

18:8 – Wounding words. Behind “*talebearer*” here is the same word translated “*whisperer*” in 16:28. Pictured are the deeply penetrating wounds caused by quiet words of slander. Compare the exact repetition in 26:22. Contrast the healing power of words in 12:25 & 16:24.

*18:10 The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous
runneth into it, and is safe.
18:11 The rich man's wealth is his strong city, and as an high
wall in his own conceit.
18:12 Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, and
before honour is humility.
18:13 He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly
and shame unto him.*

18:9 – Lazy “lord of destruction”. “Waster” here is in the sense of laying waste in destruction rather than squandering. The phrase “*great waster*” is literally “lord of destruction” or “master waster”. God would emphasize the fact that one lazy in his work is not merely less than productive, but actively destructive.

18:10 – Refuge in the Name. To find refuge in Jehovah’s name is to be set in a high place, lifted high above all earthly harm. Compare Matt. 10:28.

18:11 – Walls of the imagination. The rich man’s trust is revealed here. His riches are like walls of security, but only in his imagination.

18:12 – Compare 16:18 & 15:33. The second half of the verse comes to full bloom in 22:4.

18:13 – Wise restraint. Again it’s the exaltation of

18:14 The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?
18:15 The heart of the prudent getteth knowledge; and the ear of the wise seeketh knowledge.
18:16 A man's gift maketh room for him, and bringeth him before great men.
18:17 He that is first in his own cause seemeth just; but his neighbour cometh and searcheth him.

composed restraint before daring to speak (15:28). Here is where self-important fools display themselves in the too-early airing of their half-cooked opinions. Get all sides of the story first (vs. 17).

18:14 – Spirit of endurance. With the right disposition all things are bearable. Hope in the promises of the Lord and in the Lord of the promises is deliverance from deadly despair. Compare Psalm 42:5-6, 11; 43:5; Phil. 4:4-9.

18:15 – Wise quest. Again, it's a very common theme (15:14; 17:24), showing both the seeking and acquiring of knowledge. Contrast 17:16 & 18:2.

18:16 – Liberality wins hearts. Compare 17:8.

18:17 – Cautious conclusions. The cause of the first side heard seems right, until the other side of

18:18 The lot causeth contentions to cease, and parteth between the mighty.

18:19 A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city: and their contentions are like the bars of a castle.

18:20 A man's belly shall be satisfied with the fruit of his mouth; and with the increase of his lips shall he be filled.

the argument is heard. The thought is somewhat similar to vs. 2 & 13, where the fool won't take the time to understand. The moral of the story is, hear the whole matter before drawing conclusions and forming a response.

18:18 – An end of strife. Casting lots was a way of relieving strife, short of all out battle. It was a means of turning the outcome over to the Lord (16:33).

18:19 – Contention's potential. This is a difficult verse to get the exact sense of. Perhaps it's a warning against entering into contentions lightly, since there is the potential for building stubborn barriers, hard to ever be fully removed.

18:20-21 – Thoughts on words.

- Vs. 20 – Winsome words. Basic friendliness and vibrant interest in others goes a long ways, even toward acquiring a good job.

*18:21 Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they
that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.
18:22 Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth
favour of the LORD.*

Wisdom has already given much counsel on the power of words to help or heal. Now consider their ability to bring home the bacon.

- Vs. 21 – A step further. Not only can your tongue feed you, it can either keep you alive or cut your throat (compare James 3). Satan brought man to ruin through the power of only a mouthful of words (Gen. 3:1, 4-5). And the simple gospel message is *“the power of God unto salvation”* and eternal life (Rom. 1:16).

The second half of this verse again is difficult. The *“it”* appears to refer to the tongue. Negative view – loving the tongue in the sense of abusing or over-using it, resulting in bad *“fruit”*. Positive view – loving the tongue refers to guarding it and applying it only to right uses, thus reaping good fruit.

18:22 – Favoured with a wife. Compare the similar terms and comparisons between finding a wife

(8:17) and finding wisdom (8:35, “*favour*”; 8:11 & 31:10, “*above rubies*”). A good wife is a find on a par with wisdom, and a *good* wife is implied (19:14), for Wisdom has much to say in warning of the other kind;

- 7:19-20 – Wandering wife.
- 14:1 – Foolish woman.
- 19:13; 21:9 – Contentious wife (better no wife than this).
- Eccl. 7:26 – “*more bitter than death*”.

Happiness or heartache in marriage has everything to do with the character of the partners involved.

18:23 – Pleading poor vs. rough rich. The observation here is that the needy are forced to entreaty through their dependence, while the rich, through their independence leading to arrogance, can respond as they like. Wisdom counsels us away from surprise with money-generated pride in the wealthy, and counsels the rich away from allowing their money to rob them of common decency.

*18:24 A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and
there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.*

18:24 – There are friends, and then there are friends. As a “man of God” is a man devoted to God, so the literal phrase here, a “man of friends”, describes a man devoted to friends. One with such a commitment may be inclined to sacrifice sound principles out of devotion to friendships. The first half of this verse seems to imply the dangers involved. But there is a kind of friend who sticks (17:17).

Chapter 19

19:1 Better is the poor that walketh in his integrity, than he that is perverse in his lips, and is a fool.

19:2 Also, that the soul be without knowledge, it is not good; and he that hasteth with his feet sinneth.

19:3 The foolishness of man perverteth his way: and his heart fretteth against the LORD.

19:1 – Uprightness at all cost. Far better to be upright with little else, than to be a foolish fraud and proud of it. “*Walking*” describes no isolated incident, but a settled manner of life.

19:2 – Missing through hurried ignorance. Wisdom ever warns us away from ignorance. The word “*sinneth*” (KJV) is in the sense of “to err” or “to make a false step”. Take the time to understand before thoughtlessly hurrying on in ignorance and missing the mark.

19:3 – The blame-shift. A man has only his own foolishness to blame for his failure and perversion, yet he cries out in rage “*against the LORD*” for his ruin. Compare Adam’s subtle blame-shift in Gen. 3:12. Compare Rev. 16:11 & 21.

19:4 *Wealth maketh many friends; but the poor is separated from his neighbour.*
19:5 *A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall not escape.*
19:6 *Many will intreat the favour of the prince: and every man is a friend to him that giveth gifts.*
19:7 *All the brethren of the poor do hate him: how much more do his friends go far from him? he pursueth them with words, yet they are wanting to him.*

19:4, 6-7 – Money’s friends.

- Vs. 4 – It’s the fundamental selfishness of human nature to love the wealthy and leave the weak, to be “friends” only for personal advantage. Compare 14:20. The contrast of 17:17 & 18:24b.
- Vs. 6 – The face-stroking friends of the generous. “*Entreat the favour*” is literally “stroke the face”, describing the careful nurturing of the right kind of “friends”. Consider the positive side in 17:8 & 18:16.
- Vs. 7 – Selfishness stronger than family ties. The pleading words of the poor man mean less than his receding wealth.

19:5 & 9 – A lying witness.

- Vs. 5 – His *capture* assured.

19:8 *He that getteth wisdom loveth his own soul: he that keepeth understanding shall find good.*
19:9 *A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall perish.*
19:10 *Delight is not seemly for a fool; much less for a servant to have rule over princes.*

- Vs. 9 – His *condemnation* assured.

Don't miss the emphasis by repetition. Compare 6:19 & 14:25. Consider the application of this principle to the proclamation of a false or diluted gospel.

19:8 – Proper self-love. To acquire and keep understanding is to love yourself. And to “*love thy neighbour as thyself*” (Matt. 22:39) is to seek to instil the same in all others. Compare the concluding climax of wisdom's message in 8:35-36.

19:9 – A near copy of vs. 5.

19:10 – Two things unbecoming. “*Delight*” (KJV) seems to refer to a delicate life. Soft living is sure to corrupt a fool to even greater foolishness, since he has no wisdom to handle it. Even less appropriate is one unable to handle responsibility suddenly thrust upon him. As well in 30:22 servants to sovereigns is listed among unbearable things.

*19:11 The discretion of a man deferreth his anger; and it is his
glory to pass over a transgression.
19:12 The king's wrath is as the roaring of a lion; but his
favour is as dew upon the grass.*

.....

Things inappropriate for fools;

- Big talk (17:7).
 - Luxurious living (19:10).
 - Honour (26:1).
-

19:11 – The ornament of long-suffering. A man's prudence cuts a long fuse, and his willingness to overlook or forgive faults is an ornament of splendour. It's another aspect of the noble character of wisdom. Compare 10:12 & 17:9, 27.

19:12 – King's prerogative. A king can be as a growling lion ready to pounce (Dan. 2:12-13), or as beneficial dew (Dan. 4:20-21). Animals of the forest and underlings alike feel the unnerving shock of fear with the roar of that one with power over life, for there is no telling how his caprice might move him. The first half of the verse is similar to 20:2a and the second half to 16:15b.

19:13 A foolish son is the calamity of his father: and the contentions of a wife are a continual dropping.
19:14 House and riches are the inheritance of fathers: and a prudent wife is from the LORD.

19:13 – Calamity and contention at home. The Hebrew word translated “*calamity*” carries the magnitude of destruction or ruin. This goes much farther than the mere “*heaviness*” (10:1), “*sorrow*” (17:21), and “*grief*” (17:25) mentioned earlier (compare the sinister son in vs. 26). Child-rearing is a serious business.

The second half of the verse receives a fuller dealing at 27:15-16. Nothing deadly here, just the continual irritation of constant negative bitterness, like a dull pain that won’t go away. Contrast the cool spirit of 17:27, or the composed grace of 11:16 & 31:26.

19:14 – God’s gift. This is perhaps in response to vs. 13. As a father is one who can give material inheritance, so it is the Lord who gives a prudent wife. And as a father bestows his benefit when it suits him, so the Lord with His gift of blessing. The moral of the story is wait on the Lord if you would have the best, with an eye to the warning implied in the previous verse. Compare 18:22.

*19:15 Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep; and an idle soul
shall suffer hunger.
19:16 He that keepeth the commandment keepeth his own soul;
but he that despiseth his ways shall die.
19:17 He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD;
and that which he hath given will he pay him again.*

19:15 – The sluggard’s slide. He moves from slothfulness to a great lifelessness or deep sleep, and from idleness to hunger. Compare the same one sleeping in harvest in 10:5. Compare 10:4 unto poverty and 12:24 unto forced labour.

19:16 – What think ye of the Word? The Hebrew word behind “*keepeth*” is also translated “lying in ambush” (Ps. 56:7; 71:10), giving hint to the intensity of focus involved. Regarding or disregarding the Lord’s words is the way to self-preservation or self-destruction.

19:17 – A return is certain. Repayment is implied in both “*lend*” and “*pay*”. All deeds of mercy on the poor are merely a loan for a time. The Lord Himself will surely repay. Compare Matt. 25:40 & 45, “*Forasmuch as you did it unto the least of these my brethren you did it unto Me*”. Compare 28:27.

19:18 – Window of hope. “*Chasten*” suggests correcting with blows or stripes. The indication is

*19:18 Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul
spare for his crying.
19:19 A man of great wrath shall suffer punishment: for if thou
deliver him, yet thou must do it again.
19:20 Hear counsel, and receive instruction, that thou mayest
be wise in thy latter end.*

that there is greater hope for a child when disciplined from his early years. Compare 23:13-14 where that hope is of deliverance from eternal death. Sparing the rod is not the kindness it might appear to be on the surface.

19:19 – Handling hotheads. It’s the principle of vs. 18 applied to childish adults. The word translated “*punishment*” refers particularly to punishment through exacting a fine. Uncontrolled anger will bring trouble, punishment, even fines to be paid for damages done in moments of rage (see example of harm brought to an unborn baby in Ex. 21:22). Wisdom counsels reluctance to bale such a one out of his trouble, for you will soon have it to do again. The best help you can offer is rather to let him feel the bite of his own folly. Sparing him self-inflicted grief, like sparing the rod, is no true kindness.

19:20 – Hope for the “*latter end*”. It’s as if wisdom speaks reasonably to the hothead of vs. 19. To “*hear*” and “*receive*” are written as commands.

*19:21 There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless
the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand.
19:22 The desire of a man is his kindness: and a poor man is
better than a liar.
19:23 The fear of the LORD tendeth to life: and he that hath it
shall abide satisfied; he shall not be visited with evil.*

These could also be words to the young.

19:21 – One sure way. Man casts about in his multiplied thoughts, plans, and frets, but only one purpose and end ultimately stands, and that's the Lord's. Wisdom counsels conformity of our will to the Lord's rather than contending and running at wits end (Ps. 107:11, 25-27).

19:22 – Ornament of benevolence. It is to a man's honour to be moved to benevolence. Perhaps the contrast here is between one who is poor yet given to kindness, and one able to help those in need but lying about his ability through a constricted, unkind heart.

19:23 – Satisfied both now and forever. The last phrase ("*visited*") speaks of God visiting in punishment (Isa. 29:6). How richly rewarding is the fear of the Lord. It is the way to life, and abundant life, and without fear of evil or calamity. And such a one doesn't go to bed unsatisfied or anxious.

19:24 A slothful man hideth his hand in his bosom, and will not so much as bring it to his mouth again.

19:25 Smite a scorner, and the simple will beware: and reprove one that hath understanding, and he will understand knowledge.

19:26 He that wasteth his father, and chaseth away his mother, is a son that causeth shame, and bringeth reproach.

19:27 Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge.

19:24 – A meal scarcely managed. This seems to be an exaggerated, even comic representation of the slothful man when eating, as if too lazy to even bring food from plate to mouth. Compare 26:15.

19:25 – Hopeless, hopeful, and hearing. Scorners, simple ones, and those with understanding are discussed here. To physically punish a scorner accomplishes nothing in the scorner. Words get nowhere with him either (9:7-8; 13:1; 15:12). He's like the fool into whom 100 stripes cannot enter (17:10). But there is hope for the simple one looking on (I Tim. 5:20). And the prudent need only fair reproof to understand.

19:26 – Sinister son. The son who drives his father to ruin and his mother to running is a disgrace and dishonouring. Both the paleness of horror and blushing shame are within the Hebrew words used here.

*19:28 An ungodly witness scorneth judgment: and the mouth
of the wicked devoureth iniquity.*

*19:29 Judgments are prepared for scorers, and stripes for the
back of fools.*

19:27 – Cease to hear. It’s a command to put a stop to evil input, which leads us astray from true wisdom.

19:28 – Worthless, wicked witness. “*Ungodly*” is the Hebrew word “belial” again (6:12; 16:27), meaning “worthless”. Such a worthless one will scoff at what is fair according to the law. And as a witness in court he disregards his duty to what is right. It seems he has a taste for evil and actually enjoys wrong more than right.

19:29 – Judgments and stripes. “*Prepared*” expresses ready and imminent. It is a common conclusion that fools and scorers are eminently worthy of physical punishment (10:13; 17:10; 18:6; 19:25; 26:3). Consider then how our Saviour was handled, as if He were a scorer or a fool. That One wise above all became as a fool that we might become wise. That righteous One became as a criminal that we, the true criminals, might become righteous. We are the scorers and fools deserving what Christ received in our place.

Chapter 20

20:1 Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.

20:2 The fear of a king is as the roaring of a lion: whoso provoketh him to anger sinneth against his own soul.

20:3 It is an honour for a man to cease from strife: but every fool will be meddling.

20:1 – Demon drink. The wine is the one mocking and strong drink is the one raging or tumultuous, as if suggesting godless properties in the actual wine and strong drink, not just in those who abuse them. The substances are given personhood, like demons acting through their host. All who allow their influence to intoxication are not wise. Compare 23:29-35.

