

AN OUTLINED COMMENTARY ON

PROVERBS

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**GOSPEL
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Preface and Acknowledgment

These various commentaries and other Biblical studies were developed through many years of hard and close study of the Bible. I have had an insatiable appetite to learn all of God's Word possible. I grew up in the Beans Creek Community of Coffee County Tennessee. My family started attending the Lord's church at Beans Creek in 1949, where I was privileged to have sister Ethel Croft as an outstanding Bible class teacher. All seven members of my father's family were baptized into Christ, plus my wife, Marie. Each of our five children also obeyed the gospel.

Sister Croft greatly encouraged me to study the Bible and to become a good worker for the Lord. I tried not to cause her any disappointment. In 1978, after preaching for many years, the brethren at Beans Creek invited me to conduct a gospel meeting. Sister Croft, though she was in advanced years and had to drive a good distance, did not miss any of the services.

Since first becoming acquainted with the gospel more than seventy years ago, I have had the honor to hear some of the greatest gospel preachers of the time. Some of these are well-known to most members of the Lord's church, but some of them labored in the shadows, learning and dispensing the truth of God quietly and effectively. Not so many people in the brotherhood today knew such preachers as Luke Gibbs. I have learned much and have been profited greatly from many gospel preachers and teachers through these many years. I am fully appreciative also to those many sound brethren who have published books which I have had the privilege to study. I began preaching in July of 1961 in Italy.

A debt of gratitude is owed by many to the instructors of Memphis School of Preaching for the tremendous work they did through the years, patiently teaching their students the wonderful word of life. I am especially grateful to these great men who were serving in this capacity during 1970-72, when I attended the school: Roy Hearn, Frank Young, Richard Curry, Charles Pledge, and E.L. Whitaker.

I claim no originality for all of the material presented in the material included in my books. There is no way to give proper credit to all who have contributed to the information I have learned, but in every case possible, acknowledgment is cited. I have attempted to be as accurate, clear and concise as my finite knowledge allows, but, as with all human productions, there will doubtless be imperfections.

Some have incorrectly thought that my books are merely expansions of the notes I took while studying at MSOP. But those notes were skimpy at best, and were not in my possession when I wrote my material. The material was put together in connection with Bible classes I have taught over many decades. For several years, a hundred or more hours weekly were required as I prepared to teach two different Bible books each week, Sunday morning and Wednesday evening, while at the same time, during full-time work as a gospel preacher. These notes became the "Outlined Bible Commentaries" that have been made available to countless people.

It has not been my aim to make money through these efforts—indeed, we hardly cover our expenses. Many of my books have been given away without charge. An uncounted numbers of books and compact discs were ordered and shipped out, for which no payment was ever received. A good many of these non-paying costumers were gospel preachers. I have learned from brethren who operated Bible Bookstores that they have had the same problem. One of these brethren reported that he had to secure his supply of Bibles, in locked cases, to prevent their being stolen by preachers. How sad! "Let him that stole steal no more; but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth" (Eph. 4:28).

The Bible quotations in my books are from the King James Version, unless noted otherwise. These books were intentionally put on 8.5 by 11 inch pages, to make the outline format easier to view. A normal hardback book contains about 800 words per page; my pages contain twice that number of words. The spiral-bound or wire-bound books are much less expensive to produce. My wife and I have done all the manual labor required to produce the books. The supplies, software and equipment are very costly. Marie still helps as much as she can despite the dementia she has had for several years— and her many surgeries and broken bones and heartaches.

Feel free to copy quotations from this material. It is designed to bring glory to God and information to souls! The same goes for the articles printed in my monthly publication: *Studies in the Old Paths*. This paper is free via e-mail.

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INTRODUCTION TO PROVERBS

A. Proverbs.

1. The use of proverbs was an ancient method of instruction. "Proverbial teaching is one of the most ancient forms of instruction. It was well adapted to the rudeness and simplicity of the first ages, when books were few, and philosophy little understood" (Bridges, p.iii). That the use of proverbs is ancient is seen by the statement in I Samuel 24:13: "As saith the proverb of the ancients, Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked: but mine hand shall not be upon thee."
2. "The Hebrew word *mashal*, from which our English word *Proverb* comes, has a much fuller meaning than the English word as we use it. Our word proverb signifies a pithy, pointed saying. A maxim, with practical implications, such as, 'He profits most who serves best.' The Hebrew proverb, on the contrary, seeks to instruct in what is good and upright in the whole of one's daily life, and to present the theme that there is no true wisdom apart from the faith in the one God" (Eason, p.230).
3. The purpose of the book of Proverbs is stated in the opening verses: "To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding; to receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity; to give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion. A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels: To understand a proverb, and the interpretation; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings" (1:2-6).
4. The Book of Proverbs has practical applications of godliness with every relationship of life mentioned. These include duty to God, to neighbors, of parents to children, children to parents, and duty as citizens.

B. The Author of Proverbs.

1. The opening verses of the book assert that what follows is the production of Solomon, the son of David. Through the centuries, Solomon has been considered the author of this inspired book.
2. Uninspired Jewish writers claimed that Solomon wrote canticles in his youth, Proverbs in his ripe years, and Ecclesiastes in his old age.
3. The book bears other names alleging authorship: Agur (30:1) and Lemuel (31:1). These last two chapters appear to have been written by the ones identified, and were placed by inspiration with those by Solomon.
4. I Kings 4:32 says that Solomon authored three thousand proverbs and a thousand and five songs. Ecclesiastes 12:9 reports that he sought out and set in order many proverbs. This may mean that he collected many of his proverbs together. It may be that Solomon collected the proverbs of Agur and Lemuel and placed them among his own inspired proverbs, which were all later placed in the book which is attributed to Solomon. All of the truths are inspired, and many are quoted in the New Testament.
5. "David wrote the Psalms out of a heart of reverence, and praise, and thanksgiving for God. In his Psalms, he extolled the power and greatness of God, the justice and righteousness of God, and the love and mercy of God. The Psalms have been preserved by divine inspiration and providence so that men today can receive instruction and motivation for worship. Solomon, David's brilliant son, wrote his proverbs out of his reverence and fear of God, and out of his great wisdom as a means of guiding and directing his fellow men, and particularly the young. The Proverbs have been preserved through means of inspiration and providence so that men will have a guidebook of instructions in their everyday walk of life in matters which pertain to judgmental decisions in spiritual, social, and business affairs" (ALC, 1978, pp.94f).

C. Outline of Proverbs.

1. Proverbs 1:1—9:18.
 - a. This section contains instructions primarily for young men.

b. "Virtue is pronounced in the very outset to be essential wisdom, and vice or wickedness essential folly. The only wise man therefore is declared to be the truly good and virtuous, or he that fears God, and reverences his law; while the man of vice and wickedness is a fool, a stubborn or perverse wretch, and an abomination to Jehovah" (Bridges, p.vi).

2. Proverbs 10:1—22:16.

a. This section consists of a collection of general maxims which are unconnected with each other, dealing with various subjects.

b. "They treat on the various duties of man towards God, and towards his fellowmen in every station of life. The great object in each of the proverbs or axioms of the present part is, to enforce a moral principle in words so few, that they may be easily learnt, and so curiously selected and arranged, that they may strike and fix the attention instantaneously: whilst to prevent the mind from becoming fatigued by a long series of detached sentences, they are perpetually diversified by the most playful changes of style and figure" (Horne, p.121).

3. Proverbs 22:17—24:34.

a. This section contains a collection of short discourses on sundry topics.

b. Some of the information relates to men of wealth and position.

4. Proverbs 25:1—29:27.

a. "This division consists of a collection of Solomon's proverbs which were copied from Solomon's records during the reign of King Hezekiah..." (ALC, 1978, p.95).

b. "The proverbs in this section are unconnected, and some of them are repetitions of the moral aphorisms which are delivered in the former part of the book" (Horne, *ibid.*).

5. Proverbs 30:1—31:31.

a. These two chapters contain the proverbs attributed to Agur and Lemuel, two men about whom we know nothing. It may be that these two men were not Israelites. [Some have suggested that these are different names for Solomon].

b. The last chapter gives a picture of a virtuous woman.

D. Different Forms of Proverbs.

1. Synonymous distich.

a. A distich is a two-line stanza which makes a complete statement.

b. The second line in this kind of distich represents the thought of the first line, but states the thought in different words. The relationship between the two lines in the synonymous distich is always obvious. Cf. Proverbs 11:25: "The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself."

2. Antithetic distich.

a. The second line expresses a contrast to the thought in the first line. Cf. Proverbs 10:1: "The proverbs of Solomon. A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother."

b. The truth in the first line is emphasized and explained in the second by means of the presentation of its opposite.

c. Sometimes similar forms are used; sometimes the contrast is shown by a question.

3. Synthetic distich.

- a. Two different truths are expressed in two different lines; the authorization for their connected use is a certain relationship.
 - b. Proverbs 10:18 is an example of this blending of two different thoughts to make a complete point. The word "synthetic" means a blending of two materials to make another.
4. Integral distich.
- a. Sometimes one line cannot express the full thought intended; in this case, the second line completes the idea begun in the first.
 - 1) Proverbs 11:31: "Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth: much more the wicked and the sinner."
 - 2) Proverbs 15:11: "Hell and destruction *are* before the LORD: how much more then the hearts of the children of men?"
 - b. Belonging to the integral distich are those in which the thought stated in the first, has in the second line a reason, or proof, or consequence, or purpose, or a definition, completing or perfecting the first. "The law of the wise *is* a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death" (Prov. 13:14).
5. Parabolic proverb.
- a. "The form of this *parabolic* proverb is very manifold, according as the poet himself expressly compares the two subjects, or only places them near each other in order that the hearer or reader may complete the comparison" (Keil, p.8).
 - b. Examples:
 - 1) Proverbs 26:20: "Where no wood is, *there* the fire goeth out: so where *there is* no talebearer, the strife ceaseth."
 - 2) Proverbs 27:15: "A continual dropping in a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike."

E. Repetitions in Proverbs.

1. Whole proverbs are repeated in exact words.
 - a. Proverbs 14:12, 16:25.
 - b. Proverbs 25:24, 21:9.
 - c. Proverbs 22:3, 17:12.
 - d. Proverbs 20:16, 27:13.
 2. Some proverbs are slightly changed in their form of expression.
 - a. Proverbs 10:1, 15:20.
 - b. Proverbs 14:20, 19:4.
 - c. Proverbs 16:2, 21:7.
 - d. Proverbs 19:5, 19:9.
 - e. Proverbs 20:10, 20:23.
 - f. Proverbs 21:9, 21:19.
 3. Proverbs are sometimes nearly identical in form but different in sense.
 - a. Proverbs 10:27, 11:4.
 - b. Proverbs 13:14, 14:27.
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4. Some proverbs contain the same first lines.
 - a. Proverbs 10:15, 18:11.
 - b. Proverbs 27:21, 17:3.
 - c. Proverbs 19:13, 27:15.
5. Some proverbs contain the same second lines.
 - a. Proverbs 10:6, 10:11.
 - b. Proverbs 10:8, 10:10.
 - c. Proverbs 15:33, 18:12.
6. Some proverbs have one line almost the same as another proverb.
 - a. Proverbs 11:13, 20:19.
 - b. Proverbs 11:21, 16:5.
 - c. Proverbs 12:14, 13:2.
 - d. Proverbs 14:3, 17:5.
 - e. Proverbs 16:18, 18:2.
 - f. Proverbs 19:12, 20:2.

F. Many of the Proverbs are Quoted in the New Testament.

1. Proverbs 1:16, Romans 3:15.
2. Proverbs 3:7, Romans 12:16.
3. Proverbs 3:11-12, Hebrews 12:5-6; Revelation 3:19.
4. Proverbs 3:34, James 4:6.
5. Proverbs 10:12, I Peter 4:8.
6. Proverbs 11:31, I Peter 4:18.
7. Proverbs 17:13, Romans 12:17; I Thessalonians 5:15; I Peter 3:9.
8. Proverbs 17:27, James 1:19.
9. Proverbs 20:22, Romans 12:17.
10. Proverbs 25:21, Matthew 5:44; Romans 12:20.
11. Proverbs 26:11, 2 Peter 2:22.

G. One Authority, Hanneberg, Has Given Five Classes of Proverbs. (See ALC, 1978, pp.100f)

1. Historical proverbs or parables (I Sam. 10:12; Num. 24:5, 15, 17; Job 27:1; Isa. 14:4; Ezek. 17:1-2. These are similar to "Remember the Alamo," etc.).
 2. Metaphorical proverbs (Prov. 1:17; 6:6; 17:12; 19:13). These are characterized by the metaphorical element, that is, where a word or phrase denoting one kind of object or ideal is used in the place of another to suggest a similarity between the two.
 3. Enigmatic proverbs (Prov. 30:15). These are in the form of riddles or obscure questions which require deep thought to understand them.
 4. Parabolic proverbs. These are proverbs which express truths in allegorical form (Prov. 9:1).
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5. Didactical proverbs. These are proverbs devoted to the teaching of high points of morals, both religious and behavioral. The instructions in the first nine chapters are classic examples.
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PROVERBS 1

A. Proverbs 1:1-6: Introduction and Statement of Purpose.

1. Verse 1: "The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel."
 - a. The first statement was sure to arrest the attention of every zealous Israelite by the mention of David and Solomon. David was the beloved psalmist and king; Solomon was the wisest of the wise, who was held in high esteem by many among the Gentiles. The book begins with the author identified as Solomon. The headings of chapters 30 and 31 could be attributed to those men named; if so, they have the stamp of divine approval through Solomon, the agents of Hezekiah (25:1), or of some other inspired prophet.
 - b. We are told in Ecclesiastes 12:9 that Solomon "sought out" and "set in order" many proverbs, a statement which likely includes those of the last two chapters of Proverbs.
 2. Verse 2: "To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding."
 - a. Part of his purpose is to set forth wisdom and instruction, to bring about a perception of the words of understanding. Parallelism is a feature of Hebrew writings which is prominently displayed in Proverbs. In Hebrew parallelism, one thought is balanced against another thought. A sentence which consists of two balanced parts (lines) is called a "distich." In the present verse, the thought of the first line is equal to that of the second.
 - b. Notice that the emphasis is on the reception of the knowledge set forth. The student of the book must have a receptive disposition, a willingness to learn. To impart worthy information is laudable, but here the emphasis is on the reception of that worthy knowledge.
 3. Verse 3: "To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity."
 - a. The development of wisdom is the real aim of learning spiritual truths. The purpose of these proverbs is to instruct, all who are willing to learn, in the will of God; and when we learn God's will, we obey his instructions.
 - b. Having obtained the understanding set forth, one will have the wisdom to show justice in his dealings, to discern between right and wrong (judgment), and to be fair (have equity) in his treatment of others.
 - c. "[Wisdom] Not the same word as in Prov 1:2; better, perhaps, thoughtfulness. [justice] Rather, righteousness. The word in the Hebrew includes the ideas of truth and beneficence as well as 'justice.' [Judgment] The teaching of the Proverbs is to lead us to pass a right sentence upon human actions, whether our own or another's. [Equity] In the Hebrew (see the margin) the plural is used, and expresses the many varying forms and phases of the one pervading principle" [Barnes' Notes, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by Biblesoft].
 - d. "Justice maintains right relations between man and man, holds the balance fairly between conflicting interests, coordinates the rights of each withal. Love of justice is the moral part of piety, as the love of truth is the intellectual part of it. Justice is peculiar in this respect, that there are no degrees of it, as there are degrees of goodness or generosity; for a man less than just is unjust. A man, again, may do a hundred kindly acts, but if he fail in one act of justice the blemish is fatal to character. There is therefore, great need that members of the body of Christ should be just in all their acts. Their relation to Christ does not exempt them from the laws which bind men of the world" (David Lipscomb, *Commentary on Philippians*, p.225).
 4. Verse 4: "To give subtlety to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion."
 - a. "Subtilty" is "prudence" [the ability to know the difference between right and wrong, between truth
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and error (cf. Heb. 5:12-14)]. The simple man in the verse is one who is inexperienced and unaware of the subtleties of the world and of evil men; one who is easily influenced into sin and error. The second line is akin to the first, showing that the young man, being inexperienced and impressionable, is in need of knowledge and discretion (equal with prudence/subtily).

- b. Young men tend to be over-confident, often because they just do not understand the situation. We all did things in our youthful years which we shudder over now that we are older and wiser. We have learned from our experiences and studies.
 - c. “The Hebrew for discretion...is taken both in a good and bad sense, as *zamam* (OT:2161), its root, signifies to devise or imagine; for the device may be either mischief, or the contrivance of some good purpose” [Adam Clarke's Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1996 by Biblesoft].
 - d. “‘Subtily,’ shrewdness, not in the sense of worldly cunning, but that knowledge which will put one on his guard against the subtle snares of the world; as Jesus told His disciples, ‘Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves; be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves’ (Matt 10:16). The ‘simple’ are the inexperienced, those ‘who want understanding’ (Prov 7:7; 9:4; 14:15). The antithesis to ‘subtily’ requires this sense, rather than the good sense, as guilelessly simple and teachable (Ps 19:7; 116:6). Though it is true that the guileless and childlike are the fittest for receiving divine truth (Matt 11:25). ‘To give’ here beautifully answers ‘to receive’ (Prov 1:3). Plato's school bore the inscription over the doors, ‘Let no one not acquainted with geometry enter here.’ Solomon's invitation, on the contrary, is, ‘Let the simple and untutored enter here.’ While, in Prov 1:2-3, all are welcome ‘to receive the instruction of wisdom’ (Prov 1:2), ‘the young man’ especially is invited, as most needing it. The philosophers excluded the young as unfit for their recondite teachings. But the wisest of men stoops to the humblest—a type of the infinitely Wise Teacher, who embraced little children in His arms (Matt 18:3-4; 19:14-15). ‘Discretion’—literally, device, invention (as it is translated Prov 8:12), meditation, thoughtful prudence, whereby to avoid what is wrong and choose what is right. ‘Knowledge’ distinguishes between truth and falsehood. ‘Discretion’ [*m^zimaah* (OT:4209)], or thoughtful prudence, distinguishes between what is honourable and what is base, and chooses the former” [Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by Biblesoft].
5. Verse 5: "A wise *man* will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels."
- a. But not only are the proverbs for the young and inexperienced, the one who is already endowed with a measure of wisdom can also learn. Thus, the wise man can gain greater wisdom and be able to dispense wise counsels to others. The richest storehouse of understanding will lose its supply without continuing additions.
 - b. Jethro was able to provide Moses with useful counsel (Ex. 18:17-26); Priscilla and Aquila taught Apollos the way of the Lord more perfectly (Acts 18:24-26).
 - c. “But it is not for the young only that he writes. The ‘man of understanding’ may gain ‘wise counsels,’ literally, the power to “steer” his course rightly on the dangerous seas of life. This ‘steersmanship,’ it may be noted, is a word almost unique to Proverbs (compare ‘counsel’ in Prov 11:14; 12:5; 24:6)” [Barnes' Notes, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by Biblesoft].
 - 1) Proverbs 11:14: "Where no counsel *is*, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors *there is* safety."
 - 2) Proverbs 12:5: "The thoughts of the righteous *are* right: *but* the counsels of the wicked *are* deceit."
 - 3) Proverbs 24:6: "For by wise counsel thou shalt make thy war: and in multitude of counsellors *there is* safety."

6. Verse 6: "To understand a proverb, and the interpretation; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings."
 - a. Another purpose of Proverbs is stated here. "That purpose was to encourage both the younger and older of society to understand the meaning and significance of figurative language, including well established symbols and that which is termed 'dark sayings.' There is a great need for Christians to learn the science of figurative language, and thus how to probe for the deeper and fuller meanings of New Testament writings, such as the parables of the Gospels, together with a study of James and Hebrews, and for all the books of the New Testament..." (ALC, 1978, p.97).
 - b. 2 Peter 3:15-17: "And account *that* the longsuffering of our Lord *is* salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all *his* epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as *they do* also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know *these things* before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness."

B. Proverbs 1:7-9: The Foundation of Genuine Knowledge.

1. Verse 7: "The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of knowledge: *but* fools despise wisdom and instruction."
 - a. This has been called the motto of Proverbs. We might consider it as the theme of the book. It certainly furnishes the great truth lying beneath real knowledge. If one seeks to grasp the great truths of the Bible, he must have first a deep reverence for the Almighty. One who lightly esteems the God of heaven is not likely to have the dedication to ferret out the profound principles of his word. A ripe understanding and store of knowledge is developed only through years of continuing and intensive study. Without a fear of God, the diligent effort will not be present or cannot be sustained.
 - b. Fear is that dread we have of doing anything that would displease God. We do not live in terror, but we so deeply respect God, and stand in awe of his majesty and holiness, that we abhor the thought of contradicting his will by any overt action or thought, or by leaving undone something he has commanded (cf. Eccl. 12:13-14; Heb. 10:23-31; 12:28-29).
 - c. If we are in sin, we have reason to be terrified; if we are walking in the light of the gospel the best we can, we can be certain of his good will: "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us" (1 John 1:7-10).
 - d. Those who do not have reverence for God are not likely to study his word, and are less likely to be profited by its instructions even if they are exposed to them. Such individuals are called "fools" because they reject the wisdom and instruction offered in God's will. These are the opposite of those who reverence God.
 - e. There are several kinds of fools mentioned in Proverbs, including:
 - 1) Those who are arrogant: "The way of a fool *is* right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel *is* wise" (12:15).
 - 2) The short-tempered: "A fool's wrath is presently known: but a prudent *man* covereth shame" (12:16).
 - 3) The boastful: "In the mouth of the foolish *is* a rod of pride: but the lips of the wise shall preserve them" (14:3).

- 4) Those who have stifled their conscience: "Fools make a mock at sin: but among the righteous *there is favour*" (14:9).
 - 5) The disobedient:
 - a) Proverbs 15:5: "A fool despiseth his father's instruction: but he that regardeth reproof is prudent."
 - b) Proverbs 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."
 - 6) Those who foster strife: "*It is* an honour for a man to cease from strife: but every fool will be meddling" (20:3).
 - 7) Those who are set in their foolishness: "Though thou shouldest bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, *yet* will not his foolishness depart from him" (27:22).
- f. There are several descriptions of wise men in Proverbs:
- 1) Proverbs 1:5: "A wise *man* will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels."
 - 2) Proverbs 9:8-9: "Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee: rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee. Give *instruction* to a wise *man*, and he will be yet wiser: teach a just *man*, and he will increase in learning."
 - 3) Proverbs 14:16: "A wise *man* feareth, and departeth from evil: but the fool rageth, and is confident."
 - 4) Proverbs 16:14: "The wrath of a king *is as* messengers of death: but a wise man will pacify it." Cf. Matthew 5:9.
 - 5) Proverbs 17:10: "A reproof entereth more into a wise man than an hundred stripes into a fool."
 - 6) Proverbs 21:22: "A wise *man* scaleth the city of the mighty, and casteth down the strength of the confidence thereof."
 - 7) Proverbs 24:5: "A wise man *is* strong; yea, a man of knowledge increaseth strength."
 - 8) Proverbs 29:9: "*If* a wise man contendeth with a foolish man, whether he rage or laugh, *there is* no rest."
 - 9) Proverbs 29:11: "A fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise *man* keepeth it in till afterwards." Cf. James 1:19.
2. Verse 8: "My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother."
- a. Young people are under the direction of their parents during their growing up years, and even after one is older and on his own, there is still the need for him to respect and honor his parents. Joseph was grown and head of his own family when he met his father after 22 years of separation, but he bowed before Jacob.
 - 1) Genesis 46:29: "And Joseph made ready his chariot, and went up to meet Israel his father, to Goshen, and presented himself unto him; and he fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while."
 - 2) Genesis 48:12: "And Joseph brought them out from between his knees, and he bowed himself with his face to the earth."
 - b. Solomon charges the young man (and lady) to hear (and follow) the instruction of his father, and to forsake not the law of his mother. Both parents have authority over the young in their family, and the
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young person who rejects their authority and counsel do so to their own hurt.

- 1) Exodus 20:12: "Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee."
 - 2) Ephesians 6:1-4: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."
 - c. Many homes in our country have the two-fold problem of children who will not obey their parents and parents who live in sin and otherwise set a bad example. Generally, children will "improve" on the sins of their parents, but do not usually exceed their parents' good traits.
 - d. The importance of children learning to obey their parents, and the parents insisting on that obedience, is that this is essential in teaching young people to obey God. If children do not learn to obey their parents, they are not apt to learn obedience to God. Obedience to parents is the first step young people make in order to learn obedience—to the law of the land and to the law of the Lord.
3. Verse 9: "For they *shall be* an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck."
- a. The father's instruction and the mother's law (comprising the counsels and demands of the parents) are ornaments and decorations to the child. The ornament is said to be "wreaths" which adorn the head; the chains are necklaces. These are figures of speech, representing the beauty of character which was produced by God-fearing parents in their children.
 - b. The chastening, cajoling and counseling given by the parents are not often appreciated by the young, but when they grow to maturity, and are able to see the truth, then they come to highly esteem the training their parents gave them.

C. Proverbs 1:10-19: Counsel to Young Men Against Following the Wicked.

1. Verse 10: "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not."
 - a. The picture described is one in which a young man is enticed by his peers to join with them in some sinful enterprise. Solomon's counsel is: Do not consent to it! Solomon, as a loving father, issues this instruction out of sincere concern for the son's welfare.
 - b. If the son heeds this fatherly counsel ahead of time, when the allurements come he will have already made his choice. If we make up our minds as to how we will respond to such an invitation to sin before it is offered, this decision to do right will be a wall of protection for our souls.
 - c. Eve consented to the devil's temptation, and brought upon the world an untold mass of trouble and sorrow (Gen. 3:1ff). David gave in to the temptation which resulted in many others besides himself suffering greatly (2 Sam. 11). Job was sorely tried, but did not fall into sin (Job 1:22; 2:10). Joseph resisted enticements and was spared a world of sorrow: "But he refused, and said unto his master's wife, Behold, my master wotteth not what *is* with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand; *There is* none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou *art* his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Gen. 39:8-9).
 2. Verses 11-14: "If they say, Come with us, let us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause: Let us swallow them up alive as the grave; and whole, as those that go down into the pit: We shall find all precious substance, we shall fill our houses with spoil: Cast in thy lot among us; let us all have one purse."
 - a. This is the explicit appeal of the sinners; it is one which urges the young person to engage in criminal
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- activity (in the case cited). The details of the plot are stated. The plotters assert that there will be on danger; they will lie in concealment until they can pounce upon the unsuspecting victim; it matters not that the victim is innocent, and the attack is unprovoked.
- b. Instead of "grave," the ASV has "Sheol," the Old Testament equivalent of the New Testament word "hades." It refers to the place of the departed spirits of the dead. The word "pit" is used as a synonym of Sheol. The plotters allege that "we will fall upon the victims so quickly and ruthlessly that they will not be a risk to us; we will overcome them as quickly as Sheol swallows up those who die."
 - c. "In addition to the fun they get out of doing evil, the goal of common criminals is to get rich. Thievery may take the form of overpricing, selling shoddy merchandise, underpayment of taxes, evasion of tolls, petty theft, shoplifting, burglary, or even what we see described here, highway robbery" (Alden, p.24).
 - d. They appeal for him to join them in this adventure; it will be profitable and fun. No mention is made about the inherent dangers or the sinfulness of it.
3. Verses 15-16: "My son, walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path: For their feet run to evil, and make haste to shed blood."
- a. The wise man appeals with the son that he shun their treachery. Do not go with them. He describes these sinful ones as being swift to run to evil, and who make haste to shed blood. They are wicked and violent.
 - 1) Isaiah 59:7: "Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood: their thoughts *are* thoughts of iniquity; wasting and destruction *are* in their paths."
 - 2) Romans 3:15: "Their feet *are* swift to shed blood."
 - b. The wise man is one who knows when to flee and when to fight.
 - 1) 1 Corinthians 6:18: "Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body."
 - 2) 1 Timothy 6:12: "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses."
4. Verse 17: "Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird."
- a. Sin does not pay. When ambition is nearly satisfied, the end comes; the fulfillment is temporary or empty. Birds see the net being set up to entrap them, and they avoid it. Sin is also unable to furnish what it promises, so the wise person will avoid its trap.
 - b. In the illustration, the net represents the reward of sin: neither fulfills its intent. Compare: "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this *is* also vanity. When goods increase, they are increased that eat them: and what good *is there* to the owners thereof, saving the beholding *of them* with their eyes?" (Eccl. 5:10-11). The trap laid in the sight of the birds remains empty; the ambition of a covetous heart is never satisfied; sin cannot pay what it promises.
 - c. Barnes lists other meanings: "Strictly speaking, this is the first proverb (i.e., similitude) in the book; a proverb which has received a variety of interpretations. The true meaning seems to be as follows: 'For in vain, to no purpose, is the net spread out openly. Clear as the warning is, it is in vain. The birds still fly in. The great net of God's judgments is spread out, open to the eyes of all, and yet the doers of evil, willfully blind, still rush into it.' Others take the words as pointing to the failure of the plans of the evil-doers against the innocent (the 'bird'): others, again, interpret the proverb of the young man who thinks that he at least shall not fall into the snares laid for him, and so goes blindly into them"
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5. Verses 18-19: "And they lay wait for their *own* blood; they lurk privily for their *own* lives. So *are* the ways of every one that is greedy of gain; *which* taketh away the life of the owners thereof."
 - a. This is the old principle of reaping what is sown. The band of robbers lurked unseen to rob an unsuspecting victim, but the victims were themselves.
 - b. They succeed in robbing their own souls and in destroying their own lives (cf. 1 Kings 21:4ff).
 - 1) Esther 7:9: "And Harbonah, one of the chamberlains, said before the king, Behold also, the gallows fifty cubits high, which Haman had made for Mordecai, who had spoken good for the king, standeth in the house of Haman. Then the king said, Hang him thereon."
 - 2) Psalms 7:15-16: "He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch *which* he made. His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate."
 - 3) Psalms 9:15-16: "The heathen are sunk down in the pit *that* they made: in the net which they hid is their own foot taken. The LORD is known *by* the judgment *which* he executeth: the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands. Higgaion."
 - 4) Habakkuk 2:10: "Thou hast consulted shame to thy house by cutting off many people, and hast sinned *against* thy soul."
 - 5) Matthew 26:14-16; 27:3-5: "Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, And said *unto them*, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him....Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What *is that* to us? see thou *to that*. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself."
 - 6) Galatians 6:7-8: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

D. Proverbs 1:20-33: Wisdom is Personified.

1. Verses 20-23: "Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets: She crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates: in the city she uttereth her words, *saying*, How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you."
 - a. Wisdom is personified as a woman going about in the streets and public places, calling out to men to hear and heed her counsel. The Hebrew word for wisdom is feminine gender. The words spoken by Wisdom are the words of God, given in a unique manner.
 - b. Her cry includes the question, "How long will you love simplicity?" She addressed the "simple ones." They are simple in that they are ignorant and inexperienced. *Simplicity* here is an equivalent of folly. Those addressed do not see the danger of their present state, and are thus invited to heed the voice of Wisdom.
 - c. She also called to the scorers and fools. If all of these three groups will only turn at her reproof (repent), they will be adequately rewarded. The simple ones are those who are ignorant; the scoffers are those who have been taught but have rejected the truth; the fools are those who hate knowledge

(thus are hardened in their sins, and fight against the truth). Compare Psalm 1: "Blessed *is* the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight *is* in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. The ungodly *are* not so: but *are* like the chaff which the wind driveth away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish."