20:2 – Rebel beware. It's just not smart to mess with lions or kings (compare 19:12). To give vent to one's wrath against the king is to endanger one's life. Here is a warning to watch what you say and how you say it (remember 18:21), even in "*secret*" (Eccl. 10:20). Like the distant roar of a lion, threatening danger and sending a shudder through all, so is the fear caused by a king's power and displeasure.

*20:4 The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold;
therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing.
20:5 Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water; but a man
of understanding will draw it out.*

20:3 – An end of strife. This is perhaps in answer to vs. 2. Which will you choose, the way of *honour* or the way of *anger*? Life's circumstances often bring us to this choice. It is to a man's honour to put strife to rest, while fools would rather keep the quarrel going. Compare Gideon's honour (Judges 8:1-3) to Jephthah's rash anger (Judges 12:1-6). Compare the "*peaceable*" nature of the wisdom from above in James 3:17-18.

20:4 – Slow starting sluggard. The sluggard's refusal "*by reason of the cold*" indicates procrastination due to some measure of discomfort. Do it now, regardless of motivation level or circumstances. This is usually the best policy. Compare 6:6-9; 13:4; 15:19 & James 5:7-11.

20:5 – Discerning human nature. The counsels or purposes or intentions of people are as "*deep water*" in that they are hidden and difficult to search out (18:4). But wisdom would lead us to clear perception of what is in man, penetrating the fronts that we might not be fooled. Compare Christ's

*20:6 Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness: but
a faithful man who can find?
20:7 The just man walketh in his integrity: his children are
blessed after him.
20:8 A king that sitteth in the throne of judgment scattereth
away all evil with his eyes.*

reserve in John 2:24. Compare II Sam. 14:18-19; I Kings 3:16-28.

20:6 – On self-promotion. It's a contrast here between man's very common ("*most men*") ways of highlighting personal good deeds, virtues, abilities, accomplishments, etc., and those few faithful (secure, stable) souls who feel no need to do so. Compare Matt. 6:1-8, "*in secret*".

20:7 – Blessed heritage. Here is God's answer to every unrighteous way in a man for the sake of his children, carrying the excuse of wanting to leave them something. It is the uprightness of a righteous life that leads a happy following and leaves the finest legacy.

20:8 – Valuable leadership. It's a picture of just government. The penetrating awareness of godly leadership effectively discerns the bad from among the good, as the chaff is separated from the wheat through threshing and winnowing (20:26). The evil

20:9 *Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure
from my sin?*

20:10 *Divers weights, and divers measures, both of them are
alike abomination to the LORD.*

are properly dealt with and the good are properly delivered. All subterfuge is exposed, followed by firm, decisive, appropriate action. No evil is allowed to stand, but all is smashed and scattered, inspiring fear (I Ki. 2:46 & 3:28; Acts 5:5 & 11). None better than the King of kings for such a work of justice, for it's the way it will be in the days of Christ's earthly kingdom (Isa. 11:1-5; II Cor. 5:10). Good leadership does not mollify evil, seeking to keep everybody happy. It executes firm, fair justice. "*So shalt thou put evil away from the midst of thee*" (Deut. 13:5).

20:9 – Sinners all. None can boast of a pure heart and sinless life, for the honest are always aware of the subtle stains of deep rooted (rotted) sin. Our finest efforts are still touched by evil intent. Compare Jer. 17:9; Rom. 3:23. Man "*drinketh iniquity like water*" (Job 15:16).

20:10 – Buyer beware. The literal Hebrew here is "a stone and a stone, a measure and a measure". The picture is of using multiple weights, which shade both above and below the true standard, depending

*20:11 Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right.
20:12 The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the LORD hath made even both of them.
20:13 Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty; open thine eyes, and thou shalt be satisfied with bread.*

upon whether buying or selling, but always to the users unfair advantage. God hates all but fair measurement. Compare vs. 23; 11:1; 16:11. Look well to the great repetition on this theme!

20:11 – What’s good for the goose is good for the gosling. A child’s actions don’t only display what he *will* be, but what he *is*. God’s eye is on the child as well as adults (I Sam. 3). They too are responsible before God to walk pure and straight.

20:12 – “*Every good gift*”. Eyes and ears open to see and hear truth are among the good gifts of God (James 1:17). Though man is involved in the receiving, it is ultimately by God’s grace that wisdom and its many associated blessings become available to man.

20:13 – “*Awake thou that sleepest*”. Not that we should hate sleep, but that we must not love it above responsibility or service. As with so many of the good gifts of God; use it, don’t abuse it. This is

*20:14 It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer: but when he is
gone his way, then he boasteth.
20:15 There is gold, and a multitude of rubies: but the lips of
knowledge are a precious jewel.
20:16 Take his garment that is surety for a stranger: and take
a pledge of him for a strange woman.
20:17 Bread of deceit is sweet to a man; but afterwards his
mouth shall be filled with gravel.*

not given as a command. It's only recommended if one would prefer to eat. Compare 6:9-11.

20:14 – Seller beware. “What a rip-off!” cries the would-be buyer, seeking to argue down the seller's price. This accomplished, he later boasts among friends of his cleverness in acquiring a cheap purchase. It's another shade of dishonesty, used in persuasion. And here is warning to stand by a fair and right price. Consider the application of this principle to other ways folks may attempt to take advantage of others, seeking to seduce through dishonest persuasion.

20:15 – Knowing lips above all. Compare 3:13-15; 8:10-11.

20:16 – Surety's snare. Here is now a scene of one coming to poverty who has been foolish enough to stand surety for another. Compare 27:13; 6:1-5.

*20:18 Every purpose is established by counsel: and with good
advice make war.
20:19 He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets:
therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips.
20:20 Whoso curseth his father or his mother, his lamp shall be
put out in obscure darkness.*

20:17 – The bitter end. Sin is sweet with the first bite, but distasteful even before it passes through the mouth. Compare 5:4; 9:17 & II Sam. 13:15.

20:18 – Stability and success through good counsel. Compare 11:14; 12:15; 24:6.

20:19 – Tattlers and talkers. Compare 11:13-14 where we see the same close connection between the value of counsel (vs. 18) and the danger of talebearers. The warning is against confiding or communing with the wrong crowd. Be careful where you get your counsel or give out your secrets, for it may be information used against you.

20:20 – Cursing kids. At the root of “*curseth*” is to make light or diminish. The law condemned as worthy of death such cursing, despising children (Ex. 21:17). “*His lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness*” perhaps speaks of an end of all good fortune. Either a man would obey God’s law and deal with his child as God demands, or God would

*20:21 An inheritance may be gotten hastily at the beginning;
but the end thereof shall not be blessed.
20:22 Say not thou, I will recompense evil; but wait on the
LORD, and he shall save thee.
20:23 Divers weights are an abomination unto the LORD; and
a false balance is not good.*

deal with the child. And don't miss the missing reference to the character of the parents involved, only that they are parents. Position, not personality or lovability is what matters to God.

20:21 – Money without blessing. Compare 13:11 where wealth through honest labour is highlighted. Here is too anxious an interest in income through inheritance, perhaps expressing over-dependence on easy wealth over honest work.

20:22 – “*Vengeance is mine*”. On a private level, our approach to others is always to be on the basis of love, never through vengeance. When we feel that wish to repay evil for evil, wisdom would lead our heart to expectant hope in the Lord, that we might find our help in Him. Hate must be handed over to heaven. Compare Rom. 12:17-19; I Pet. 2:23 & 3:9; Matt. 5:10-12.

20:23 – See vs. 10.

20:24 Man's goings are of the LORD; how can a man then understand his own way?

20:25 It is a snare to the man who devoureth that which is holy, and after vows to make enquiry.

20:26 A wise king scattereth the wicked, and bringeth the wheel over them.

20:24 – Master of his own soul? It's not that man is without freedom and responsibility for his actions, but that God's sovereign guidance is over, above, and behind all. Each individual "step" is incorporated into, and moves with God's overall purpose (compare similar statement in Ps. 37:23). The full meaning and end of a man's way is beyond his ability to discern in and of himself. How could a man ever propose to be master even of his own soul? Again, fullest reliance upon the true Master is wisdom's counsel.

20:25 – Rash vow. Shades of the New Testament concept of Korban (Mark 7:11) perhaps. Wisdom seems to speak of the impulsive act of rashly proclaiming something to be holy and thus consecrated to God, and then afterward reconsidering. Here is thoughtless recklessness, which later leaves one sorry or changing his mind, doing damage to his word.

20:26 – Compare vs. 8. This a reference to the

*20:27 The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD, searching all
the inward parts of the belly.
20:28 Mercy and truth preserve the king: and his throne is
upholden by mercy.
20:29 The glory of young men is their strength: and the beauty
of old men is the grey head.
20:30 The blueness of a wound cleanseth away evil: so do
stripes the inward parts of the belly.*

threshing wheel used for separating the chaff from the good wheat.

20:27 – The lamp of the Lord. A man’s spirit or soul is the Lord’s lamp, for searching out every chamber of the heart.

20:28 – The other side of good leadership. It’s the balance of vs. 8 & 26. Wise human government (with every other type of leadership) must be like God’s, displaying both goodness and severity. And the importance of this side can be seen both in the repetition of “*mercy*”, and by the revelation that this is what props the king’s throne.

20:29 – To each his own ornament. The young possess the glory of their strength, and the old carry the ornament of their grey hair. Wisdom counsels either generation away from looking down upon the other.

20:30 – God’s remedy for evil. God proclaims the “*blueness*” (bruising) of wounds through a severe beating as a proper remedy for evil. For such wounds are one way to make a deep enough impression, penetrating to the inner chambers of the heart.

“It is joy for the just
to do judgment”

(Proverbs 21:15)

Chapter 21

21:1 The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.

21:2 Every way of a man is right in his own eyes: but the LORD pondereth the hearts.

21:3 To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice.

21:1 – The only true King. The Lord moves the affairs of men, and even the hearts of kings, like a farmer directs his irrigation. He moves the flow of all things according to His will and for the best service of His purposes. Compare Rom. 13, “*the powers that be are ordained of God*”. Compare God’s dealing with Artaxerxes through Nehemiah’s prayer (Neh. 1 & 2).

21:2 – Use the right scale. “*Pondereth*” is the same Hebrew word translated “*weigheth*” in 16:2, where the statement is very similar. It’s a contrast between what seems right and the One who *is* and *knows* right. A much highlighted warning (12:15; 14:12; 16:2 & 25; 24:2).

21:3 – Right above ritual. To love the Lord’s way out of genuine love for Him is supreme above every

21:4 An high look, and a proud heart, and the plowing of the wicked, is sin.
21:5 The thoughts of the diligent tend only to plenteousness; but of every one that is hasty only to want.
21:6 The getting of treasures by a lying tongue is a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death.
21:7 The robbery of the wicked shall destroy them; because they refuse to do judgment.

sacrificial act of devotion. Compare I Cor. 13:3.

21:4 – Lofty of eyes and heart. Even the fundamental activities of life, pictured in ploughing, if done in pride and not to the glory of God, are sin. Some suggest “lamp” here in place of “*plowing*” (see marginal note), indicating the “lamp of the wicked” perhaps refers to their haughty hopes (due to be “*put out*”, 20:20).

21:5 – Diligence, not dash. It’s diligence contrasted with rash haste, and their respective results in either plenty or poverty. The best combination is careful insight with continual industry.

21:6 – Dishonest gains are both transitory and trouble. They are only a vanishing vapour with the smell of death on the wind.

21:7 – Violence draws violence. “*Robbery*” here

*21:8 The way of man is froward and strange: but as for the
pure, his work is right.
21:9 It is better to dwell in a corner of the housetop, than with
a brawling woman in a wide house.*

(KJV) is in the sense of “violence” or “oppression”. The violent bring violence upon themselves. The oppressive ways of the wicked shall sweep them away, since they refuse to do right. Such will reap what they have sown, receiving a dose of what they have dealt to others. Compare Ahab and Jezebel after acquiring Naboth’s vineyard (I Ki. 21-22). Compare the violent end of Satan (Rev. 20:10). He himself will be cast where he has cast so many others.

21:8 – Inward way displayed outwardly. The guilty conscience of a man plays out in devious manoeuvrings, whereas one pure of conscience can just walk straight on into life without any fancy footwork or mouthwork. Any crookedness, diversion, or cover-up is evidence of the burden of guilt.

21:9 – Escape. “*A corner of the housetop*” implies flat-roofed houses, and may perhaps refer to the small towers sometimes built at the roof corners. It’s another touch of comic irony, indicating the

*21:10 The soul of the wicked desireth evil: his neighbour findeth
no favour in his eyes.*

*21:11 When the scorner is punished, the simple is made wise:
and when the wise is instructed, he receiveth knowledge.*

*21:12 The righteous man wisely considereth the house of the
wicked: but God overthroweth the wicked for their
wickedness.*

least of two hardships. This does not necessarily refer to a wife (“*woman*”), but could suggest a mother, mother-in-law, unmarried aunt, or sister. Almost the same at 25:24. Compare also vs. 19; 19:13-14; 27:15-16.

21:10 – Evil over others. The wicked have a natural bent toward evil, rather than toward care for others. Though they would likely find cause for their grudge in others, it’s the Lord who’s pointing the finger here. Compare love’s flame extinguished by sin in Matt. 24:12.

21:11 – See 19:25. Punishment is lost on the scoffer, except perhaps for the watching simple.

21:12 – Righteous over wicked. “*Righteous men*” here seems to refer to men (and God) in positions of rule or judgment. These ponder the wicked, overthrowing them for their evil. Compare 20:8 & 26. Compare King Solomon’s close scrutiny of

*21:13 Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also
shall cry himself, but shall not be heard.
21:14 A gift in secret pacifieth anger: and a reward in the
bosom strong wrath.
21:15 It is joy to the just to do judgment: but destruction shall
be to the workers of iniquity.
21:16 The man that wandereth out of the way of understanding
shall remain in the congregation of the dead.*

troublemakers in the early days of his reign (I Kings 2).

21:13 – A call for help. It's a case of strict justice, similar to 1:24-28. Compare the rich man and Lazarus (Lk. 16). Compare 24:11-12.

21:14 – See 17:8 & 18:16.

21:15 – Rejoicing in justice. Doing and holding others to right is never easy, but there is an underlying pleasure in it. For we know that it's good and right, and we know God stands with us in it. This may perhaps be a reference to joy in seeing justice and judgment done. Note the contrasting interests in 10:23 & 19:28.

21:16 – “*The way of understanding*”. Note that it is not his way of understanding but “the way of understanding”. The implication is that there is one

*21:17 He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man: he that
loveth wine and oil shall not be rich.
21:18 The wicked shall be a ransom for the righteous, and the
transgressor for the upright.
21:19 It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a
contentious and an angry woman.
21:20 There is treasure to be desired and oil in the dwelling of
the wise; but a foolish man spendeth it up.*

right way, in contrast to all the other ways that seem right. The way of God's truth is narrow, rather than the wide way leading to destruction. Compare vs. 2 and cross-references there.

21:17 – The end of indulgence. Over-attention to the fun and tasty things of life brings poverty. Moderation is the moral of this story. Compare the true joy found in vs. 15, and the right handling of goods in vs. 20.

21:18 – The wicked in place of the righteous. Compare the similar idea at 11:8. Yet here it's as if God takes the wicked as a ransom price for the just (similar idea to the firstborn dead of Egypt?). This is only what is fair and right, yet compare how Jesus in His death, "*the righteous*" for the wicked, went far beyond fairness.