- d. The wisdom to be gained is offered in words. The means of obtaining wisdom is by accepting the words offered. God does not give wisdom directly (cf. Jas. 1:5, 21-27). God issued his call through the words of the prophets, but his messages were shunned.
2. Verses 24-25: "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof."
 - a. They had refused to hear Wisdom's call; they set at nought her wise counsel; and they would have none of her reproof. Wisdom was acting in their best interest when she called, invited, counseled and reproved them.
 - b. Compare these similar thoughts:
 - 1) Proverbs 15:32: "He that refuseth instruction despiseth his own soul: but he that heareth reproof getteth understanding."
 - 2) Isaiah 66:4: "I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them; because when I called, none did answer; when I spake, they did not hear: but they did evil before mine eyes, and chose *that* in which I delighted not."
 - 3) Jeremiah 7:13: "And now, because ye have done all these works, saith the LORD, and I spake unto you, rising up early and speaking, but ye heard not; and I called you, but ye answered not."
 - 4) Matthew 25:10,30: "And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut....And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."
 - 5) Luke 7:29-30: "And all the people that heard *him*, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him."
 - c. The ones addressed by Solomon shunned her appeals to their own hurt. Multitudes stand in this very state of rebellion today. Paul's question to the wayward ones in Galatia is a fitting query for many in our generation: "Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?" (Gal. 4:16).
 3. Verses 26-27: "I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you."
 - a. Wisdom is pictured as laughing at the troubles and sorrows which would come upon them because they heeded not her wise words. She would mock when they were filled with fear. Their terror would surely come as a desolation ("storm"—ASV), and as a whirlwind.
 - 1) Isaiah 9:11-12: "Therefore the LORD shall set up the adversaries of Rezin against him, and join his enemies together; The Syrians before, and the Philistines behind; and they shall devour Israel with open mouth. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand *is* stretched out still."
 - 2) Isaiah 9:17: "Therefore the Lord shall have no joy in their young men, neither shall have mercy

- on their fatherless and widows: for every one *is* an hypocrite and an evildoer, and every mouth speaketh folly. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand *is* stretched out still."
- 3) Isaiah 9:21: "Manasseh, Ephraim; and Ephraim, Manasseh: *and* they together *shall be* against Judah. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand *is* stretched out still."
 - 4) Isaiah 65:12: "Therefore will I number you to the sword, and ye shall all bow down to the slaughter: because when I called, ye did not answer; when I spake, ye did not hear; but did evil before mine eyes, and did choose *that* wherein I delighted not."
- b. Although laughter is depicted, God is not so unfeeling that he would literally laugh at such calamity.
- 1) Ezekiel 18:32: "For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn *yourselves*, and live ye."
 - 2) Ezekiel 33:11: "Say unto them, *As* I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"
 - 3) 2 Peter 3:9: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."
- c. The calamity, distress, and anguish would come upon these rebels as a storm (with great force), and as whirlwind (suddenly, out of no where).
- 1) Genesis 6:3: "And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also *is* flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years."
 - 2) Hebrews 4:7: "Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts."
4. Verse 28: "Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me."
- a. When their travail came, then would they call, but it would be too late! They had rejected the appeal once too often. There is an acceptable time, and there is a time when opportunity is no longer given.
- 1) Psalms 69:13: "But as for me, my prayer *is* unto thee, O LORD, *in* an acceptable time: O God, in the multitude of thy mercy hear me, in the truth of thy salvation."
 - 2) Isaiah 49:8: "Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages."
- b. Opportunities unused are lost.
- 1) Psalms 90:10-12: "The days of our years *are* threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength *they be* fourscore years, yet *is* their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away. Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, *so is* thy wrath. So teach *us* to number our days, that we may apply *our* hearts unto wisdom."
 - 2) Proverbs 29:1: "He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth *his* neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."
 - 3) Matthew 7:22-23: "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."
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- 4) John 9:4: "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work."
 - 5) Ephesians 5:16: "Redeeming the time, because the days are evil."
 5. Verses 29-31: "For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD: They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices."
 - a. They had hated knowledge, shunned the fear of the Lord, rejected God's counsel, and despised his reproof. What then resulted was their own doing.
 - b. Revelation 20:12-15: "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."
 - c. 2 Corinthians 5:10: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad."
 6. Verse 32: "For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them."
 - a. "Marines remarks that it is more difficult to bear prosperity than adversity, because we endure adversity, we are corrupted by prosperity, and prosperity or ease makes fools mad. The false security of the prosperous is illustrated by our Lord in his parable of the rich fool (Luke 12:16-21)...Them; i.e. the fools themselves, and not other sinners, as Ben Ezra says, though the apparent security of fools, the impunity with which they seem to go on in their wickedness, and the success of their plans, may lead others to destruction" [The Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by Biblesoft].
 - b. The carelessness of the simple would be their undoing; the wicked would constitute the means of their punishment. God used Assyria and Babylon to punish Israel.
 - 1) Jeremiah 51:20: "Thou *art* my battle ax *and* weapons of war: for with thee will I break in pieces the nations, and with thee will I destroy kingdoms."
 - 2) Ezekiel 11:3,7: "Which say, *It is* not near; let us build houses: this *city is* the caldron, and we *be* the flesh....Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Your slain whom ye have laid in the midst of it, they *are* the flesh, and this *city is* the caldron: but I will bring you forth out of the midst of it."
 - c. "When Jeshurun waxed fat, he kicked (Deut 32:15). Thus the objection is met that sinners often outwardly prosper now. Yes, replies Wisdom; but that prosperity proves their very curse, and accelerates the Judgments of God. It is harder to bear prosperity than adversity, because we endure the latter, but are apt to be corrupted and blinded to our ruin by the former. It is they who are 'settled on their lees, that say in their heart, The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil' (Zeph 1:12)" [Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by Biblesoft].
 7. Verse 33: "But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil."
 - a. A great blessing is extended to those who hearken to the voice of Wisdom. They shall dwell safely and be free from the fear of evil. "Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh *but* in vain" (Ps. 127:1).
 - b. Modern security devices do not insure safety. The Lord is the only real security.
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- 1) John 10:27-28: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any *man* pluck them out of my hand."
 - 2) Hebrews 13:5-6: "*Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.*"
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PROVERBS 2

A. Proverbs 2:1-9: Blessings of Wisdom.

1. Verses 1-2: "My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, *and* apply thine heart to understanding."
 - a. Returning to the teacher—student approach, Solomon affirms that if the son (or the student) will receive the instructions offered, there will be certain benefits to be derived. The instructions from verse ten through the end of chapter one were mostly negative and threatening. But here the wise man shows the student that if he will receive these words (hide the commands in himself), rewards would be forthcoming.
 - b. Job had raised a question about the source of wisdom: "But where shall wisdom be found? and where *is* the place of understanding? Man knoweth not the price thereof; neither is it found in the land of the living. The depth saith, It *is* not in me: and the sea saith, *It is* not with me. It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed *for* the price thereof. It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire. The gold and the crystal cannot equal it: and the exchange of it *shall not be for* jewels of fine gold. No mention shall be made of coral, or of pearls: for the price of wisdom *is* above rubies. The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it, neither shall it be valued with pure gold. Whence then cometh wisdom? and where *is* the place of understanding? Seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living, and kept close from the fowls of the air" (Job 28:12-21). The answer is given here: it is gained through diligently searching out the truth of God's word (cf. Eph. 3:1-11)
 - 1) Proverbs 2:5-6: "Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth *cometh* knowledge and understanding."
 - 2) Acts 17:11-12: "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few."
 - 3) 1 Thessalonians 2:13: "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received *it* not *as* the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe."
 - 4) James 1:5: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all *men* liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."
 - c. To be wise, one must be willing to receive wisdom.
2. Verses 3-5: "Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, *and* liftest up thy voice for understanding; If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as *for* hid treasures; Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God."
 - a. If one is willing to exert the necessary effort and diligence, then wisdom can be obtained. But one must be willing to put forth the same degree of diligent effort as he would to find silver or some other precious treasure. Compare with the parables of the treasure hid in a field and the merchant who sought and found the pearl of great price (Matt. 13:44-46; cf. Job 28:1-19).
 - 1) Proverbs 23:23: "Buy the truth, and sell *it* not; *also* wisdom, and instruction, and understanding."
 - 2) Matthew 13:44-46: "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it. "

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- b. Things that are worthwhile are worth whatever the cost may be to obtain them. The result of obtaining the wisdom Solomon describes is an understanding of the fear of God and knowledge of God.
 - c. To obtain wisdom, one must be willing to search for it and do whatever is necessary to get it.
3. Verse 6: "For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth *cometh* knowledge and understanding." The wisdom God provides issues forth from his mouth. That is, God's word is the depository of wisdom. If we want to receive wisdom, the source is God's word. Notice that wisdom is equated in the verse with knowledge and understanding.
- a. All sins and religious errors result from a lack of understanding of, or belief in, the dictates of God's word.
 - 1) Psalms 119:11: "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee."
 - 2) Matthew 22:29: "Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God."
 - 3) 1 John 2:1-2: "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for *the sins of* the whole world."
 - 4) 1 John 3:4: "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law."
 - 5) 1 John 5:17: "All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death."
4. Verses 7-8: "He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: *he is* a buckler to them that walk uprightly. He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints."
- a. God has laid up sound wisdom for the righteous; this is in his word. In the second thought, the point is enlarged: God is a shield to those who walk uprightly.
 - 1) Genesis 15:1: "After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I *am* thy shield, *and* thy exceeding great reward."
 - 2) Psalms 3:3: "But thou, O LORD, *art* a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head."
 - 3) Psalms 18:2: "The LORD *is* my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, *and* my high tower."
 - 4) Psalms 18:30: "*As for* God, his way *is* perfect: the word of the LORD is tried: he *is* a buckler to all those that trust in him."
 - 5) Psalms 35:2: "Take hold of shield and buckler, and stand up for mine help."
 - b. The Almighty also guards the paths of judgment. Although the way of God's people is fraught with dangers and problems, yet our safety is guaranteed by the Lord (Ps. 37).
 - 1) Deuteronomy 33:26-29: "*There is* none like unto the God of Jeshurun, *who* rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky. The eternal God *is thy* refuge, and underneath *are* the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy *them*. Israel then shall dwell in safety alone: the fountain of Jacob *shall be* upon a land of corn and wine; also his heavens shall drop down dew. Happy *art* thou, O Israel: who *is* like unto thee, O people saved by the LORD, the shield of thy help, and who *is* the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places."
 - 2) 1 Samuel 2:9: "He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail."
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- 3) Matthew 10:28: "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."
- 4) Hebrews 13:5-6: "*Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.*"
5. Verse 9: "Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; *yea*, every good path."
 - a. Those who are taught in God's word understand righteousness, judgment, equity and every good path.
 - b. Psalms 119:105 "Thy word *is* a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."
 - c. Psalms 119:172: "My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments *are* righteousness."
 - d. Jeremiah 10:23: "O LORD, I know that the way of man *is* not in himself: *it is* not in man that walketh to direct his steps."
 - e. Matthew 7:12: "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets."
 - f. Hebrews 5:12-14: "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which *be* the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk *is* unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, *even* those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."
- B. Proverbs 2:10-22: Other Rewards and Consequences of Possessing Wisdom.
 1. Verse 10: "When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul."
 - a. When this wisdom which comes from God's word enters into the heart, and the knowledge it gives is pleasant to the soul, then certain blessings and rewards result.
 - b. The following verses give details regarding these. Notice that the place where this wisdom resides in man is the heart, the seat of the intellect, the will, the emotions, and the conscience. This wisdom pertains to, and regulates, all the functions of the human heart.
 - c. The knowledge God's word imparts must be loved in order to be obtained.
 - 1) Psalms 119:6: "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments."
 - 2) Psalms 119:97: "O how love I thy law! *it is* my meditation all the day."
 - d. Is the study of God's word a pleasure or burden to you?
 2. Verse 11: "Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee."
 - a. This shows, at least in part, how God is our shield: through our following his word. Discretion is the capacity to properly consider and regulate our actions. It is able to preserve us.
 - b. Discretion and understanding are used as parallels in the verse.
 3. Verses 12-15: "To deliver thee from the way of the evil *man*, from the man that speaketh froward things; Who leave the paths of uprightness, to walk in the ways of darkness; Who rejoice to do evil, *and* delight in the frowardness of the wicked; Whose ways *are* crooked, and *they* froward in their paths."
 - a. The result of having wisdom is deliverance from evil men who have left the paths of uprightness and speak perverse things. These wicked men have forsaken the ways of light and have taken the road of darkness.
 - b. Light and darkness are used in the Bible as symbols of truth and error, of righteousness and

unrighteousness: "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God" (John 3:18-21).

- c. Froward: not easily controlled; stubbornly willful; contrary; refractory; from *fro* and *ward* (Webster).
4. Verses 16-19: "To deliver thee from the strange woman, *even* from the stranger *which* flattereth with her words; Which forsaketh the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God. For her house inclineth unto death, and her paths unto the dead. None that go unto her return again, neither take they hold of the paths of life."
 - a. Wisdom will deliver the young man from the strange woman. This is an immoral woman who seeks to lead others astray. The woman described was probably a harlot. Sometimes Jewish men would marry some Gentile woman among whom prostitution was permitted. Moses' law outlawed harlotry and intermarriage with Gentiles.
 - 1) Deuteronomy 23:17-18: "There shall be no whore of the daughters of Israel, nor a sodomite of the sons of Israel. Thou shalt not bring the hire of a whore, or the price of a dog, into the house of the LORD thy God for any vow: for even both these *are* abomination unto the LORD thy God."
 - 2) Ezra 9:12-13: "Now therefore give not your daughters unto their sons, neither take their daughters unto your sons, nor seek their peace or their wealth for ever: that ye may be strong, and eat the good of the land, and leave *it* for an inheritance to your children for ever. And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, seeing that thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities *deserve*, and hast given us *such* deliverance as this."
 - b. It may have been a common occurrence for such a wife to shun her husband for the company of other men; it was possible for a woman who had been brought up right to forsake her upbringing and disregard the covenant of God, and enter a life of fornication. But the wisdom provided by God in his word could keep the righteous from falling victim to her. The result of such a life is death; and those who fall under her charm will also perish.
 5. Verses 20-22: "That thou mayest walk in the way of good *men*, and keep the paths of the righteous. For the upright shall dwell in the land, and the perfect shall remain in it. But the wicked shall be cut off from the earth, and the transgressors shall be rooted out of it."
 - a. Wisdom provides guidance that we may walk in the path of good men. Those who follow wisdom would be guaranteed an inheritance in the land, while the wicked would be cut off—sooner or later.
 - b. When Israel was carried into captivity, the wicked among them perished; the righteous were preserved. Verses 12, 16, and 20 are coordinate verses.
 - c. "The protecting power of wisdom is developed in a positive direction. Negatively, it delivers from the evil man and from the strange woman, but it does more—'it shall keep thee in order that thou mayest walk in a good way,' etc....For the upright shall dwell in the land. Much the same language is met with in Ps 37:29, 'The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein forever.' It is the secure and peaceful dwelling in the land which is intended (cf. Prov 10:30). To dwell in the land was always put forward as the reward of obedience to God's commandments (see Ex 20:12; Lev 25:18; 26:5), and the phrase conveyed to the Hebrew mind the idea of one of the greatest, if not the greatest, of all temporal blessings. The love of country was a predominant characteristic of the race....The land was the promised land, the land of Canaan....But the wicked shall be cut off from the earth. The punishment of the wicked is contrasted with the blessings that are promised to the upright" [The Pulpit

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PROVERBS 3

A. Proverbs 3:1-12: Admonitions to Faithfulness.

1. Verses 1-2: "My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments: For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee."
 - a. "My son" shows that the instructions to follow are a father's concern, and reflects God's love for mankind. The first admonition is against forgetting the law of the father. To forget something is to let it slip away from memory. Forgetting can be due to willful intent, negligence, or simply because of fallibility. To admonish one to forget not is simply a way of telling one to remember. The commandments (of God) are to be done from the heart (Rom. 6:17; cf. Prov. 4:23; Mt. 12:34-35). The heart is what departs from God; it is the heart that must return to him.
 - 1) Proverbs 4:23: "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it *are* the issues of life."
 - 2) Matthew 12:34-35: "O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things."
 - 3) Romans 6:17: "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you."
 - b. The heart is that part of man that includes the intellect, the emotions, the will, and the conscience. We first leave God—in our heart (in our love, will, etc.); our overt apostasy is later seen by others. But God is the one who knows the heart (1 Sam. 16:7; Acts 1:24), thus he knows the very instant when we depart from him. The verse means that our hearts must be in the obedience we offer; we must be sincere.
 - 1) 1 Samuel 8:7: "And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them."
 - 2) Acts 1:24: "And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all *men*, show whether of these two thou hast chosen."
 - c. The result of sincere obedience is for our good. When a child follows the godly and wise counsel of his father, he will be kept from sinful and harmful activities and attitudes; he will be more apt to live a longer life, and peace will accompany him. One who walks in obedience to the law of God will be kept from harmful places, acts, and dispositions; thus peace will be his (cf. Phil. 4:6-7) and God's providence will watch over him, giving him contentedness and longevity. "For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord *are* over the righteous, and his ears *are open* unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord *is* against them that do evil. And who *is* he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" (1 Pet. 3:10-13).
 - d. We should be so dedicated to the truths of God's word that they are second nature to us; our inclinations should be so tuned as naturally to follow the Lord's will.
2. Verses 3-4: "Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart: So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man."
 - a. Kindness (mercy) and truth are emphasized: let them not be forsaken. They are to be tied about the neck and written on the heart. We can think of these as "God's Life-Preservers." Contrast this with the millstone of Matthew 18:6: "But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and *that* he were drowned in the

depth of the sea."

- b. For the gospel to be of benefit to our souls, our response to it must originate in the heart. Jeremiah 31:31-34 showed beforehand that it would be seated in the heart of its recipients; if it is not, no good will result. There is great reward in keeping God's word: "Moreover by them is thy servant warned: *and* in keeping of them *there is* great reward" (Ps. 19:11).
 - c. When one follows mercy (kindness) and truth, he finds favor with God and man; with God, because that is what he demands of us (cf. Micah 6:8); with man, for nearly everyone looks with favor on someone who shows kindness and is marked by truth. Hardly anyone likes one who is harsh, unkind, unforgiving, and vindictive, or who is untruthful. God is characterized by these two qualities of mercy and truth—in the perfect degree.
 - d. Truth does not merely contemplate "a mental acceptance or acknowledgment of truth; but instead it contemplates a genuine dedication to truth which puts to death all pretensions, half-truths, and selfish crusading under a feigned love for truth, and also deliberate falsehoods" (ALC, 1978, p.108).
 - e. "Genuine kindness and truth are graces which always appear together. The want of one makes impossible the element of the other, and they are always present in combination" (ibid.). If a man shows a pretended kindness, he is a hypocrite. If a man claims to be dedicated to the truth but his love for the truth is not from the heart, what he claims is a lie. If one will violate one principle of truth due to circumstances, he will violate any other principle under similar settings: "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one *point*, he is guilty of all" (Jas. 2:10).
 - f. Joseph found favor in Egypt (Gen. 39:2-4, 21-23; 41:37-43; 44:16). David was well-thought-of by many (1 Sam. 18:5-7, 14-16). Our brethren in Jerusalem were favored by the people (Acts 2:47). No one likes an obnoxious person. When we follow the Lord's will, we will be different from the world, but the difference is in the way we live and speak, and in our priorities and attitudes; but the Lord never intended that we be obnoxious. But the condition of the world being what it usually is, we will encounter few or many who oppose the truth, thus we will be disliked by these (Luke 6:26; 2 Tim. 3:12). Joseph was hated by Potipher's wife; David was hated by Saul; and the early Christians were persecuted severely (Acts 8:1, 4).
3. Verses 5-6: "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."
- a. These are familiar words to all Bible students. The admonition is to place our full trust in the Lord. Trusting the Lord only when we have the means in our hands to deliver ourselves is not trust. But when we must depend absolutely upon him to work out a solution to our problem, without our being able to see how it could be so, is trusting the Lord with all our heart. The main emphasis here is that we are not to live by our own understanding, but rather we are to trust the Lord.
 - 1) Jeremiah 10:23: "O LORD, I know that the way of man *is* not in himself: *it is* not in man that walketh to direct his steps."
 - 2) 2 Corinthians 5:7: "For we walk by faith, not by sight."
 - b. Our trust in God must be entire and exclusive and constant. It cannot be only half-way given; it cannot be shared by worldly concerns; it cannot be intermittent.
 - c. God will direct our paths if we acknowledge him in all our ways. All the decisions and actions we take are to be made with the Lord's will in mind as the guiding light. "Let the will be kept in a quiet, subdued, cheerful readiness, to move, stay, retreat, turn to the right hand or to the left, at the Lord's bidding; always remembering that is best which is least our own doing, and that a pliable spirit ever secures the needful guidance" (Bridges, p.25). Abraham acknowledged God as he lived and grew by
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faith. Where he pitched his tent, he usually built an altar, also.

4. Verses 7-8: "Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil. It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones."
 - a. One who is wise in his own eyes is the same as one who leans unto his own understanding. This is a warning against self-reliance. "Woe unto *them that are* wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!" (Isa. 5:21). In warning against this, the wise man commanded the reader to fear God and depart from wickedness. The blessings for so doing are described figuratively: health to the navel and marrow (moisture) to the bones. The ancients were said to view the navel as the center of the human body; thus health to the navel was tantamount to saying health to the body. Moisture or refreshing to the bones is put in contrast to dry bones (see Margin).
 - b. Young men often are filled with self-confidence and independence. To these and others of like mind Solomon issues this solemn warning against self-reliance. There are things we must do for ourselves, but unless God is taken into consideration, our efforts may well prove to be fruitless; in spiritual affairs, only God is able to show what is necessary and right. We need to have enough self-confidence to do our duty, but enough trust in God to place ourselves in his hands; and enough wisdom to know the difference.
 - c. The descriptions of physical health stand for a depiction of spiritual health, which is the real point of the passage. "*Be* of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits" (cf. Rom. 12:16).
 5. Verses 9-10: "Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine."
 - a. A principle so prominent in the New Testament is here addressed, couched in Old Testament terminology. To obtain, one must first give. This paradoxical precept is akin to the Lord's statement, that to be exalted one must be abased (Matt. 23:12). Jesus also taught that the way to receive was to give. Malachi challenged the Jews to give as they were taught to give, and see how God would then bless them (3:8-10). Wealth to the ancient Israelites included barns filled with grain (cf. Luke 12:13-21) and vats overflowing with grape juice.
 - b. Proverbs 19:17: "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again."
 - c. Luke 6:38: "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again."
 - d. 2 Corinthians 9:6-7: "But this *I say*, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, *so let him give*; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver."
 6. Verses 11-12: "My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction: For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son *in whom* he delighteth."
 - a. "At the point of the above promise of blessings, Solomon shifts to another point of consideration—not every person who is characterized by true 'kindness and truth' will have 'length of days, and years of life,' at least from a physical standpoint; and not every person who 'honors Jehovah with his substance' will be endowed with prosperity, at least physical prosperity. There is another principle of God's providence which must be taken into account—that is, God often sends afflictions as a means of chastening, which thing is imperative for the development of spiritual character, but his chastening and correction is always done in love" (ALC 1978, p.113).
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- b. The best commentary on this passage is Hebrews 12:1-11. "Nowhere, indeed, are our corruptions so manifest, or our graces so shining, as under the rod. We need it as much as our daily bread. Children of God are still children of Adam; with Adam's will, pride, independence, and waywardness. And nothing more distinctly requires Divine teaching and grace, than how to preserve in our behaviour the just mean between hardness and despondency; *neither despising the chastening of the Lord, nor being weary of his correction*" (Bridges, pp.27f). Compare: "And the children struggled together within her; and she said, *If it be so, why am I thus? And she went to inquire of the LORD*" (Genesis 25:22).
- c. God corrects his children with love, not by caprice; it is correction, not vengeance. Human parents who are godly and wise will chasten their children as needed; it is not from anger or hatred, but love. Thus does the God of heaven chasten his children.
- d. Chastening is meant to be felt, thus it is painful and difficult to bear. But it is intended for our good. It is much better to endure hardship and pain here if by so doing we are made to be more faithful, and avoid the horrible punishments of hell. Without chastening we would not be apt to learn to trust the Lord, or be moved to be fully obedient.
 - 1) 2 Samuel 15:26: "But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, *here am I*, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him."
 - 2) Psalms 39:10-11: "Remove thy stroke away from me: I am consumed by the blow of thine hand. When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth: surely every man *is* vanity. Selah."
- e. "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness" (Micah 7:9). This is the proper attitude: "But he knoweth the way that I take: *when* he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold" (Job 23:10). Lessons of spirituality are easy to learn in principle (in theory), but to truly learn them experimentally, one needs to undergo hardships.

B. Proverbs 3:13-20: Wisdom is the Basis of Happiness, and Has Outstanding Characteristics.

- 1. Verses 13-15: "Happy *is* the man *that* findeth wisdom, and the man *that* getteth understanding. For the merchandise of it *is* better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She *is* more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her."
 - a. The implication of verse 13 is that wisdom is found by searching for it, not by accidentally stumbling upon it. Wisdom is also stated to be the real source of genuine happiness. Solomon learned this lesson the hard way—in Ecclesiastes (see 12:13-14). The supreme dictate of wisdom is, "Fear God and keep his commandments." The Lord's parable about the pearl of great price (Matt. 13:45) illustrates the principle of searching for and finding wisdom.
 - b. "The wisdom concerning which Solomon wrote is moral and religious sensitivity, the knowledge of the moral law of God as it applies to the practical and spiritual affairs of all times and phases of life. The man who would be the possessor of such wisdom must desire it; he must seek for it; and he must be prepared to discipline himself in keeping with the demands of it" (ALC 1978, p.114).
 - c. Not only does wisdom give happiness, it is valued above silver, gold, rubies, and all the things one could desire to possess. When Solomon became king of Israel, God gave him the opportunity of asking for anything that his heart desired. He could have requested great wealth, or power, or honor; he rather asked God to give him an understanding heart that he might be able to better rule Israel. This was well pleasing to God; he gave the young king the wisdom he sought, and as a consequence of that wisdom, all the other things he could have requested eventually came to him, also.
 - d. 1 Kings 3:7-14: "And now, O LORD my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my

father: and I *am but* a little child: I know not *how* to go out or come in. And thy servant *is* in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude. Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people? And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing. And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies; but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment; Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee. And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches, and honour: so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days. And if thou wilt walk in my ways, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as thy father David did walk, then I will lengthen thy days."

2. Verses 16-18: "Length of days *is* in her right hand; *and* in her left hand riches and honour. Her ways *are* ways of pleasantness, and all her paths *are* peace. She *is* a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy *is every one* that retaineth her."
 - a. Several wondrous characteristics pertain to wisdom, which are distributed to one possessing it (wisdom). Solomon had just shown that wisdom's value exceeded that of precious metals and gems. Wisdom, again pictured as a woman, stands with blessings in both her hands.
 - b. In her right hand is length of days. Although just because one is a faithful child of God, this is no guarantee of a long earthly life. In a general sense, one who follows the principles of God's word will be kept from harmful habits, situations, and places; God can bless him with health and years. But this is not a principle which always obtains for there have been many evil men who have lived long lives. But in a broad sense, godly people often live long lives. However, the real sense of the promise Solomon makes about wisdom here is fulfilled in eternity, where the godly are to be forever preserved in a state of unspeakable bliss and glory.
 - c. In Wisdom's left hand are riches and honor. Again, the primary fulfillment is in the spiritual realm and in heaven. It is far better to be held in contempt by men and in honor by the Lord, than the reverse. It is much better to be a poor saint than a wealthy sinner. But God's people possess riches and honor which are far superior to any of an earthly nature. At the very best, earthly riches and honor are fleeting, and cannot sustain their value to us. But spiritual riches (Matt. 6:19-21) are im-erishable and never lose their worth to the soul: "Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Pet. 1:3-5).
 - d. The ways of wisdom are pleasant and peaceful. Wisdom beautifies the soul and enhances the disposition. The influence of one possessing wisdom is pleasant and peaceful (cf. Gal. 5:22-23). Just because one has the wisdom spoken of (has become a child of God), freedom from adversity is not assured. But when problems arise, even severe cases, the possessor of wisdom is able to face them with contentedness: "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things *are* honest, whatsoever things *are* just, whatsoever things *are* pure, whatsoever things *are* lovely, whatsoever things *are* of good report; if *there be* any virtue, and if *there be* any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you. But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked

opportunity. Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, *therewith* to be content" (Phil. 4:6-11).

- e. Wisdom is a tree of life to its possessor. If Adam and Eve could have retained their access to the tree of life in Eden, they could have lived on and on, preserved in the youthful strength and beauty which they had enjoyed from the moment of their creation. This is why God barred them from the garden (Gen. 3:22-24). It is by wisdom that access to heaven is gained, where the "tree of life" is now planted (Rev. 22:14).
3. Verses 19-20: "The LORD by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens. By his knowledge the depths are broken up, and the clouds drop down the dew."
- a. The source of all true wisdom is God himself. Solomon now shows that wisdom was used by God when he founded the earth and universe. When one observes and studies the material creation and life on earth, he cannot but be greatly impressed by the marvelous wisdom with which they operate. Countless books would have to be written to begin to list and describe the works of wisdom in nature, and that would only commence to tell the story. Consider the interaction of the stars, the sun, the moon, and the earth: there is a precision that does God justice. The atmosphere is precisely adjusted to permit life to exist. The composition of the earth reveals the wise design the great Architect. The myriads of life forms; their interdependence on each other—the cases are innumerable which detail the infinite wisdom of God in the material creation.
 - b. Solomon cites as an example of God's wisdom in the creation the case of the depths being broken up. This is a reference to the deposits of water, the rivers and streams which are underground within the earth. These spring forth from the earth, or can be drawn out, for the good of man and animal. Without this benefit, designed by the wisdom of God, life could not be. See also Genesis 7:11.
 - c. The wise man also cites the case of rain that falls from the atmosphere. Without the benefit of this "dew" from heaven, our water supply could not be replenished and our crops would eventually fail. Solomon spoke of the evaporative cycle in Ecclesiastes 1:7 (see also Jer. 10:13). The "science" of the time had not discovered this fact of nature, thus only God could have revealed it to Solomon; and only an all-wise and powerful God could have designed it and set it in motion!
 - 1) Ecclesiastes 1:7: "All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea *is* not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again."
 - 2) Jeremiah 10:13: "When he uttereth his voice, *there is* a multitude of waters in the heavens, and he causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth; he maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of his treasures."

C. Proverbs 3:21-35: Sundry Admonitions and Pronouncements.

1. Verses 21-24: "My son, let not them depart from thine eyes: keep sound wisdom and discretion: So shall they be life unto thy soul, and grace to thy neck. Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble. When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid: yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet."
 - a. Having illustrated God's use of divine wisdom in the construction and organization of the earth, Solomon now urges that sound wisdom and discretion be guarded. He indicates that an active effort is necessary to thus keep wisdom and discretion. It is not enough to obtain wisdom only. Certain benefits are to be derived by keeping wisdom: (1) life to the soul; (2) grace (an ornament) to the neck; (3) assistance and protection along life's way; and (4) confident peace when one lies down to sleep. The soul and the neck represent the dual nature of man: spiritual and physical (internal and external). God's providence watches over those who are guided by his wisdom. The assurance of God's protection provides such peace of mind that one can lie down to sleep without fear.

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- b. "Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday" (Ps. 91:5-6).
- c. "He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is thy keeper: the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night" (Ps. 121:3-6).
2. Verses 25-26: "Be not afraid of sudden fear, neither of the desolation of the wicked, when it cometh. For the LORD shall be thy confidence, and shall keep thy foot from being taken."
- a. Having broached the subject of fear, the wise man insists that we be not afraid of the punishment which will surely come upon the wicked.
- b. Being followers of God, the desolation he brings to the wicked will miss the righteous; and God is able to protect the righteous when he punishes the wicked. Because the Lord is God, he can be safely trusted to guard us from the evil which befalls the unrighteous.
- c. "Integrity and uprightness will preserve us, so that we need not be afraid of sudden fear, v. 25. The harms that surprise us, unthought of, giving us no time to arm ourselves by consideration, are most likely to put us into confusion. But let not the wise and good man forget himself, and then he will not give way to any fear that has torment, be the alarm ever so sudden. Let him not fear the desolation of the wicked...The desolation which wicked men will be brought into in a moment. It will come, and timorous saints may be apprehensive that they shall be involved in it; but let this be their comfort, that though judgments lay waste generally, at least promiscuously, yet God knows who are his and how to separate between the precious and the vile. Therefore be not afraid of that which appears most formidable, for (v. 26) 'the Lord shall be not only thy protector to keep thee safe, but thy confidence to keep thee secure, so that thy foot shall not be taken by thy enemies nor ensnared by thy own fears.' God has engaged to keep the feet of his saints" [Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: New Modern Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1991 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.].
3. Verses 27-29: "Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do *it*. Say not unto thy neighbour, Go, and come again, and to morrow I will give; when thou hast it by thee. Devise not evil against thy neighbour, seeing he dwelleth securely by thee."
- a. If one has the means and opportunity to aid a neighbor in need, be quick to provide. The Hebrew is said to be difficult to translate in verse 27. The point of the verse is either punctuality in paying debts or generosity to the poor (Alden, p.42). Do not refuse to pay what is due when you have the ability to pay it; do not defraud the neighbor; he trusts you. The point of the three verses seems to that of being faithful in paying debts.
- b. The word *tomorrow* (verse 28) may possibly be used as some people use the word *manana* or *domane*—as a means of delaying. One can devise evil by using delaying tactics and lies in evading payment of a just debt. But one can also defraud a needy person by withholding "good" from him when the means of assisting him is readily at hand.
- c. "This precept indicates the general principle of beneficence, and not merely, as the words at first sight seem to imply, restitution. We are to do good to those who are in need or deserving of it, whenever we have the means and opportunity...The principle brought forward in this passage is that what we possess and is seemingly our own is in reality to be regarded as belonging to others. We are only stewards of our wealth... 'While we have opportunity, let us do good unto all men' (Gal. 6:10)...The precept of this [vs. 28] and that of the preceding verse are very closely related. The former precept enjoined the general principle of benevolence when we have the means; this carries on the idea, and is directed against the postponement of giving when we are in a position to give. In effect it says, 'Do not defer till tomorrow what you can do today.' This 'putting off' may arise from avarice, from
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indolence, or from insolence and contempt. These underlying faults, which are incompatible with neighbourly good will, are condemned by implication.....Devising evil against a friend is at any time reprehensible, but to do so when he confides in and is altogether unsuspecting of you, is an act of the greatest treachery, and an outrage on all law. human and Divine. It implies dissimulation. It is the very sin by which 'the devil beguiled Eve through his subtlety' (Wardlaw)" [The Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by BibleSoft].

4. Verse 30: "Strive not with a man without cause, if he have done thee no harm."
 - a. Alden says that the Hebrew verb "strive" carries legal overtones. The strife might be in a lawsuit. But whatever the nature of the strife, it is to be avoided unless there is a just cause.
 - 1) Romans 12:18: "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men."
 - 2) Romans 14:19: "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another."
 - b. "Never trouble thy neighbour with frivolous complaints and accusations, or vexatious law-suits, when either there is no harm done thee or none worth speaking of, or thou mightest right thyself in a friendly way. Law must be the last refuge; for it is not only our duty, but our interest, as much as in us lies, to live peaceably with all men. When accounts are balanced, it will be found there is little got by striving" [Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: New Modern Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1991 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.].
5. Verses 31-32: "Envy thou not the oppressor, and choose none of his ways. For the froward *is* abomination to the LORD: but his secret *is* with the righteous."
 - a. Envy is forbidden one who would follow wisdom. The oppressor might give the impression of great strength and power, but do not envy him or choose any of his ways. Such a man is an abomination in the sight of the Lord. The word *froward* means *perverse*. While the perverse man is abominable to God, the righteous have a friendship with him. "Envy not the man of violence, and choose none of his ways. For the perverse is an abomination to Jehovah; but his friendship is with the upright" (ASV). The marginal rendering of the ASV has "counsel." suggesting that the righteous man is in on the secret counsel of God, thus is a friend of the Almighty.
 - b. "And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God" (Jas. 2:23; cf. Gen. 18:17ff).
 - c. "Envy thou not the oppressor—when he is in prosperity (Ps 37:1)—literally, the man of violence. Even if one have 'done thee harm,' do not retaliate; nor, on the other hand, envy his wickedly gained prosperity. And choose none of his ways—because success seems to attend them. Envy of the prosperous easily leads to imitating his ways. Solomon showed the godly man how to behave toward God and his neighbour. Now it is shown how he is to act toward himself. For the froward is abomination to the LORD: but his secret is with the righteous. For the froward is abomination to the Lord: but his secret is with the righteous—Hebrew, the upright....His familiar intimacy...is the privilege of the righteous. They have the favour of their King (Job 29:4; John 7:17; 15:15; Gen 18:17; Amos 3:7). The 'for' introduces the reason why the froward oppressor should not be envied, much less followed—namely, because their seeming prosperity is not from the Lord, and is not real or substantial. He will make an awful example of them at last, and often does so even here (Ps 37:20; Prov 16:18). They are raised on high only to be cast down with the heavier fall. On the contrary, however outwardly afflicted the upright may be, they enjoy the secret consolations and friendship of God, (2 Cor 7:4. etc.) Not His secret decrees (Job 15:8; Jer 23:18; Rom 11:34), but all that He reveals, and that is for their good, is their privilege to know (Deut 29:29). The secret of true happiness from God is theirs..." [Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c)

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6. "The curse of the LORD *is* in the house of the wicked: but he blesseth the habitation of the just. Surely he scorneth the scornors: but he giveth grace unto the lowly. The wise shall inherit glory: but shame shall be the promotion of fools."
 - a. God brings curses upon the wicked, but blessings upon the just; he scorns the scornful, but he gives grace to the lowly; the wise will inherit glory, but those who are spiritually foolish will be promoted to shame.
 - b. James 4:6 and 1 Peter 5:5 cite verse 34, as they urge humility upon the followers of Christ.
 - 1) James 4:6: "But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble."
 - 2) 1 Peter 5:5: "Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all *of you* be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble."
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PROVERBS 4

A. Proverbs 4:1-9: Wisdom is the Principal Thing.

1. Do you wonder why God chose such a man as Solomon to write Proverbs? In his latter years he was involved in questionable and sinful activities. He had 700 wives and 300 concubines (I Kings 11:3). His wives turned his heart away to follow strange gods so that his heart was not perfect before the living God (I Kings 11:4-8). God rebuked him, and promised that he would rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon's son (I Kings 11:9-13). Solomon put together great stables of horses, in disobedience to the will of God (I Kings 4:26).
 - a. When God predicted in the days of Moses that Israel in the future would demand a king, he warned those future kings against multiplying horses and wives. (Deut. 18:14-16). Solomon violated both of these injunctions. The reason for the prohibition against the accumulation of horses was in this wise: horses were used primarily then as weapons of war; having a large number of horses was equivalent to having a great stockpile of weapons; but God was to be the shield and protector of Israel; Solomon's accumulation of horses indicated a mistrust of God's ability to properly defend the kingdom and a reliance on worldly power to do so. "Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh *but* in vain" (Ps. 127:1).
 - b. In these matters, Solomon did wrong.
 - c. Several things need to be observed in regards to the question above: Why did God choose Solomon to write Proverbs?
 - 1) Divine inspiration never affected the moral character of the individual having it. In other words, just because someone spoke the inspired word of God did not mean that he could not get involved in sin. God used Balaam through whom to give inspired information (See Numbers 24:17; 22:27-30). God delivered a message through the wicked high priest Caiaphas (John 11:47-53). Peter had received the baptism of the Holy Spirit but that did not keep him from acting hypocritically in Antioch (Gal. 2:11-21).
 - 2) Solomon was a spiritual giant in his younger days, more so than when he later married all those women, and had his heart turned from the Lord. He grew up under the instruction of the prophet Nathan and his father David. When he was appointed king upon the death of David, God gave Solomon the opportunity to ask for whatever he desired; he chose "an understanding heart" so as to rule the people wisely (I Kings 3:5-15; I Chron. 1:7-13). It is very likely the case that he wrote the Proverbs during his younger and more spiritual days, and that Ecclesiastes was written later in life, after "he had come back to his senses."
 - 3) Nothing that was written by Solomon would ease the guilt of his sins, or condone his sins, or explain them away.
 2. Verse 1: "Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding."
 - a. The wise man pleads with "ye children" to hear the instructions of a father. The use of the plural "children" is unusual; he commonly addresses "my son." It may be that this reference includes his other children (sons and daughters), or is stated from a classroom situation; or simply broadens the scope of his instructions.
 - b. The truths which are given in Proverbs have application to sons and daughters, and men and women; precepts are stated which are beneficial to all who would be spiritually minded and godly.
 3. Verse 2: "For I give you good doctrine, forsake ye not my law."
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- a. What is given is “sound doctrine”—an excellent reason for giving heed. All too often, especially in our present society, young people are not given proper instruction and guidance by the parents. In many cases, there is only one parent present, and often the parents are not what they themselves ought to be. This bodes ill for our nation in the future. Things can only get worse when a generation is raised up with little or no spiritual and ethical guidance, and where biblical morality is often explained away, watered down, neglected, rejected, and despised.
 - b. "Good doctrine" (a word which simply means "teaching") is that which comes from God's word. Too many people want a form of doctrine, and not the doctrine itself. Many want that which is exciting" but shallow (cf. Ezek. 33:31-32); many want curious and speculative doctrine (2 Tim. 4:3-4); many want compromising doctrine (Isa. 30:10; Jer. 5:31); many want to be taught only those things which are attractive and positive.
 - 1) Isaiah 30:10: "Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits."
 - 2) Jeremiah 5:31: "The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love *to have it* so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?"
 - 3) Ezekiel 33:31-32: "And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee *as* my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they show much love, *but* their heart goeth after their covetousness. And, lo, thou *art* unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not."
 - 4) 2 Timothy 4:3-4: "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."
 - c. Young people need good instructions concerning God, Christ, the Bible, evidences of the correctness of Christianity and the Bible, and how to get along with others in the world; they need to have instilled in them a good understanding of what is right and wrong; they need to know what constitutes good morality; they need to learn the importance of being obedient to parents, school teachers, and civil authorities; they need to learn to respect the laws of the land. The time our children are in our care is too short to waste with too many frills, fun and frivolities, and yet this seems to be what most of us do.
 - 1) "When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also" (2 Tim. 1:5).
 - 2) "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned *them*; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 3:14-15).
4. Verses 3-4: "For I was my father's son, tender and only *beloved* in the sight of my mother. He taught me also, and said unto me, Let thine heart retain my words: keep my commandments, and live."
- a. Solomon states that he had good instructions from his father. He had been told by David to hear and retain the lessons he was being taught. The love his parents had for him brought forth the lessons they taught him. When parents love their children they will teach them what is needful. As David taught Solomon good instructions, so Solomon is teaching his son.
 - b. “The writer is fortifying and strengthening his instruction by the authority of his father, showing that what he was laying before others he had had placed before him; and as his father's advice was the outcome of affection, so he addresses his hearers in the same spirit” [Pulpit Commentary, Electronic
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5. Verses 5-7: "Get wisdom, get understanding: forget *it* not; neither decline from the words of my mouth. Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee. Wisdom *is* the principal thing; *therefore* get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding."
 - a. It seems that these words are from Solomon to his son. The wisdom taught in God's word is vastly superior to the wisdom the world teaches. If worldly wisdom is a goodly pearl, the wisdom of God is the pearl of great price.
 - b. The wisdom taught by the wise man is such that it will produce huge benefits to its possessor. But it must be loved and preserved in one's heart. Wisdom is the *principal* thing to obtain, says the great man.
 - c. An education without wisdom cannot produce the best life.
6. Verses 8-9: "Exalt her, and she shall promote thee: she shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her. She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee."
 - a. "Exalt her, and she will promote you; She will bring you honor, when you embrace her. She will place on your head an ornament of grace; A crown of glory she will deliver to you" (4:8-9, NKJ).
 - b. Proverbs 1:9: "For they *shall be* an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck."
 - c. "Esteem and honour, the confidence of others, elevation to offices of trust and consequence, are some of the rewards with which Wisdom repays those who esteem and love her. Others follow in the next verse" [Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by Biblesoft].

B. Proverbs 4:10-19: Value of Godly Instruction.

1. "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not."
 - a. Solomon presents truth to his son. The principle of this verse is one of universal application: if one will follow truth, then truth will bless. When a young person adopts godliness and purity as the rule of his life, he will be kept from the many places, people, and evil actions which often lead to dissipation, ill health, and violence and hurt. Thus, in a general way, a long life is assured those who follow the ways of God's wisdom.
 - b. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth" (Eph. 6:1-3).
 - c. Those who live are not guaranteed a long earthly life, but generally speaking, those who live pure lives will live long, especially when the eternal scheme of things is considered. One who lives as God directs will have an eternal life of glory in heaven awaiting him.
 - 1) Psalm 16:11: "Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence *is* fulness of joy; at thy right hand *there are* pleasures for evermore."
 - 2) Hebrews 11:10: "For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker *is* God."
 - 3) Hebrews 13:14: "For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come."
 - 4) Revelation 14:13: "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed *are* the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them."

- 5) Revelation 22:14: "Blessed *are* they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."
 - 6) Matthew 25:21-23: "His lord said unto him, Well done, *thou* good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord...His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord."
 - d. Many young people are being led into a life of sex, alcohol, drugs, and "partying" which will inevitably lead to dissipation. Many of these will die young; many will contract horrible diseases; many will suffer physical ailments, the full extent of which may not even be visualized today. Many of these will bring into the world unwanted babies which are already addicted to drugs, or who are doomed to follow the kind of life foisted off on them by their parents. The greatest tragedy is not the short life many of these will have, but the eternal loss of their souls.
2. Verse 11: "I have taught thee in the way of wisdom; I have led thee in right paths."
 - a. Solomon knew the awesome responsibility of correctly instructing his son in the way of righteousness. Misguided people have asserted down through the generations that young people must "sow their wild oats." But what if one dies in the midst of so doing? What about the evil influence they exert? What about the damage that is done to their health and souls?
 - b. While many do sow their wild oats and later come to their senses, no one comes out of it unscathed. A father illustrated this truth to his son by having him drive a large number of nails into a board of lumber. He told him to pull out the nails and see the results. One might get rid of the guilt of his sins, but the "nail holes" remain; sin always leaves a scar.
 - c. A great number of young people sow wild oats, but another sizeable number keep themselves relatively free from such things. Their peers may ridicule them, but all who are spiritually minded will praise them and encourage them.
 3. Verse 12: "When thou goest, thy steps shall not be straitened; and when thou runnest, thou shalt not stumble."
 - a. Solomon means that if his son would "follow in the way of wisdom and in the path that his father had set, his steps would not be straitened—or cramped or impeded for want of freedom of movement—and he would not stumble when he ran—that is, he would not totter or sink down as one about to fall" (ALC, 1978, p.121).
 - b. The clause, "when thou goest," is a reference to the daily events and activities of life. One who follows the dictates of wisdom will make choices which will bring him honor in the sight of other godly persons. He will not be under the bondage of sin, and forced by a sinful lifestyle to follow evil ways.
 - 1) John 8:34: "Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin."
 - 2) 2 Peter 2:19: "While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage."
 - c. Sin does not give freedom as some suppose; and righteousness does not enslave as some think. But one who sins becomes the slave of sin; one who desires to serve God, has freedom from all the dictates of sin—he is free to do all that is right and holy.
 - d. "When thou runnest," is a reference to emergencies which arise in our lives. In the case of one who has wisdom, he will be able to make right decisions, for his life has included much instructions
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regarding the facing of such problems. He sees things in their proper perspective: the difficulties of life can develop greater faith, trust, hope, and strength in us; earthly hardships are only temporary; in eternity is to be found the real fruition of serving God (cf. Heb. 11:6ff; 2 Cor. 12:1-10; 11:24-27; Jas. 1:2-4). People in the world do not have this perspective, or hope of a better situation in eternity, or the help of God in the present difficulty. Some of these utterly panic; others face it because they are naturally tough; others ignore the seriousness of the problem, and get by because they refuse to face the reality of the case—they merely endure, hoping the problem will solve itself.


- e. Serving God as a faithful, growing Christian will prepare one to face whatever hardships, anxieties, turmoils, sufferings, and difficulties life may bring our way.
 - 1) Philippians 4:11-13: "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, *therewith* to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."
 - 2) Philippians 4:19: "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."
 - 3) Hebrews 13:5-6: "*Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.*"
4. Verses 13-15: "Take fast hold of instruction; let *her* not go: keep her; for she *is* thy life. Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil *men*. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away."
 - a. Solomon warns against going into the path of the wicked; to the contrary, he enjoins upon his son that he hold fast to the instructions he has been given. The idea in the passage is that we "seize the truth" and hold to it with determination. If we hunger and thirst for righteousness, we have that resolve.
 - 1) Psalms 42:1-2: "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?"
 - 2) Matthew 5:6: "Blessed *are* they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."
 - b. Many learn the truth, but allow it to slip away from them through anxiety, anger, prejudice, inattention, false teachers, personal or family problems, discouragement, weak brethren, or some other such cause. "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let *them* slip. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard *him*; God also bearing *them* witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?" (Heb. 2:1-4).
 - c. The wise man demands that the way of evil be avoided; we ought not even come near it lest we be tempted. The Lord taught us to pray that we be not led into temptation, and that we be kept from evil (Matt. 6:13). Many of our problems could be avoided if we followed the Lord's instructions.
5. Verses 16-17: "For they sleep not, except they have done mischief; and their sleep is taken away, unless they cause *some* to fall. For they eat the bread of wickedness, and drink the wine of violence."
 - a. He gives an uncomplimentary description of the wicked. They will not sleep unless they have done mischief; they cannot sleep unless they have caused someone to fall. One who values his standing with God and the welfare of his own soul will have as little to do with wicked individuals as possible.

- b. We live in a world filled with all kinds of sinful people; to completely avoid such we would have to become an absolute hermit or leave the world (cf. 1 Cor. 5:9-10). But many (if not most) of our associations with them can be avoided. Leaven affects the whole lump (1 Cor. 5:6-7); evil companions corrupt good morals (1 Cor. 15:33, ASV).
 - c. Evil men partake of wickedness and violence. Solomon depicts them as eating these as their food. Those who start out on a life of sin will eventually be completely corrupted—sin will permeate and contaminate their whole lives and activities; it soon becomes a way of life. Some who use foul language cannot tell someone the time of day without including some untoward comment. "Therefore is judgment far from us, neither doth justice overtake us: we wait for light, but behold obscurity; for brightness, *but* we walk in darkness. We grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if *we had* no eyes: we stumble at noon day as in the night; *we are* in desolate places as dead *men*" (Isa. 59:9-10).
6. Verses 18-19: "But the path of the just *is* as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. The way of the wicked *is* as darkness: they know not at what they stumble."
- a. The ways of the righteous and the wicked are contrasted. "Verse 18 compares the good way to the rising sun; at first it is an almost imperceptible glow in the eastern sky, then it appears in rays announcing the day, then finally it reigns over the sky in all its blazing glory. The contrast to that bright morning is the utter blackness of night, realm of the wicked. Man is not a nocturnal creature by nature and therefore is apt to lose his way or get into trouble at night" (Alden, p.47). The path of the just is as a shining light: his way is fully illuminated; and the influence of his life sheds benefits to others. But the wicked walks in darkness; he knows not his destination; he cannot see obstacles in his way; his eventual, final fall is inevitable. The light of the righteous is depicted as being one accomplished under the light of the sun; at the beginning of day the light is not as much as it is at high noon; the righteous are able to see better and better as they progress through life.
 - b. "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, *even* as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18).

C. Proverbs 4:20-27: Admonitions for His Son to Follow the Instructions.

1. Verses 20-22: "My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings. Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart. For they *are* life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh."
 - a. Solomon again speaks of the benefits of wisdom as being long life, and he adds, health (or medicine, margin) to the flesh.
 - b. Ephesians 6:1-3: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth."
 - c. "The moral condition is regarded as enfeebled by sickness, from which it may be restored to health and soundness by the words of wisdom. The effect of these, however, is not only to restore to health, but to maintain in health. Their tendency is to promote 'a sound mind in a sound body.' To their flesh; literally, to his flesh; the singular...being used instead of the plural, which we should have expected, because what is said applies to each one of those who receive the precepts of wisdom. The all implies the completeness of the restoration; it is not confined to one part, but pervades the whole body" [Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by BibleSoft].
 2. Verse 23: "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it *are* the issues of life."
 - a. This is one of the truly great proverbs in a book filled with them. The heart is the seat of the emotions, the will, the intellect, and the conscience. The heart is equivalent to the soul; it is the base of our
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actions, thoughts, emotions, and decisions. What is in the heart is demonstrated by our words, attitudes, and deeds. Hence, the need for "keeping" the heart.

- 1) Mark 12:30: "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this *is* the first commandment."
 - 2) 2 Corinthians 9:7: "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, *so let him give*; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver."
 - 3) Romans 10:9-10,17: "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."
 - 4) 1 Samuel 24:5: "And it came to pass afterward, that David's heart smote him, because he had cut off Saul's skirt."
 - 5) Romans 2:15: "Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and *their* thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another."
- b. Jeremiah 17:9-10: "The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the LORD search the heart, *I* try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, *and* according to the fruit of his doings."
 - c. Matthew 15:18-20: "But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are *the things* which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man."
 - d. Matthew 12:33-37: "Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by *his* fruit. O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."
 - e. "One fundamental principle with respect to the heart is that a person must know his heart before he can keep it; and a second fundamental principle is that a person can only know his heart by constantly examining it, reflecting on his attitudes, decisions, desires and emotional reactions" (ALC, 1978, pp.119f). "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" (2 Cor. 13:5).
3. Verses 24-27: "Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee. Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil."
 - a. In view of the foregoing truth, we are admonished to put from ourselves a froward mouth (crooked, perverse speech); we are to let our eyes look "right on" (set the eyes on the right goal). "The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great *is* that darkness!" (Matt. 6:22-23).
 - b. The light of the body is the eye (Matt. 6:22); if the eye is single, that is, if it is focused entirely on the proper things, then the body is guided aright. Our attitude must be right, the goal must be the correct one, and the standard by which we operate must be the truth. The eye is the directing facility of 

body. In the Lord's comment, it is placed for the means by which we direct our paths. Matthew 6:22-23 connects directly to the preceding verses, and stresses the great importance of having our full trust in the Lord. "All light and vision of the body come through the eye; the eye supplies for the whole body the benefits of light and vision. 'If therefore thine eye be single' means that the eye does not see double or does not look at two objects at the same time....For the eye to be evil is for it to be in a diseased condition so that light and vision are blurred or obscured; in a spiritual sense if the eye be evil the power of distinct and clear vision of spiritual things is lost and the whole body in a spiritual sense is full of darkness...This figure used by Jesus has direct reference to laying up treasures; he who lays up treasures upon earth has an evil eye, but he who lays up treasures in heaven has a clear vision and the whole body is full of light" (H. Leo Boles, *Commentary on Matthew*, pp.151f).