21:19 – Driven even farther afield. See vs. 9.

*21:21 He that followeth after righteousness and mercy findeth
life, righteousness, and honour.
21:22 A wise man scaleth the city of the mighty, and casteth
down the strength of the confidence thereof.
21:23 Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul
from troubles.
21:24 Proud and haughty scorner is his name, who dealeth in
proud wrath.*

21:20 – Wealth and waste. What the wise have, fools waste or eagerly swallow up.

21:21 – The good find good. Here is the earnest pursuit of right things, with the glowing results. Contrast the violent finding violence at vs. 7.

21:22 – Brains over brawn. Wisdom wins over strength. How often history has confirmed this truth. Compare Cyrus taking Babylon. Compare Eccl. 9:14-18, where again “*wisdom is better than strength*”. Compare the application of this to the spiritual battle (II Cor. 10:4-5).

21:23 – Kept tongue, kept soul. Here again is the restraint wisdom brings to mouth and tongue. Compare 13:3.

21:24 – Mad with pride. It’s a piling of words here picturing one running amok (amock?) with scoffing

21:25 The desire of the slothful killeth him; for his hands refuse to labour.

21:26 He coveteth greedily all the day long: but the righteous giveth and spareth not.

21:27 The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination: how much more, when he bringeth it with a wicked mind?

arrogance, trampling over all that is good and pure and right.

21:25-26 – Having and not having his desire.

- Vs. 25 - Deadly love of leisure. The desire or delight of the slothful is all about sleep and slackness, and his refusal to labour pays its ultimate wage in death.
- Vs. 26 – The desire of the slothful in another sense. The opening “*he*” here seems to refer back to vs. 25. His soul ever lusts after what he does not have (13:4), for he cannot bring himself to work toward his wish. Meanwhile the cup of the righteous even spills over to the benefit of others. One wishes to have and the other has to give.

21:27 – Buying sin through sacrifice. The Lord despises the sacrifices of the wicked at the best of times (15:8). Yet especially distasteful to Him are sacrifices brought without sorrow or repentance,

*21:28 A false witness shall perish: but the man that heareth
speaketh constantly.
21:29 A wicked man hardeneth his face: but as for the upright,
he directeth his way.*

but only as a concession for wickedness. Such an approach does not seek deliverance from wrong but God's nod to sin, and denies His holy demands. Sin cannot be included in any such "bargains" with God. Rather than making up for sin through sacrifice, man must come to God utterly appalled and repentant over his evil.

21:28 – Liars and hearers. "*Constantly*" (KJV) is in the sense of "perpetually". The wise listener will always have a voice, not as an endless babbler, but in the sense of eternal existence, in contrast to the perishing liar. Thus the fleeting fables of the false are set in contrast to the timeless tongue of the true listener. Compare 12:19 & 19:9.

21:29 – The difference in the face. Compare in 7:13 the same hardened, shameless, defiant look on the face of the strange woman. Firm, fixed, and sure is the entire way of the upright, while with the wicked firmness goes only as far as his hardened face.

21:30-31 – Jehovah is the victory.

*21:30 There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel
against the LORD.*

*21:31 The horse is prepared against the day of battle: but
safety is of the LORD.*

- Vs. 30 – No counsel wins against the Lord.
- Vs. 31 – No strength wins without the Lord. Remember David's warning to Goliath, "*the battle is the Lord's*" (I Sam. 17:47). This is true whether it be physical, mental, or spiritual conflicts.

Chapter 22

*22:1 A GOOD name is rather to be chosen than great riches,
and loving favour rather than silver and gold.*

*22:2 The rich and poor meet together: the LORD is the maker
of them all.*

*22:3 A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but
the simple pass on, and are punished.*

22:1 – A good name. The name expresses the character or reputation of the person. Far better to be appreciated by the wise as one with unblemished reputation, even with poverty, than to be rich at the expense of your name. Apply this principle to the dividing of an inheritance (Lk. 12:13).

22:2 – Levelled before the Creator. This is a truth that works for both sides, dispelling both envy in the poor and contempt in the rich, for all are included in the “*neighbour*” to be loved as ourselves. Compare 14:31; 17:5; Job 31:15.

22:3 – The prudent and the punished. One of the primary characteristics of the prudent is their cautious foresight, in contrast with the incautious simple. They are thoughtfully aware, marking potential danger and taking appropriate

22:4 By humility and the fear of the LORD are riches, and honour, and life.

22:5 Thorns and snares are in the way of the froward: he that doth keep his soul shall be far from them.

22:6 Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

precautions. In the Hebrew, “*prudent*” is singular and “*simple*” is plural, perhaps suggesting prevalence among men. Compare the same statement at 27:12.

22:4 – Right heart and results. The one tends to follow the other, but not necessarily all on this side of glory. Compare 21:21.

22:5 – Snares of the low road. The *highway* of the righteous avoids life’s snares (16:17), whereas the lower, more twisted ways of the wicked run into those dangers and diseases, hindrances and heartaches associated with the lower life. Compare the hard “*way of transgressors*” in 13:15. Compare 15:19.

22:6 – Consistency pays off. “*Train up*” or “catechise” is written as a command, and speaks of relentless consistency in parental guidance. This word carries the idea of narrowing or hedging in, implying consistently firm guidance away from

22:7 The rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender.
22:8 He that soweth iniquity shall reap vanity: and the rod of his anger shall fail.

wrong choices and toward the right. Compare Abraham's insistence that Isaac not go back to his homeland when sending his servant for Isaac's wife, wanting to keep Isaac from contact with a life he might not want to leave (Gen. 24:6 & 8). Compare Jacob's failure in this regard with his daughter Dinah through weak leadership (Gen. 34). Indicated in the phrase "*in the way he should go*" (literally "according to his way") is training that takes into consideration the peculiarities of a child's age, mental, and physical abilities, yet remaining conformed to Scripture's requirements. A clear note of certainty rings in the assurance of promised results here.

22:7 – Slavery of debt. It's a reference to the way life is. The rich tend to control affairs anyway, but all the more when the poor put themselves into the bondage of debt to them. One putting himself in debt enters into a form of servanthood to the one lending.

22:8 – Promise for the persecuted. The troubler will

22:9 He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed; for he giveth of his bread to the poor.

22:10 Cast out the scorner, and contention shall go out; yea, strife and reproach shall cease.

22:11 He that loveth pureness of heart, for the grace of his lips the king shall be his friend.

come to trouble, for the one scattering wickedness as if sowing seeds will reap a harvest of emptiness and trouble. His ragings and beatings (“rod”) shall perish with him.

22:9 – Kind benevolence. It’s the complete opposite of the previous verse, for here we find the good-hearted soul who looks kindly upon those in need, and follows up with action. Compare 19:17; 28:27.

22:10 – Trouble goes with the troubler. Problem *people* are usually strife’s starting place, and both trouble and troubler depart together. And not only will trouble end, but the shame it brings upon all concerned ends as well. The scorner is given to insensitive, self-centred pride, rejecting all due respect for things serious, and generating no end of trouble wherever he goes. The only solution is his removal. Compare 25:5.

22:11 – The king’s friend. One given to purity of heart and graciousness of speech will have the

*22:12 The eyes of the LORD preserve knowledge, and he
overthroweth the words of the transgressor.
22:13 The slothful man saith, There is a lion without, I shall be
slain in the streets.*

respect and friendship even of leadership. Love and purity and graciousness are what lifts us before earthly and heavenly king. Compare 14:35; 16:13. Compare Daniel, Joseph, Nehemiah, etc.

22:12 – Valiant for truth. “*The eyes*” speak of the Lord’s active awareness through which He defends true knowledge. God is the great protector of truth against all who would seek to suppress it. And He will hand over to destruction all who use their words against truth. Compare in Rom. 1:18, “*the wrath of God . . . against all who hold (suppress) the truth in unrighteousness*”.

22:13 – Likely story. This seems to be an exaggerated representation of a sluggard’s imaginative excuse (shading even to the ridiculous) to avoid venturing out to honest work. The sluggard also shows a lack of trust in God’s care and protection while doing what he ought to be doing. This common human tendency to foolishly, faithlessly talk up perceived threats toward avoiding some distasteful direction can be seen in many

*22:14 The mouth of strange women is a deep pit: he that is
abhorred of the LORD shall fall therein.*

*22:15 Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of
correction shall drive it far from him.*

areas;

- Emigrant talk – No prospects or progress or protection.
- Tithing exemption – My funds will be swallowed up and we'll starve.
- Servanthood dismissal – My time will be swallowed up and I'll be used by people.
- Compassion exclusion – My reserves will be swallowed up in caring for the poor and I'll be swamped with beggars.

How we excuse ourselves from appropriate action through talking up perceived threats.

22:14 – “*God gave them over*”. Here is a trap used by the Lord, with focus on her end (5:4-5, 9-11; 7:22-23) not on sin's sweetness. And note that a fall into immorality marks not the *beginning* of divine displeasure, but the *result* of it. Rom. 1:24, 26 & 28 describe the same giving over of the children of His wrath to deeper depths of

22:16 He that oppresseth the poor to increase his riches, and he that giveth to the rich, shall surely come to want.
22:17 Bow down thine ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply thine heart unto my knowledge.

immorality.

22:15 – God’s removal tool. This does not speak only of “foolishness” in the sense of silliness or simplicity, but of active, inherent godless perversity. God’s appointed way of removing such entrenched rebellion from a child’s nature is through the earnest application of the rod. A child so schooled with God’s tool is left at peace with himself and a pleasure to others (29:17). In 23:14 we discover the long-range effect of the rod’s ministry.

22:16 – Robin Hood reversed. It’s the outcome of robbing the poor and giving to the rich. God will bring all things level. One who oppresses the poor or weak for his own enrichment and one who gives (panders) to the rich will come to poverty.

22:17-21 – An appeal to wisdom.

- Vs. 17 – The listener. Bend close and hear, and with full attention turned to the words of God’s wisdom.

22:18 *For it is a pleasant thing if thou keep them within thee;
they shall withal be fitted in thy lips.*

22:19 *That thy trust may be in the LORD, I have made known
to thee this day, even to thee.*

22:20 *Have not I written to thee excellent things in counsels
and knowledge,*

22:21 *That I might make thee know the certainty of the words
of truth; that thou mightest answer the words of truth to
them that send unto thee?*

- Vs. 18 – The promise. Those precious words of wisdom will be pleasantly agreeable right to your core, and established on your lips, both *in* you and flowing *out* of you. Compare Col. 3:16.
- Vs. 19 – The purpose. That the Lord might be your confident hope. His whole purpose in revealing His wisdom to us is to draw us to trust in Him.
- Vs. 20 – The calibre. It's a question expecting an affirmative answer. Is it not true that the nature of Wisdom's instruction is of the highest excellence?
- Vs. 21 – The accreditation. Wisdom states that her purpose is to impart a certainty of the truth, that *learner* might turn *teacher*, equipped to impart truth to others seeking counsel.

22:22 *Rob not the poor, because he is poor: neither oppress the afflicted in the gate:*
22:23 *For the LORD will plead their cause, and spoil the soul of those that spoiled them.*
22:24 *Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go:*
22:25 *Lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul.*

22:22-23 – Spoiler spoiled. “*The gate*” of the city was where all judgment took place, thus a court setting is suggested here. God warns would-be oppressors away from abusing the poor and weak, for they have Him for an advocate. He will spoil every spoiler at the last. Compare vs. 16. Consider how the Lord repays “*good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over*” to the gracious giver (19:17:Lk. 6:38), and removes by the same expanded measure from the treacherous taker. Compare 23:10-11.

22:24-25 – Don’t hang with a hothead. Wisdom counsels against keeping company with a hothead. Easy fellowship with him implies acceptance rather than disapproval of his ways. And acceptance will lead on to adopting his ways, leading on to ruin. Note again the descending staircase. The word translated “*learn*” (vs. 25) has in it the idea of “become accustomed”. We must be careful to “*have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness*”

*22:26 Be not thou one of them that strike hands, or of them
that are sureties for debts.
22:27 If thou hast nothing to pay, why should he take away thy
bed from under thee?
22:28 Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers
have set.*

(Eph. 5:11). Rather our appropriate response is reproof, which may very likely end all friendly relation with the hothead.

22:26-27 – Even your bed. Great caution and counsel must be applied to business relationships. A partnership may actually be a back door surety arrangement, making us dependent upon the integrity of another, and putting our head on the block should the other default. Wisdom warningly wonders why we would put ourselves in a situation where we may even lose our bed at the last when there is nothing left to pay (vs. 27). Compare 6:1-5; 11:15; 17:18; 20:16; 27:13; Gen. 43:9.

22:28 – The old boundary markers. The point appears to be stealing of a more subtle nature, shifting boundary lines in order to cut a wider swath for one's self at the expense of others (the fatherless in 23:10). Compare 15:25; Deut. 19:14; 27:17, among the curses of the law.

*22:29 Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand
before kings; he shall not stand before mean men.*

22:29 – The buoyancy of diligence. One skilled and earnest in his occupation will tend to rise to the top, as oil in water. It's a good and godly goal to go for! Compare “*will bear rule*” in 12:24.

“My son, if thine heart be wise,
my heart shall rejoice,
even mine”

(Proverbs 23:15)

Chapter 23

23:1 When thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before thee:

23:2 And put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite.

23:3 Be not desirous of his dainties: for they are deceitful meat.

23:4 Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom.

23:5 Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven.

23:1-3 – Reservations. This is perhaps related to the previous verse. Of those who “*stand before kings*” wisdom counsels cautious reserve rather than over-familiarity. Don’t let the sumptuous fare distract you from the matter at hand or the man before you. Vs. 2-3 counsel restraint of appetite in light of the threat such a one represents.

23:4-5 – Attitude adjustments. Don’t make it your aim to be rich, and stop directing your intelligence toward that end. For such an aim targets a fleeting, flying object. The only certainty about riches is their flight. Compare 28:20, “*maketh haste to be rich*”. Compare Lk. 12:15 & I Tim. 6:6-10, where we see warning for “*they that will (desire to) be rich*”.

*23:6 Eat thou not the bread of him that hath an evil eye,
neither desire thou his dainty meats:
23:7 For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: Eat and drink,
saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee.
23:8 The morsel which thou hast eaten shalt thou vomit up,
and lose thy sweet words.
23:9 Speak not in the ears of a fool: for he will despise the
wisdom of thy words.*

23:6-8 – Hospitality’s hook. The picture is of a superficially gracious host with hidden, calculating designs. Perhaps this relates to dinner with the king in vs. 1-3. Wisdom counsels awareness (20:5) and avoidance of such, regardless of his glowingly offered benefits (“*Eat and drink, saith he to thee*”). You will only be sorry later for your incautious self-indulgence. Don’t be fooled by the generous hospitality of the calculating plotter who shows grace only to later use it against you (Lk. 7:36-50), or to use you in his purposes. Again, wisdom counsels restraint (vs. 2-3) and awareness, and perhaps even a touch of sanctified suspicion.

23:9 – Pearls before swine. When it becomes clear that you’re dealing with a fool, leave it and walk away. All wisdom is lost on such a one, for wisdom or reason or logic or fairness simply doesn’t reach him as it does the wise. Understand that his hatred rises higher than you. See a variation of this in

*23:10 Remove not the old landmark; and enter not into the fields of the fatherless:
23:11 For their redeemer is mighty; he shall plead their cause with thee.
23:12 Apply thine heart unto instruction, and thine ears to the words of knowledge.
23:13 Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die.
23:14 Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell.*

Titus 3:10-11.