- c. The eye is an invaluable tool in life, yet it is often the means by which temptation comes. If Eve had not observed the forbidden fruit with a lustful eye, she might not have stumbled (Gen. 3:6). If David had not beheld Bathsheba, many sufferings might have been avoided (2 Sam. 11-12). If Lot's wife had not looked back at Sodom with longing, she would have been spared (Gen. 19:17,26). Achan would not have met with disaster if he had not looked upon the spoils of Jericho with lustful desires (Josh. 7:21).
 - d. Our feet are to be set on the proper way (vs. 26), and turn not to the right or the left. "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise" (Eph. 5:15). Joseph followed these principles and sinned not (Gen. 39:9-10). Peter neglected them, and had troubles (Mt. 26:58,69-75; Luke 22:31-32). If we never turn out of the straight path to avoid a difficulty, we are acting by wisdom.
 - e. Hebrews 12:13 cites Proverbs 4:26, suggesting that people "often get lost because of uncertain plans, faulty road maps, or unclear goals. Proverbs provides both a goal and a route. The goal is successful living and the route is the way of wisdom. The precepts of Proverbs are like signposts at critical junctions in life where we might stray from the road. Carefully mapping out our journey, marking intersections, which might be confusing, and noting the dangers to be avoided along the way are the best ways to guarantee a safe trip. These are the metaphors of verses 26 and 27" (Alden, p.48).
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PROVERBS 5

A. Proverbs 5:1-2: Again Solomon calls on his son to heed his instructions.

1. "Chapters 5-7 are an extended warning against adultery with Proverbs 6:1-19 the only deviation from that theme. Illicit sex must have been readily available in ancient Israel or such an extended warning would not have been necessary. Either that, or the devastating effects of this sin must have prompted the author to give it such heavy treatment. Another possible reason for the serious warning might have been the author's own preoccupation with this vice; a kind of warning from experience. Solomon's problems all started by marrying women he shouldn't have. First Kings 11:1-11 chronicles the sad story of a king who married Pharaoh's daughter yet eventually lost his kingdom" (Alden, p.49). However, it is more likely that Solomon wrote the proverbs earlier in life, before he fell away into foolish conduct. If so, then he allowed himself to depart into sin with a full awareness of his folly.
2. Verses 1-2: "My son, attend unto my wisdom, *and* bow thine ear to my understanding: That thou mayest regard discretion, and *that* thy lips may keep knowledge."
 - a. Solomon calls on his son to "bow" his ear to a caring father's understanding. We usually increase in wisdom and knowledge as we advance through life. A concerned father who has learned lessons from life both bitter and sweet is anxious to instill these into his offspring, so they can enjoy the good and avoid the evil. But how tragic it often is that young people insist on learning for themselves. Lessons older folks have learned at the University of Hard Knocks are easily stated, just as easily grasped by the quick minds of youth, but seldom learned by young people until they have also "taken courses at that school."
 - b. He counsels his son to regard discretion—that is, esteem it highly and hold on to it. Do not let knowledge slip away. "Lips which preserve knowledge are such as permit nothing to escape from them (Ps. 17:3b) which proceeds not from the knowledge of God, and Him of that which is good and right, and aims at the working out of this knowledge..." (Keil, p.119).

B. Proverbs 5:3-14: Warning against fornication.

1. Verse 3: "For the lips of a strange woman drop *as* an honeycomb, and her mouth *is* smoother than oil."
 - a. Reference is again made to the strange woman (cf. 2:16). The strange woman is one that does not belong to the son; she is pictured as a temptress who either is wife to another man, or is a harlot; whatever her status, intimacy with her would be illicit. Her lips are as sweet (desirous) as honey dripping from a honeycomb; her mouth is also very desirous (smoother than oil).
 - b. Psalm 55:21 speaks of a deceitful associate who uses words smoother than butter to effect his evil intentions against David. Compare: "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple" (Rom. 16:17-18).
 2. Verses 4-5: "But her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a twoedged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps take hold on hell."
 - a. Although she is very desirable, yet there are extreme dangers which her embraces offer. The deluded victim expects to taste honey, but behold it is wormwood (bitter). "The O.T. Language regards bitterness and poison as related both in meaning and in reality..." (Keil, p.120). What she offers is also described as a two-edged sword. "Literally the second image reads 'sharp as a sword with mouths.' In Hebrew swords had two 'lips' or 'mouths' which 'ate' their victims, according the author here a play on words. The mouth of the adulteress which was so tasty will all too soon become an instrument of pain and death" (Alden, p.50).
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- b. Instead of pleasure, there will be the bitter pain of self-reproach, a realization of having committed sin, and the need for sincere mourning (in repentance) if one expects to be reconciled with God. The path the temptress treads is one which ultimately leads into hades (Tartarus—2 Pet. 2:4), the end also of those who walk with her.
3. Verses 6-8: "Lest thou shouldest ponder the path of life, her ways are moveable, *that* thou canst not know *them*. Hear me now therefore, O ye children, and depart not from the words of my mouth. Remove thy way far from her, and come not nigh the door of her house."
- a. Such a wicked person operates quickly in setting and springing her trap. If the victim is to be snared, he must not have time to think and ponder on the consequences of the enticement. If one takes time to think and consider, his conscience will aid him in avoiding sin. Often, the mere presence of a child, or someone we know, can prevent our entering into sin (of any kind). How much more likely would be the prevention of sin if we would only remember that the omniscient eye of God sees all (Heb. 4:13).
- b. Therefore, in view of the foregoing, heed my instructions (says Solomon). Do not even come near her door. "The woman of verse 8 is clearly the adulteress of verse 3. The best way to avoid her seductive embrace is to stay away from even the part of town where she lives. To put ourselves in the place of sin, then to ask God to deliver us from temptation is presumptuous as well as foolish. A regular diet of pornography will eventually lead anyone to indulge in illicit sex. Jesus emphasized this teaching when he said that anyone who looks at a woman and wants to possess her is guilty of adultery in his heart (Matt. 5:28). If even a look leads to sin, don't get close enough to look. If this teaching was emphasized in ancient times when women were modest, how much more ought men to be on guard today when sex is exploited in almost all of advertising and entertainment" (Alden, p.50).
4. Verses 9-14: "Lest thou give thine honour unto others, and thy years unto the cruel: Lest strangers be filled with thy wealth; and thy labours *be* in the house of a stranger; And thou mourn at the last, when thy flesh and thy body are consumed, And say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof; And have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me! I was almost in all evil in the midst of the congregation and assembly."
- a. Several evil results come from living in sin. One loses his honor (self-respect) by the sinful conduct indicated in the context.
- 1) Genesis 38:23-26: "And Judah said, Let her take *it* to her, lest we be shamed: behold, I sent this kid, and thou hast not found her. And it came to pass about three months after, that it was told Judah, saying, Tamar thy daughter in law hath played the harlot; and also, behold, she *is* with child by whoredom. And Judah said, Bring her forth, and let her be burnt. When she *was* brought forth, she sent to her father in law, saying, By the man, whose these *are*, *am* I with child: and she said, Discern, I pray thee, whose *are* these, the signet, and bracelets, and staff. And Judah acknowledged *them*, and said, She hath been more righteous than I; because that I gave her not to Shelah my son. And he knew her again no more."
- 2) 2 Samuel 12:11-12: "Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give *them* unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun. For thou didst *it* secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun." 2 Samuel 15:30: "And David went up by the ascent of *mount* Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered, and he went barefoot: and all the people that *was* with him covered every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went up."
- 3) Nehemiah 13:26: "Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? yet among many nations was there no king like him, who was beloved of his God, and God made him king over all Israel:
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- nevertheless even him did outlandish women cause to sin."
- 4) Proverbs 6:32-33: "*But* whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding: he *that* doeth it destroyeth his own soul. A wound and dishonour shall he get; and his reproach shall not be wiped away."
- b. One gives his years to the cruel; he will spend his life wastefully (Prov. 6:26; 31:3; Judges 16:18-21). "Though all the blandishments of love dwell on the tongue, and the excess of fondness appear in the whole demeanour of the harlot and prostitute; yet cruelty has its throne in their hearts; and they will rob and murder (when it appears to answer their ends) those who give their strength, their wealth, and their years to them. The unfaithful wife has often murdered her own husband for the sake of her paramour, and has given him over to justice in order to save herself. Murders have often taken place in brothels, as well as robberies; for the vice of prostitution is one of the parents of cruelty" (Clarke, p.714).
 - c. Strangers take your wealth; you spend your substance on those who furnish sinful pleasure. Sin is a very expensive lifestyle, often including physical support of illegitimate offspring.
 - 1) Job 31:9-12: "If mine heart have been deceived by a woman, or *if* I have laid wait at my neighbour's door; *Then* let my wife grind unto another, and let others bow down upon her. For this *is* an heinous crime; yea, it *is* an iniquity *to be punished by* the judges. For it *is* a fire *that* consumeth to destruction, and would root out all mine increase."
 - 2) Proverbs 6:26,35: "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....He will not regard any ransom; neither will he rest content, though thou givest many gifts."
 - 3) Proverbs 29:3: "Whoso loveth wisdom rejoiceth his father: but he that keepeth company with harlots spendeth *his* substance."
 - 4) Hosea 7:9: "Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth *it* not: yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not."
 - 5) Luke 15:13,30: "And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living....But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf."
 - d. Spend your labors in the house of a stranger. Sin is a cruel taskmaster to whom those enslaved must labor.
 - 1) Luke 15:15-16: "And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him."
 - 2) John 8:34: "Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin."
 - 3) 2 Peter 2:19: "While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage."
 - e. Physical dissipation; a life of sinful pleasure leads inevitably to ill health and even death. There are all kinds of diseases and afflictions which one can contract, including AIDS.
 - f. Then there is the accusing voice of conscience. When one has lost his wealth, health, the cream of his years, and is brought to poverty, disgrace, and disease, he is then further tormented by thoughts of what might have been. In today's permissive world, we are daily bombarded with the assertions that
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sexual promiscuity is normal, wholesome, and is not shameful. With many, perhaps, there is no pang of conscience when the guilt of fornication is accrued—only regret that misery has come.

C. Proverbs 5:15-21: Admonition to be faithful to one's own wife.

1. Verses 15-19: "Drink waters out of thine own cistern, and running waters out of thine own well. Let thy fountains be dispersed abroad, *and* rivers of waters in the streets. Let them be only thine own, and not strangers' with thee. Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth. *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."
 - a. These verses describe "the wholesome, pure alternative to sexual immorality. A word-for-word rendering of the Hebrew would say: 'Drink water from your own cistern, that flows out of your own well.' Or, in other words, be faithful to your own wife. Elsewhere the images of fountain and wife are connected as in verse 18 and Song of Solomon 4:12,15. A drink from another well really isn't any sweeter than that from your own. Notice wife (cistern or well) is singular. Although God permitted some Old Testament heroes to have several wives, creation testifies to his original plan that each man should have one wife, and each wife one husband. God created only Eve for Adam" (Alden, pp.51f).
 - b. "Desire after forbidden enjoyments naturally springs from dissatisfaction with the blessings in possession. Where contentment is not found at home—drinking out of our own cistern—it will be sought for, however vainly, abroad. Conjugal love is chief among the earthly goods in mercy granted by God to his fallen and rebellious creature. Enjoy then with thankfulness thine own, and desire not thy neighbour's well. (Exod. 20:17; 2 Sam. 11:2,3)" (Bridges, p.58).
 - c. The image depicted in this passage is of someone throwing water from his well into the dusty street—a foolish waste of precious water in a dry land. So is the man who turns from his wife to other women. Instead, his wife should be considered by the husband as a "loving hind (deer) and pleasant roe."
2. Verses 20-21: "And why wilt thou, my son, be ravished with a strange woman, and embrace the bosom of a stranger? For the ways of man *are* before the eyes of the LORD, and he pondereth all his goings."
 - a. Two rhetorical questions are here raised. There is no viable reason to be given for so doing.
 - b. Such conduct does not escape the notice of the Lord (Job 31:4; Ps. 139:1-13). God ponders our activities (Prov. 16:2; 1 Sam. 2:3; Heb. 4:13; Eccl. 12:13-14; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rom. 14:10-12).
 - 1) 1 Samuel 2:3: "Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let *not* arrogancy come out of your mouth: for the LORD *is* a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed."
 - 2) Job 31:4: "Doth not he see my ways, and count all my steps?"
 - 3) Proverbs 16:2: "All the ways of a man *are* clean in his own eyes; but the LORD weigheth the spirits."
 - 4) Ecclesiastes 12:13-14: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this *is* the whole *duty* of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether *it be* good, or whether *it be* evil."
 - 5) Romans 14:10-12: "But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, *As* I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."
 - 6) 2 Corinthians 5:10: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad."

7) Hebrews 4:13: "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things *are* naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do."

D. Proverbs 5:22-23: Wicked men reap what they sow.

1. Verse 22: "His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins."
 - a. One who sets a trap for another will fall victim to his own devices
 - b. Psalm 7:15-16: "He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch *which* he made. His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate."
 - c. Psalms 57:6: "They have prepared a net for my steps; my soul is bowed down: they have digged a pit before me, into the midst whereof they are fallen *themselves*."
 - d. Galatians 6:7-8: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."
 - e. Ephesians 5:5: "For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God."
 2. Verse 23: "He shall die without instruction; and in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray."
 - a. One who violates the principles set forth in the chapter must ultimately face death without the benefits God's word gives the obedient.
 - b. His life was one of folly. It would have been better for him if he had never lived. "The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born" (Matt. 26:24).
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PROVERBS 6

A. Proverbs 6:1-5: Caution Against Being Surety to a Loan.

1. Verses 1-2: "My son, if thou be surety for thy friend, *if* thou hast stricken thy hand with a stranger, Thou art snared with the words of thy mouth, thou art taken with the words of thy mouth."
 - a. This section addresses a warning against unsound business practices. It is not wise to become surety to a stranger's debt; it is inadvisable to do so with regards to a friend, in many cases. However, other precepts in the Scriptures would urge us to be willing to assist our brethren, which might entail co-signing a note in some situations. Proverbs 11:15 gives a strong warning against becoming surety to a stranger (cf. Prov. 17:18; 20:16; 22:26).
 - 1) Proverbs 11:15: "He that is surety for a stranger shall smart *for it*: and he that hateth suretiship is sure."
 - 2) Proverbs 17:18: "A man void of understanding striketh hands, *and* becometh surety in the presence of his friend."
 - 3) Proverbs 20:16: "Take his garment that is surety *for* a stranger: and take a pledge of him for a strange woman."
 - 4) Proverbs 22:26: "Be not thou *one* of them that strike hands, *or* of them that are sureties for debts."
 - b. "In thou pledge thyself in behalf of another, thou takest the burden off him, and placest it on thine own shoulders; and when he knows he has got one to stand between him and the demands of law and justice, he will feel little responsibility; his spirit of exertion will become crippled, and listlessness as to the event will be the consequence. His own character will suffer little; his property nothing, for his friend bears all the burden; and perhaps the very person for whom he bore this burden treats him with neglect...(Clarke, p.715).
 - c. "The *son* has just been warned against the deadly wound of a stranger. He is now cautioned against a hurt from an imprudent friend. So graciously has our God made his book, not only for our guide to heaven, but the directory of our common life. We must, however, often take its wise rules with some restriction. We are here earnestly warned against *suretyship*. Yet in some cases it is plainly allowed and approved [Gen. 32:37; 33:9; 44:32f; Phile. 18-19]. 'A man that hath friends must show himself friendly.' (Chap. 18:24.) And the passing of our word, or giving a bond, may be an act of prudent friendship, and of solid and permanent advantage. The caution is evidently directly against rash engagements (Comp. also chap. 11:15; 17:18; 20:16; 22:26,27), to which the young and inexperienced are especially exposed; *striking hands* (the usual mode of plighting faith (Chap. 17:18; 22:26; Job 17:3), in an unguarded moment. Often may they be *snared* and *taken by the words of their mouth*, by entering into virtual promises, without knowing how far they were pledged, or what might be the issue. Christian prudence will keep us clear from such engagements, which bring distress upon our families, dishonour upon our name, and reproach upon our religion..." (Bridges, p.60).
 - d. "When a fool goes to market, the merchants rejoice."
2. Verses 3-5: "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. Give not sleep to thine eyes, nor slumber to thine eyelids. Deliver thyself as a roe from the hand of *the hunter*, and as a bird from the hand of the fowler."
 - a. This passage urges one who has become surety for a loan to do what he can to encourage the debtor to make good his promise. One has made his own wealth, good name, and economic future dependent on the good will of the debtor; hence, use your influence on him to pay his just debt and thus release you from your obligations.

- b. Desire your release as much as a deer wishes to be freed from the hunter and the bird from the hand of the fowler.

B. Proverbs 6:6-11: Admonition to Diligence is Presented by the Illustration of the Ant.

1. Verse 6: "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise."
 - a. Much can be learned by observing the instincts God has placed within the lower creations. God's wisdom, ingenuity, and power are plainly on display there, and by means of observing the ways of these creatures, we may see the need for diligence in our own lives. Elihu affirms that there is much to be learned from the beasts and birds. "Who teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth, and maketh us wiser than the fowls of heaven?" (Job 35:11).
 - b. The ant is an excellent example of industry, hard work, and full cooperation in a good work. And in the ant is found a perfect illustration of the design in nature which requires an intelligent Creator.
2. Verses 7-8: "Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, Provideth her meat in the summer, *and* gathereth her food in the harvest."
 - a. There is no overseer or ruler to make the ant do its work. Men often will work only if forced to do so, but the ant works diligently in providing its food for the future by working continually while the food may be collected. "The ants *are* a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer....The locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands" (Prov. 30:25,27).
 - b. But man has many guides: his conscience, the Bible, godly elders.
3. Verses 9-11: "How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? *Yet* a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man."
 - a. The ant is a "self-starter." No one can become a Christian or be a faithful Christian unless he takes personal action motivated by his own choice. As the sluggard in the world is bound to suffer want due to his own slothfulness, so the individual who will not take proper action will suffer spiritual want.
 - 1) Psalms 95:8: "Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, *and* as *in* the day of temptation in the wilderness."
 - 2) Ecclesiastes 11:6: "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both *shall be* alike good."
 - 3) Ecclesiastes 12:1: "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them."
 - 4) Hebrews 3:8: "Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness."
 - b. The lazy person will not stir himself to provide for his own necessities. He says "just a little more sleep." "The slothful man saith, There is a lion without, I shall be slain in the streets" (Prov. 22:13). Poverty will come on such a person as surely as upon a traveler who encounters an armed robber. The slothful man is robbed of the necessities by his own slothfulness.

C. Proverbs 6:12-19: Things That are Hated by the Lord.

1. Verses 12-15: "A naughty person, a wicked man, walketh with a froward mouth. He winketh with his eyes, he speaketh with his feet, he teacheth with his fingers; Frowardness *is* in his heart, he deviseth mischief continually; he soweth discord. Therefore shall his calamity come suddenly; suddenly shall he
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be broken without remedy."

- a. The wicked person is characterized by a perverse mouth. His "body language" is such that he entices with various movements of the eyes, feet, and fingers. His winking eye signals the wicked thoughts with which his heart is filled. He conveys signs to others by certain movements of his feet. His fingers are adept at signaling certain information.
 - b. "The seat of the evil man's iniquity and perverseness is his heart, as Solomon specifically stated. With and from the heart he nourishes and gives expression of his jealousies, hatred, and malice. In the heart he deliberately premeditates and plots the course of his diabolical schemes. The heart is his workshop. A calamity is certain to befall all such evil men, and it will fall suddenly and without warning or remedy" (ALC, 1979, p.128).
2. Verses 16-19: "These six *things* doth the LORD hate: yea, seven *are* an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness *that* speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren." Seven things are named as being abominable to God. Something that is abominable is something that is disgusting, repulsive, and hated.
- a. **A proud look.**
 - 1) A haughty, exalted, lofty, self-righteous attitude. This is the basis of disobedience and rebellion.
 - 2) This attitude is the opposite of what God requires:
 - a) Matthew 5:3: "Blessed *are* the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."
 - b) Matthew 20:25-28: "But Jesus called them *unto him*, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."
 - c) Philippians 2:3-4: "*Let nothing be done* through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."
 - 3) It is opposed by the Lord. "And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God" (Acts 5:38,39. "But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble" (Jas. 4:6).
 - b. **A lying tongue.**
 - 1) Like begets like: "Ye are of *your* father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it" (John 8:44). "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, **and all liars**, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death" (Rev. 21:8).
 - 2) A liar is one who will add to God's word: "Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar" (Prov. 30:6).
 - 3) God classifies a liar beneath a poor man: "The desire of a man *is* his kindness: and a poor man *is* better than a liar" (Prov. 19:22).
 - 4) A liar is one who says he has not sinned: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and

the truth is not in us" (I John 1:8).

- 5) A liar claims to know God while in disobedience: "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (I John 2:4).
- 6) A liar is one who denies Christ: "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son" (1 John 2:22).
- 7) A liar says he loves God but hates his brother: "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also" (1 John 4:20,21).
- 8) The lying tongue is that which seeks to deceive by perverting the truth.

c. Hands that shed innocent blood.

- 1) The life of the flesh is in the blood: "But flesh with the life thereof, *which is* the blood thereof, shall ye not eat" (Gen. 9:4). "For the life of the flesh *is* in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it *is* the blood *that* maketh an atonement for the soul" (Lev. 17:11).
- 2) It is a fearful thing to shed blood. God has decreed that civil authorities are to punish evil-doers, even to the extent of execution in capital cases.
 - a) Genesis 9:5-6: "And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man."
 - b) Matthew 26:52: "Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword."
 - c) Romans 13:4: "For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to *execute* wrath upon him that doeth evil."
- 3) Abortion is an excellent example of this abomination: it is the murder of little babies; it is the shedding of innocent blood.

d. A heart that devises wicked imaginations.

- 1) This describes many in the Bible:
 - a) Genesis 6:5: "And God saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every imagination of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually."
 - b) Micah 2:1-3: "Woe to them that devise iniquity, and work evil upon their beds! when the morning is light, they practice it, because it is in the power of their hand. And they covet fields, and take *them* by violence; and houses, and take *them* away: so they oppress a man and his house, even a man and his heritage. Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, against this family do I devise an evil, from which ye shall not remove your necks; neither shall ye go haughtily: for this time *is* evil."
- 2) Men have shown themselves to be ingenious in devising new ways to sin, defraud, and do evil. The sins are still the same, but there seems to be an endless number of ways to accomplish them. "The thing that hath been, it *is that* which shall be; and that which is done *is that* which shall be done: and *there is* no new *thing* under the sun. Is there *any* thing whereof it may be said, See, this

is new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us" (Eccl. 1:9,10).

- 3) There is not as much justice on the earth as we might wish to think; perfect judgment will be had only at the end of time:
 - a) Romans 14:10-12: "But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, *As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.*"
 - b) 2 Corinthians 5:10: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad."
 - c) Galatians 6:7-8: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."
- 4) This describes the devising and fabricating of evil plans and purposes in the heart; it pictures one who is preparing himself for utter depravity.

e. Feet that are swift in running to mischief.

- 1) Ecclesiastes 5:1: "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil."
- 2) Isaiah 59:7: "Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood: their thoughts *are* thoughts of iniquity; wasting and destruction *are* in their paths."
- 3) Romans 3:15: "Their feet *are* swift to shed blood."
- 4) James 1:19: "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath."
- 5) Swift destruction awaits such: "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction" (2 Pet. 2:1).
- 6) Sinful men are quick to sin, but slow to do good and be obedient.
- 7) This is not a picture of one who has merely fallen into sin; it is one who persists in it.

f. A false witness that speaks lies.

- 1) God has always been opposed to such; it is an eternal principle. He legislated against it in the decalogue and in the gospel: "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another" (Eph. 4:25).
- 2) This sin defiles a man (Matt. 15:19f); it puts us in bad company (Mark 14:55-59).
- 3) It is perjury that harms the innocent or frees the guilty.

g. He that soweth discord among brethren.

- 1) Discord is strife, contest, quarrel, contention, and trouble. It is a work of the flesh: "Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies" (Gal. 5:20).
- 2) It is difficult to stop.
- 3) It leads to many other sins:
 - a) Hebrews 12:15: "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of

bitterness springing up trouble *you*, and thereby many be defiled."

- b) James 3:14-16: "But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife *is*, there *is* confusion and every evil work."
 - 4) It is hated by the Lord and forbidden by him:
 - a) Psalms 133: "Behold, how good and how pleasant *it is* for brethren to dwell together in unity! *It is* like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, *even* Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; As the dew of Hermon, *and as the dew* that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, *even* life for evermore."
 - b) 1 Corinthians 14:33: "For God is not *the author* of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints."
 - 5) This discord which God hates is that which pertains to his people, to the family, in the community, state and nation.
3. The will of God in these respects is just the opposite of what is condemned.
- a. Instead of strife, we ought to strive to do God's will: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen *doth gather* her brood under *her* wings, and ye would not!" (Luke 13:34).
 - b. We are to be proclaimers of truth: "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and *be* ready always to *give* an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (1 Pet. 3:15).
 - c. Our feet ought to be swift to do the Lord's will: "And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" (Rom. 10:15). "And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace" (Eph. 6:15).
 - d. We ought to devise good plans to carry the gospel to the lost, to help the needy, and to edify one another in love.
 - e. Our hands ought to be used to the glory of God and the good of man.
 - f. We should use our tongues to praise God, preach the truth, and encourage those who are faint-hearted.
 - g. Instead of sowing discord, we ought to do all within our power to bring about that perfect unity and peace which is demanded by the Scriptures:
 - 1) Matthew 5:9: "Blessed *are* the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God."
 - 2) John 17:20-21: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, *art* in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."
 - 3) 1 Corinthians 1:10: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you; but *that* ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."
 - 4) Romans 12:18: "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men."
 - 5) Romans 14:19: "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another."
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D. Proverbs 6:20-35: Warnings Against Adultery Are Continued.

1. Verses 20-22: "My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother: Bind them continually upon thine heart, *and* tie them about thy neck. When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and *when* thou awakest, it shall talk with thee."
 - a. Solomon instructs his pupil to adhere to the directions given by the parents, that they be bound to his heart. If this is so, these godly instructions will be a comfort and guidance. The directions indicated are actually God's will.
 - b. One, therefore, who follows them will have the guidance through life he needs, will be free from excessive worry when he lies down, and will have the comfort which comes from the guidance furnished by them. This instruction is personified as an intimate companion.
 2. Verses 23-24: "For the commandment *is* a lamp; and the law *is* light; and reproofs of instruction *are* the way of life: To keep thee from the evil woman, from the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman."
 - a. More directly indicating the word of God, Solomon describes it as a lamp and a light which is able to reprove the individual when needed and deliver him from the enticements of wicked women.
 - b. This latter point was broached in Chapter 5.
 - c. Psalms 119:105: "Thy word *is* a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."
 - d. "When we consider how much this iniquity abounds, how heinous it is in its own nature, of what pernicious consequence it is, and how certainly destructive to all the seeds of the spiritual life in the soul, we shall not wonder that the cautions against it are so often repeated and so largely inculcated. One great kindness God designed men, in giving them his law, was to preserve them from this sin, v. 24. 'The reproofs of instruction are therefore the way of life to thee, because they are designed to keep thee from the evil woman, who will be certain death to thee, from being enticed by the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman, who pretends to love thee, but intends to ruin thee.' Those that will be wrought upon by flattery make themselves a very easy prey to the tempter; and those who would avoid that snare must take well-instructed reproofs as great kindnesses and be thankful to those that will deal faithfully with them, Prov 27:5-6" [Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: New Modern Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1991 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.].
 3. Verses 25-26: "Lust not after her beauty in thine heart; neither let her take thee with her eyelids. 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."
 - a. Warning is issued to insulate the young man from the captivating eyes of the temptress. The woman referred to could be a common prostitute or an evil woman out for a good time.
 - b. Jezebel attempted to impress Jehu with cosmetics: "And when Jehu was come to Jezreel, Jezebel heard *of it*; and she painted her face, and tired her head, and looked out at a window" (2 Kings 9:30).
 - 1) Jeremiah 4:30: "And *when* thou *art* spoiled, what wilt thou do? Though thou clothest thyself with crimson, though thou deckest thee with ornaments of gold, though thou rentest thy face with painting, in vain shalt thou make thyself fair; *thy* lovers will despise thee, they will seek thy life."
 - 2) Ezekiel 23:40: "And furthermore, that ye have sent for men to come from far, unto whom a messenger *was* sent; and, lo, they came: for whom thou didst wash thyself, paintedst thy eyes, and deckedst thyself with ornaments."
 - c. Such a person has often brought a man to poverty, and to the loss of his precious soul. Lust (strong desire for something forbidden) leads to fulfillment, and so to eternal death. "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it
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bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (Jas. 1:14-15).