23:10-11 – Father of the fatherless. This verse begins as in 22:28 but then makes the application to the more defenceless (orphans). The reference in vs. 11 is perhaps to their human near kinsman redeemer (Lev. 25:25; Ruth 2:20; 3:12-13; 4), but looks beyond to the heavenly Father who ultimately stands with those unjustly oppressed. “*He shall plead their cause with thee*” is a phrase freighted with menace. Compare 22:22-23.

23:12 – Remember to not forget. How continually Wisdom echoes this appeal to willingly bring our hearts under instruction. Compare vs. 19 & 22:17-21.

23:13-16 – That my heart may rejoice.

- Vs. 13-14 – The paddling. Behold the

23:15 *My son, if thine heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice,
even mine.*

23:16 *Yea, my reins shall rejoice, when thy lips speak right
things.*

unfragile child! God's prescription may not be pleasant, either in the giving or receiving, but it brings benefits both now and into eternity. Note well how vs. 14 holds up the rod as a catching tool for snatching souls from hell. Parental leniency is not only disobedience, it's *deadly!*

- Vs. 15-16 – The pleading. Don't miss the intense warmth of appeal here. Firmness should never be coldness. "*Reins*" is literally "kidneys" in the Hebrew, perhaps expressing the idea of "heart of hearts". It's a father happy to the core. What child doesn't long to please his parents in the early years of his life? Even carnal Esau was moved by this desire, and into his adulthood (Gen. 28:8-9). Suggested here is the equally important matter of the child's involvement. For all the force of a parent's fair and earnest efforts to impart wisdom, a child has the final say as to whether he will receive it. And so the appeal is earnestly made to the child's will. *He must*

*23:17 Let not thine heart envy sinners: but be thou in the fear
of the LORD all the day long.
23:18 For surely there is an end; and thine expectation shall
not be cut off.
23:19 Hear thou, my son, and be wise, and guide thine heart in
the way.
23:20 Be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh:
23:21 For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty:
and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags.*

choose wisdom! Compare 8:35-36. Thus the child must be both driven by the constraints of discipline and drawn by the cords of love. Compare 19:18; 22:15.

23:17-18 – “*Surely there is an end*”. Give no thought to sinners, either to envy or fear them, for your hope in the Lord will not perish, in sharp contrast with theirs. Above all else let your heart be moved to fear the Lord. Envy is a selfish concern with people in the present, but God would turn our thoughts to the (their) end. Similar thoughts in 24:1, 19; Ps. 37:1, 7-8. Compare the Psalmist’s conclusion in Ps. 73:17-28.

23:19 – Another echo. See vs. 12.

23:20-21 – Miss the party! Here are those like the squandering son lined up for stoning in Deut. 21:20, who suck up the wine and wastefully gorge

23:22 Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old.
23:23 Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding.
23:24 The father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice: and he that begetteth a wise child shall have joy of him.
23:25 Thy father and thy mother shall be glad, and she that bare thee shall rejoice.
23:26 My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways.

themselves with meat (note the false use of this in Lk. 7:34). Their lavishness coupled with their laziness ensures their eventual neediness. Wisdom counsels both avoidance of their manners and absence from their midst. Compare 20:13; 21:17.

23:22-28 – Heart to heart talk.

- Vs. 22 – The attention. The father appeals to his son's hearing and honouring of his parents.
- Vs. 23 – The advice. Let truth, wisdom, instruction, and understanding be your prize. Reminiscent of 3:13-15 & 4:7.
- Vs. 24-25 – The advantage. Here are the blessed parents of a blessed child who makes vs. 23 his highest aim. Note the fourfold emphasis on parental delight.

23:27 For a whore is a deep ditch; and a strange woman is a narrow pit.

23:28 She also lieth in wait as for a prey, and increaseth the transgressors among men.

23:29 Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes?

- Vs. 26-28 – The admonition.

- Vs. 26 leads into the warning of vs. 27-28, demanding full surrender to love's leadership. Implied is a fatherly example worthy of a following.
- Vs. 27-28 – Not quite the romantic picture of Hollywood fame. Now who are you going to believe? This looks more like a trap laid for the stupid or a spider's web, serving only to increase faithlessness among men.

23:29-35 – The drunkard's ordeal.

- Vs. 29 – Moaning and misery, contentions and complaints, unaccountable wounds, and unbecoming eyes. The Lord begins where drink leaves off, with descriptive details of drunkenness and hangover. This from the perspective of one looking on.

23:30 *They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine.*

23:31 *Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright.*

23:32 *At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.*

23:33 *Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things.*

23:34 *Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast.*

- Vs. 30 – Those who stay at the wine until late. *“Mixed wine”* is wine mixed with spices.
- Vs. 31 – *“Pleasant to the eyes”*. Don’t feast your eyes on the red sparkle and bubbling flow of the wine as it’s poured.
- Vs. 32 – Garden temptation revisited. From *“good for food and pleasant to the eyes”* to the serpent’s bite. As with all sin, it’s sweet on entry, with the sting in the tail. And this is no harmless wound (vs. 29). Compare 20:17.
- Vs. 33-35 – The results.
 - Vs. 33 – Moral inhibitions come down and thoughts run to perversity.
 - Vs. 34 – Instability prevails, as if tossed by waves. It’s a reference not only to his drunken illusions, but to his entire life’s course.

23:35 *They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again.*

- Vs. 35 – No brain no pain. As the drunkard now speaks we discover that even the beating he received (vs. 29, “*wounds without cause*”) does nothing to quench his thirst for more. His resolve to “*seek it yet again*” is the sad revelation of his bondage.

“Be not thou envious
against evil men,
neither desire to be with them”

(Proverbs 24:1)

Chapter 24

24:1 Be not thou envious against evil men, neither desire to be with them.

24:2 For their heart studieth destruction, and their lips talk of mischief.

24:3 Through wisdom is an house builded; and by understanding it is established:

24:4 And by knowledge shall the chambers be filled with all precious and pleasant riches.

24:1-2 – Envy not the evil. Don't envy or enjoy a man of evil, for he thinks and talks only trouble. There is much counsel in the near context here against envy of the evil (3:31);

- 23:17-18 – Because the Lord will reward those who hope in Him.
- 24:19-20 – Because the Lord won't reward the other.

24:3-4 – Successful home. The building of “*an house*” refers to a strong, flourishing family life (14:1), and perhaps more distantly to other successful endeavours (business, church, etc.). A rewarding home experience marked by pleasant, precious sufficiency is the product of wisdom, understanding, and knowledge in the leadership.

24:5 *A wise man is strong; yea, a man of knowledge increaseth strength.*
24:6 *For by wise counsel thou shalt make thy war: and in multitude of counsellors there is safety.*
24:7 *Wisdom is too high for a fool: he openeth not his mouth in the gate.*
24:8 *He that deviseth to do evil shall be called a mischievous person.*
24:9 *The thought of foolishness is sin: and the scorner is an abomination to men.*

In contrast to vs. 1, here is something worth wanting and those we should “*desire to be with*”.

24:5-6 – Wisdom is not independence. The wise show themselves wise and secure their strength by not trusting to their own wisdom alone, seeking rather the assurance of many a wise counsellor.

24:7 – In over his head. Matters of wisdom are too difficult for the fool, and to his credit he manages here to keep his mouth shut where such issues are discussed.

24:8-9 – Schemers and scorners.

- Vs. 8 – One given to plotting evil will be known and named as such.
- Vs. 9 – Such devising of foolishness is not only against society, *it's sin!* And equally

24:10 *If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small.*
24:11 *If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain;*
24:12 *If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?*

censored by society are scorers, who make a mockery of virtue. Even the devil's children sense that plots allowed against one today will take in others tomorrow.

24:10 – Courage lost in the fray. This admonition comes in the form of a mild taunt. When else can courage show itself but in a day of threat or conflict? A man's mettle is revealed in the battle. The good shepherd, moved by love, stands up to the threat in reliance on the Lord, while the hireling crumbles and runs (Jn. 10). Compare young David with lion, bear, and giant, knowing and really convinced that *"the battle is the Lord's"* (I Sam. 17:47).

24:11-12 – *"Doth not He know it?"* Thoughts here may relate to the one losing courage in vs. 10. Withheld kindness and feigned ignorance does not fool the One who examines all, knows all, understands all. And consider;

24:13 *My son, eat thou honey, because it is good; and the honeycomb, which is sweet to thy taste:*
 24:14 *So shall the knowledge of wisdom be unto thy soul: when thou hast found it, then there shall be a reward, and thy expectation shall not be cut off.*
 24:15 *Lay not wait, O wicked man, against the dwelling of the righteous; spoil not his resting place:*
 24:16 *For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief.*

- That “*He . . . keepeth thy soul*” while you evade responsibility to keep or care for the souls of others.
- That the Lord repays a man “*according to his works*”, not according to his *words* (“I didn’t know!”).
- That no conditions are mentioned here. No reasons for evasion are considered valid.

24:13-14 – Sweet wisdom. As vs. 13 begins with the command to eat, so vs. 14 begins with the command to know. Recognize in wisdom something as sweet to your soul as honey to your tongue. And always with a view to the end when our expectation proves true after all, and wisdom’s way proves sweetest of all.

24:15-16 – Be warned. Directly addressing the wicked man, God warns him away from the home of

24:17 Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth:
24:18 Lest the LORD see it, and it displease him, and he turn away his wrath from him.
24:19 Fret not thyself because of evil men, neither be thou envious at the wicked:
24:20 For there shall be no reward to the evil man; the candle of the wicked shall be put out.

the righteous. Because the righteous are indomitable! Whether falling down or knocked down, and that repeatedly, they will be the only ones left standing when the *final* dust settles. The point is that calamity doesn't take out the righteous as it does the wicked. Compare the two witnesses in Rev. 11, finally put to death, but then suddenly restored to life before a watching world. Compare Ps. 37:24; 36:12.

24:17-18 – Unrighteous rejoicing. This seems to be related to vs. 16. The enemies of the righteous will fall, yet don't ever let that be cause for pleasure. For such a gloating attitude is cause for the Lord's displeasure. It is ours to love even those who hate us. If your enemy suffers, *relieve*, don't *rejoice* in his sufferings. Compare 25:21-22; Rom. 12:20. It's not that God will permanently drop His anger toward the enemy, but that He will bring an end to our unrighteous pleasure as well.

*24:21 My son, fear thou the LORD and the king; and meddle
not with them that are given to change:
24:22 For their calamity shall rise suddenly; and who knoweth
the ruin of them both?
24:23 These things also belong to the wise. It is not good to
have respect of persons in judgment.*

24:19-20 – Consider their end. The Lord would turn our eyes away from things that seem to be unfair for the moment (Ps. 73:13), that by faith we might look to the end. There is help in the awareness that the wicked have only this life. Compare vs. 1-2 & 13:9.

24:21-22 – Good subject of God and government. Peter uses similar words in I Pet. 2:17 to describe the godly way of a fundamentally positive attitude toward all. Beware of fellowship with one always given to opposition. Standing against wrong is necessary upon occasion, but some *live* for it. Don't hang with the self-willed rebel, lest when their end suddenly arrives you should be swept away with them. The "*both*" of vs. 22 perhaps refers to those who resist God and those who resist the king. Compare the self-willed in II Pet. 2:10, again in a context of looming judgment.

24:23-26 – Fair judgment.

*24:24 He that saith unto the wicked, Thou are righteous; him
shall the people curse, nations shall abhor him:
24:25 But to them that rebuke him shall be delight, and a good
blessing shall come upon them.*

- Vs. 23 – Partiality. Compare 18:5; 28:21; Deut. 1:17; 16:19; James 2:1-13.
- Vs. 24 – Just judge. One who offers support to those in the wrong, even setting the guilty free, will be hated by people and nations. This is a heavy censor, perhaps particularly aimed at judges. Violation here could be through dishonest words of agreement with wrong or simply by saying nothing, refusing to side with the right. Consider the application of this thought to the quiet allowance of the deceived to perish in their deception (vs. 11). Do we believe God's method is the bold preaching of the truth or not?
- Vs. 25-26 – Comfort for the confronter.
 - o Vs. 25 – Difficult though it may be at the moment of conflict, it will go well with those bold to rebuke those worthy of it, fully exposing wrong for what it is. Perhaps you would say, "But I'll lose my

*24:26 Every man shall kiss his lips that giveth a right answer.
24:27 Prepare thy work without, and make it fit for thyself in
the field; and afterwards build thine house.*

job/pastorate!” “But my neighbour/friend will hate me!” Yet note well that the Lord says “good blessing”. Carry those words in your heart as you approach to reprove.

- Vs. 26 – As society will *curse* one who gives the wrong answer, who calls the wicked right, so they will *kiss* one who gives the right answer, who calls the right right and the wrong wrong. Compare 23:16. Compare Micaiah and Elijah with King Ahab, and Jesus with the Jewish leaders.

24:27 – First things first. See to your provisions first. Get the field laid out and growing before seeing to comforts of house and home. Get your occupation established and producing before considering home and family. Consider this thought applied to Haggai’s message against putting personal things before God’s things. See to God’s house (spiritual provisions) above your own. Violation of this vital principle was Lot’s tragic

*24:28 Be not a witness against thy neighbour without cause;
and deceive not with thy lips.
24:29 Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me: I will
render to the man according to his work.
24:30 I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of
the man void of understanding;
24:31 And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles
had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof
was broken down.*

mistake.

24:28 – False witness. If you are called upon to testify concerning another, be sure you never deceive with your lips. Here again is one of the seven things on God's hate list (6:19). Compare 14:5; 25:18.

24:29 – The promise of vengeance. Wisdom forbids not only the *act* of vengeance, but even the *proposal* of it ("*don't say . . .*"). After the way of your heavenly Father, don't return evil for evil, but good for evil. Leave judgment with the just Judge. Compare Samson's words after the fact in Judges 15:11. Compare 20:22; Matt. 5:43-48; Rom. 12:19; I Pet. 2:22-23.

24:30-34 – The field of the slothful. It's an account of the wise made wiser by observation.

24:32 *Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction.*

24:33 *Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep:*

24:34 *So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man.*

- Vs. 30-31 – The look. The field and vineyard of the slothful (his means of livelihood) all overgrown with thorns and nettles is a picture of careless laziness.
- Vs. 32-34 – The lesson. The observant wise one didn't only see, he *perceived*. Vs. 33 is a copy of 6:10, picturing the encroaching nature of idleness ("*a little . . . a little . . . a little*"), gradually winding down produce and bringing poverty home to stay. "*One that travelleth*" is a vagrant, thus one as poor as a vagabond thief.

Chapter 25

25:1 These are also proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied out.

25:2 It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter.

25:1 – Introduction. Here now are more of Solomon’s proverbs collected by King Hezekiah’s team.

25:2-7 – Counsel for kings.

- Vs. 2 – Glory of God and king. It is to God’s honour to leave many aspects of Himself as mysteries (Deut. 29:29), humbling man in the display of his own inadequacy. The “*secret things belong unto the Lord our God*”, but things revealed by God are for man. Both things revealed and things unrevealed move the wise to thankful humility and obedience before God. But a king’s honour comes differently. He is honoured by wisely bringing to light the truth of every controversy or subterfuge, finding the reality of things and executing fair judgment among his people. By this means he lifts himself to the place of

25:3 *The heaven for height, and the earth for depth, and the heart of kings is unsearchable.*
25:4 *Take away the dross from the silver, and there shall come forth a vessel for the finer.*
25:5 *Take away the wicked from before the king, and his throne shall be established in righteousness.*

guardian of the state against dangers and conspiracies which would bring both him and his people to harm and shame. It's a principle true of all leadership. Here is a call to fair, aware, unclouded judgment

- Vs. 3 – The king's heart. As unsearchable as the heavens for height and the earth for depth is the king's heart. It is not to be fathomed or fooled with. Again, it's a warning toward caution with one who might be as changeable as the wind (23:1-3). Compare the fearful caution before kings in Nehemiah, Esther, Daniel, David, and Nathan.
- Vs. 4-5 – The reward of purging. As the refiner is rewarded with precious metal of finest beauty from the fire through separating out the dross. Even so a king is rewarded with a kingdom of excellence through the purging out of the wicked. In fact his kingdom cannot *"be established in righteousness"* without putting the wicked on

25:6 Put not forth thyself in the presence of the king, and stand not in the place of great men:
25:7 For better it is that it be said unto thee, Come up hither; than that thou shouldest be put lower in the presence of the prince whom thine eyes have seen.
25:8 Go not forth hastily to strive, lest thou know not what to do in the end thereof, when thy neighbour hath put thee to shame.

the run. Compare 16:12; 22:10. Consider the application to church discipline. In I Cor. 5 Paul used the similar analogy of removing the yeast from the dough.

- Vs. 6-7 – Assume yourself low. Don't try to play the great one before important people. And don't ever assume yourself worthy of a place of honour among the distinguished. It's unwise to ever presume yourself worthy of high regard, but rather take a place among the lowly until you're called upward. Far better to be publicly shunted up than down. Christ spoke a parable after this proverb in Lk. 14:7-11 to the effect that self-exalters shall be abased and the humble shall be exalted.

25:8-10 – Think before you speak.

- Vs. 8 – Too quick to quarrel. Don't hurry into

25:9 *Debate thy cause with thy neighbour himself; and
discover not a secret to another:*
25:10 *Lest he that heareth it put thee to shame, and thine
infamy turn not away.*
25:11 *A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of
silver.*

contention without careful forethought, or you run the risk of being made a fool by one with a better grasp of the facts. Don't ever let your passion strip from you the wisdom of studying out the best answer before you speak (15:28).

- Vs. 9 – Forthright and faithful. Speak directly with those concerned in a strife in order to secure all the facts (18:13). And don't be spreading the details ("*secrets*") to others who have no responsibility in the issue, and therefore have no reason to know. Compare 11:13; Matt. 18:15, "*between thee and him alone*".
- Vs. 10 – Lest you come to wear the title of a tattler who will not keep the secrets of others if the telling is to your own advantage.

25:11-12 – A thing of beauty.

- Vs. 11 – "*A word fitly spoken*". Comparable to

25:12 As an earring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise reprover upon an obedient ear.

25:13 As the cold of snow in the time of harvest, so is a faithful messenger to them that send him: for he refresheth the soul of his masters.

25:14 Whoso boasteth himself of a false gift is like clouds and wind without rain.

golden apples in a silver setting is the right word spoken at the right time. Like a beautiful gift elegantly fitting the circumstance. Compare 24:26; 16:20. Compare Christ's mastery of words, and of the way and when of speaking them.

- Vs. 12 – Priceless meeting! Like a beautifully adorning piece of jewellery is the grace to rightly rebuke meeting the grace to humbly hear.

25:13 – The finest ability is dependability. Like the refreshing cool of ice in the sweaty heat of harvest is a messenger you can depend on. Compare Abraham's faithful, successful servant in Gen. 24. Contrast the annoyance of messengers unfit to lean on in vs. 19; 26:6; 10:26; 13:17.

25:14 – Empty promises. As a sudden change of weather yet bringing no rain is one boasting of what he can and will deliver, yet nothing comes of it.

25:15 By long forbearing is a prince persuaded, and a soft tongue breaketh the bone.

25:16 Hast thou found honey? eat so much as is sufficient for thee, lest thou be filled therewith, and vomit it.

25:17 Withdraw thy foot from thy neighbour's house; lest he be weary of thee, and so hate thee.

Jude (vs. 13) used the same analogy of false teachers who bring a hollow promise of riches or redemption, and yet run only to ruin (14:12; 16:25).

25:15 – Gentle patience. Wisdom lifts up a tender tongue that refuses to be provoked to wrath as the way most likely to bring success, even before high officials. Bitterness or passion may affront the pride of an opponent, only sinking his heels deeper. Calm graciousness is much more convincing that right is on its side, when combined with consistency and long patience. Compare 15:1. Compare King Saul's broken confession before David's undeserved kindness in I Sam. 24:17 & 26:21.

25:16-17 – Too much of a good thing. As we can get too much of the sweetness of honey, such that we're sick of it, even so others can get too much of us. Keep your presence (as your speech) on the rarer side, that when you do make an appearance others will be genuinely glad for it. Moderation is the key in most things. Compare vs. 27. Compare other

25:18 A man that beareth false witness against his neighbour is a maul, and a sword, and a sharp arrow.

25:19 Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is like a broken tooth, and a foot out of joint.

25:20 As he that taketh away a garment in cold weather, and as vinegar upon nitre, so is he that singeth songs to an heavy heart.

proverbs highlighting sensitivity toward others, such as vs. 20 & 27:14.

25:18 – A false witness. As if using weapons of war is one using his tongue to give false testimony against another, for to slay a man’s character through falsehood is in a measure to slay what a man really is. Again, it’s a vice forbidden in the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:16) and on God’s short list of abominations (6:19). Compare 24:28.

25:19 – Betrayal in trouble. As the painful annoyance of a worthless tooth or a uselessly weakened foot, so is reliance on the untrustworthy in trouble. Such folks are sure to betray your trust. Compare Judas Iscariot turning to treachery in a time of trouble.

25:20 – Simple wrongs. “Nitre” is potash (an alkali), which when mixed with vinegar (an acid) is neutralized, destroying the value of both. As such

*25:21 If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if
he be thirsty, give him water to drink:
25:22 For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the
LORD shall reward thee.
25:23 The north wind driveth away rain: so doth an angry
countenance a backbiting tongue.*

waste is just wrong, and as it is silly to put away warm clothing in cold weather, so is the insensitive wrongness of singing happy songs to the heavy-hearted. We ought rather to mourn with those who mourn than to sing in their sorrow.

25:21-22 – “*Love your enemies*”. The verbs to give food and drink here are written as commands in the Hebrew rather than mere suggestions. To “*heap live coals upon his head*” speaks proverbially of the torment and shame undeserved kindness brings to the tormenter. Compare the bone-breaking tender tongue of vs. 15. The Lord rewards kindness that approaches more closely to the calibre of His own. Compare Matt. 5:43-48; Rom. 12:19 (quoted). The contrast of 24:17-18.

25:23 – Handling slander. As the marginal note suggests, there’s a bit of a debate here whether the verb speaks of bringing near or pushing away. Either way seems to highlight the same proper response to slander – irritation rather than interest.

*25:24 It is better to dwell in the corner of the housetop, than
with a brawling woman and in a wide house.
25:25 As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a
far country.
25:26 A righteous man falling down before the wicked is as a
troubled fountain, and a corrupt spring.*

25:24 – See 21:9 & 19.

25:25 – Good news. As the refreshment of a cold drink to one wilting with thirst, so is the arrival of good news. Compare 15:30; I Thess. 3:6-9; II Cor. 7:7. Compare the eternal refreshment of the gospel message from the “*far country*” of heaven when combined with faith in a soul.

25:26 – Muddied spring. As the waters of a spring disturbed and muddied by walking through it, so it is when the righteous are momentarily shaken or shown up by the wicked. There is heartache and loss for those in the habit of drinking from it. This may refer to a righteous one falling into dishonour before an evil witness, or to the righteous deviating from what is right into compromise through an evil influence. Yet as the water of a muddied spring will clear with time, so will the righteous rise again, though he fall repeatedly. The wicked have no such hope (24:16).

*25:27 It is not good to eat much honey: so for men to search
their own glory is not glory.
25:28 He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that
is broken down, and without walls.*

25:27 – Glory seekers. Eating honey, like seeking honour, can be overdone. Compare the true honey of 24:13-14. Compare other thoughts on self-seeking in 20:6 & 27:2.

25:28 – The walls down. One without self-control is not only defenceless concerning his impulsive desires, but such passions have likely already ravaged his life and left him in ruin, perhaps rags (“a city not only “*without walls*” but “*broken down*”). Contrast 16:32.

Chapter 26

26:1 As snow in summer, and as rain in harvest, so honour is not seemly for a fool.

26:2 As the bird by wandering, as the swallow by flying, so the curse causeless shall not come.

26:3 A whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass, and a rod for the fool's back.

26:1-12 – A festival of fools. Note the word “*fool*” in every verse of vs. 1-12 except vs. 2.

- Vs. 1 – Things inappropriate. As snow does not belong to summer, nor rain to the harvest season, so honour is out of place in a fool. Honours would only make a fool a bigger fool.
- V. 2 – Wasted incantations. A curse spoken without God’s will behind it is like the aimless, twittering flight of a bird. It’s an empty little stir of wind. Compare Balaam’s frustrated conclusion in Num. 23:8. “*Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world*” (I John 4:4).
- Vs. 3 – Things appropriate. Again wisdom suggests the appropriateness of corporeal punishment for a fool as an effective means of

26:4 Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him.

26:5 Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit.

26:6 He that sendeth a message by the hand of a fool cutteth off the feet, and drinketh damage.

motivation (“*whip*”) and guidance (“*bridle*”). Here is warning for the fool, and wise counsel for his handler. Compare 10:13; 19:29.

- Vs. 4-5 – To answer or not to answer.
 - Vs. 4 – Answer not. Highlighting the danger of the one answering coming to resemble the fool. For even to answer implies his foolish statements or questions worthy of response. The warning is against an answer that in any way offers support for the fool’s high-mindedness.
 - Vs. 5 – Answer. The key here may be that the phrase “*according to*” is perhaps to be understood in a varied sense in these two verses; in vs. 4 in the sense of “in the same way as”, and in vs. 5 in the sense of “in response (opposition) to”. To answer (vs. 5) is to sharply reject and refute his

26:7 The legs of the lame are not equal: so is a parable in the mouth of fools.

26:8 As he that bindeth a stone in a sling, so is he that giveth honour to a fool.

26:9 As a thorn goeth up into the hand of a drunkard, so is a parable in the mouths of fools.

foolishness.

- Vs. 6 – Harmful herald. Here’s a promise of pain and trouble upon all who seek to use a fool as a messenger. Not only will there be no refreshment of a task faithfully completed (25:13), but the job will be enlarged in size and difficulty. Compare 13:17.
- Vs. 7 – Wisdom wasted. As useless as the legs of the lame is a pithy saying in the mouth of a fool. Wisdom cannot effectively be carried by one it has not effectively reached. Compare vs. 9 where the 2nd half is exactly the same as here.
- Vs. 8 – A fool’s honour. To honour a fool is as foolish as *tying* a stone into a sling, in which it should rather sit loosely if it would fly when slung. Both endeavours are a waste.
- Vs. 9 – Wisdom as a weapon. Picture the thorn in the drunkard’s hand as a weapon rather than a wound. A fool uses a wise

26:10 The great God that formed all things both rewardeth the fool, and rewardeth transgressors.
26:11 As a dog returneth to his vomit, so a fool returneth to his folly.
26:12 Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him.

saying like a drunkard uses a thorn, to provoke and torment rather than to promote the truth. Compare vs. 7.

- Vs. 10 – The Creator’s kindness to all. The reference here is to the Lord creating, caring, and employing all in His purposes, even fools and transgressors. Compare Matt. 4:45.
- Vs. 11 – A dog shows himself a dog. As a dog displays what he is by going back to that which he has cast away, so a fool displays his true nature and commitment to folly by the same vile return. Even so one merely professing religion, who is no true possessor of eternal life in Christ, reveals himself in his return to the world (I John 2:19). Peter used this proverb in II Pet. 2 of false teachers who ultimately show their true colours.
- Vs. 12 – Comparison of fools. Wisdom admits more hope for a fool than for one wise only in his own eyes. A fool may at least know his

26:13 The slothful man saith, There is a lion in the way; a lion is in the streets.
26:14 As the door turneth upon his hinges, so doth the slothful upon his bed.
26:15 The slothful hideth his hand in his bosom; it grieveth him to bring it again to his mouth.
26:16 The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason.

need of wisdom while the other is convinced he already has it. The self-righteous are like the self-wise (Matt. 9:12-13). Compare the same 2nd half in 29:20.

26:13-16 – Thoughts on sloth.

- Vs. 13 – See the same unlikely story at 22:13.
- Vs. 14 – Bed hinge. As a door is anchored fast to the doorframe and cannot escape its confined swing of movement around that fixed point, even so the fixed point of a sluggard is his bed. His activities never range far from that narrow field of movement.
- Vs. 15 – See similar at 19:24.
- Vs. 16 – Sloth against all reason. The sluggard defends his sloth behind a shield of “wise” reasons, which even seven men with discerning answers cannot penetrate.

*26:17 He that passeth by, and meddleth with strife belonging
 not to him, is like one that taketh a dog by the ears.
 26:18 As a mad man who casteth firebrands, arrows, and
 death,
 26:19 So is the man that deceiveth his neighbour, and saith, Am
 not I in sport?
 26:20 Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where
 there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth.
 26:21 As coals are to burning coals, and wood to fire; so is a
 contentious man to kindle strife.*

Compare the same phrase in vs. 12. The sluggard is within the less-hope-than-a-fool camp.

26:17 – Not your fight. The risks involved in earnest, uninvited intrusion into somebody else’s argument is like grabbing a dog by the ears. Both actions are thoughtless and risk a nasty bite.

26:18-19 – Deadly arrows “in jest”. A man who displays his bitter hatred by tripping up or defrauding another, and then pulling back saying “am I not just playing?” or “I’m not really serious”, will be seen as insane and as if flinging deadly darts. Many a true feeling is dressed in jest.

26:20-26 – On bitter words.

- Vs. 20-21 – The fire’s fuel. The contentious slanderer is himself the fuel keeping the fiery

*26:22 The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go
down into the innermost parts of the belly.
26:23 Burning lips and a wicked heart are like a potsherd
covered with silver dross.
26:24 He that hateth dissembleth with his lips, and layeth up
deceit within him;
26:25 When he speaketh fair, believe him not: for there are
seven abominations in his heart.
26:26 Whose hatred is covered by deceit, his wickedness shall
be shewed before the whole congregation.*

fight going, not the facts of the case. Compare
15:18; 16:28; 22:10; 25:5, where
personalities are given as strife's starting and
staying point as well.

- Vs. 22 – See exact same at 18:8.

26:23-26 – Sunny surface, dark depths. A clay pot
painted with silver dross (vs. 23) shines like a silver
vessel, but it's still clay underneath and not even
true silver on the surface. So is one with hate and
hurtful designs within (vs. 24) yet outwardly
expressing the glow of warmest love (vs. 25, "*when
he speaketh fair*"). To dissemble (vs. 24) is to
conceal the truth behind a false front. Again it's
wisdom's counsel toward reading people properly
(20:5). Don't be fooled by the front (vs. 25, "*believe
him not*"), but rather deal with them according to
the true designs in the depths. In vs. 26 we find
that the dark heart of the hateful will ultimately

*26:27 Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein; and he that rolleth
a stone, it will return upon him.
26:28 A lying tongue hateth those that are afflicted by it; and a
flattering mouth worketh ruin.*

come both to the *surface* and to the *public*.