4. Verses 27-29: "Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned? So he that goeth in to his neighbour's wife; whosoever toucheth her shall not be innocent."
 - a. Two rhetorical questions are raised which affirm two positive truths: A man cannot take a fire (as a coal of fire) into his bosom without being burned; one cannot walk upon a bed of hot coals without burning his feet. So one who commits adultery with another's wife shall not be innocent.
 - b. "The meaning of the verses is plain enough, viz. that as it is in vain to suppose that a person's garment will not be burnt or his feet not be scorched if fire is brought near them, so it is equally inconceivable that a person indulging in adultery can escape its consequences or the retribution that follows. The two questions in vers. 27 and 28 imply a strong negative, and so prepare for the conclusion in ver. 30" [Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by BibleSoft].
 - c. Galatians 6:7-8: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."
5. Verses 30-32: "*Men* do not despise a thief, if he steal to satisfy his soul when he is hungry; But *if* he be found, he shall restore sevenfold; he shall give all the substance of his house. *But* whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding; he *that* doeth it destroyeth his own soul."
 - a. Here the wise man shows a difference between a thief and an adulterer. If a thief is discovered, there were proper penalties pronounced upon him; in the case named, he had to repay seven times the value of what he stole. This might bring him to abject poverty, but he would still have his life and his freedom. However, the adulterer has committed a sinful act that cannot be erased by a payment of money. How can one's honor be restored? How can respect be regained by the woman? A starving man might steal food to preserve his life; this might be tolerated by some, although it still violates truth.
 - b. But a man will not perish by abstaining from sexual activity; in a godly society, one who satisfies his sexual appetite through an unscriptural means is not tolerated at all; he has sinned grievously, and the Law prescribed death for the offender (both offenders if the woman was not forced). The final penalty for one guilty of fornication is the loss of his immortal spirit, which is also true of anyone dying guilty of any kind of sin.
6. Verses 33-35: "A wound and dishonour shall he get; and his reproach shall not be wiped away. For jealousy *is* the rage of a man: therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance. He will not regard any ransom; neither will he rest content, though thou givest many gifts."
 - a. The adulterer has caused damage to others besides himself. "The offended husband is mentioned in verse 33; eventually he or his relatives exact vengeance on the adulterer by beating him up. Even the community joins in to heap scorn on the man who yielded to seduction. Notice the obvious silence here concerning the fate of the guilty woman; Leviticus 20:10 prescribes death for both" (Alden, p.61).
 - b. "Potipher (Gen. 39) sided with his wife against Joseph even though she was obviously guilty. Perhaps a husband's ego is at stake here; it is easier to charge a man with raping your wife than it is to admit your wife wants someone else instead of you" (ibid., p.62).
 - c. "This is an injury that admits of *no compensation*. No *gifts* can satisfy a man for the injury his honour has sustained; and to take a *bribe* or a *ransom*, would be setting up *chastity* at a price" (Clarke, p.718).
 - d. "Two other things more immediate await the adulterer—personal chastisement and loss of reputation. It seems clear that 'a wound' ...used here in the singular, collectively refers to the corporal punishment,

which the outraged husband will inflict upon the adulterer....It may also have reference to the punishment inflicted by the Law....The second part of the verse states that a brand of disgrace will be attached to his name which will be perpetual, not confined to this life only, but extending beyond it, so that men will never recall it but with this stigma.....Verse 35—He will not regard any ransom; neither will he rest content, though thou givest many gifts. No recompense or atonement, nor any gifts however great, will buy him off. These are supposed to be offered by the adulterer to the enraged husband, who, however, will never rest till he effects the utter ruin of his injurer....Many gifts, each increasing in value, may be offered, but he will not be willing to forego his right of revenge. Though thou givest many gifts. It is noticeable that the address, which has been adapted to the third person, here becomes personal, and so takes up the form originally employed in vers. 20-25. A hypothetical case has been imagined in vers. 26-35, but still with the thought underlying it that it applies to the person addressed” [Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by Biblesoft].

- e. "One does not condemn a man who is a thief through poverty, he is pitied; while the adulterer goes to ruin under all circumstances of contempt and scorn. And: theft may be made good, and that abundantly; but adultery and its consequences are irreparable" (Keil, p.154).
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PROVERBS 7

A. Proverbs 7:1-5: Wisdom Can Keep its Possessor From Evil.

1. Verses 1-3: "My son, keep my words, and lay up my commandments with thee. Keep my commandments, and live; and my law as the apple of thine eye. Bind them upon thy fingers, write them upon the table of thine heart."
 - a. Again, Solomon urges his student to keep his words (his commandments). It is to his benefit that he keep them: if he does so, he will live. "I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron: And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the LORD, which call *thee* by thy name, *am* the God of Israel" (Isa. 45:2-3).
 - b. "The Hebrew word for 'apple' is diminutive for 'man'...If you are close enough to look into someone's eyes, you may see yourself reflected in them. The advice here is for the son to keep his eye so closely fixed on his father's teachings that they are constantly reflected in his eyes" (Alden, p.62).
 - 1) Deuteronomy 32:10: "He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye."
 - 2) Psalms 17:8: "Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of thy wings."
 - 3) Apple of the Eye: The eyeball, or globe of the eye, with pupil in center, called "apple" from its round shape. Its great value and careful protection by the eyelids automatically closing when there is the least possibility of danger made it the emblem of that which was most precious and jealously protected. The Hebrew terms for it were, 'ishon, diminutive of 'ish, "man," little man or mannikin, referring perhaps specially to the pupil, probably from "the little image one sees of himself when looking into another's pupil" (Davies' Lexicon). "He kept him (Israel) as the apple of his eye" (Deut 32:10); "Keep me as the apple of the eye," literally, "as the apple, the daughter of the eye" (Ps 17:8). "Keep my law (the Revised Version, margin "teaching") as the apple of thine eye" (Prov 7:2). Compare Prov 7:9 where it is used to denote what is the center (American Revised Version, "in the middle of the night"; the English Revised Version "in, the blackness of night"; margin "Hebrew pupil (of the eye)"); babhah perhaps an "opening," "gate"; others regard it as a mimetic word akin to Latin pupa, papilla ("He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye," i.e. Jeh's; Zech 2:8); bath-'ayin, "daughter of the eye"; "Give thyself no respite, let not the apple of thine eye cease" (Lam 2:18), which means, either "sleep not," or "cease not to weep." kore, "young girl," "pupil of the eye": "He (the Lord) will keep the good deeds (the Revised Version (British and American) "bounty") of a man as the apple of the eye" (Ecclus 17:22); the Septuagint also has kore in all instances except Lam 2:18, where it has thugater, "daughter" [W. L. WALKER, International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, Electronic Database Copyright (c)1996 by Biblesoft].
 - c. The expression in our language has come to describe someone or something that is our "pride and joy." The wise man's point is that his instructions are to be so esteemed by the son that he will protect and keep them as he does the tenderest part of his eye. Solomon strengthens the point by calling on the son to bind these instructions to his finger and engrave them upon his heart.
2. Verses 4-5: "Say unto wisdom, Thou *art* my sister; and call understanding *thy* kinswoman: That they may keep thee from the strange woman, from the stranger *which* flattereth with her words."
 - a. The son is to consider wisdom and understanding as his sister and kinswoman. The personification of wisdom anticipates what is to be said in the next two chapters where wisdom is pictured as setting a table and inviting guests to her feast. He is showing that wisdom is to be loved and respected as a sister.

- b. "If wisdom is not loved, lust will be indulged. The Bible therefore—not merely read, but the *cherished* object of familiar intercourse—proves a sacred exorcist to expel the power of evil. (Chap.2:10,16; 6:23,24; 23:26,27)" (Bridges, p.68).
- c. The great truths of God's word will keep us from falling victim to fornication and other sins.
 - 1) Psalms 119:11: "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee."
 - 2) 1 John 2:1: "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

B. Proverbs 7:6-23: An Illustration of How a Young Man Can Fall into Grievous Sin.

1. Verses 6-7: "For at the window of my house I looked through my casement, And beheld among the simple ones, I discerned among the youths, a young man void of understanding."
 - a. Speaking from the vantage point of an observer, Solomon describes his looking out his window, through the casement, and beholding the young men passing to and fro. The casement mentioned is a lattice covering the window, allowing the air to enter and giving a measure of sight through it, but also providing a degree of privacy from the outside.
 - b. In watching through the window opening and lattice work, he could see the young ones on the street outside. Among them was one young man void of understanding. It is this one whose actions are described.
2. Verses 8-9: "Passing through the street near her corner; and he went the way to her house, In the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night."
 - a. This young man went to the place on the street where some woman lived. Whether he knew where the harlot lived is not clear, but he had something in mind which he likely thought could be accomplished in this part of town.
 - b. "His presence here and her obvious willingness to take advantage of that proximity all contribute to the tragedy that is sure to follow. If you want to avoid the devil, stay away from his neighborhood" (Alden, p.63). Notice that is often during the hours of darkness that evil is done.
 - c. "He was sauntering, and had nothing to do, but passed through the street as one that knew not how to dispose of himself. One of the sins of filthy Sodom was abundance of idleness, Ezek 16:49. He went in a starchy stately manner, so (it is said) the word signifies. He appeared to be a nice formal fop, the top of whose accomplishments was to dress well and walk with a good air; fit game for that bird of prey to fly at. He was a night-walker, that hated and scorned the business that is to be done by day-light, from which the evening calls men in to their repose; and, having fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, he begins to move in the twilight in the evening, v. 9. And he chooses the black and dark night as fittest for his purpose, not the moonlight nights, when he might be discovered. He steered his course towards the house of one that he thought would entertain him, and that he might be merry with; he went near her corner, the way to her house (v. 8), contrary to Solomon's advice (Prov 5:8), Come not night the door of her house. Perhaps he did not know it was the way to an infamous house, but, however, it was a way that he had no business in; and when we have nothing to do the devil will quickly find us something to do. We must take heed, not only of idle days, but of idle evenings, lest they prove inlets to temptation" [Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: New Modern Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1991 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.].
3. Verses 10-12: "And, behold, there met him a woman *with* the attire of an harlot, and subtle of heart. (She *is* loud and stubborn; her feet abide not in her house: Now *is she* without, now in the streets, and lieth in wait at every corner.)"

- a. The woman met him; she is dressed in the attire of harlotry. There was something in their dress and demeanor which identified harlots then, and now. Judah saw Tamar as a harlot by her dress (Gen. 38:12-16).
 - b. The way some women dress today makes a statement about their availability. This woman is described as loud and insistent; she was not timid in asserting her desires. She did not remain at home, but was on the street, lying in wait at the corner.
4. Verses 13-15: "So she caught him, and kissed him, *and* with an impudent face said unto him, *I have* peace offerings with me; this day have I payed my vows. Therefore came I forth to meet thee, diligently to seek thy face, and I have found thee."
- a. She grabbed this unwise young man and kissed him—a very brazen act. But she hardens her face when she speaks to him. With a straight face she claims to have offered peace offering and paid her vows, and therefore has come forth to meet this young man. Many people who live in sin maintain a varnish of religion.
 - b. "It is a well-known fact, that the favourite mistress of Louis XIV, was so rigid in her religious duties, that her bread was weighed during Lent, lest she should transgress the austerity of fasting" (see Bridges, p.69, footnote). "She durst not play the harlot with man till she had played the hypocrite with God, and stopped the mouth of her conscience with *her peace-offerings*" (ibid.).
 - c. The movie "Never On Sunday" is said to be a story about a modern prostitute who would not ply her trade on the Lord's Day. All the many forms of fornication are condemned by the God of heaven
 - 1) 1 Corinthians 6:9-11: "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."
 - 2) Galatians 5:19-21: "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told *you* in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."
 - d. No person can be acceptable to God who holds on to sin with one hand and tries to serve God with the other.
 - 1) Matthew 6:24: "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."
 - 2) Matthew 12:30: "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad."
 - 3) Titus 2:11-14: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."
 - e. She claims to have ventured forth into the streets for the express purpose of finding this young man. Was he foolish enough to believe her claim? "...She is of a hidden mind, of a concealed nature; for she feigns fidelity to her husband and flatters her paramours as her only beloved, while in truth she loves none, and each of them is to her only a means to an end, viz. to the indulgence of her worldly
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sensual desire" (Keil, p.161).

5. Verses 16-18: "I have decked my bed with coverings of tapestry, with carved *works*, with fine linen of Egypt. I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. Come, let us take our fill of love until the morning: let us solace ourselves with loves."
 - a. She has flattered him with her lie about having come out to meet him. It appears she is a shrewd judge of character. She now entices him by describing her den: "I have decked my bed with tapestry, carved works, and fine Egyptian linen; I have perfumed it with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon; let us take our pleasure."
 - b. The next verse indicates that she is a married woman. If so, she brings her lovers to the very bed she shares with her husband. "That husband may be a scoundrel who cheats on her in another city on a business trip, but Scripture condemns marital infidelity regardless of the circumstances. Sex outside of marriage is plainly, simply, sin. (cf. 2:17)" (Alden, p. 65).
 - c. "She courted him to lie with her. They will sit down to eat and drink, and then rise up to play, to play the wanton, and there is a bed ready for them, where he shall find that which will be in all respects agreeable to him. To please his eye, it is decked with coverings of tapestry and carved works, exquisitely fine; he never saw the like. To please his touch, the sheets are not of home-spun cloth; they are far-fetched and dear bought; they are of fine linen of Egypt, v. 16. To gratify his smell, it is perfumed with the sweetest scents, v. 17. Come, therefore, and let us take our fill of love, v. 18. Of love, does she say? Of lust she means, brutish lust; but it is a pity that the name of love should be thus abused. True love is from heaven; this is from hell. How can those pretend to solace themselves and love one another who are really ruining themselves and one another?" [Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: New Modern Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1991 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.].
 6. Verses 19-20: "For the goodman *is* not at home, he is gone a long journey: He hath taken a bag of money with him, *and* will come home at the day appointed."
 - a. The "goodman" of the house is a reference to the ruler of the house, her husband. Her aim here is obviously to remove any fear of discovery. It may be debatable whether there was any husband at all. If she were a common harlot, the young man might be more hesitant to accept her advances; if she claimed to be a married woman whose husband was away, he might be more willing. If she was willing to lie about one thing (vs. 15), she would be able to lie about another. But the most natural understanding is to take her at her word: she is a married woman who is not content to stay at home and remain virtuous in the absence of her husband; thus does she seek out the companionship of strangers.
 - b. She asserts that the goodman of the house is away on a long journey; that he has taken his bag of money; and that he has appointed a day for his return, a day which will not interfere with her plans for pleasure.
 7. Verse 21: "With her much fair speech she caused him to yield, with the flattering of her lips she forced him."
 - a. Solomon speaks of her fair speech by which she broke down all his inhibitions. Her appeal has been masterfully done. "Man cannot be ruined till he has been made confident *to the contrary*. A man must get into his victim's heart with fair speeches and promises, before he can come at it with a dagger.' Thus the harlot's *flattering speech* chained the youth blindfolded for destruction" (Bridges, pp.69f).
 - b. This method of using smooth words and fair speeches is the plan of actions employed by false teachers. In many cases, they know precisely that they are deceiving the hearts of the simple, but they
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are unconcerned. Some may sincerely be teachers of religious error, believing it to be truth, but the effect is still the same. Those who know what they are about, have as their aim the gratification of their greed. Invariably, they make a continual appeal for money, either directly or by the use of some scam. No false teacher is identifiable by a name plate; he can be recognized only by what he teaches and practices (Matt. 7:15-20).

- c. We have the perfect standard by which to measure and test those who claim to be gospel teachers.
 - 1) Acts 17:11-12: "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few."
 - 2) 2 Timothy 2:15: "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."
 - 3) 1 John 4:1: "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world."
 - 4) Jude 1:3: "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort *you* that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."
 - d. "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple" (Romans 16:17-18; cf. 2 Sam. 15:1-6).
 - e. Sin is itself deceitful. Those who make their living by selling sinful indulgences (such as alcoholic beverages, illegal drugs, etc.) do not tell the whole story. The billboards advertising whiskey or beer depict beautiful scenery and pleasant settings but do not show the end result of such indulgences. They say nothing about the bums on skid row, or the broken families, or the diseased bodies of its adherents, or the smashed bodies and lives of those injured by those who drink; and for certain they will say nothing about the eternal loss of precious souls who are enticed thereby.
8. Verses 22-23: "He goeth after her straightway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks; Till a dart strike through his liver; as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it *is* for his life."
- a. Solomon depicts the ultimate end of the fornicator. This young man is hooked and landed by the artful enticer. He is led away as an ox who innocently goes to the slaughter, or the fool to the stocks.
 - b. The end of such a one is death, which is described by several figures of speech. With the New Testament before our minds, we can know that such a one, who dies guilty of sin, will be consigned to torment (Matt. 25:46).
 - c. "'Straightway' implies the youth's precipitancy, and his rash inconsiderateness as to the grievousness of the sin and its penalty: 'as the ox goeth to the slaughter,' full of alacrity, because he fancies he is being led to the stall or to the pasturage. 'As a fool to the correction of the stocks'—literally, 'as the stocks,' or 'fettters (go) to the correction of the fool' or 'malefactor;' as the fetter or stocks wherewith he is punished follow his foot. The youth sports with his fetters, or is proud of them, and thinks they are put on him as an ornament, or in play (Gejer). The same Hebrew...is used for 'tinkling ornaments' on the feet of women (Isa 3:16-18), as here expresses fetters or 'stocks.' Solomon implies the harlot's tinkling ornaments on her feet provoked the youth with their sound, calling his attention to her gait and form. All the while he knows not that the tinkling ornament on her feet will prove his own fetter
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(Cornelius a Lapide). 'To love one's fetters, though they be of gold, is the part of a fool' (Seneca)...Till a dart strike through his liver; as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it (is) for his life. He knoweth not that his following her is at the cost of the present and eternal life. The 'dart' of the husband, the magistrate, Satan, and, above all, God (Job 16:13), strikes the youth in body, in resources, in reputation, and, worst of all, in soul. The "liver" is mentioned as a vital part (Lam 2:11). 'It is the seat of love; where, therefore, the youth sinned by love, there he is transfixed with pain' (Gejer)" [Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by Biblesoft].

C. Proverbs 7:24-27: Solomon Admonishes his Students to Take Heed to his Instructions.

1. Verses 24-25: "Hearken unto me now therefore, O ye children, and attend to the words of my mouth. Let not thine heart decline to her ways, go not astray in her paths."
 - a. Wisdom is to be heeded; the student's directions are characterized by wisdom; these directions are wise and beneficial.
 - b. "In the hand of a licentious poet or painter, this picture might serve to contaminate the unsanctified imagination. But as it stands on the page of inspiration, it is God's solemn warning to *children*, whether in years, understanding, or experience. *Now, therefore*, that you have seen the end of sin... *hearken unto me*. That you may *not go astray in her paths, let not thine heart decline*" (Bridges, p.70).
2. Verses 26-27: "For she hath cast down many wounded: yea, many strong *men* have been slain by her. Her house *is* the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death."
 - a. Fornication is a short cut to the grave and hell. Many acquire diseases, meet with injury, and face the condemnation of conscience. The choice one faces in this enticement is between life and death, and heaven and hell.
 - b. "The harlot marks her course with ruined souls, as a ruthless conqueror leaves a field of battle strewn with corpses. Yea, many strong (atsum) men have been slain by her. One thinks of Samson and David and Solomon, the victims of illicit love, and suffering for it....Her house is the way to hell (sheol). A warning fontal in Prov 2:18 and Prov 5:5....Manifold are the ways of destruction to which adultery leads; but they all look to one awful end. Going down to the chambers of death. Once entangled in the toils of the temptress, the victim may pass through many stages, but he ends finally in the lowest depth—destruction of body and soul. Spiritual writers see here an adumbration of the seductions of false doctrine, and the lake to which it brings all who by it are led astray" [Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by Biblesoft].
 - c. Proverbs 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."

PROVERBS 8

A. Proverbs 8:1-11: The Call of Wisdom.

1. Verses 1-3: "Doth not wisdom cry? and understanding put forth her voice? She standeth in the top of high places, by the way in the places of the paths. She crieth at the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in at the doors."
 - a. Wisdom is given a feminine personification. "The Hebrew language has only two genders, masculine and feminine, so grammatically speaking there are no 'its' in the language. As a rule concepts such as righteousness, wickedness, love, truth, and law are feminine...Wisdom is feminine also as the personification of a woman who is to be loved, honored, and wed. Proverbs includes a number of interesting comparisons between the adulteress, or Lady Folly, and Dame Wisdom. They both stand at the crossroads to persuade men to follow them. They both make promises and give rewards" (Alden, p.69).
 - b. "Wisdom is not mere historical information or scientific knowledge, or moral philosophy; but rather, wisdom is piety toward God. It is an appreciation of the fine attributes of God coupled with a holy desire to imitate those divine attributes" (ALC, 1979, p.131).
 - c. In this section, the call of wisdom is issued. The previous chapter described the means used by a harlot to ensnare the unsuspecting and foolish young man who ventured to her corner in the evening. Through the subtlety of her words, she was able to overcome the young man's inhibitions and cause him to sin. "Without doubt, Solomon's description of the 'strange woman' in physical life is a type of the false teachers in spiritual life, and this fact should be held in view in the study of the present text. Wisdom, as personified by Solomon is to be studied in contrast with the strange woman" (ibid., p.132).
 - d. The strange woman of chapter seven waited on the dark street corner, but Wisdom calls openly in the daytime, from prominent places where she can be seen from afar. There is nothing secretive and seductive about her call or her intentions. Wisdom has something worthwhile to offer and nothing to conceal. This is also true of the call of the gospel (Mark 16:15-16; 2 Thess. 2:14; Rom. 10:13-18).
 2. Verses 4-5: "Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice *is* to the sons of man. O ye simple, understand wisdom: and, ye fools, be ye of an understanding heart."
 - a. The call of wisdom is issued to all classes of people, which are delineated in this passage.
 - b. To men—Those who are mature and experienced, and who already have a measure of wisdom. There is always a need of increasing and deepening the wisdom we have. It is of such a nature that we cannot get too much of it.
 - c. To the sons of men—Those who are weaker and of less experience than those of the first line. These would be the younger people and those with less knowledge.
 - d. To the simple—These are people who are easily influenced, and because of that, are easy marks for the wicked. This class would include such people as the young man of chapter seven.
 - e. To the foolish—This class includes "those who are spiritually and intellectually dull and difficult of impression in the course of righteousness. This was the case because their heart—the seat of their mind and emotions—was inclined to things evil" (ibid., p.133).
 3. Verse 6: "Hear; for I will speak of excellent things; and the opening of my lips *shall be* right things."
 - a. Wisdom assures her auditors that what she speaks are "excellent things." What she speaks are things which will do good, not evil.
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- b. These things are superior to that which the harlot of chapter seven spoke. Wisdom pledges that she will speak only "right things," things which will correct mistaken views, lead to amended lives, and prevent her followers from doing things that are wrong. There will be no duplicity or words that are deceitful.
 4. Verse 7: "For my mouth shall speak truth; and wickedness *is* an abomination to my lips."
 - a. Wisdom here promises to speak the truth; there would be no error and no combination of truth and error, to come from her lips. God's wisdom, which is expressed in the gospel, is all truth.
 - b. Wisdom affirms that she considers all wickedness as abominable; thus, she pledges to speak only that which is truthful and right.
 5. Verse 8: "All the words of my mouth *are* in righteousness; *there is* nothing froward or perverse in them."
 - a. Again Wisdom states that her words are in righteousness. "Wisdom's words were in righteousness—that is, her words testified as to the areas of justice, equity, and fairness coupled with mercy. Those words testified as to those matters which a man owes to his God, to his neighbor, to his companion and children, and to himself, thereby giving to each his just dues. There was nothing perverse, or distorted, or slanted in Wisdom's words" (ALC, p.133).
 - b. "What she says is trustworthy. You can trust her to put you on the right path. During World War II the towns on the east side of England prepared themselves for invasion by arranging that the citizens should turn all the road signs in the wrong direction to confuse the enemy. Wisdom would never do that to you" (Alden, p.71).
 6. Verse 9: "They *are* all plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge."
 - a. Wisdom's words are also plain—easy to grasp and appreciate. Those who have no interest in her words of truth shut their minds to her message. Many today claim that they cannot understand the King James Version of the Bible. But people of previous generations who had little education could understand it. What is the difference? A desire to understand and a firm belief that it was God's word.
 - b. Many members of the church say they cannot understand the Bible, or some Bible presentation, but they are able to watch movies and television, and read books, which have complex plots and a multitude of characters, and understand what is presented. Anyone who desires to know God's word—can! The Bible is intended for everyone; anything God requires of us, we can learn and do.
 7. Verses 10-11: "Receive my instruction, and not silver; and knowledge rather than choice gold. For wisdom *is* better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it."
 - a. Wisdom pleaded with her auditors to receive the instructions she imparted with a greater desire than for silver and gold. "When you think of all the hard work, long hours, and years of intrigue, risk, and even crime people engage in to acquire wealth, you begin to realize the price-tag wisdom puts on herself in these verses" (ibid.).
 - b. Wisdom has a value beyond material advantages and wealth.
 - c. "Thou canst not make as thy chief aim the acquisition of silver and that of true wisdom at one and the same time; for those aims mutually conflict, and each claims the whole man (Matt 6:24). To accept the one involves the rejection of the other as the chief portion. He who lives for money is void of wisdom (Luke 12:16,20), and is called in Scripture a 'fool.' The phrase "and not" does not imply an utter disregard to money, because we cannot rightly avoid some attention to the business of this world; but it is used to imply the comparative worthlessness of money when brought in competition with heavenly wisdom" [Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by Biblesoft].
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B. Proverbs 8:12-21: Practical Benefits of Wisdom.

1. Verse 12: "I wisdom dwell with prudence, and find out knowledge of witty inventions."
 - a. Wisdom and Prudence, both personified, dwell together. Clarke defines prudence as "wisdom applied to practice," and states that where "true wisdom is, it will lead to action; and its activity will be always in reference to the accomplishment of the best ends by the use of the most appropriate means. Hence comes what is here called *knowledge of witty inventions*....The farther wisdom proceeds in man, the more *practical* knowledge it gains..." (p.722).
 - b. Wisdom cannot dwell with evil; she does dwell with prudence.
 - c. "Wisdom inhabits prudence, animates and possesses that cleverness and tact which is needed for the practical purposes of life. So the Lord is said to "inhabit eternity" (Isa 57:15)...This rendering refers to the production and solution of dark sayings which Wisdom effects. But the expression is better rendered, 'knowledge of deeds of discretion' (ch. 1:4), or 'of right counsels,' and it signifies that Wisdom presides over all well considered designs, that they are not beyond her sphere, and that she has and uses the knowledge of them" [Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by Biblesoft].
 - d. "Wisdom dwells with prudence; for prudence is the product of religion and an ornament to religion; and there are more witty inventions found out with the help of the scripture, both for the right understanding of God's providences and for the effectual countermining of Satan's devices and the doing of good in our generation, than were ever discovered by the learning of the philosophers or the politics of statesmen. We may apply it to Christ himself; he dwells with prudence, for his whole undertaking is the wisdom of God in a mystery, and in it God abounds towards us in all wisdom and prudence. Christ found out the knowledge of that great invention, and a costly one it was to him, man's salvation, by his satisfaction, an admirable expedient. We had found out many inventions for our ruin; he found out one for our recovery. The covenant of grace is so well ordered in all things that we must conclude that he who ordered it dwelt with prudence" [Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: New Modern Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1991 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.].
 2. Verse 13: "The fear of the LORD *is* to hate evil: pride, and arrogance, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate."
 - a. The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom (1:7). One who fears God will hate the same things that are hated by him. God hates every false way (Ps. 119:128). Seven things he hates were listed in Proverbs 6:16-19: "These six *things* doth the LORD hate: yea, seven *are* an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness *that* speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren."
 - b. Here wisdom says she hates *evil*, and then proceeds to name four examples: pride, arrogance, the evil way, and the froward mouth. Pride is self-esteem of the wrong degree or kind; arrogance is pride in the extreme; the evil way is anything that violates God's standard of godliness; and the froward mouth is one which utters falsehoods. Everyone who seeks to please God will likewise reject these evil attitudes and practices. Wisdom cannot dwell with such.
 3. Verses 14-16: "Counsel *is* mine, and sound wisdom: I *am* understanding; I have strength. By me kings reign, and princes decree justice. By me princes rule, and nobles, *even* all the judges of the earth."
 - a. Wisdom possesses the ability to counsel, to give understanding and to share her strength. Wisdom is able to guide kings, princes, nobles, and judges. If all our earthly rulers in the civil realm would operate by the counsel of Wisdom, our lot would be universally good. War would be banished; greed
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would be hindered; peace and harmony would prevail.

- b. We are instructed to pray for rulers (I Tim. 2:1-3). Rulers are serving a God-given function (Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-17). Woe to that ruler who misuses his authority for wrongful ends!
 - 1) Romans 13:1-7: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to *execute* wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore *ye* must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute *is due*; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour."
 - 2) 1 Timothy 2:1-3: "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, *and* giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and *for* all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this *is* good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour."
 - 3) 1 Peter 2:13-17: "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: As free, and not using *your* liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honour all *men*. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king."
4. Verse 17: "I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me."
 - a. Wisdom loves those who love her. Wisdom's blessings are bestowed upon those who love Wisdom. God loves all mankind, but his spiritual blessings are given to those who love him. Hence, we can keep ourselves in the love of God (Jude 21). We keep ourselves in his love by keeping his commandments: "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love" (John 15:9-10).
 - 1) John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."
 - 2) Romans 5:8: "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."
 - 3) 1 John 4:19: "We love him, because he first loved us."
 - b. Those who seek wisdom *early*, will find her. This implies that those who do not seek her early may not find her. "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them" (Eccl. 12:1). The time usually comes when a man grows callous or content in his situation; he either has no desire or sees no need to care for his soul.
5. Verses 18-21: "Riches and honour *are* with me; *yea*, durable riches and righteousness. My fruit *is* better than gold, *yea*, than fine gold; and my revenue than choice silver. I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment: That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance; and I will

fill their treasures."

- a. Riches and honor are benefits of Wisdom. The riches are spiritual and the honor is righteousness. These are durable.
 - 1) Matthew 6:19-21: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."
 - 2) John 6:27: "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed."
- b. Those who love wisdom will be led by her in paths of righteousness; they will ultimately inherit substance that lasts; they will be filled with treasures. "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again" (Luke 6:38).