26:27 – Trapper trapped. One designing for the fall of others will fall to his own designs. Compare 28:10; Ps. 7:15; Eccl. 10:8. Compare Haman's timely demise (Esther 7). Compare Daniel's hateful accusers cast to the same pit (of lions!) into which they had manoeuvred Daniel (Dan. 6).

26:28 – Hate behind the lie. The deceiver actually hates the one on the receiving end of his lie. And the smooth words of one speaking flattery are not aimed at the hearer's best either, but at his ruin by means of his pride (29:5, spreads a net for his feet). Truth is always best, bringing health and expressing true love. Love is always based on truth. Apply this to the way of our day in the flattering failure to expose false religion. Compare 27:6. Give thought to the difference between flattery and praise.

Chapter 27

27:1 Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.

27:2 Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips.

27:3 A stone is heavy, and the sand weighty; but a fool's wrath is heavier than them both.

27:1-2 – Boasting in things not ours.

- Vs. 1 – Our future. We cannot boast of things for which we are not responsible. The future is not in our hands but in the Lord's. Compare Lk. 12:20; James 4:13-16.
- Vs. 2 – Our accomplishments. All that we are and have is from the Lord. Let your boasting be *there* (Jer. 9:23-24). And if any mouth should celebrate your glory, make sure it's not your own. Jesus carried this selfless attitude even to the point of hiding our goodnesses (Matt. 6:3).

27:3-4 – On anger.

- Vs. 3 – A fool's unendurable anger. The one who must endure the sullen, explosive, hateful anger of a fool knows the grievous

*27:4 Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able
to stand before envy?*
27:5 Open rebuke is better than secret love.
*27:6 Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an
enemy are deceitful.*

heartache of that burden.

- Vs. 4 – Jealousy. There is the explosive outpouring of anger, quickly arising and quickly subsiding, and then there is the slow-burning rage of jealousy bent on vengeance and injury to the max. Compare 6:34-35; Song of Sol. 8:6.

27:5-6 – Faithful wounds.

- Vs. 5 – Rebuke’s “better” way. “Secret [hidden] love” seems to refer to a love that goes into hiding when a nobler, purer love would confront and openly rebuke wrong. Thus it’s an unfaithful love compared with the faithful wounds of a friend. Compare 24:25; 28:23.
- Vs. 6 – Wounds or kisses. In contrast to the forthright way of the faithful, the kisses of an enemy are too abundant to be honest, pictured in Judas’ treacherous betrayal with a kiss. Compare the foolish parent who seeks

*27:7 The full soul loatheth an honeycomb; but to the hungry
soul every bitter thing is sweet.
27:8 As a bird that wandereth from her nest, so is a man that
wandereth from his place.
27:9 Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so doth the
sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel.*

to guide by fond flattery rather than by fair
flailing (13:24). Compare Ps. 141:5.

27:7 – Gratitude attitude. This is bigger than a lesson on food. Be careful to maintain the grateful, earnest, seeking heart of the hungry man receiving bread, even after God has blessed with abundance, rather than despising Him or His bounty in the good times. Compare Deut. 32:13-18, “*But Jeshurun waxed fat . . . and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation*” (vs. 15). Compare Isa. 17:10; Ps. 107.

27:8 – The roving nomad. The warning here is against the wasteful wanderlust of the prodigal (Lk. 15), who through selfish pursuits refuses to stick to his place of responsibility. At the party's end he remembers his place of comfort. Compare Elimelech's foolish flight to Moab. He left the place of rest God had given him because he didn't see the value of it.

*27:10 Thine own friend, and thy father's friend, forsake not;
neither go into thy brother's house in the day of thy
calamity: for better is a neighbour that is near than a
brother far off.
27:11 My son, be wise, and make my heart glad, that I may
answer him that reproacheth me.*

27:9 – A refreshing friend. The pleasantness of the intimate counsel of a friend is compared with the refreshment of anointing oil. Compare Ps. 23:5; 133:1-2.

27:10 – A proven friend. A family friend proven true over time is the better help for his nearness and reputation than the far brother. Don't offend his trust by passing him by in your distress. Such a soul is a rare jewel deserving highest regard.

27:11 – Wise son, wise father. The world rejects, to their own sorrow, the Lord's wisdom and way of child-rearing, while at the same time scorning those who obediently take up the rod with diligence. The father now pleads for the choice of wisdom in his son if only for the sake of his joy and affirmation before a scorning world, that he was right to follow God's way. It's a bit of a different angle on parental pleading. "*Be wise*" and "*make glad*" are commands. Compare 23:15-16, 24-25; 10:1. Consider the Lord pleading in this way with us in

27:12 A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself; but the simple pass on, and are punished.

27:13 Take his garment that is surety for a stranger, and take a pledge of him for a strange woman.

27:14 He that blesseth his friend with a loud voice, rising early in the morning, it shall be counted a curse to him.

27:15 A continual dropping in a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike.

27:16 Whosoever hideth her hideth the wind, and the ointment of his right hand, which bewrayeth itself.

light of Satan's scorning slanders (Job 1-2).

27:12 – See almost exact same at 22:3.

27:13 – See very similar at 20:16.

27:14 – Insensitive salutation. Note the contrast of *blessing* and *cursing* in the two halves of this verse. Even a good word of blessing can draw cursing when spoken with thoughtlessness (too loud and too early). The sensitivity of simple courtesy is the theme here and elsewhere (24:17; 25:17, 20).

27:15-16 – The complainer.

- Vs. 15 – Compare 19:13. It's a picture of constant monotonous noise, the continual grumblings of a habitually dissatisfied woman.

*27:17 Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the
countenance of his friend.
27:18 Whoso keepeth the fig tree shall eat the fruit thereof: so
he that waiteth on his master shall be honoured.
27:19 As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to
man.*

- Vs. 16 – To restrain such a one is like trying to hold back the moaning wind or to grasp oil with the hand. As impossible as it is elusive.

27:17 – Helpful honing. “*Countenance*” goes beyond just the outward appearance, though inward improvement and refreshment will show there. Here is the sharpening, shaping effect of a friend willing to confer the painful benefit of open rebuke (vs. 5), seeking to fashion his friend into an item of quality. A dull blade is of little worth. Make it sharp! And if you’re a friend worth the title, seek the same in others.

27:18 – Payday. Tending and pruning a tree will be rewarded with fruit, like the faithful service of a master (both earthly and heavenly) will be rewarded with honour. Compare Rebekah’s nurse, Deborah. Her place of death was called “the oak of weeping” (Gen. 35:8), pointing to her high esteem, while Rebekah’s own death receives not a mention.

*27:20 Hell and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man
are never satisfied.*

*27:21 As the fining pot for silver, and the furnace for gold; so is
a man to his praise.*

*27:22 Though thou shouldest bray a fool in a mortar among
wheat with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart
from him.*

27:19 – Heart mirror. As one can see the reflection of his face on water, so a man can see the shimmering reflection of his heart in another. We are all of like passions (James 5:17), and there is no temptation uncommon to man (I Cor. 10:13). That ability to find similar feeling, sympathy, and help in others is the essence of true Christian fellowship.

27:20 – “*Never satisfied*”. The eyes of a man in the flesh are the avenue of lust and covetousness, and are as insatiable as hell. Eyes that are “*full*” or “*satisfied*” express a peaceful contentment. How rare such simple satisfaction among men. Compare the same phrase “*hell and destruction*” in 15:11. Compare Eccl. 4:4-8; Heb. 13:5; Lk. 12:15; I Tim. 6:6-8. Only in Christ does one “*never thirst*” (Jn. 4:13-14).

27:21 – Test of praise. One way in which a man is tried and refined is by the way he handles praise. Compare David (I Sam. 18:7) and Solomon (II

27:23 Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds.
27:24 For riches are not for ever: and doth the crown endure to every generation?
27:25 The hay appeareth, and the tender grass sheweth itself, and herbs of the mountains are gathered.

Chron. 9:6-8). Note the unfortunate contrast in Rehoboam (II Chron. 12:1) and Uzziah (II Chron. 26:15-16). The first half of this verse is exactly the same as 17:3.

27:22 – Fool and folly inseparable. Though discipline should be so severe, as if pounding one to powder with a pestle, yet still the fool will be crushed with his foolishness intact.

27:23-27 – Reward of diligence.

- Vs. 23 – Diligent attentiveness to your business (“flocks” and “herds”) is commanded and commended as the better way over idle wishing for wealth. Compare 24:30-34.
- Vs. 24 – Money and majesty alike are fleeting and foolish aims. Compare 23:4-5. Don’t idly pine for “the big win”.
- Vs. 25-27 – God’s provision is found and sufficient for herd (vs. 25), herdsman,

27:26 The lambs are for thy clothing, and the goats are the price of the field.

27:27 And thou shalt have goats' milk enough for thy food, for the food of thy household, and for the maintenance for thy maidens.

household, and handmaids (vs. 26-27) through simple honest labour. Compare 12:11; 13:11.

“He that rebuketh a man
afterwards shall find more favour
than he that flattereth
with the tongue”

(Proverbs 28:23)

Chapter 28

28:1 The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion.

28:2 For the transgression of a land many are the princes thereof: but by a man of understanding and knowledge the state thereof shall be prolonged.

28:3 A poor man that oppreseth the poor is like a sweeping rain which leaveth no food.

28:1 – Terror of a troubled conscience. Haunted by both past and future, the guilt of the wicked magnifies their fears of the present such that they flee from phantoms. Whereas the righteous are settled on all sides and secure within, such that they fear God and *nothing else!*

28:2 – Transitory transgressors. Leadership is prolonged and stability maintained through clear perception and a commitment to purity. When a rebellious spirit is allowed to prevail in a land (church or business), peace flees and dynasties are short-lived. Compare 25:2, 4-5. Compare the roller-coaster ride of assassination and rule throughout the days of the Judges and kings of Israel.

28:3 – Hope turned havoc. Oppressive tyranny is

28:4 *They that forsake the law praise the wicked: but such as
keep the law contend with them.*
28:5 *Evil men understand not judgment: but they that seek the
LORD understand all things.*

expected from the rich, yet is a surprise from one rising to power from poverty, like a promise of refreshing rain turned to a devastating storm. Such a one would be expected to champion the cause of the poor. The principle applies to any hold on power. Compare the king faithful to the poor in 29:14. Compare Christ's parable of the unmerciful servant (Matt. 18:23-35). We too should have a fundamental sympathy toward those lost in sin, for we have arisen out of the same spiritual poverty.

28:4 – Interest or irritation. Our delights express our heart attitude toward God and His standard of right. If our delight is in what's right, then those delighting in wrong will become our *irritation*. If we have inwardly deserted the right, those in the wrong will become our *interest*. We cannot be relishing both. Compare those delighting in the wicked in Rom. 1:32. Think carefully of your heroes among the urchins of Hollywood, pop idols, and raging, rapping “music” personalities. Compare Isaiah's representation of the upright in Isa. 33:15. What you look at is where your heart's interest lies.

*28:6 Better is the poor that walketh in his uprightness, than he
that is perverse in his ways, though he be rich.
28:7 Whoso keepeth the law is a wise son: but he that is a
companion of riotous men shameth his father.*

28:5 – “*The understanding darkened*”. The evil are blind to what is right and pure (Eph. 4:18). So don’t be surprised at their raging, whinging, manipulating accusation of unfairness when handled with justice. Compare Ps. 112:10; Rev. 16:11, 21. In contrast everything comes clear to those fearing the Lord. Compare Ps. 25:14; I Cor. 2:14-16; I John 2:20.

28:6 – Principle with poverty, above perversity with property. When did money ever become the true measure of a man? Integrity is true substance, a possession of a much higher class than any earthly trinkets. Again, the idea behind “*the upright*” is innocence or simplicity, the complete absence of hateful or hurtful designs. Compare similar thoughts at 19:1. Compare on the “*upright*” in 10:9; 11:20; 15:8.

28:7 – Keeper of the law or companion of the low. Wise is the son keeping God’s way. A parental shame is one enjoying the company of squanderers (vs. 4). The “*riotous*”, those lavishly pouring out or

*28:8 He that by usury and unjust gain increaseth his substance, he shall gather it for him that will pity the poor.
28:9 He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination.*

squandering their substance, are the same as in 23:20-21, which see for similar contrast of choices.

28:8 – Increase by usury. Usury is lending at interest, especially at oppressively high rates. The Lord did not allow the charging of any type of interest on a loan among His people (Lev. 25:35-37; Deut. 23:19-20). Note the same in that portrait of a rock-steady righteous man in Ps. 15 (vs. 5). Increase gained through unfair means will pass to the meek in their inheritance of the earth (Matt. 5:5). Compare 13:22.

28:9 – Abominable prayer. One who ignores the fearful threats and just requirements of God's law will be ignored in his heavenward pleas. For outside of redemption in Christ one stands outside of access to God. Compare 1:24-28. As in 15:8-9, such plain terms deny any ability to undo our evil through religious practices. From the position of an unconverted heart, even a good deed like prayer is as abominable as the practice of evil. Prayer expresses a humility that is not real in one denying

*28:10 Whoso causeth the righteous to go astray in an evil way,
he shall fall himself into his own pit: but the upright shall
have good things in possession.*

*28:11 The rich man is wise in his own conceit; but the poor that
hath understanding searcheth him out.*

*28:12 When righteous men do rejoice, there is great glory: but
when the wicked rise, a man is hidden.*

God's words and only way of salvation.

28:10 – Tripper tripped. It's an application of 26:27. Compare how Satan's alluring work of deception in Gen. 3 was the beginning of his own end (vs. 15). And innumerable will be the throng of the redeemed who come away victors with the blessing of God in the end.

28:11 – Understanding is no respecter of persons. A rich man may think himself wise (and rich for this cause) and all others expendable pawns. But even a man of insight with the simplest of means will see right through him.

28:12 – Golden era. Glory for all is the result of the righteous rising to rule. Compare Israel's glory days under godly David and Solomon. Persecution and hiding are the nature of the day when the righteous are forced underground by the flourishing wicked (Jer. 36:19, 26). Compare vs. 28; 11:10; 29:2.

*28:13 He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso
confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.
28:14 Happy is the man that feareth alway: but he that
hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief.
28:15 As a roaring lion, and a ranging bear; so is a wicked
ruler over the poor people.*

Compare the coming days of Antichrist's rule (Dan. 7; Rev. 13).

28:13 – Sin covered or confessed. Denied, covered, or excused sin will not meet with success, neither in life in general nor in keeping the sin buried. “*Behold your sin will find you out*”. Compare Ps. 32:1-4. Ultimate success and happiness before God and man comes only through confession with a genuine desire to leave off the wrong.

28:14 – The happy and the hard. This perhaps follows from the thought of the previous verse. Here the reference is to a proper continual dread of sin getting a hold in our heart. Compare the psalmist's heart ever standing in awe of God's words in Ps. 119:161. Contrasted here is the one hardened against the input of God's Word and church and people. While all will be well for the one, the other will go from bad to worse.

28:15-16 – Foraging beast on the loose. It's a

28:16 The prince that wanteth understanding is also a great oppressor: but he that hateth covetousness shall prolong his days.

28:17 A man that doeth violence to the blood of any person shall flee to the pit; let no man stay him.

28:18 Whoso walketh uprightly shall be saved: but he that is perverse in his ways shall fall at once.

picture of life under the tyranny of a violent, unpredictable, unreasonable, greedy despot. As in Daniel 7, God deems the arrogance of human kings and kingdoms comparable to wild beasts. Compare vs. 12 & 28. Compare again the rule of the Beast or Antichrist described in Rev. 13, that one in whom will combine all of the arrogance of man's glory, yet who will not "*prolong his days*" (only 3½ years, Rev. 13:5). This is that one Daniel describes, "*that had eyes*" of understanding and "*whose look was more stout than his fellows*" (Dan. 7:20). He will be pre-eminent above every peer, and yet destitute of the insight ("*wanteth understanding*") which only the fear of the Lord can bring.

28:17 – Flight of a murderer. A murderer fleeing the seen of his gruesome crime runs only to his own grave. Wisdom counsels that none should offer him support in his flight, thus hindering justice.

28:18 – The way of preservation. Compare vs. 16;

28:19 *He that tilleth his land shall have plenty of bread: but he that followeth after vain persons shall have poverty enough.*
28:20 *A faithful man shall abound with blessings: but he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent.*
28:21 *To have respect of persons is not good: for for a piece of bread that man will transgress.*

10:9, 25; 11:3-6. “*At once*” is in the sense of “suddenly”.

28:19 – Full of bread or full of poverty. This is a near copy of 12:11 with the addition of expected results. Compare 27:23-27.

28:20-22 – The way to blessing. God proclaims *faithfulness* rather than *finance* as the way to blessing, in fact *many* blessings (vs. 20, “*abound*”). In vs. 22 we’re reminded that a driving urge for wealth is not born out of a right heart. Compare I Tim. 6:9-10. The picture in vs. 21 is of one such as a judge showing unfair favouritism, turning from what is right as a result of taking a bribe. As Esau, “for a bit of bread this one will overturn what is right!” Such a one will never “*abound with blessings*” (vs. 20). His willingness for unjust gain in his “*haste to be rich*” only shows his evil envy (vs. 22) and speeds the arrival of his punishment by poverty. Consider the application to men in ministry who sell out the truth for the “*piece of*

28:22 *He that hasteth to be rich hath an evil eye, and
considereth not that poverty shall come upon him.*
28:23 *He that rebuketh a man afterwards shall find more
favour than he that flattereth with the tongue.*

bread” of better attendance, offerings, or earthly honours.

28:23 – Rebuke’s “*good blessing*”. Things to notice here;

- The favour comes “*afterward*”, not usually in the heat of the confrontation.
- “Favour” comes. Not loss but gain. It’s a promise (“*shall find*”)!
- We’re not told that the one rebuked will be the source of that favour. Yet, though he never pull his heart together and even hate you to his grave, God’s “*good blessing*” will be upon the faithful reprover (24:25).
- The favour will be upon the one caring enough to bring the rebuke, not upon those brave only to discuss the matter behind the offender’s back. Though counsel with those responsible may be appropriate before rebuke is brought.

*28:24 Whoso robbeth his father or his mother, and saith, It is no transgression; the same is the companion of a destroyer.
28:25 He that is of a proud heart stirreth up strife: but he that putteth his trust in the LORD shall be made fat.*

- Assumed is confrontation of legitimate wrong.
- There is no indication of *how* the rebuke must be couched, which is often the fault-finding focus of an unrepentant heart when met with rebuke. Contrast 25:12.
- To not rebuke when it is due can be a form of flattery.
- Compare 27:5-6; 29:5.

28:24 – Parent stripper. One excusing himself for ripping off his own parents would be willing to take part in anybody’s ruin. Compare 19:13, 26; 20:20. The second half of this verse is similar to 18:9. God counsels just the opposite in I Tim. 5:4.

28:25 – It depends on the heart. The proud are a continual threat to peace, while those trusting upon the Lord live in satisfaction, and not a little (“*fat*”). The first half of the verse is the same as in 15:18. The second half is similar to 29:25.

28:26 He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered.
28:27 He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack: but he that hideth his eyes shall have many a curse.
28:28 When the wicked rise, men hide themselves: but when they perish, the righteous increase.

28:26 – Guidance from the right source. God has condemned man’s heart as corrupt to the core (Jer. 17:9) and therefore no safe guide (14:12). One trusting in the Lord as his source of wisdom (3:5) will find the way of sure deliverance and the “*narrow way*” leading to life.

28:27 – Care for the caring. We have already seen God’s care for those caring for the needy (11:24-25; 19:17; 22:9). Here is now a repeated promise of fatness upon the liberal soul and want or lack upon the selfish, who deliberately hide their eyes from the misery of others.

28:28 – See vs. 12. Compare 11:10; 29:2. Keil and Delitzsch make the apt comparison to flourishing plants “when the worms, caterpillars, and the like are destroyed”.

“He, that being often reprovèd
hardeneth his neck,
shall suddenly be destroyed,
and that without remedy”

(Proverbs 29:1)

Chapter 29

*29:1 He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.
29:2 When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn.
29:3 Whoso loveth wisdom rejoiceth his father: but he that keepeth company with harlots spendeth his substance.
29:4 The king by judgment establisheth the land: but he that receiveth gifts overthroweth it.*

29:1 – Long-suffering, but not eternal. The Lord will not always be knocking at the heart's door. There comes an end to man's opportunity afforded by God's grace and patience. Compare 1:24-33; 6:15. On "*suddenly*" compare Babylon in Daniel 5 (vs.20, "*in that night*"), and again in Rev. 18 ("*in one hour*").

29:2 – Singing or sighing. When righteousness rules through a predominance of righteous people, everybody scores with a happier existence. When the wicked are in power there is good cause for many a groaning sigh. Compare 28:12, 28.

29:3 – See 23:15-28. Compare 10:1; 28:7.

29:4 – All rises or falls on leadership. Those leading by justice shall bring stability to their realm. But

*29:5 A man that flattereth his neighbour spreadeth a net for his feet.
29:6 In the transgression of an evil man there is a snare: but
the righteous doth sing and rejoice.*

leaders given to swapping injustice for bribes will only lead the way to destruction. Compare vs. 14; 15:27.

29:5 – Flattery’s net. To speak smooth rather than to speak truth;

- Shows one to be mild steel, able to sharpen nothing (27:17).
- Denies the other the “*better*” benefit rebuke brings (27:5).
- Demonstrates no love for the one flattered, or desire for his best.
- Indicates a desire to use the other for one’s own advantage.

Compare 26:28.

29:6 – Snares or singing. Sin will always bring a snare, while righteousness will always bring singing. Consider how often righteousness and wisdom are associated with joy in this book.

29:7 The righteous considereth the cause of the poor: but the wicked regardeth not to know it.
29:8 Scornful men bring a city into a snare: but wise men turn away wrath.

Compare righteousness and peace as the twin characteristics of Christ's coming kingdom in Isa. 11:4-9. For He who is Melchizedek (meaning "king of righteousness", Heb. 7) is also king of Salem ("peace", Gen. 14:18-20; Heb. 7:2).

29:7 – Aware of the weak. The righteous know and identify with the cause of the lowly and weak, while the wicked avert their eyes from the condition of the disadvantaged lest they become aware and feel responsible. Compare 28:27.

29:8 – Flaming fox tails. Here is the perverse man of 16:28 but now on a citywide scale. Men with contempt (and pride, 28:25) for all that is right and good, when given free run, will stir a city to turmoil. Their evil influence begs removal if peace would be restored. Compare 22:10; 25:5; 26:20. But the wise know how to avert anger and trouble. Compare the wise woman of Abel (II Sam. 20:14-22). Compare the "*poor wise man*" who delivered his little city in Eccles. 9:13-15.

*29:9 If a wise man contendeth with a foolish man, whether he
rage or laugh, there is no rest.*

29:10 The bloodthirsty hate the upright: but the just seek his soul.

*29:11 A fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise man keepeth it in
till afterwards.*

29:12 If a ruler hearken to lies, all his servants are wicked.

29:9 – Folly’s way in a fight. When a wise man attempts reasonable debate with a fool, the fool will tend to descend to tactics of passion and mockery, now raging, now scornfully laughing, refusing to listen to reason, displaying by this means his own inward awareness that truth and reason are not on his side. Compare thoughts at 25:15.

29:10 – The evil hate while the righteous help. The righteous stand with all those who are unbending in their uprightness, and the evil hate them for it. Compare Matt. 25:31-46.

29:11 – Verbal volcano. Having no restraint, the fool pours out all in him (thoughts, rage, abuse, obscenities, etc.), while the wise one has the self-possession to hold in his natural response. On restraint of words compare 12:16; 14:33. On restraint of anger compare 14:17, 29; 16:32; 25:28.

29:12 – Leaders listening to lies. Leaders hearing rather than scattering liars cause a counsel of

*29:13 The poor and the deceitful man meet together: the LORD
lighteneth both their eyes.*

*29:14 The king that faithfully judgeth the poor, his throne shall
be established for ever.*

*29:15 The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to
himself bringeth his mother to shame.*

wicked ministers to grow up like poisonous mushrooms around them. Compare in I Kings 22 the one prophet (Micaiah) not waiting on King Ahab had to be summoned out of prison, while the rest (about 400) were all deceivers. Apply this principle to parental leadership that is soft on lying.

29:13 – “*By whom all things consist*”. The Lord is the One ultimately holding the supply lines for both the poor and the oppressor who helps to make and keep the poor poor. Compare 22:2 & Matt. 5:45. It’s a thinly veiled threat from the Advocate only of the one (22:22-23; 23:10-11).

29:14 – Earthly advocate. Compare the previous verse. A king joining the Lord as an earthly advocate of the oppressed, handling all men with equity, will be richly rewarded by our heavenly Advocate. Compare vs. 4; 16:12.

29:15 – A child kept or left. Proper restraint will bring a child to wisdom, while no or inadequate

*29:16 When the wicked are multiplied, transgression
increaseth: but the righteous shall see their fall.
29:17 Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall
give delight unto thy soul.*

restraint will bring a mother to shame. “*Left*” means “given up to his own will”. “*The rod and reproof*” describes wisdom’s formation through a proper balance of both physical and verbal correction (not abuse). Take the time to explain. If a mother allows the sweet wine of her tender love to sour into the vinegar of over-indulgence, she’s the one who will end up smelling like a pickle. On shame, compare 19:26; 28:7.

29:16 – Though the wicked have their day in the sun, bringing with their rise to prominence a special on transgression, yet it will be only the righteous remaining to inherit the earth when they see the wicked fall at the last. Compare vs. 2; 28:28.

29:17 – Make your son a delight. To “*correct*” means to chastise or “to correct with blows or stripes”. The word is written as a command in the Hebrew. The question of whether a child becomes a delightful pleasure to those around him is largely to be answered by the parent in the child’s formative years. And the decision to apply this principle is no

29:18 Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.
29:19 A servant will not be corrected by words: for though he understand he will not answer.

option for the parent who would obey God. It's a process that must be started early and pursued with diligence (13:24; 19:18).

29:18 – “Open vision”. “Vision” here is in the sense of God-given vision or revelation. Without the proclamation and general awareness of God’s true message the people have no hope, for little holds them back from lawlessness and ruin. But in having and keeping God’s Word there is not only hope but joy. Compare the type of day into which Samuel was born (I Sam. 3:1), and the national victory he later brought through his itinerant teaching ministry.

29:19 – Sullen servant. The reference is to a servant refusing improvements from those over him, when such efforts involve mere words. Though he obviously understands, yet there is no appropriate response in keeping with his understanding. Implied is the need for more tangible means of getting his attention and making lasting impressions. Compare vs. 21.

*29:20 Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words? there is
more hope of a fool than of him.
29:21 He that delicately bringeth up his servant from a child
shall have him become his son at the length.
29:22 An angry man stirreth up strife, and a furious man
aboundeth in transgression.*

29:20 – Little hope for the hasty. Here is the one who speaks without hearing or due consideration and moves without counsel (18:13). Such a one considers himself and his own opinion adequate for every situation, thus he is as that equally hopeless one who is “*wise in his own conceits*” in 26:12.

29:21 – Spare the rod, spoil the servant. To “*delicately bring up*” is to indulge or pamper. When a servant is pampered with too much freedom he forgets his rightful place of responsibility and his expectations rise to inappropriate levels. Not only is it wrong for one to personally leave the way of discipline, it’s wrong to allow others for whom we are responsible to drift from that way as well. Consider the application to indulgent parents whose children will grow up to expect things inappropriate. On servants and their handling, compare vs. 19; 17:2; 19:10; 30:10, 22-23.

29:22 – Troubling transgressor. Though an angry man would find justification for his cause through

29:23 A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit.

29:24 Whoso is partner with a thief hateth his own soul: he heareth cursing, and bewrayeth it not.

misrepresentation of words and circumstances, Wisdom clarifies that his fury in and of itself testifies of his own sinful (prideful, 13:10) heart. He's a centre of trouble because he's a centre of transgression. Compare 15:18; 28:25.

29:23 – More on the lofty and lowly. Though a man's pride lift his self-estimation to the heights, his arrogance will bring him down, while the lowly rise to an honour they aren't even seeking. Compare 16:18-19; 15:33; 16:5; 18:12.

29:24 – The perjurer. One who is a partner of a thief hates his own soul in that he wilfully brings threat of harm upon himself by his association. The second half of the verse follows Lev. 5:1, referring to the refusal to testify, likely against his thief friend, when adjured with an oath ("*cursing*") by a judge. To "*bewray*" (KJV) is to declare, betray, or confess openly. He will not betray his friend in declaring the truth. From an accessory to crime he descends to perjury.

29:25 The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe.

29:26 Many seek the ruler's favour; but every man's judgment cometh from the LORD.

29:27 An unjust man is an abomination to the just: and he that is upright in the way is abomination to the wicked.

29:25 – Fear the Lord and nothing else. The word translated “safe” can also express the idea of “set on high” or “exalted”. Fearing people is as the dangerous entanglement of snares, while trusting the Lord sets one as if in the safety of a high place (18:10). Compare Matt. 10:28, “*and fear not them which kill the body but are not able to kill the soul*”. One may think he’s avoiding trouble by bowing to the pressure of people to compromise or conceal the truth. But Wisdom reveals that such are actually walking right into trouble. He who fears people does not fear the Lord who commands of us, “*fear not for I am with thee, be not dismayed for I am thy God*” (Isa. 41:10).

29:26 – Supreme court. Though men would appeal to a human ruler as the one who determines all outcomes, the Lord presides over the court of final appeal. Even the king’s heart is in His hand (21:1).

29:27 – Spiritual racism. The uncompromisingly righteous despise the ways of the wicked one,

though they long for the salvation of his soul. The wicked despise the righteous man, for his ways expose and reprove their own depravity. Compare 28:4 (see comments there).

“Every word of God is pure:
He is a shield unto them
that put their trust in Him”

(Proverbs 30:5)

Chapter 30

*30:1 The words of Agur the son of Jakeh, even the prophecy:
the man spake unto Ithiel, even unto Ithiel and Ucal,
30:2 Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the
understanding of a man.
30:3 I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy.
30:4 Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? who
hath gathered the wind in his fists? who hath bound the
waters in a garment? who hath established all the ends of
the earth? what is his name, and what is his son's name, if
thou canst tell?*

Chapter 30 is a collection of the words of Agur.

30:1-3 – Introduction to the man.

- Vs. 1 – Nobody knows who this man was, nor the others mentioned in vs. 1.
- Vs. 2-3 – Agur's humility. This man was the very opposite of one who thinks he knows most while knowing least. Here was one who from a human perspective readily advertised his ignorance, yet in spite of this, yea *because* of it, the Lord esteemed him worthy to find his place among the wise.

30:4 – The enquiry. In words comparable to the Lord's penetrating questions put to Job from chap.

*30:5 Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that
put their trust in him.
30:6 Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and
thou be found a liar.*

38 of his book, Agur expresses his longing to know His Creator (Eccl. 12:1). Though aware of his ignorance he was consumed with a search for the Author of existence.