C. Proverbs 8:22-36: Wisdom Has the Right to be Heard and Heeded.

1. Verse 22: "The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old."
 - a. The point made through these verses is Wisdom's claim to have been present in the beginning while God made the earth. Before the creation, God possessed wisdom. The greatest of wisdom was exercised in bringing the universe and the earth into being from nothing.
 - 1) Psalms 33:6-9: "By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap: he layeth up the depth in storehouses. Let all the earth fear the LORD: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. For he spake, and it was *done*; he commanded, and it stood fast."
 - 2) Psalms 104:24: "O LORD, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches."
 - 3) Hebrews 11:3: "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear."
 - b. The wisdom that pertains to God's nature he has always possessed; the wisdom which pertains to man and earthly things was brought into play prior to the creation (if it was not also eternally present).
 - c. "Wisdom reveals herself as preceding all creation, stamped upon it all, one with God, yet in some way distinguishable from Him as the object of His love (Prov 8:30). John declares that all which Wisdom here speaks of herself was true in its highest sense of the Word that became flesh (John 1:1-14): just as Apostles afterward applied Wisd. 7:22-30 to Christ (compare Col 1:15; Heb 1:3)" [Barnes' Notes, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by BibleSoft].
2. Verses 23-31: "I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When *there were* no depths, I was brought forth; when *there were* no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth: While as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When he prepared the heavens, I *was* there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth: When he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the fountains of the deep: When he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth: Then I was by him, *as* one brought up *with him*: and I was daily *his* delight, rejoicing always before him; Rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights *were* with the sons of men."
 - a. Wisdom gives details concerning the creation, and states that before these came into being, she was

there. Hence, wisdom has the right to be heard and obeyed.

- b. Wisdom was present in the beginning. All the plans and operations of the creation of the universe, the earth, and all earthly life depended on wisdom; without wisdom, none of these things could have been brought into existence. The universe could not have created itself; the earth could never have come into being without wisdom; not form of life could have obtain existence without wisdom. God used great wisdom in bringing about the creation of the world, all plant and animal life, and man.
- c. This passage denies what foolish men affirm; it affirms what foolish men deny. Not one atom could have come into existence on its own, for in nature, nothing cannot produce anything. The entire creation resulted from the operations of God's miraculous power, acting in harmony with divine wisdom.
 - 1) Hebrews 3:4: "For every house is builded by some *man*; but he that built all things *is* God."
 - 2) Psalms 14:1: "The fool hath said in his heart, *There is* no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, *there is* none that doeth good."
3. Verses 32-36: "Now therefore hearken unto me, O ye children: for blessed *are they that* keep my ways. Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not. Blessed *is* the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the LORD. But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death."
 - a. Here is the application of Wisdom's words: hear and obey my instructions. Many have tried to find in this chapter some reference to Christ, but this must be read into the text, for no such allusion is stated or implied. Rather, wisdom is personified; it becomes in effect a representation of God's word, the revealed will of the Almighty.
 - b. "Either a man loves wisdom and life or avoids her and dies; the choice is simple. Chapter 8 ends with the grand theme of choosing between two ways: the way of life or the way of death; the way of piety or the way of sin" (Alden, p.75).
 - c. "The wisdom that comes from God, teaching to avoid evil and cleave to that which is good; findeth life....But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death....It is not Satan, it is not sin, properly speaking, that hurts him; it is himself. If he received the teaching of God, sin would have no dominion over him; if he resisted the devil, the devil would flee from him.... As they love sin, that leads to death, so they may be justly said to love death, the wages of sin. He that works in this case, works for wages; and he must love the wages, seeing he labours so hard in the work...." [Adam Clarke's Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1996 by Biblesoft].
 - d. Adam Clarke also gave these general comments on this chapter: "I have gone through this fine chapter, and given the best exposition of it in my power. I have also, as well as others, weighed every word, and closely examined their radical import, their connection among themselves, and the connection of the subject of the chapter with what has gone before, and with what follows after; and I cannot come, conscientiously, to any other interpretation than that which I have given. I am thoroughly satisfied that it speaks not one word either about the divine or human nature of Christ, much less of any eternal filiation of his Divinity. And I am fully persuaded, had there not been a preconceived creed, no soul of man, by fair criticism, would have ever found out that fond opinion of the eternal sonship of the divine nature, which so many commentators persuade us they find here. That it has been thus applied in early ages, as well as in modern times, I am sufficiently aware; and that many other portions of the divine records have been appealed to, in order to support a particular opinion, and many that were false in themselves, must be known to those who are acquainted with the fathers....As to the fathers in general, they were not all agreed on this subject, some supposing Christ, others the Holy Spirit, was meant in this chapter. But of these we may safely state, that there is not a

truth in the most orthodox creed, that cannot be proved by their authority, nor a heresy that has disgraced the Romish church, that may not challenge them as its abettors. In points of doctrine, their authority is, with me, nothing. The WORD of GOD alone contains my creed. On a number of points I can go to the Greek and Latin fathers of the church, to know what they believed, and what the people of their respective communions believed; but after all this I must return to God's word, to know what he would have ME to believe....By appealing to the Bible alone, as the only rule for the faith and practice of Christians, they confounded and defeated their papistical adversaries, who could not prove their doctrines but by fathers and councils. Hence, their peculiar doctrines stand in their ultimate proof upon THESE; and those of Protestantism on the BIBLE. Some late writers upon this subject, whose names I spare, have presumed much on what they have said on this subject; but before any man, who seeks for sober truth, will receive any of their conclusions, he will naturally look whether their premises be sound, or whether from sound principles they have drawn legitimate conclusions. They say this chapter is a sufficient foundation to build their doctrine on. I say it is no foundation at all; that it never has been proved, and never can be proved, that it speaks at all of the doctrine in question. It has nothing to do with it. On this conviction of mine, their proofs drawn from this chapter must go with me for nothing. I have been even shocked with reading over some things that have been lately written on the subject. I have said in my heart, They have taken away my ETERNAL LORD, and I know not where they have laid him. I cannot believe their doctrine; I never did; I hope I never shall. I believe in the holy Trinity; in three persons in the Godhead, of which none is before or after another. I believe YAHWEH, JESUS, the HOLY SPIRIT to be one infinite, eternal GODHEAD, subsisting ineffably in three persons. I believe Jesus the Christ to be, as to his divine nature, as unoriginated and eternal as YAHWEH Himself; and with the Holy Spirit to be one infinite Godhead, neither person being created, begotten, nor proceeding, more than another: as to its essence, but one TRINITY, in an infinite, eternal and inseparable UNITY. And this TRIUNE GOD is the object of my faith, my adoration, and my confidence. But I believe not in an eternal sonship or generation of the divine nature of Jesus Christ. Here I have long stood, here I now stand, and here I trust to stand in the hour of death, in the day of judgment, and to all eternity. Taking the Scriptures in general, I find a plurality in the divine nature; taking the grand part mentioned, Matt 3:16-17, I find that plurality restrained to a trinity, in the most unequivocal and evident manner: Jesus, who was baptized in Jordan; the HOLY GHOST, who descended upon him who was baptized; and the FATHER, manifested by the voice from heaven that said, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' And how that person called Jesus the CHRIST, in whom dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, could be called the Son of God, I have shown in my note at Luke 1:35" [ibid].

PROVERBS 9

A. Proverbs 9:1-12: Wisdom Prepares a Feast and Invites Guests.

1. Verses 1-2: "Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars: She hath killed her beasts; she hath mingled her wine; she hath also furnished her table."
 - a. The personification of Wisdom continues with a description of her building a house and preparing a great feast. There is no obvious significance to the number of pillars (seven); it possibly indicates perfection. The table is prepared with flesh and wine and whatever else was customary.
 - b. *Mingled wine* is a reference to the ancient practice of mixing water and wine in certain portions: for example, one part wine and three parts water. Clarke thinks it was wine into which spices or other ingredients had been stirred (p.728).
 - c. "The Greeks mingled wine with water in a bowl called a (*krater*), and the LXX translates, (she has mingled her wine in a bowl). Rev 14:10 declares that the wicked will drink the wine of God's wrath unmixed, i.e., undiluted. The apocryphal book II Maccabees 15:39 declares that wine undiluted with water was thought distasteful. The rabbis held that the Passover wine should be diluted with three parts of water (Art. "wine," ISBE; The Mishnah, Berakoth Prov 7:5). Obviously, not all the wine of antiquity was thus diluted or it would all have been nonintoxicating. Wine was also mixed with spices (Isa 5:22). Wisdom's wine is at all events symbolic" [The Wycliffe Bible Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1962 by Moody Press].
 - d. The passage is simply describing in human terms Wisdom's preparation of her benefits, and her invitation for all to partake.
2. Verses 3-6: "She hath sent forth her maidens: she crieth upon the highest places of the city, Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: *as for* him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him, Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine *which* I have mingled. Forsake the foolish, and live; and go in the way of understanding."
 - a. She sends forth her maidens to extend invitations to her feast. This was the ancient custom: those to be invited were told about the forthcoming feast; the feast was prepared on the prescribed day; and then servants were dispatched to call those bidden to come to the feast, when all things were ready (Matt. 22:1ff; Luke 14:16ff).
 - b. Wisdom's servants station themselves in the prominent places of the city and invite those who pass to come to the feast. In the present case, the invitation is extended to all, not to a selected few. This is in keeping with the universal call of the gospel (Rev. 22:17; Matt. 11:28-30). Their call is for those who are simple to turn in at Wisdom's gate, and partake of her benefits; forsake the foolish ways and go in at the door of understanding.
3. Verses 7-9: "He that reproveth a scorner getteth to himself shame: and he that rebuketh a wicked *man* getteth himself a blot. Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee: rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee. Give *instruction* to a wise *man*, and he will be yet wiser: teach a just *man*, and he will increase in learning."
 - a. Solomon observes that it is useless to reprove a scornful person. He implies that this reproof be withheld from such people, which further implies the necessity of making a judgment regarding the prospective contact's character. One who has set himself against God, Christ, or the Bible is not apt to be changed. The Lord described the same point, that Solomon makes here, as giving pearls to swine (Matt. 7:6). Notice that the Lord's statement immediately follows his discourse on judging; so even in the very context of judging, he shows that we must make certain judgments. "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment" (John 7:24).

- b. Giving reproof to a scorner (also called a wicked man), is repaid by receiving shame, a blot, and hatred. But give reproof to a wise man, and he will love you for it, and will himself have even greater wisdom. "He that rebuketh a wicked man getteth himself a blot; rather, he that reproveth a sinner, it is his blot. Such a proceeding results in disgrace to himself. This is not said to discourage the virtuous from reproving transgressors, but states the effect which experience proves to occur in such cases. Prudence, caution, and tact are needed in dealing with these characters. Evil men regard the reprover as a personal enemy, and treat him with contumely, and hence arise unseemly bickerings and disputes, injurious words and deeds. To have wasted teaching on such unreceptive and antagonistic natures is a shameful expenditure of power" [Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by BibleSoft].
- 1) Proverbs 27:6: "Faithful *are* the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy *are* deceitful."
 - 2) Galatians 4:16: "Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?"
- c. "The gospel is a thing too holy to be exposed to scoffing fools, (Matt. 7:6.) Why should we *reprove*, where more harm than good may be occasioned? Avoid irritations. Await the favourable opportunity. Sometimes a sad, serious, intelligible silence is the most effective reproof. (Amos 5:13; 6:10.) Whereas open *rebuke* might stir up a foment of *hatred* (Chap. 15:12; 23:9; 1 Kings 22:8; 2 Chron. 25:16) and abuse (Gen. 19:8; Amos 7:10; Matt. 7:6); and under provocation of spirit, the *reprover* might *get to himself a blot*. (Isa. 29:21.) Yet this prudence must not degenerate into cowardice, and compromise the primary obligation boldly to rebuke sin (Eph. 5:11; 1 Thess. 5:14; 1 Tim. 5:20; Matt. 14:3,4)..." (Bridges, pp.86f).
4. Verse 10: "The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy *is* understanding."
- a. This thought is expressed elsewhere in the Scriptures (Job 28:28; Ps. 111:10; Prov. 1:7). "The child of God has only one dread—to offend his Father; only one desire to please and delight in him. Thus *is the fear of the Lord* connected with his love" (ibid., p.87).
 - b. With our faith in God comes reverence for him; with this faith and awe, comes the dread of doing anything that would displease him (fear); this fear is to continue with us all our days.
 - 1) Ecclesiastes 12:13-14: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this *is* the whole *duty* of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether *it be* good, or whether *it be* evil."
 - 2) Hebrews 10:26-31: "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance *belongeth* unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. *It is* a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."
 - 3) Hebrews 12:28-29: "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God *is* a consuming fire."
5. Verse 11-12: "For by me thy days shall be multiplied, and the years of thy life shall be increased. If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself: but *if* thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear *it*."
- a. Everyone desires to live a long and happy life; Wisdom promises to provide this great blessing to her

followers. Old Testament blessings included a long life. In the New Testament, we understand that though our life on earth might be short, yet for the faithful, there awaits eternal life in heaven.

- 1) Mark 10:29-30: "And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life."
 - 2) 2 Peter 1:5-11: "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make *you that ye shall* neither *be* barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."
 - 3) Revelation 2:10: "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast *some* of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."
- b. Verse twelve expresses the old truth that we reap what we sow. The primary beneficiary of wisdom is its possessor; the primary curse of the scornful is on the scorner.

B. Proverbs 9:13-18: Dame Folly Sets Up Shop to Oppose Dame Wisdom.

1. Verses 13-16: "A foolish woman *is* clamorous: *she is* simple, and knoweth nothing. For she sitteth at the door of her house, on a seat in the high places of the city, To call passengers who go right on their ways: Whoso *is* simple, let him turn in hither: and *as for* him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him."
 - a. "Wisdom sets up her school to instruct the ignorant: Folly sets her school up next door, to defeat the designs of Wisdom....
 - (1) 'Wherever God erects a house of prayer,
 - (2) The devil surely builds a chapel there.
 - (3) And it is found upon examination,
 - (4) The latter has the larger congregation'" (Clarke, pp.728f).
 - b. Thus, Wisdom is opposed by Folly, who in truth, has nothing worthwhile to offer. Folly puts up a good front to deceive the simple. "She, like Wisdom, has a house of her own, and imitates her in inviting guests to enter. She does not send forth her maidens; she does not stand in the streets and proclaim her mission. Vice has an easier task; all she has to do is to sit and beckon and use a few seductive words. Her house is not supported by seven pillars, built on the grace of God....Like that of Wisdom (ver. 1); it is an ordinary habitation of no stately proportions. But its meanness impedes not the uses to which she puts it, her own charms causing her victims to disregard her environments" [Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by Biblesoft].
2. Verses 17-18: "Stolen waters are sweet, and bread *eaten* in secret is pleasant. But he knoweth not that the dead *are* there; and *that* her guests *are* in the depths of hell."
 - a. The heart of Folly's counsel is in verse 17. Folly asserts that the best water is that which is stolen; indulgence is best which is unlawful. It thrill some children to obtain something by stealth. But Folly

does not show the end result of sin (verse 18).

- 1) Romans 6:23: "For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."
 - 2) Revelation 20:12-15: "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."
 - 3) Revelation 21:8: "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."
- b. "Stolen waters are sweet. It is to water and bread, whereas Wisdom invites to the beasts she has killed and the wine she has mingled; however, bread and water are acceptable enough to those that are hungry and thirsty; and this is pretended to be more sweet and pleasant than common, for it is stolen water and bread eaten in secret, with a fear of being discovered. The pleasures of prohibited lusts are boasted of as more relishing than those of prescribed love; and dishonest gain is preferred to that which is justly gotten. Now this argues, not only a bold contempt, but an impudent defiance, of God's law, in that the waters are the sweeter for being stolen and come at by breaking through the hedge of the divine command....We are prone to what is forbidden. This spirit of contradiction we have from our first parents, who thought the forbidden tree of all others a tree to be desired....The bread is eaten in secret, for fear of discovery and punishment, and the sinner takes a pride in having so far baffled his convictions, and triumphed over them, that, notwithstanding that fear, he dares commit the sin, and can make himself believe that, being eaten in secret, it shall never be discovered or reckoned for. Sweetness and pleasantness constitute the bait; but, by the tempter's own showing, even that is so absurd, and has such allays, that it is a wonder how it can have any influence upon men that pretend to reason....He that so far wants understanding as to be drawn aside by these enticements is led on, ignorantly, to his own inevitable ruin: He knows not, will not believe, does not consider, the tempter will not let him know, that the dead are there, that those who live in pleasure are dead while they live, dead in trespasses and sins....Her guests, that are treated with those stolen waters, are not only in the highway to hell and at the brink of it, but they are already in the depths of hell, under the power of sin, led captive by Satan at his will, and ever and anon lashed by the terrors of their own consciences, which are a hell upon earth The depths of Satan are the depths of hell. Remorseless sin is remediless ruin; it is the bottomless pit already. Thus does Solomon show the hook; those that believe him will not meddle with the bait" [Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: New Modern Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1991 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.].
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PROVERBS 10

A. Introduction.

1. "Some think the title, 'Proverbs of Solomon,' was moved forward when chapters 1-9 were added to the book by ancient scribes such as the men of Hezekiah (25:1). Whether the first nine chapters should come before or after the next section matters little; the New Testament quotes from both early and late chapters with the same authority. With chapter 10 comes the listing of a series of 375 isolated maxims which better fit our traditional definition of proverbs. We will not return to the kind of extended poems, pictures, and pleas of earlier chapters" (Alden, p.83).
2. "The former chapters have beautifully set forth in continuous discourse the nature and value of heavenly wisdom, contrasted with the fascinations of sinful folly. We now come to what are more properly (not excluding the foregoing) (Chap. 1,2) *the Proverbs of Solomon*. They are for the most part unconnected sentences, remarkable for profound thought; the whole comprising a Divine system of morals of universal application; a treasure of wisdom in all its diversified details, personal, domestic, social, civil. The previous chapters form a striking introduction of the book. The glorious description of the Great Counsellor (Chap. 1:8) commends to us his gracious instruction as the principles of true happiness and practical godliness" (Bridges, p.90).
3. Most of the proverbs in this part of Proverbs (10:1—22:16) are *antithetical parallels*, which means that two thoughts are given in each verse, with a contrast being drawn between the two. There is usually a "but" separating the two parts of the verses. The subjects addressed are general in nature.

B. Proverbs 10:1-12.

1. Verse 1: "The proverbs of Solomon. A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish son *is* the heaviness of his mother."
 - a. These are styled as "The Proverbs of Solomon" (See Proverbs 1:1; 25:1). This title does not necessarily imply that others composed some of the other proverbs. The men of Hezekiah "copied out" some of Solomon's proverbs (But see 30:1; 31:1). Solomon wrote 3,000 proverbs and 1005 songs (1 Kings 4:32; Eccl. 12:9).
 - 1) 1 Kings 4:32: "And he spake three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five."
 - 2) Ecclesiastes 12:9: "And moreover, because the preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, *and* set in order many proverbs."
 - 3) Proverbs 1:1: "The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel."
 - 4) Proverbs 25:1: "These *are* also proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied out."
 - 5) Proverbs 30:1: "The words of Agur the son of Jakeh, *even* the prophecy: the man spake unto Ithiel, even unto Ithiel and Ucal."
 - 6) Proverbs 31:1: "The words of king Lemuel, the prophecy that his mother taught him."
 - b. The statement of the proverb here expresses the truth that what a son does, affects his parents. A wise son produces happiness, while a foolish son produces heaviness. The difference between the wise and foolish lies in the son's response to the godly instruction he has been given by the parents. Mothers are happy over wise sons, and fathers are made heavy by their foolish sons.
 - c. If the child is properly taught, and receives the godly instructions he is given, he will usually turn out to be wise. If he is not given proper instruction or if the proper discipline is not administered, or if he refuses guidance, he will usually turn out to be foolish. In all too many cases, a child turns out

wrong because one or another of these important parts is missing.

- d. "Want of early discipline; passing over trifles; yielding when we ought to command—how little do we think to what they may grow! (1 Sam. 2:24; 3:13; 1 Kings 1:5,6; 2:25.) God has laid down plain rules, plain duties, and plain consequences flowing from their observance (Chap. 22:6; 23:13,14) or neglect. (Chap. 29:15.) To forget a daily reference to them; to choose our own wisdom before God's (1 Sam. 2:29);—can we wonder that the result should be *heaviness*?" (Bridges, p.91).
2. Verse 2: "Treasures of wickedness profit nothing: but righteousness delivereth from death."
 - a. In the long run especially, the treasures acquired by wickedness profit nothing. Obtaining Naboth's vineyard did not profit Ahab (I Kings 21); the 30 pieces of silver did not add to the wealth of Judas. Both of these men met a violent death.
 - b. But on the other hand, the righteousness of a God-fearing person gives deliverance from death (the death of being separated from God (Isa. 59:1-2; Rev. 20:12-15; 21:8,27; Matt. 25:46). We are to flee sin and follow righteousness (1 Tim. 6:11); righteousness is to be our breastplate (Eph. 6:14; 1 Thess. 5:8); righteousness is the pathway to eternal life (Prov. 12:28; Ps. 15; Isa. 35:8; Mt. 5:8; Tit. 2:11-12; Acts 10:34-35).
 - c. Living a righteous life on earth can preserve our physical lives by keeping us from evil places, activities, and habits, which things might produce an untimely death.
 3. Verse 3: "The LORD will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish: but he casteth away the substance of the wicked."
 - a. God provides all the necessary sustenance for the human soul, so that the soul of the righteous person will not famish. The righteous soul is one who appropriates the spiritual nourishment (1 Pet. 2:2; Heb. 5:12-14). This seems to be the main emphasis of the statement, but God also provides the necessities of life to the righteous.
 - 1) Psalms 37:25: "I have been young, and *now* am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread."
 - 2) Matthew 6:33: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."
 - b. But the wicked, so seemingly secure in his abundance, will be cast away. The wicked were often also rich, especially in ancient times; the means of their wealth were often evil ways; thus, the wicked are frequently spoken of as having substance. Many wicked people have wealth throughout their lives; many righteous people suffer from want much of their lives; but in eternity, all the substance of the wicked will be removed, and the righteous will be blessed.
 4. Verses 4-5: "He becometh poor that dealeth *with* a slack hand: but the hand of the diligent maketh rich. He that gathereth in summer *is* a wise son: *but* he that sleepeth in harvest *is* a son that causeth shame."
 - a. Two precepts are given here which emphasize the necessity of diligent labor if they are to have the physical necessities of life. A slack hand is placed in contrast to the diligent hand; and one who gathereth in summer is contrasted with one who sleeps during harvest. Agriculture is the setting for these principles, but the same is true with those workers in an office or factory who are diligent or slack in doing their work. The hard workers are usually recognized; the lazy often need a union to preserve their jobs.
 - b. When God chose someone in the ancient days for a job to be done, he opted for a busy person: Moses was herding sheep (Ex. 3:1-2); Gideon was threshing wheat (Judg. 6:11); the apostles were fishing, mending their nets and collecting taxes when they were called (Matt. 4:18-22; 9:9); Saul of Tarsus was
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- busy, persecuting the saints (Acts 9). "An idle mind is the devil's workshop." "Our idle days are Satan's busy days." The trade of godliness is sure; prosperity is certain for those who obey God.
- c. In verse 4, indolence was contrasted with diligence; in verse five, forethought is opposed by improvidence (Bridges, p.93). "He who idles away the time of his youth will bear the shame of it when he is old."
 - d. A farmer must use intelligence and wisdom in planning his crops: when to plant, how to cultivate; when to harvest, etc.
5. Verse 6: "Blessings *are* upon the head of the just: but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked."
- a. God often brings trials upon the righteous to test and develop their faith. It is frequently the case that saints are among the poorer classes of society (Mark 12:37), and many times are the subjects of discrimination and hardship. But at the same time, there are blessings on them that no one else has.
 - 1) Matthew 6:33: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."
 - 2) Mark 10:29-30: "And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life."
 - 3) Ephesians 1:3: "Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ."
 - 4) Philippians 4:13, 19: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me....But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."
 - 5) Hebrews 13:5-6: "*Let your conversation be* without covetousness; *and be* content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord *is* my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me."
 - b. While blessings are on the head of the just, violence characterizes the mouth of the wicked. Alden says that this describes the hypocrisy and deceit the wicked man speaks—to the hurt of others.
6. Verse 7: "The memory of the just *is* blessed: but the name of the wicked shall rot."
- a. The memory of righteous people is pleasant to those who knew them in life. Their influence for good lives on long after they have gone into eternity (Heb. 11:4). But this is not true of wicked men; their names shall rot (be held in contempt; disliked).
 - b. Each person chooses whether he will be remembered gladly by the saints and God, or whether remembrance of his name will be shameful. We remember the righteous and the wicked, but in God's mind there is a special remembrance for the godly.
 - c. "It is part of the dignity of the saints, especially those who excel in virtue and are eminently useful, that they are remembered with respect when they are dead. Their good name, their name with good men, for good things, is then in a special manner as precious ointment, Eccl 7:1. Those that honour God he will thus honour, Ps 112:3,6,9. The elders by faith obtained a good report (Heb 11:2), and, being dead, are yet spoken of. It is part of the duty of the survivors: Let the memory of the just be blessed, so the Jews read it, and observe it as a precept, not naming an eminently just man that is dead without adding, Let his memory be blessed. We must delight in making an honourable mention of good men that are gone, bless God for them, and for his gifts and graces that appeared in them, and especially be followers of them in that which is good" [Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole
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7. Verses 8-10: "The wise in heart will receive commandments: but a prating fool shall fall. He that walketh uprightly walketh surely: but he that perverteth his ways shall be known. He that winketh with the eye causeth sorrow: but a prating fool shall fall."
 - a. The heart of a wise person is ready to receive correction and instruction. Not so with the prating fool. The former is open to the truth, which blesses; the latter is quick to denounce the truth, and suffer the consequences. "And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thess. 2:10-12).
 - b. Verse nine shows that the righteous person is on safe ground; he walks uprightly.
 - 1) Matthew 7:21-27: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it."
 - 2) 2 Peter 1:5-11: "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make *you that ye shall* neither *be* barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."
 - c. The person who walks in error or sin is not unobserved.
 - 1) Proverbs 15:3: "The eyes of the LORD *are* in every place, beholding the evil and the good."
 - 2) Hebrews 4:13: "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things *are* naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do."
 - 3) 2 Peter 2:4-9: "For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast *them* down to hell, and delivered *them* into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth *person*, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly; And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned *them* with an overthrow, making *them* an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly; And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed *his* righteous soul from day to day with *their* unlawful deeds;) The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished."

- d. One who winks at (overlooks) certain things causes sorrow. If we see another saint being overtaken in a sin, and do not warn him, we are permitting something to develop which will produce much sorrow: to him and others; now and in eternity (Ezek. 3: 17-19; Gal. 6:1-5; 1 John 5:16). Ignoring sin and error is not a demonstration of love; it rather shows unconcern for the sinner and perverter of truth.
- 1) Ezekiel 3:17-19: "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked *man* shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul."
 - 2) Galatians 6:1-5: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For every man shall bear his own burden."
 - 3) 1 John 5:16: "If any man see his brother sin a sin *which is* not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it."
8. Verse 11: "The mouth of a righteous *man is* a well of life: but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked."
- a. The righteous man speaks words which help, encourage and purify.
 - 1) Proverbs 10:21: "The lips of the righteous feed many: but fools die for want of wisdom."
 - 2) Proverbs 15:7: "The lips of the wise disperse knowledge: but the heart of the foolish *doeth* not so."
 - 3) Matthew 12:34-37: "O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."
 - 4) Ephesians 4:29: "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers."
 - 5) Colossians 4:6: "Let your speech *be* alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man."
 - b. But the wicked man speaks words which do harm to others and to himself: "But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies" (Matt. 15:18-19).
9. Verse 12: "Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins."
- a. "*Hatred*, however varnished by smooth pretence, is the selfish principle of man. (Tit. 3:3.) Like a subterraneous fire, it continually *stirs up* mischief, creates or keeps alive rankling coldness, disgusts, dislikes, 'envyings and evil surmisings;' carps at the infirmities of others; aggravates the least slip (Isa. 29:21); or resents the most trifling, or even imaginary, provocation" (Bridges, p.97).
 - b. Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers sin. This latter part of the verse is cited in 1 Peter 4:8 and James
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5:20, where the meaning is that love brings about the forgiveness of multitudes of sins. God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the inspired men who recorded the Bible, faithful preachers and teachers today—the love that these have shown work to the end of bringing about salvation. To cover sins is not to cover them up, but to cause them to be forgiven.

- 1) James 5:19-20: "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."
 - 2) 1 Peter 4:8: "And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins."
- c. "The word 'hide' or 'overwhelms' of verse 11 is the same as the word for 'overlook' or 'covers' in this verse; perhaps the reason why these verses appear together. The wicked and righteous both hide or overlook sin but for different reasons. The wicked man hides his own sin; that's deceit. The righteous man overlooks another's sin; that's forgiveness. The most deceitful are often least forgiving while the most forgiving are the least deceitful. The diligence you exhibit in exposing the shortcomings of others may be a barometer of your own faults" (Alden, p.86).
- d. Love covers sin by bringing about its forgiveness; and when someone who has sinned against us repents, we quickly overlook their offense (we cover it up; it no longer stands between us).

C. Proverbs 10:13-32.

1. Verses 13-14: "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. Wise *men* lay up knowledge: but the mouth of the foolish *is* near destruction."
 - a. Those who are wise store up and speak understanding; the foolish are not so; they are reserved for punishment.
 - b. 2 Peter 2:4-9: "For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast *them* down to hell, and delivered *them* into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth *person*, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly; And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned *them* with an overthrow, making *them* an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly; And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed *his* righteous soul from day to day with *their* unlawful deeds;) The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished."
 - c. Corporal punishment was meted out under the Law for certain offenses. "Forty stripes he may give him, *and* not exceed: lest, *if* he should exceed, and beat him above these with many stripes, then thy brother should seem vile unto thee" (Deut. 25:3).
 - d. "Wisdom—i.e., wise speech—brings no rod to the speaker: but unwise speech brings 'a rod' upon 'him that is void of understanding.' 'Wisdom,' moreover, is to be learnt from the wise speaker; but you must search for it until it 'is found.' The wise man's words attest his wisdom; the fool's stripes attest his folly. He who will not be taught understanding by words must be taught it by the 'rod.' The wise man carries the ornament of his wisdom in his "lips;" the fool shall bear the disgrace of his folly on his 'back'.... Wise men lay up knowledge: but the mouth of the foolish is near destruction. After 'the lips' (Prov 10:13), the bringers forth of knowledge, follows the mind or memory, its storehouse. The wise lay it up in the mind, so as to bring it forth at the seasonable time (not at random, like fools, but) for the temporal and spiritual benefit of themselves and others (Matt 12:35; 13:52). By his spiritual knowledge he wards off from himself and others the destruction which is the result of sin (Ps

119:11). But the 'foolish' has always 'near' and reply in his mouth speech such as brings 'destruction' on himself as well as on others (Prov 12:23). It is a considerable part of wisdom to know when to speak, and when to be silent" [Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by BibleSoft.

2. Verse 15: "The rich man's wealth *is* his strong city: the destruction of the poor *is* their poverty."
 - a. The outward appearance of the things considered is what is stated. The strength of a wealthy man is his fortification. But wealth can do nothing for the soul; it can not give happiness or peace of mind; it is unreliable for it can be stolen, or lost, or can lose its value. On the other hand, the poverty of the poor man appears to be his greatest detriment. But many poor people are happy, healthy, and have peace of mind. Wealth can provide protection, benefits, and other worthwhile things; and poverty can keep one from doing many things. But neither wealth nor poverty mean much in the long term. And each has its own temptations: "Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: 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*" (Prov. 30:8-9).
 - b. "The safety of both is, when *the rich are poor in spirit* (1 Chron. 29:14) and large in heart; and *the poor* 'rich in faith,' and 'contented with the gain of godliness.' (Job 1:21; 1 Tim. 6:6-8.) 'Let the brother of low degree rejoice, in that he is exalted; but *the rich*, in that he is made low.' (Jam. 1:9,10.)" (Bridges, p.100).
3. Verses 16-17: "The labour of the righteous *tendeth* to life: the fruit of the wicked to sin. He *is in* the way of life that keepeth instruction: but he that refuseth reproof erreth."
 - a. Verse sixteen in essence is saying that we reap what we sow. The righteous man reaps life because of what he is and does; the wicked man produces sin because of what he is and does.
 - b. The next verse shows that the one who keeps instruction is in the way of life, but the one who rejects instruction (reproof) is in error (sin). A young person who resists instruction from his parents develops pride and arrogance as a man.
 - c. "Honest labour brings its own reward in the blessing of God and a long and peaceful life....All the profit that the wicked make they use in the service of sin, which tends only to death (Rom 6:21). The due reward of honourable industry is contrasted with the gains obtained by any means, discreditable or not.....It is a way of life when a man keepeth instruction, taketh to heart what is taught by daily providences and the wisdom of experience. Such teachableness leads to happiness here and hereafter. Erreth (Jer 42:20); not 'causeth to err,' as in the margin, which weakens the antithesis" [Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by BibleSoft].
4. Verses 18-21: "He that hideth hatred *with* lying lips, and he that uttereth a slander, *is* a fool. In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips *is* wise. The tongue of the just *is* as choice silver: the heart of the wicked *is* little worth. The lips of the righteous feed many: but fools die for want of wisdom."
 - a. Both cases described are wrong: one who covers up his hatred by lying words is foolish; one who speaks slander is foolish. One who talks too much is bound to get involved in sin sooner or later. The tendency of the tongue is to speak something that is in some way sinful (Jas. 3). But one who is careful about his speech shows wisdom. "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath" (Jas. 1:19).
 - b. The tongue of a righteous man is valuable; his lips feed many. But the heart of a wicked man has little value; and fools perish because they lack wisdom. The foolish man has little to offer for the betterment of other people—or for himself.

5. Verses 22-25: "The blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it. *It is* as sport to a fool to do mischief: but a man of understanding hath wisdom. The fear of the wicked, it shall come upon him: but the desire of the righteous shall be granted. As the whirlwind passeth, so *is* the wicked no *more*: but the righteous *is* an everlasting foundation."
- a. God's blessings can make a man rich—spiritually; his blessings are ever good and perfect (Jas. 1:17). They are given with no evil and have no bad side effects.
 - b. Foolish people make sport of sin, not realizing the awful nature of what they do. If men could only see the end effects of sin! "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. Though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his *days* be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him: But it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong *his* days, *which are* as a shadow; because he feareth not before God" (Eccl. 8:11-13).
 - c. The wicked will be punished as by a whirlwind. The righteous are well-established on a sure foundation. The worst terrors of the wicked will come upon them (Cf. Jer. 42-43). The righteous get their desires—and more.
 - 1) Genesis 11:4, 8: "And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top *may reach* unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth....So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city."
 - 2) 1 Kings 22:18-37: "And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, Did I not tell thee that he would prophesy no good concerning me, but evil? And he said, Hear thou therefore the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left. And the LORD said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramothgilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner. And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the LORD, and said, I will persuade him. And the LORD said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, Thou shalt persuade *him*, and prevail also: go forth, and do so. Now therefore, behold, the LORD hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the LORD hath spoken evil concerning thee. But Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah went near, and smote Micaiah on the cheek, and said, Which way went the spirit of the LORD from me to speak unto thee? And Micaiah said, Behold, thou shalt see in that day, when thou shalt go into an inner chamber to hide thyself. And the king of Israel said, Take Micaiah, and carry him back unto Amon the governor of the city, and to Joash the king's son; And say, Thus saith the king, Put this *fellow* in the prison, and feed him with bread of affliction and with water of affliction, until I come in peace. And Micaiah said, If thou return at all in peace, the LORD hath not spoken by me. And he said, Hearken, O people, every one of you. So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went up to Ramothgilead. And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, I will disguise myself, and enter into the battle; but put thou on thy robes. And the king of Israel disguised himself, and went into the battle. But the king of Syria commanded his thirty and two captains that had rule over his chariots, saying, Fight neither with small nor great, save only with the king of Israel. And it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they said, Surely it *is* the king of Israel. And they turned aside to fight against him: and Jehoshaphat cried out. And it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots perceived that it *was* not the king of Israel, that they turned back from pursuing him. And a *certain* man drew a bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness: wherefore he said unto the driver of his chariot, Turn thine hand, and carry me out of the host; for I am wounded. And the battle increased that day: and the king was stayed up in his chariot against the Syrians, and died at even: and the blood ran out of the wound

- into the midst of the chariot. And there went a proclamation throughout the host about the going down of the sun, saying, Every man to his city, and every man to his own country. So the king died, and was brought to Samaria; and they buried the king in Samaria."
- 3) Matthew 7:21-27: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it."
- 4) 2 Peter 2:1,3: "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction....And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not."
6. Verses 26-32: "As vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes, so *is* the sluggard to them that send him. The fear of the LORD prolongeth days: but the years of the wicked shall be shortened. The hope of the righteous *shall be* gladness: but the expectation of the wicked shall perish. The way of the LORD *is* strength to the upright: but destruction *shall be* to the workers of iniquity. The righteous shall never be removed: but the wicked shall not inhabit the earth. The mouth of the just bringeth forth wisdom: but the froward tongue shall be cut out. The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable: but the mouth of the wicked *speaketh* frowardness."
- Two known truths are mentioned, with a third truth being the point of the verse: vinegar sets the teeth on edge; smoke irritates the eyes; so the sluggard is a source of irritation and anger to his employers.
 - One who fears the Lord will have his days prolonged: a usual Old Testament blessing. In the long run, eternal life results from a continuing fear of God (Eccl. 12:13-14; Heb. 12:28-29). The opposite is true with the wicked. Their rewards: gladness [the faithful] and death [the wicked].
 - One who follows the Lord's way is recipient of the Lord's strength; but workers of iniquity will receive destruction. Cf. Joseph; Nicodemus (John 3:2; 7:50-51; 19:39).
 - The righteous have security, as long as they remain righteous: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any *man* pluck them out of my hand" (John 10:27-28). The wicked will not enter the new heaven and earth (2 Pet. 3:10ff).
 - Wisdom issues from the mouth of the righteous; the perverse-speaking person will have his tongue cut out (be punished). "The froward tongue (Prov 2:12,14: 8:13, which speaks only what is perverse and evil). Shall be cut out; like a corrupt tree that cumbereth the ground (Matt 3:10; Luke 13:7). The abuse of God's great gift of speech shall be severely punished...(Matt 12:36,37)" [Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by BibleSoft].
 - The wise man knows, because he is wise, what ought to be said and not to be said; the wicked man does not have this benefit, thus he speaks crooked things.
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PROVERBS 11

A. Proverbs 11:1-14: Miscellaneous Proverbs.

1. Verse 1: "A false balance *is* abomination to the LORD: but a just weight *is* his delight."
 - a. God's law governs man's dealings with his fellowman. He requires that we treat each other fairly. In the ancient days, merchants used stones and balances as a means of determining weight. Crooked men had more than one set of stones: one which they used in selling and another for buying.
 - 1) Proverbs 16:11: "A just weight and balance *are* the Lord's: all the weights of the bag *are* his work."
 - 2) Proverbs 20:10: "Divers weights, *and* divers measures, both of them *are* alike abomination to the LORD."
 - 3) Proverbs 20:14: "*It is* naught, *it is* naught, saith the buyer: but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth."
 - 4) Proverbs 20:23: "Divers weights *are* an abomination unto the LORD; and a false balance *is* not good."
 - 5) Amos 8:5: "Saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit?"
 - b. This kind of business dealings God abominates. He legislated against such practices in Leviticus 19:35-36, and the basic principles of the gospel forbid such transactions.
 - 1) Leviticus 19:35-36: "Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, in meteyard, in weight, or in measure. Just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin, shall ye have: I *am* the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt."
 - 2) Mark 12:28-31: "And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all? And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments *is*, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this *is* the first commandment. And the second *is* like, *namely* this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these."
 - 3) Luke 6:27-36: "But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you. And unto him that smiteth thee on the *one* cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloak forbid not *to take thy* coat also. Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask *them* not again. And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise. For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same. And if ye lend *to them* of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and *to* the evil. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful."
 - 4) Philippians 4:8: "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things *are* honest, whatsoever things *are* just, whatsoever things *are* pure, whatsoever things *are* lovely, whatsoever

- things *are* of good report; if *there be* any virtue, and if *there be* any praise, think on these things."
- 5) 1 Thessalonians 4:6: "That no *man* go beyond and defraud his brother in *any* matter: because that the Lord *is* the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified."
- c. God despises dishonesty, but delights in fair and honest practices; he takes note of both and will reward accordingly. Merchants (manufacturers, wholesalers, and retailers) are capable of defrauding others by many elaborate schemes: 1 for 67 cents; five for \$3.50; package design and color; buying an item from an unsuspecting person for a cheap price which can be sold for a great profit. A livestock-trading farmer in the community where this scribe grew up returned to give a widow woman a higher price for a cow he had purchased from her; it brought more money than he expected, so he gave her part of the profit. This farmer (Jim Crawford) was a member of the Lord's church.
2. Verse 2: "*When* pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly *is* wisdom."
- a. Pride leads to shame; humility leads to wisdom. "Pride *goeth* before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall" (Prov. 16:18).
- b. One of the three principles by which Eve fell into sin was pride (Gen. 3:5-6); those who erected the tower of Babel were smitten with pride (Gen. 11); Miriam had a problem with pride (Num. 12:1-2, 10); Uzziah (2 Chron. 26:16-21); Haman (Esther 5:11; 7:10); Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 4:29-32); Saul (I Sam. 15:17); Herod (Acts 12:22-23); many others (Mark 7:22).
- c. Wisdom comes by humility, for only if one has the lowliness of heart which humility provides will he be willing to profitably receive instruction from God.
- 1) Isaiah 2:17: "And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day."
- 2) Micah 6:8: "He hath showed thee, O man, what *is* good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"
- 3) Matthew 11:25: "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes."
- 4) Luke 18:13-14: "And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as *his* eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."
3. Verses 3-7: "The integrity of the upright shall guide them: but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them. Riches profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivereth from death. The righteousness of the perfect shall direct his way: but the wicked shall fall by his own wickedness. The righteousness of the upright shall deliver them: but transgressors shall be taken in *their own* naughtiness. When a wicked man dieth, *his* expectation shall perish: and the hope of unjust *men* perisheth."
- a. These verses give sundry truths about the wicked, the rich, and the upright. God is a shield to them that walk uprightly.
- 1) "Who therefore is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" (I Pet. 3:13).
- 2) "Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness" (Eph. 6:14).
- 3) As the righteous integrity of God's people serves as a protection, the dishonesty of the transgressors will bring about their destruction. Many times sin is punished here; in every case it is punished in the Judgment [unless covered by Christ's blood].
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- b. This statement illustrates the foregoing truth: the wealth of a sinful man cannot protect him from judgment (that which God sends in this life or that which is to be poured out in the last day). But the righteousness of the saints will allow each one to stand justified before God (Matt. 25:31-46).
- 1) Genesis 7:1: "And the LORD said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation."
 - 2) Psalms 1: "Blessed *is* the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight *is* in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. The ungodly *are* not so: but *are* like the chaff which the wind driveth away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish."
 - 3) John 5:28-29: "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."
 - 4) Acts 10:34-35: "Then Peter opened *his* mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him."
 - 5) 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18: "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."
 - 6) 1 Thessalonians 1:6-10: "Seeing *it is* a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day."
 - 7) 1 John 4:17-18: "Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love."
- c. Solomon again affirms the ageless principle that we reap what we sow. It is much in our best interests to follow God: we will be amply rewarded here and later.
- d. The man who dies in wickedness has no hope. This is the case of the rich man of Luke 16:19-31. "That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12). As long as there is life, there is hope—but only if we are able and willing to obey the gospel. Consider the situation of a person who is lost, knows he is lost, and knows the essentiality of obeying the gospel, but does not have the time or inclination to obey—despite any good traits he has, his present condition is hopeless.
4. Verses 8-9: "The righteous is delivered out of trouble, and the wicked cometh in his stead. An hypocrite with *his* mouth destroyeth his neighbour: but through knowledge shall the just be delivered."
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- a. God aids the righteous. Many times we have troubles which the Lord permits to come on us for our own good (Heb. 12:1-11). Sometimes our troubles are the results of evil (our own or that of some other person). Problems may result simply because we are living in this world. We may often wonder whether our woes are the work of the devil to torment us, or of the Lord to chasten us, or whether they are simply the common lot of humanity. From our vantage point it may be impossible to know which is true. But faithful saints have nothing of which to be fearful: God will deliver us in due course.
 - b. He is able to bring harsh penalties upon the wicked while delivering the righteous from the same. He brought Israel out of their troubles in Egypt and sent punishment upon the Egyptians (Ex. 14:21-28). He delivered Israel from the sentence of death imposed on them by Haman, and brought about Haman's death on his own gallows (Est. 5:14; 7:10). The three Hebrews of Daniel 3 (22-26) were preserved from death in the fiery furnace, while those who threw them into it perished. Daniel was protected from the lions, but his enemies were devoured by them (6:22-24). Peter was released from prison, but those who held him were condemned (Acts 12:6,19,23).
 - c. For one just person, God can trouble a whole nation: "Saul also and his men went to seek *him*. And they told David: wherefore he came down into a rock, and abode in the wilderness of Maon. And when Saul heard *that*, he pursued after David in the wilderness of Maon. And Saul went on this side of the mountain, and David and his men on that side of the mountain: and David made haste to get away for fear of Saul; for Saul and his men compassed David and his men round about to take them. But there came a messenger unto Saul, saying, Haste thee, and come; for the Philistines have invaded the land. Wherefore Saul returned from pursuing after David, and went against the Philistines: therefore they called that place Selahammahlekoth. And David went up from thence, and dwelt in strong holds at Engedi" (1 Sam. 23:25-29).
 - d. A hypocrite can bring destruction to his neighbor by speaking evil words against him. Haman tried to destroy Israel (Esther 3); the lying prophet brought about the death of the younger prophet (I Kings 13). The hypocrite can thus destroy another, but by means of knowledge shall the just person be delivered. That is, the more that is known about a righteous person, the greater his enhancement in the eyes of others. A righteous man has nothing to hide and nothing to fear from others learning the truth about him. But a lie told against even the most faithful saint can destroy him. It is extremely important that we speak only the truth about our brethren, and that we be very hesitant about believing some negative report told against them. If someone reports to us that a brother in Christ is guilty of a certain sin, and the only evidence is an unsupported charge, what are we to do? If we believe the report, we might be condemning an innocent man; if we reject the report, we might be winking at sin. Hence, we must maintain an open mind regarding the charge until all the significant facts are known. Just because a charge is leveled against another does not make the charge true or false. The person making the allegation might (1) be lying, or (2) be mistaken, or (3) be correct.
 - e. Many elders, preachers, deacons, Bible teachers, and other Christians have had their influence destroyed because of false or mistaken charges. God will not hold him guiltless who thus destroys another (cf. Jas. 3).
 - 1) Matthew 12:33-37: "Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by *his* fruit. O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."
 - 2) Romans 14:19: "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things
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- wherewith one may edify another."
- 3) Ephesians 4:29: "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers."
 - 4) Colossians 4:6: "Let your speech *be* alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man."
5. Verses 10-11: "When it goeth well with the righteous, the city rejoiceth: and when the wicked perish, *there is* shouting. By the blessing of the upright the city is exalted: but it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked."
- a. Those who know and appreciate the value of righteous conduct, rejoice when the righteous are exalted and when the wicked are put down. Those who think correctly will understand that righteousness is in a city's best interest, but wickedness harms the entire population.
 - 1) Psalms 9:17: "The wicked shall be turned into hell, *and* all the nations that forget God."
 - 2) Proverbs 14:34: "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin *is* a reproach to any people."
 - 3) Matthew 5:13-16: "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."
 - b. Who would want to live in a city where everyone else was either a thief, a prostitute, a murderer, or a drunk? Who would want to live in a place where everyone was a liar, full of greed, selfish, or had no interest in the well-being of others? A group of infidels started a town [Liberal, Missouri] which excluded God, preachers and churches, and which permitted anything the people desired. Before long, the founders left the city because of the crime and sin.
 - 1) Genesis 26:26-33: "Then Abimelech went to him from Gerar, and Ahuzzath one of his friends, and Phichol the chief captain of his army. And Isaac said unto them, Wherefore come ye to me, seeing ye hate me, and have sent me away from you? And they said, We saw certainly that the LORD was with thee: and we said, Let there be now an oath betwixt us, *even* betwixt us and thee, and let us make a covenant with thee; That thou wilt do us no hurt, as we have not touched thee, and as we have done unto thee nothing but good, and have sent thee away in peace: thou *art* now the blessed of the LORD. And he made them a feast, and they did eat and drink. And they rose up betimes in the morning, and sware one to another: and Isaac sent them away, and they departed from him in peace. And it came to pass the same day, that Isaac's servants came, and told him concerning the well which they had digged, and said unto him, We have found water. And he called it Shebah: therefore the name of the city *is* Beersheba unto this day."
 - 2) Exodus 34:23-24: "Thrice in the year shall all your menchildren appear before the Lord GOD, the God of Israel. For I will cast out the nations before thee, and enlarge thy borders: neither shall any man desire thy land, when thou shalt go up to appear before the LORD thy God thrice in the year."
 - 3) Job 27:23: "*Men* shall clap their hands at him, and shall hiss him out of his place."
 - 4) Proverbs 16:7: "When a man's ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him."
 - 5) Mark 6:20: "For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly."

- c. Rome rejoiced when Nero died; many rejoiced when Ted Bundy was executed; but many mourn when a good man dies.
6. Verses 12-14: "He that is void of wisdom despiseth his neighbour: but a man of understanding holdeth his peace. A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter. Where no counsel *is*, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors *there is* safety."
- a. Where the text says, he that is "void of wisdom," the marginal rendering is "destitute of heart." One who is void of wisdom will show despite to his neighbor. If he lacks understanding (or is unconcerned about the good name and well-being of others), he will say or do things to his neighbor's hurt.
- 1) Matthew 7:1-5: "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam *is* in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye."
 - 2) Titus 3:2: "To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, *but* gentle, showing all meekness unto all men."
 - 3) 2 Peter 2:10: "But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous *are they*, selfwilled, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities."
 - 4) Jude 8: "Likewise also these *filthy* dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities."
- b. A talebearer is a dangerous and sinful person, as indicated by the statements given in the Bible about him and by the laws against his stock in trade.
- 1) Leviticus 19:16: "Thou shalt not go up and down *as* a talebearer among thy people: neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbour: I *am* the LORD."
 - 2) Proverbs 18:8: "The words of a talebearer *are* as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly."
 - 3) Proverbs 20:19: "He that goeth about *as* a talebearer revealeth secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips."
 - 4) Proverbs 26:20: "Where no wood is, *there* the fire goeth out: so where *there is* no talebearer, the strife ceaseth."
 - 5) Proverbs 26:22: "The words of a talebearer *are* as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly."
 - 6) 1 Thessalonians 4:11: "And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you."
 - 7) 1 Timothy 5:13: "And withal they learn *to be* idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not."
 - 8) 1 Peter 4:15: "But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or *as* a thief, or *as* an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters."
- c. "The tale bearer having much time on his hands, worms out family secrets. He is always delighted to make a discovery. The most idle rumour is a treasure. A quarrel made up before he had time to reveal it, is a disappointment" (Bridges, p.117).
- d. This [verse fourteen] is a general truth which has application to all endeavors. A nation, a city, a
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company, a school, or a congregation which is not guided by intelligence, truth, and wisdom is doomed to troubles and failure. When Rehoboam heeded the unwise advice of young men, his nation was torn asunder, and an untold amount of trouble and sorrow ensued (1 Kings 12). Later, when Jehoiada's wise counsel was rejected, problems followed (2 Chron. 24:15-19).

- 1) Proverbs 15:22: "Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established."
- 2) Proverbs 20:18: "*Every* purpose is established by counsel: and with good advice make war."
- 3) Proverbs 24:6: "For by wise counsel thou shalt make thy war: and in multitude of counsellors *there is* safety."

B. Proverbs 11:15-31: Various Proverbs on Sundry Subjects.

1. Verses 15-17: "He that is surety for a stranger shall smart *for it*: and he that hateth suretyship is sure. A gracious woman retaineth honour: and strong *men* retain riches. The merciful man doeth good to his own soul: but *he that is* cruel troubleth his own flesh."
 - a. It is unwise to become surety for another's debt. An illustration from the experiences of a prominent restoration preacher furnishes an object lesson on this point: "In this fearful crisis, J.T. Johnson, lost a handsome fortune—not to pay his own debts, but those of his friends, for whom he had become surety. In this he realized the truth of the saying of the wise man, that: 'He that is surety for his friend shall smart.' His generous nature would not permit him to say *no* to his friend; hence, he could not, in that case, realize, in the language of the same wise man, that, 'he that hateth suretyship is sure.' But let us have his own account of this matter. He says: 'In the great convulsion of 1819, and onward, I became security for my friends for a large amount, and voluntarily gave up all my real estate to be relieved from security debts.' This was certainly a hard case. To give up a fortune to pay his own debts, would have been hard enough; but, for one who had never known want, to give up a handsome fortune to pay security debts, is hard, indeed. But he was a man of a great heart and noble mind, and, therefore, bore it without a murmur. He says: 'I never felt happier than in thus relieving myself, by giving up near \$50,000 worth of real estate.' He says again: 'It was a pretty fortune. It was five hundred and fifty acres of land, near Georgetown, of the choice kind, and about a half-dozen valuable lots, with valuable improvements, in Georgetown.' If that property was worth \$50,000 then, it is worth now [1861] not much, if any, less than double that amount" (John Rogers, *Biography of J.T. Johnson*, Gospel Advocate Company, Nashville, 1956, pp.17f),
 - b. This is good counsel since a stranger's reliability and honesty are unknown. And even someone we have known for many years may disappoint us through design or because he cannot pay his debt.
 - 1) Proverbs 17:18: "A man void of understanding striketh hands, *and* becometh surety in the presence of his friend."
 - 2) Proverbs 22:26: "Be not thou *one* of them that strike hands, *or* of them that are sureties for debts."
 - c. Godliness is a pleasing characteristic which beautifies the soul.
 - 1) Proverbs 12:4: "A virtuous woman *is* a crown to her husband: but she that maketh ashamed *is* as rottenness in his bones."
 - 2) Proverbs 31:10: "Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price *is* far above rubies."
 - 3) 1 Timothy 2:9-10: "In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works."
 - 4) 1 Peter 3:3-4: "Whose adorning let it not be that outward *adorning* of plaiting the hair, and of

wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But *let it be* the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, *even the ornament* of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price."

- d. The greatest beauty of a woman is that which pertains to her soul; it will not fade with time; it will shine on in its influence even after death. We remember Esther, not because of her famous beauty, but primarily because she was a woman of faith and courage. Sarah was a beautiful woman, but her inner beauty shone even greater (1 Pet. 3:5-6). Those who are thus strong retain riches (i.e., rich blessings).
 - e. Other women who were spiritual beauties were:
 - 1) Hannah (1 Sam. 1).
 - 2) Lois and Eunice (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15).
 - 3) The elect lady (2 John 1-4).
 - 4) Pheobe and her companions (Rom. 16:1-6; Phil. 4:3).
 - 5) Lydia and her ladies (Acts 16).
 - 6) The poor widow (Mark 12:41-44).
 - 7) Mary and Martha (John 11:1-5; Luke 10:38-42).
 - 8) Dorcas (Acts 9:36).
 - f. What is specified here about women applies in principle also to men. The man who shows mercy to others, obtains the same for his own soul, just as the cruel man wreaks havoc indirectly on himself. This is another statement of the principle of reaping according to what we sow. This biblical precept is found in a great many passages and is uttered in a wide variety of ways. There are also many illustrations of it given by the inspired Record.
 - 1) Consider the case of Ahab and his quest for Naboth's vineyard (I Kings 21, 22). His terrible end shows that he did not enrich himself at Naboth's loss. Cain only obtained great condemnation when he hated and slew his brother (Gen. 4; Heb. 11:4). Joseph's brethren brought pain and trouble to themselves and their father by their evil treatment of their brother. Adoni-bezek had mutilated 70 kings he conquered, by cutting off their thumbs and great toes, but when Israel captured him, he suffered the same penalty (Judges 1:5-8).
 - 2) On the positive side, the widow of Sarepta and the Shunamite woman were rewarded for their kindnesses toward the prophets (2 Kings 4:16; 8:1ff). Cornelius gave many alms to the poor, prayed to God, feared the Lord, was devout and just, and had a good reputation among the Jews; he was richly rewarded for his diligence by the angelic vision which led to his hearing the gospel and being saved (Acts 10:2,22; 11:13-14). God does not forget our diligent service (Heb. 6:10; Mt. 10:42; 25:34). By watering our neighbor's garden, we give nourishment to our own.
2. Verses 18-19: "The wicked worketh a deceitful work: but to him that soweth righteousness *shall be* a sure reward. As righteousness *tendeth* to life: so he that pursueth evil *pursueth it* to his own death."
- a. Righteousness pays off by a rich reward, but wickedness deceives its adherents. Pharaoh thought he would be benefitting himself and his country by killing the Hebrew babies, but it eventually spelled defeat and death to his own people.
 - b. Consider these cases:
 - 1) Abimelech in Judges 9.
 - 2) The greed of Judas (Mt. 26:14-16) and Gehazi (2 Kings 5:20-27).
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- c. Thus, those who pursue evil, do so to their own hurt; and those who work righteousness have a sure reward. "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves *with him*" (Psalm 126:6).
3. Verses 20-23: "They that are of a froward heart *are* abomination to the LORD: but *such as are* upright in *their way are* his delight. *Though* hand *join* in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished: but the seed of the righteous shall be delivered. *As* a jewel of gold in a swine's snout, *so is* a fair woman which is without discretion. The desire of the righteous *is* only good: *but* the expectation of the wicked *is* wrath."
- a. This is a brief statement describing the attitude of the Lord toward the froward and upright hearts. The former he considers an abomination; the latter is his delight. "Abomination" denotes the awful and detestable nature of something that is hated.
- b. A wicked man who revels in great strength and wealth, protected by loyal soldiers and a strong fortified castle, might think he is beyond danger and above punishment. But despite the strongest of measures such men may take, their punishment is certain. The wicked men of Noah's generation did not escape it; despite Pharaoh's great strength, he was justly punished; Israel did not avoid the penalty for their many rebellions; the great army of Assyria could not stand against God, and even their great king could not escape (Isa. 36).
- c. The reward of the righteous is as sure as the punishment of sinners: "For God *is* not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister" (Heb. 6:10).
- d. "Beauty indeed is to be honoured, as the gift of God. Yet in itself it is a fading vanity (Chapt. 31:10); and, without discretion, it is as misplaced, as mis-becoming, as a jewel of gold in a swine's snout. Would the ornament beautify the filthy animal? Rather would not the unnatural combination make it more than ever an object of disgust? All the charms of beauty are lost upon a foolish woman. Instead of 'retaining honour' (Verse 16), she only brings upon herself disgrace. For just as the jewel is soon employed and besmeared in raking the mire; so too often does the beauty of the indiscreet woman become subservient to the vilest passions. (2 Sam. 11:2)" (Bridges, p.123).
- e. A woman with discretion is a lady whose conduct is above reproach, seemly, and godly—she is what God would have her to be.
- f. The righteous man, being guided by God's will, has "good" as his only desire—the doing of good and a good reward. The wicked man, doing what pleases himself as his main goal, can expect to receive only wrath as a reward.
4. Verses 24-26: "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and *there is* that withholdeth more than is meet, but *it tendeth* to poverty. The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself. He that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him: but blessing *shall be* upon the head of him that selleth *it*."
- a. This expresses the precept that to obtain, we must give: "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again" (Lk. 6:38). He is not speaking of wastefulness, but of provident giving and spending. The farmer scatters his seed, expecting to receive a good return.
- 1) Ecclesiastes 11:1: "Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days."
- 2) Psalms 112:9: "He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor; his righteousness endureth for ever; his horn shall be exalted with honour."
- 3) 2 Corinthians 9:6-11: "But this *I say*, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he
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which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, *so let him give*; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. And God *is* able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all *things*, may abound to every good work: (As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever. Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for *your* food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness;) Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God."