30:5-6 – The conclusion. The result of his search was to come to cherish and revere “*every word of God*” as the expression of the true God.

- Vs. 5 – “*Every word of God is pure*”. The focus here is on the individual words. Compare Psalm 18:30 for the same combination of the purity of the Lord’s words and His protection. Purity expresses sincerity and certainty. Thus to take refuge in the Lord is to firmly believe His promises are not corrupted and will never let us down. And the very purpose of God’s pure words is to lead us to such firm trust. On the purity of God’s words, see Ps. 12:6; 19:7-9.
- Vs. 6 – Make no adjustments. The statement here is similar to the closing words of the Bible (Rev. 22:18-19) warning men away from

*30:7 Two things have I required of thee; deny me them not
before I die:
30:8 Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither
poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me:
30:9 Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD? or
lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.*

adding or making adjustments to God's words. Many among the proud have failed to heed such divine warnings.

30:7-9 – Two requests.

- Vs. 8 – Neither vanity nor lies, neither poverty nor riches. He would have only this day his daily bread.
- Vs. 9 – The why of the second request. Perhaps explanation is given on this latter concern because this one might be most difficult to understand. The man's humility is evident in that he did not trust himself with either extreme, nor was he living for himself. Rather he preferred just *enough* that he might not be tempted away from the Lord (his only concern). Behold how a sin such as stealing (not just getting caught at it) does violence to the name of God for whom you stand. Compare I Tim. 6:1; Titus 2:10.

*30:10 Accuse not a servant unto his master, lest he curse thee,
and thou be found guilty.
30:11 There is a generation that curseth their father, and doth
not bless their mother.
30:12 There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes,
and yet is not washed from their filthiness.
30:13 There is a generation, O how lofty are their eyes! and
their eyelids are lifted up.*

30:10 – Equal respect. This is addressed either to a fellow servant or to those on the outside. We cannot ignore obvious wrongs, allowing a neighbour to be abused by others. Nor can we ignore the Lord’s counsel to debate our cause with the offender (25:9-10) first (Matt. 18:15), lest we also come to shame. There must be equal respect for master and servant alike. Take your concern to the offending servant first and give him his opportunity to reply or repent and put things right.

30:11-14 – Haughty generation.

- Vs. 11-13 – Twisted judgments. While despising those parents worthy of esteem (vs. 17; Jude 8-9), this generation places *itself* on the vacated pedestal of their own hearts. Note the inappropriately lofty self-opinion of pureness and highness in this “*generation*” (6:17).

30:14 *There is a generation, whose teeth are as swords, and their jaw teeth as knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from among men.*
 30:15 *The horseleach hath two daughters, crying, Give, give. There are three things that are never satisfied, yea, four things say not, It is enough:*
 30:16 *The grave; and the barren womb; the earth that is not filled with water; and the fire that saith not, It is enough.*

- Vs. 14 – Don’t miss the natural movement from a haughty misuse of God-appointed authorities (vs. 11), to a self-excusing, lofty self-opinion (vs. 12-13), to the greed-driven arrogant abuse of all who are considered weaker (vs. 14). Their abusing ways move from parent to public.

30:15-16 – Insatiable covetousness. It’s a picture of covetousness coming off of vs. 14.

- Vs. 15 – “*Give, give*”. It is possible that “*give, give*” are to be understood as the names of the hungry twin daughters of the horseleech. They are altogether like their parents with an insatiable hunger for the blood of others, given only to taking.
- Vs. 16 – Wisdom describes greed here;
 - As bottomless as hell (Isa. 5:14).

- As unsatisfied with its present lot as the barren womb (Gen. 30:1).
- As capable of continued consumption as parched ground taking in endless quantities of water.
- As consuming as fire. As with covetousness, it is never of the nature of fire to fill up or come to a satisfied state. Fire is driven by outward availability of fuel, not by an inward search for satisfaction. Where there is fuel, fire, like covetousness, will continue to burn (26:21). Even as the abundance of blood only causes the bloodsucker to multiply more like itself with equally ravenous hunger.

It is never the proper solution to feed greed, for this is only to throw more fuel on the fire, stoking rather than stopping the flames. By the same principle it is never the proper solution to reward rebellion by relaxing the boundaries, compromising on what is right. The only answer for greed and rebellion, as with all sin, is to deny it while you have the opportunity.

*30:17 The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey
his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and
the young eagles shall eat it.*

*30:18 There be three things which are too wonderful for me,
yea, four which I know not:*

*30:19 The way of an eagle in the air; the way of a serpent upon
a rock; the way of a ship in the midst of the sea; and the
way of a man with a maid.*

30:17 – Pride’s end. The “*lofty . . . eyes*” (vs.13) of the arrogant, the very instrument of their “*proud look*” (6:17), shall be turned to bird food, and ultimately left as dung upon the earth. It’s clearest warning of the certain shameful end of the proud-hearted. Compare Deut. 28:26. Compare the coming, final, literal fulfilment in Rev. 19:17-21. Note Agur’s great focus on arrogance compared with his own lowly self-estimation.

30:18-19 – Four things “*too wonderful*”. As easily as the first three things were made for their respective medium, so the fourth mentioned. A man is in his element with a maid. A man has a way with a woman, for they were made to win the heart of each other. Compare in Gen. 2:18 “*a help meet*” or fit for him. A man and woman compliment each other like the water keeps the ship afloat, using it to set its course, and as the eagle held aloft by the air, using it to make his way. Even so the

30:20 *Such is the way of an adulterous woman; she eateth, and
wipeth her mouth, and saith, I have done no wickedness.*
30:21 *For three things the earth is disquieted, and for four
which it cannot bear:*
30:22 *For a servant when he reigneth; and a fool when he is
filled with meat;*

woman bears up and completes the man, as the wind does the eagle and the sea does the ship.

30:20 – Unashamed adulteress. The idea of eating is a figure of partaking of something. In the case of the adulteress here it describes her partaking of her immorality. Compare the similar figure of one eating “*bread of deceit*” in 9:17. So seared is the conscience of the adulteress that she can partake of her sin as unashamedly as one would eat a meal. And as brazenly as the adulteress practices her evil she justifies herself as well, refusing to acknowledge the sinfulness of her actions.

30:21-23 – Four things “*the earth cannot bear*”.

- Vs. 22 – The reigning servant. We’ve considered the similar thought in 19:10. The reference is perhaps to the sudden rise to power of one unable to handle the pressures or privileges of the role. Compare 28:3; I Tim. 3:6.

30:23 *For an odious woman when she is married; and an
handmaid that is heir to her mistress.*

30:24 *There be four things which are little upon the earth, but
they are exceeding wise:*

- Vs. 22 – The full-bellied fool. A fool is emboldened by a full belly, for he feels no need to curb his ungracious, foolish responses if he's satisfied for the moment, which is the only time frame in which he thinks.
- Vs. 23 – Odious wife revisited. We've seen much of her in Proverbs. Such a highly highlighted theme is good cause for warning. Odious men can be rather unbearable too (I Sam. 25:17, 25).
- Vs. 23 – The handmaid heir. Such an outcome suggests the misfortune of a barren woman, or one losing her sons, husband, and now her own life, with none but her handmaid to inherit. Compare Naomi's experience.

30:24-28 – Four things “*little but exceeding wise*”. Indicated are creatures which make their way in life through simple sensibility rather than through might or mass.

30:25 *The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their
meat in the summer;*
30:26 *The conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their
houses in the rocks;*
30:27 *The locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by
bands;*

- Vs. 25 – Ants are wise in their diligence, taking fullest advantage of the opportunity to do their work “*while it is day for the night cometh when no man can work*” (John 9:4). Even so we have only the brief window period of our earthly life to labour for the Lord and lay up treasures in heaven.
- Vs. 26 – Conies (dassies, badgers, marmots) are little soft-bodied creatures, yet they show their wisdom in using the strength of the rocks for their hiding place (Ps. 104:18). Even so we are wise to foresee the coming evil and find refuge in the only sure Rock, which is Christ.
- Vs. 27 – Locusts go forth to conquer in an orderly fashion, all working together in apparent unity, yet without the guidance of a leader. Compare Joel’s description of a devastating invasion of locusts in Joel 2:7. Even so we are all to be busy with our individual part in the Lord’s invasion of this

30:28 The spider taketh hold with her hands, and is in kings' palaces.

30:29 There be three things which go well, yea, four are comely in going:

30:30 A lion which is strongest among beasts, and turneth not away for any;

30:31 A greyhound; an he goat also; and a king, against whom there is no rising up.

earth with the truth, as an overwhelming hoard seeking to bring Satan's earthly field of produce to stubble.

- Vs. 28 – Spiders know the honour of living in the palaces of kings. Even so we, though small and insignificant creatures before God, yet by embracing Christ we may dwell in the palace of the King of kings.

30:29-31 – Four things that are “*comely in going*”. Here are beings that have a stately excellence about them as they face conflict, fearing nothing. Even so the child of God can face all that life brings on in a dignified, stand-tall, stately fashion, knowing that he has nothing to fear when he fears the Lord. Compare 29:25.

30:32-33 – Proceed with caution. The thought here is perhaps similar to Christ's reference to counting costs before committing to a fight (Lk. 14:31-33). If

*30:32 If thou hast done foolishly in lifting up thyself, or if thou
hast thought evil, lay thine hand upon thy mouth.
30:33 Surely the churning of milk bringeth forth butter, and
the wringing of the nose bringeth forth blood: so the
forcing of wrath bringeth forth strife.*

you've spoken or exalted yourself in a foolish way, then clap your hand over your own mouth before the conflict ascends. For as the forceful wringing of milk and noses will bring an expected result (butter and blood), so continuing to violently prod another's wrath will surely come to blows.

Chapter 31

31:1 The words of king Lemuel, the prophecy that his mother taught him.

31:2 What, my son? and what, the son of my womb? and what, the son of my vows?

31:3 Give not thy strength unto women, nor thy ways to that which destroyeth kings.

31:4 It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink:

31:1-2 – Introduction to King Lemuel’s mother. This King Lemuel relates the prophecy taught to him by his mother, who pled for clear-headed judgment in her son when it comes to deciding the causes of others (vs. 4-9), and when it comes to women (vs. 3, 10-31). Proverbs largely comes across as a father earnestly exalting wisdom before his son, but the book ends on a motherly note. Here is the mother of King Lemuel teaching discernment to her son, displaying before him what to look for in a wife, presumably both by word and example. Have you done this for your sons? Compare 23:26.

31:4-9 – Discernment in court.

- Vs. 4-5 – As civil leaders, so spiritual leaders. It is inappropriate to allow one’s discernment

31:5 *Lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted.*
 31:6 *Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts.*
 31:7 *Let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more.*
 31:8 *Open thy mouth for the dumb in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction.*
 31:9 *Open thy mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy.*

to be impaired in any way. Wisdom has explained previously that it is to the glory of leaders to discern the truth through penetrating perception as the guardian of honour, both their own and that of their people (25:2). Compare I Cor. 14:32, “*the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets*”. Compare I Tim. 3:3, 8; Titus 1:7.

- Vs. 6-7 – Drink and drunkenness must serve only an anaesthetic purpose.
- Vs. 8-9 – Speak for those who have no voice, allowing no unjust judgment. Compare similar thoughts in 24:11-12.

31:3, 10-31 – Discernment in women.

- Vs. 3 – Immoral involvement is like handing your strength to a woman. Compare 5:9, 11; 6:26; 7:26.

31:10 *Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far
above rubies.*

31:11 *The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that
he shall have no need of spoil.*

31:12 *She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life.*

- Vs. 10-31 – This now is a beautiful 22-verse acrostic poem. As mentioned in the introduction, each verse from vs. 10 to vs. 31 begins with the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Thus we find here the a-b-c’s of excelling womanhood.
 - Vs. 10 – Her price. The Lord uses the same comparison as with the pricelessness of His wisdom (3:15; 8:11).
 - Vs. 10 – Her strength. Again, “*virtuous*” carries at its root the ideas of strength and ability. The very same Hebrew word is used when describing a courageous man as a “*mighty man of valour*”. Compare the repeated focus on the same in vs. 17 & 25. Here is reference to her moral, physical, and spiritual vitality arising from her vibrant walk with God (vs. 30). And here is one wise to *build* a home, rather

31:13 She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands.
31:14 She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar.
31:15 She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens.
31:16 She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard.
31:17 She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms.
31:18 She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night.

than tear it down (14:1).

- Vs. 11-12 – Her trustworthiness. Her husband can “*safely trust in her*” because she is ever committed to “*do him good and not evil*”. Though she’s a woman of business, he does not feel threatened, for she is not given to self-centred independence.
- Vs. 13-25 – Her industry. This is no grudging soul when it comes to honest labour (vs. 13, “*willingly*”). Compare Eph. 6:5-8; Col. 3:22-23. Through all of her many forms of industry listed here, she does not allow her heart to be drawn away from her focus upon home and family (vs. 27), nor is she cold and impersonal. Compare the Lord’s

*31:19 She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold
the distaff.*
*31:20 She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she
reacheth forth her hands to the needy.*
*31:21 She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all
her household are clothed with scarlet.*
*31:22 She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is
silk and purple.*
*31:23 Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth
among the elders of the land.*
*31:24 She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth
girdles unto the merchant.*

guidance toward a wife's domestic focus in Titus 2:4-5, "*keepers at home*" (I Tim. 5:14). This is not a picture of the flitting haste of a bird either, for diligence is relentless, never hasty (21:5). Hers is that priceless, quiet grace of dignity described in I Pet. 3:4. Compare 11:16.

- Vs. 20 – Her liberality. Her husband's safe trust in her allows her this freedom with her own earnings.
- Vs. 26 – Her speech. In the only verse of this inspired poem speaking of her speech (indicating that same wise restraint of speech so exalted in this book) we hear of her wisdom and kindness.

31:25 *Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall
rejoice in time to come.*
 31:26 *She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue
is the law of kindness.*
 31:27 *She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth
not the bread of idleness.*
 31:28 *Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband
also, and he praiseth her.*
 31:29 *Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest
them all.*
 31:30 *Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain; but a woman
that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised.*
 31:31 *Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works
praise her in the gates.*

- Vs. 28-30 – Her praise. The applaud of her begins from her blessed children and husband (vs.28), descends from God (vs. 29-30), and is then joined by the public (vs. 31). Note well how vs. 30 sorts out our priorities. Outward charm and beauty can be deceiving and transitory, but the real worth of a woman and the key to her success is that she does what she does for the Lord, out of her personal walk with Him.

In Isaiah 40:31 we find the answer to how a woman could live this kind of superhuman life; *“But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount with wings as eagles; they shall*

run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.”

Solomon’s beloved song of wisdom has covered the earth and the full experience of man, soaring to the glorious heights of heaven and visiting the searing gates of hell. Yet he ends on the very same note with which he began – the fear of the Lord. Compare 1:7 with 31:30.

.....

Ponder Points

A bad choice in women;

9:13 – foolish and clamorous

11:22 – without discretion

12:4 – “*she that maketh ashamed*”

14:1 – “*the foolish*” who pulls down her house

19:13 – contentious

21:9 – brawling and angry

25:24 – brawling

27:15-16 – contentious

A good choice in women;

11:16 – a gracious woman who retains honour

12:4 – a virtuous crown

14:1 – a wise woman who builds her house

18:22 – a good find and favour from the Lord

19:14 – a prudent prize from the Lord
31:10-31 – excelling in virtue