- 4) Galatians 6:10: "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all *men*, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."
 - 5) Hebrews 6:10-11: "For God *is* not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister. And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end."
 - 6) Proverbs 19:17: "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again."
- b. But one who will not help others will be known for such, and despised; but one who is selfless will be esteemed highly, and blessed.
 - c. "The sentiment of the preceding verse is here carried on and confirmed. The liberal soul; literally, the soul of blessings, the man that blesses others by giving liberally. Shall be made fat (Prov 13:4; 28:25). The term is used of the rich and prosperous (Ps 22:29)" [Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by Biblesoft].
 - d. "The liberal soul shall be made fat. He who gives to the distressed, in the true spirit of charity, shall get a hundred fold from God's mercy. How wonderful is the Lord! He gives the property, gives the heart to use it aright, and recompenses the man for the deed, though all the fruit was found from himself! He that watereth. A man who distributes in the right spirit gets more good himself than the poor man does who receives the bounty. Thus it is more blessed to give than to receive" [Adam Clarke's Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1996 by Biblesoft].
5. Verses 27-31: "He that diligently seeketh good procureth favour: but he that seeketh mischief, it shall come unto him. He that trusteth in his riches shall fall: but the righteous shall flourish as a branch. He that troubleth his own house shall inherit the wind: and the fool *shall be* servant to the wise of heart. The fruit of the righteous *is* a tree of life; and he that winneth souls *is* wise. Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth: much more the wicked and the sinner."
- a. We reap what we sow, and we get back what we give. God expects his children to be active and productive of good. What we spend, we use; what we save, we lose; what we give, we keep. Laying up treasure on earth is wasted effort; laying up treasure in heaven, can never be a fruitless endeavor.
 - 1) Matthew 6:19-21: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."
 - 2) Mark 10:29-30: "And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life."

- 3) 1 Peter 1:3-5: "Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."
- b. Wealth can be productive of much good, but we must not put our trust in it. To do so is to show a distrust in God. The faithful will flourish as a living branch.
- c. Those who foment strife in their own house will receive an apt reward. Consider these cases:
- 1) Korah: "And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that *appertained* unto Korah, and all *their* goods. They, and all that *appertained* to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation" (Num. 16:32-33).
 - 2) Achan (Josh. 7).
 - 3) Eli: "Behold, the days come, that I will cut off thine arm, and the arm of thy father's house, that there shall not be an old man in thine house. And thou shalt see an enemy *in my* habitation, in all *the wealth* which *God* shall give Israel: and there shall not be an old man in thine house for ever" (1 Sam. 2:31-32).
 - 4) Jeroboam: "But hast done evil above all that were before thee: for thou hast gone and made thee other gods, and molten images, to provoke me to anger, and hast cast me behind thy back: Therefore, behold, I will bring evil upon the house of Jeroboam, and will cut off from Jeroboam him that pisseth against the wall, *and* him that is shut up and left in Israel, and will take away the remnant of the house of Jeroboam, as a man taketh away dung, till it be all gone. Him that dieth of Jeroboam in the city shall the dogs eat; and him that dieth in the field shall the fowls of the air eat: for the LORD hath spoken *it*" (1 Kings 14:9-11).
 - 5) Ahab (1 Kings 21-22).
 - 6) A certain man of Bethel brought loss to his own family in a unique way: "In his days did Hiel the Bethelite build Jericho: he laid the foundation thereof in Abiram his firstborn, and set up the gates thereof in his youngest *son* Segub, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by Joshua the son of Nun" (1 Kings 16:34).
- d. What the tree of life was in Eden, is what the life of a righteous man is before others. One who saves souls demonstrates wisdom; to neglect it is to risk his own soul. "The wise are something more; they are as trees of knowledge, not forbidden, but commanded knowledge. He that is wise, by communicating his wisdom, wins souls, wins upon them to bring them in love with God and holiness, and so wins them over into the interests of God's kingdom among men. The wise are said to turn many to righteousness, and that is the same with winning souls here, Dan 12:3" [Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: New Modern Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1991 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.].
- 1) Daniel 12:3: "And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."
 - 2) 2 Corinthians 5:10-11: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences."
 - 3) 1 Corinthians 9:19-22: "For though I be free from all *men*, yet have I made myself servant unto
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all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all *men*, that I might by all means save some.”

e. God blesses his people even on earth:

- 1) “For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come” (1 Tim. 4:8).
 - 2) Generally, the wicked obtain more wealth than the righteous, and have more hardships during hard times. "For the time *is come* that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if *it* first *begin* at us, what shall the end *be* of them that obey not the gospel of God?" (1 Pet. 4:17).
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PROVERBS 12

A. Proverbs 12:1-9: A Good Man, A Virtuous Woman, and the Wicked.

1. Verse 1: "Whoso loveth instruction loveth knowledge: but he that hateth reproof *is* brutish."
 - a. Knowledge is acquired by instruction, thus one who loves instruction loves knowledge. To obtain knowledge, one must go through the rigors of instruction, but the information received is worth the pain and effort. Businesses hire experts who can critique their present methods and products to learn how to improve their sales. Coaches study game films to see what their players are doing wrong; the players readily receive the instructions coming out of this critique, for by seeing their mistakes they are improved. A prospective Air Traffic Controller is closely critiqued by his trainer to eliminate all errors in his techniques and application of the rules. Seeing the need for instruction, with the guidance and correction involved, one who is serious about the welfare of his soul will be willing to receive instruction.
 - b. But one who does not like to be corrected or guided by a more knowledgeable hand is called "brutish." To act like a brute is to be like a beast: unthinking; acting on impulse or instinct. An animal will fight against having a thorn removed from its foot, or when having some other painful operation performed on it for its own good. People will often refuse surgery, medicine, or some other unpleasant medical treatment because they are unwilling to undergo the discomfort involved; they had rather cling to the false hope of recovery without it.
 - c. One who rejects God's word, which is intended for the good of his soul, is acting like the brutish animal. Thus, the efforts by sincere workers who try to plant the truth in his mind are rejected.
 - 1) Jeremiah 6:16: "Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where *is* the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk *therein*."
 - 2) 2 Corinthians 13:5: "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?"
 - 3) 2 Timothy 3:16-17: "All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."
 - 4) 2 Timothy 4:1-5: "I charge *thee* therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry."
 - 5) James 1:21: "Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls."
2. Verses 2-3: "A good *man* obtaineth favour of the LORD: but a man of wicked devices will he condemn. A man shall not be established by wickedness: but the root of the righteous shall not be moved."
 - a. Righteousness is generally respected by people in our communities. No one wants to live in a city where crime, immorality, and filth are rampant. A good person is often held in high esteem by other men, and obtains the loving favor of God. But the man who is controlled by evil practices, words, and demeanor stands condemned by God and by all right-thinking men.

- b. Even those who utterly reject the Bible, do not want to live in a community where Biblical morality is not practiced. They want liberty to live as they please, but they want others not to intrude on their rights. But godly moral standards will not be observed where there is a rejection of the authority behind those standards.
3. Verse 4: "A virtuous woman *is* a crown to her husband: but she that maketh ashamed *is* as rottenness in his bones."
- a. A wicked man may prosper for a time, but eventually, in eternity if not also here, he will reap his proper reward. No person can establish himself forever by wickedness. Consider the biblical cases of:
- 1) Abimelech: "Then he called hastily unto the young man his armourbearer, and said unto him, Draw thy sword, and slay me, that men say not of me, A woman slew him. And his young man thrust him through, and he died. And when the men of Israel saw that Abimelech was dead, they departed every man unto his place. Thus God rendered the wickedness of Abimelech, which he did unto his father, in slaying his seventy brethren: And all the evil of the men of Shechem did God render upon their heads: and upon them came the curse of Jotham the son of Jerubbaal" (Judges 9:54-57).
 - 2) The wicked kings of Israel (2 Chron. 21).
 - a) 1 Kings 16:9-10: "And his servant Zimri, captain of half *his* chariots, conspired against him, as he was in Tirzah, drinking himself drunk in the house of Arza steward of *his* house in Tirzah. And Zimri went in and smote him, and killed him, in the twenty and seventh year of Asa king of Judah, and reigned in his stead."
 - b) 2 Kings 15:10-14: "And Shallum the son of Jabesh conspired against him, and smote him before the people, and slew him, and reigned in his stead. And the rest of the acts of Zachariah, behold, they *are* written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel. This *was* the word of the LORD which he spake unto Jehu, saying, Thy sons shall sit on the throne of Israel unto the fourth *generation*. And so it came to pass. Shallum the son of Jabesh began to reign in the nine and thirtieth year of Uzziah king of Judah; and he reigned a full month in Samaria. For Menahem the son of Gadi went up from Tirzah, and came to Samaria, and smote Shallum the son of Jabesh in Samaria, and slew him, and reigned in his stead."
 - 3) Ahab (1 Kings 21-22).
 - 4) Consider also the high priest Caiaphas.
 - a) Matthew 21:43-44: "Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder."
 - b) John 11:49-50: "And one of them, *named* Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not."
 - 5) Cf. Psalm 1; Matthew 7:21-27.
- b. A righteous person may appear to be weak, pitiable, and vulnerable to wicked and worldly-minded people, but only the righteous have any standing with God; their worth will become evident in the end for they build their lives upon the firm foundation of God's will.
- c. We have a proverb which states a thought similar to this verse: "Behind every successful man is a good woman." Solomon declares here that a virtuous (worthy) woman is a crown to her husband. She supports and encourages him. She is an honor to him, not a source of shame. Requirements of godly
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wives given in the Scriptures included:

- 1) Faithfulness: "The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life" (Prov. 31:11-12).
 - 2) Obedience: "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body" (Eph. 5:22-23).
 - 3) Chastity: "*To be* discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed" (Tit. 2:5; cf. 1 Pet. 3:2).
 - 4) Love their husbands and children (Tit. 2:4; 1 Pet. 3:1-6).
 - 5) Plus many of the items discussed in Proverbs 31. Such a woman is a wonderful treasure to the husband and home, but a wife that brings shame to her husband is like rottenness in his bones—a cancerous disease, eating away at his strength and influence (cf. worm eating into the heart of a tree).
4. Verses 5-7: "The thoughts of the righteous *are* right: *but* the counsels of the wicked *are* deceit. The words of the wicked *are* to lie in wait for blood: but the mouth of the upright shall deliver them. The wicked are overthrown, and *are* not: but the house of the righteous shall stand."
- a. These verses contain general statements relating to our thoughts and words, and the end effect they produce. As declared by Solomon (Prov. 4:23; 23:7) and by Christ (Matt. 12:34-37; 15:18-20), the inner conditions of the heart are revealed by the words which are spoken. A person becomes wicked first in his heart; that wickedness is then expressed in words and actions. Thus, the righteous man is pure in his thoughts and a wicked man is evil in his thoughts. The heart is the fountainhead of our words and deeds.
 - 1) Proverbs 4:23: "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it *are* the issues of life."
 - 2) Proverbs 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."
 - 3) Matthew 12:34-37: "O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."
 - 4) Matthew 15:18-20: "But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are *the things* which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man."
 - b. The words of the wicked, by design or merely by effect, work to the hurt of others. The mouth of the righteous produce good to other people. The power of life and death lies in the tongue: we can harm or we can bless with our speech. See James 3.
 - 1) Proverbs 18:21: "Death and life *are* in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof."
 - 2) Ephesians 4:29: "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers."
 - 3) Colossians 4:6: "Let your speech *be* always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how
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- ye ought to answer every man."
- c. The evil use of words will spell disaster and loss to those thus guilty. Jacob's sons set their father up to twenty years of pain by implying to him that Joseph had been destroyed by wild beasts. These brothers brought misery upon themselves by this wicked use of speech (Gen. 37). Haman's words led to his own destruction (Esth. 3-7). Ahithophel's counsel led to his suicide (2 Sam. 15:1—7:23). "Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by *his* fruit. O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Matt. 12:33-37).
5. Verse 8 "A man shall be commended according to his wisdom: but he that is of a perverse heart shall be despised."
 - a. People of wisdom are esteemed and exalted by those who appreciate their worth, but those who have corrupted themselves are held in despite. Joseph was exalted in Egypt, but his brothers were humbled; Mordecai was honored, but Haman was hanged; Stephen received the Lord's approval, but his enemies died in shame and infamy, many of them were likely caught in the siege of Jerusalem.
 - b. Sin and wickedness had permeated the city of Nineveh when Jonah, the reluctant prophet, arrived. His message of doom struck a responsive chord in the hearts of the Ninevites. They all repented, from the king on the throne to the lowly beggar in the street. The message he presented was well-received, and he likewise was obviously accepted by the people.
 - c. According to this verse, perverseness of soul will cause a man to be despised, rather than because he is obscure, poverty-stricken, or ignorant, or has physical handicaps (cf. Nabal—1 Sam. 25).
 - 1) 2 Kings 12:16: "The trespass money and sin money was not brought into the house of the LORD: it was the priests'."
 - 2) Malachi 2:8-9: "But ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the LORD of hosts. Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law."
 6. Verse 9: "*He that is* despised, and hath a servant, *is* better than he that honoureth himself, and lacketh bread."
 - a. "The chief point in the lines above is that respectful mediocrity is better than boastful poverty. In short, better is the man of obscurity and of little means than is the man who boasteth of his skills and/or ability, or of his family background, or of his knowledge and wisdom, but has never really accomplished anything in life. Better is the man who works at a lowly job and earns a base livelihood for the family than is the man who boasts of his qualifications and achievements but who is unemployed and thus in poverty" (ibid, p.138).
 - b. "Nothing is so despicable as to be proud, where there is nothing to be proud of....Yet it is hard, even for the Christian, as Bunyan reminds us, 'to go down the Valley of Humiliation, and catch no slip by the way'" (Bridges, p.136).
 - c. A lowly man, even one who is able to have a servant, is greater than another who is boastful and poor.
 7. Verse 10: "A righteous *man* regardeth the life of his beast: but the tender mercies of the wicked *are* cruel."
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- a. In a farming community where animals are used in the work, a righteous man and a wicked man can be identified by their respective treatment of their stock. One who is righteous will abide by the principles of God's word, hence he will treat his animals with care and kindness; but the wicked individual will mistreat his by lack of care and ill-advised punishment.
 - 1) Genesis 24:32: "And the man came into the house: and he ungirded his camels, and gave straw and provender for the camels, and water to wash his feet, and the men's feet that *were* with him."
 - 2) Genesis 33:13-14: "And he said unto him, My lord knoweth that the children *are* tender, and the flocks and herds with young *are* with me: and if men should overdrive them one day, all the flock will die. Let my lord, I pray thee, pass over before his servant: and I will lead on softly, according as the cattle that goeth before me and the children be able to endure, until I come unto my lord unto Seir."
 - 3) Numbers 22:27-28: "And when the ass saw the angel of the LORD, she fell down under Balaam: and Balaam's anger was kindled, and he smote the ass with a staff. And the LORD opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam, What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times?"
 - 4) Deuteronomy 25:4: "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out *the corn*."
 - b. "The delight of children in putting animals to pain for amusement, if not early restrained, will mature them in cruelty, demoralize their whole character, and harden them against all the sympathies of social life...."They who delight in the sufferings and destruction of inferior creatures, will not be apt to be very compassionate and benign to those of their own kind" (Bridges, p.137).
 - c. God has great concern for all his creation (cf. Luke 12:24); he placed man in charge of his creation (Gen. 1:26-27); we are to be as careful of our charge as possible. But some have gone too far by decrying the killing of any animal, even for food and clothing. God gave us dominion over the lower creation, with the right to use them for our food and clothing (Gen. 9:1-3; 3:21), but this does not give any man the right to be cruel to the lower animal creation.
 - d. The "tender mercies" of the wicked are cruel. "Tender mercies" is a term describing the innermost feelings of their heart of hearts. Hence, at their very reins, cruelty is the characteristic most evident. They care nothing about anyone else but themselves and their own satisfaction. Thus, even beasts are made to suffer at their hands.
8. Verse 11: "He that tilleth his land shall be satisfied with bread: but he that followeth vain *persons* is void of understanding."
- a. Those who are willing to till the land will be blessed with the fruits thereof; but one who follows people or things that are vain (empty, useless, profitless) shows a decided lack of understanding. The wise man is placing the stamp of divine approval upon industry and diligence. But inspiration speaks reprovingly of those who will not work: "For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread" (2 Th. 3:10-12).
 - b. "The proud person is Satan's throne, and the idle man his pillow; he sitteth on the former, and sleepeth quietly on the latter." (See Bridges, p.138).
 - c. Proverbs 28:19: "He that tilleth his land shall have plenty of bread: but he that followeth after vain *persons* shall have poverty enough."

B. Proverbs 12:12-23: The Wicked, The Fool, and The Prudent.

1. Verse 12: "The wicked desireth the net of evil *men*: but the root of the righteous yieldeth *fruit*."
 - a. Evil men usually know what they want and set their sights on obtaining it; what they want is what pertains to their type character.
 - b. "The gist of this verse is that wicked men catch all kinds of bad things in their nets, finding what they want and reaping what they sow" (Alden, p.101).
 - c. "Not satisfied with the honest 'gain of godliness,' they desire a net, in which they may grasp richer treasures of this world's vanity. (1 Tim. 6:10.)" (Bridges, p.138).
 - d. But the righteous produce fruit; and their fruit is acceptable to God.
 2. Verse 13: "The wicked is snared by the transgression of *his* lips: but the just shall come out of trouble."
 - a. The evil man is ensnared in a trap of his own making. His words entrap him. A loose tongue will sooner or later trip up the individual.
 - b. 2 Samuel 1:1-16: "Now it came to pass after the death of Saul, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Amalekites, and David had abode two days in Ziklag; It came even to pass on the third day, that, behold, a man came out of the camp from Saul with his clothes rent, and earth upon his head: and *so* it was, when he came to David, that he fell to the earth, and did obeisance. And David said unto him, From whence comest thou? And he said unto him, Out of the camp of Israel am I escaped. And David said unto him, How went the matter? I pray thee, tell me. And he answered, That the people are fled from the battle, and many of the people also are fallen and dead; and Saul and Jonathan his son are dead also. And David said unto the young man that told him, How knowest thou that Saul and Jonathan his son be dead? And the young man that told him said, As I happened by chance upon mount Gilboa, behold, Saul leaned upon his spear; and, lo, the chariots and horsemen followed hard after him. And when he looked behind him, he saw me, and called unto me. And I answered, Here *am* I. And he said unto me, Who *art* thou? And I answered him, I *am* an Amalekite. He said unto me again, Stand, I pray thee, upon me, and slay me: for anguish is come upon me, because my life *is* yet whole in me. So I stood upon him, and slew him, because I was sure that he could not live after that he was fallen: and I took the crown that *was* upon his head, and the bracelet that *was* on his arm, and have brought them hither unto my lord. Then David took hold on his clothes, and rent them; and likewise all the men that *were* with him: And they mourned, and wept, and fasted until even, for Saul, and for Jonathan his son, and for the people of the LORD, and for the house of Israel; because they were fallen by the sword. And David said unto the young man that told him, Whence *art* thou? And he answered, I *am* the son of a stranger, an Amalekite. And David said unto him, How wast thou not afraid to stretch forth thine hand to destroy the LORD'S anointed? And David called one of the young men, and said, Go near, *and* fall upon him. And he smote him that he died. And David said unto him, Thy blood *be* upon thy head; for thy mouth hath testified against thee, saying, I have slain the LORD'S anointed." [This Amalekite thought his report of Saul's death would earn him a reward].
 - c. 2 Samuel 4:9-12: "And David answered Rechab and Baanah his brother, the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, and said unto them, *As* the LORD liveth, who hath redeemed my soul out of all adversity, When one told me, saying, Behold, Saul is dead, thinking to have brought good tidings, I took hold of him, and slew him in Ziklag, who *thought* that I would have given him a reward for his tidings: How much more, when wicked men have slain a righteous person in his own house upon his bed? shall I not therefore now require his blood of your hand, and take you away from the earth? And David commanded his young men, and they slew them, and cut off their hands and their feet, and hanged *them* up over the pool in Hebron. But they took the head of Ishbosheth, and buried *it* in the sepulchre of Abner in Hebron."
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- d. 1 Kings 2:22-23: "And king Solomon answered and said unto his mother, And why dost thou ask Abishag the Shunammite for Adonijah? ask for him the kingdom also; for he *is* mine elder brother; even for him, and for Abiathar the priest, and for Joab the son of Zeruah. Then king Solomon sware by the LORD, saying, God do so to me, and more also, if Adonijah have not spoken this word against his own life."
 - e. Daniel 6:7-8: "All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counsellors, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions. Now, O king, establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not." Daniel 6:24: "And the king commanded, and they brought those men which had accused Daniel, and they cast *them* into the den of lions, *them*, their children, and their wives; and the lions had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces or ever they came at the bottom of the den."
 - f. Matthew 27:25: "Then answered all the people, and said, His blood *be* on us, and on our children."
 - g. Psalms 35:8: "Let destruction come upon him at unawares; and let his net that he hath hid catch himself: into that very destruction let him fall."
3. Verse 14: "A man shall be satisfied with good by the fruit of *his* mouth: and the recompense of a man's hands shall be rendered unto him."
- a. The previous verse spoke of the evil engendered by wrongful uses of the lips; this verse reports on the blessings gained by the rightful use of words. Righteous words and deeds bring rewards to the individual. No one serves God without gracious benefits, and no one disobeys him without due recompense.
 - b. Matthew 10:42: "And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold *water* only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward."
 - c. Hebrews 6:10: "For God *is* not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister."
 - d. Hebrews 2:1-4: "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let *them* slip. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard *him*; God also bearing *them* witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?"
4. Verses 15-16: "The way of a fool *is* right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel *is* wise. A fool's wrath is presently known: but a prudent *man* covereth shame."
- a. One who does not evaluate himself honestly is foolish. One who has an exalted view of his own strength, talents, and importance does not accept corrective counsel; he has a distorted view of himself. Many others have a perverted view of themselves in that they do not recognize their strengths and talents. They rob the kingdom of good service that could be offered if they could only see their worth and potential. Feelings of either arrogance or inferiority can destroy our usefulness.
 - 1) The foolishness of an arrogant man causes him to seek no counsel from others and to reject it when offered (cf. Judges 2:19; Prov. 16:2; 26:12). He lives with a sense of security, a confidence that is based on faulty information (Deut. 29:19; Jer. 6:14; 23:17; Matt. 7:21-27).
 - 2) Bridges wisely describes the arrogance of many religious people: "There may be no flagrant sin, nothing that degrades him below the level of his respectable neighbour. He has no doubt of
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- heaven. Instead of the way being so narrow, that few find it (Matt. 7:14); in his view it is so easy of access, that few miss it. Thus all his religion is self-delusion. (Chap. 24:12.)" (p.140).
- 3) Few of us can see ourselves as others see us. As we can only see part of ourselves reflected in a mirror while others can see us entirely, so our close friends and family members can see our strengths and weaknesses. We may have an inflated or an underrated view of our worth.
 - 4) Moses showed wisdom in heeding the counsel of Jethro (Ex. 18:14ff); David listened to the wise counsel of Abigail (1 Sam. 25:1-32).
- b. A foolish man's wrath will expose his real character to public view. In his anger, he will reveal his heart. In this case, Solomon shows that one's inability to control his wrath marks the individual as foolish. On the other hand, a prudent (wise) man will cover up (control) shameful wrath. No special talent or strength is necessary to allow one's emotions to explode, but one is wise indeed who is able to control his anger when its venting would lead to shame or greater problems. We should never allow vexation to override reason.
- 1) Saul allowed his hostility to overcome rationality in his assaults against David and his own son (1 Sam. 18:10-11; 19:9-11; 20:30-34); Jezebel's rage against Elijah led her deeper into rebellion (1 Kings 19:1ff); Nebuchadnezzar's fury against his wise men was irrational and extreme (Dan. 2:11-13).
 - 2) Even Moses allowed provocation to cause him to violate God's will (Num. 20:1-12); David was about to allow anger to cause him to overstep the bounds (1 Sam. 25:21-22); Asa acted unwisely due to his anger (2 Chron. 16:10).
 - 3) The capacity to be angry and to control anger was given to us by the Lord. There are times when anger is proper (cf. Mark 3:5; Eph. 4:26-27), but anger must be controlled or it will lead to hatred and violence.
 - 4) A quick temper is a dangerous fault which must be subjugated (cf. Titus 1:7). One who cannot take criticism is a poor candidate for the work of an elder (or preacher, teacher, or saint!). Many Christians who must live with unbelieving husbands, wives, friends, or families, and have learned to endure harsh and undeserved criticism, yet without becoming discouraged or bitter, have truly developed the Christian graces.
5. Verses 17-18: "*He that speaketh truth showeth forth righteousness: but a false witness deceit. There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword: but the tongue of the wise is health.*"
- a. The principles of this verse apply to many of life's situations, from the court room to ordinary conversation. The verse is not a mere truism, for the "Scripture not only sets out what is deep and searching, but stamps the every-day truths with the seal of God for our more reverential obedience" (Bridges, p.141). Compare: "For *it is* better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing" (1 Peter 3:17).
 - 1) To obey God is to evince righteousness for "all thy commandments are righteousness" (Ps. 119:172; cf. Acts 10:34-35; I John 3:7). The word of the Lord instructs us to speak the truth. As we speak truth, we manifest righteousness.
 - 2) One can violate God's word by misrepresenting or concealing the whole truth; a half-truth is really a whole lie. One can wrongly deceive another by giving a half-truth.
 - b. It is within the power of the tongue to hurt or heal (Jas. 3).
 - 1) Proverbs 12:7: "The wicked are overthrown, and *are* not: but the house of the righteous shall stand."
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- 2) Proverbs 18:8: "The words of a talebearer *are* as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly."
 - 3) Proverbs 18:21: "Death and life *are* in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof."
 - c. We have all felt the sharp tongue of a carping critic; Solomon graphically describes such as a piercing sword.
 - 1) Psalms 42:10: "*As* with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, Where *is* thy God?"
 - 2) Psalms 52:2: "Thy tongue deviseth mischiefs; like a sharp razor, working deceitfully."
 - 3) Matthew 5:21-22: "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire."
 - d. But a wise person uses his tongue to heal, and help, and encourage (1 Sam 19:1-7; 25:32-33; Matt. 5:9; Heb. 12:1-13).
 - e. "But it is the tongue of the wise, that is health. Its unrestrained and unregulated vent might be hurtful. Wisdom is the guiding principle; not a loose loquacity, but a delicate discriminating tact, directing us, how, when, what, to whom to speak; sometimes repressing; sometimes quickening; 'the tongue of the learned, to speak a word in season to him that is weary.' (Isa. 1:4.) This is no negative responsibility. It is not enough, that there is no poison in the tongue. It must be healing, not only purified from 'corrupt communication,' but 'ministering grace unto the hearers,' (Eph. 4:29)" (Bridges,p.142).
6. Verses 19-20: "The lip of truth shall be established for ever: but a lying tongue *is* but for a moment. Deceit *is* in the heart of them that imagine evil: but to the counsellors of peace *is* joy."
- a. One of the Christian ideals is to view every word and deed as it relates to the vast eternity awaiting all men. Thus, the wise man's lips are established and the lying tongue is short-lived. Many will not hesitate to tell a falsehood to escape a momentary difficulty or embarrassment, but will have to face the consequences of this sinful conduct in eternity. Compare the Gibeonites (Josh. 9) and Gehazi (2 Kings 5:25-29). But one who is truthful will be blessed eventually because of his righteous conduct, even though in the short run he may have difficulties.
 - b. A contrast is placed between the aim of the wicked and that of the counselors of peace; evil is in the former and joy is in the latter. The heart is shown to be the source of deceit. One may deceive by outright falsehood, by exaggeration, by shading the truth, and by willfully giving the wrong implication.
 - c. Ananias and Sapphira departed into eternity with the taint of deceit embedded in their hearts (Acts 5:1-11; cf. Rev. 21:8).
 - d. But joy resides in the heart of those who give good and truthful counsel. Paul could be joyful and have peace of mind, knowing that he had preached the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:17-27; 2 Tim. 4:6-8). Jonathan and Abigail could rejoice in the success of the good counsel they gave (1 Sam. 19:4-7; 25:23-32).
7. Verses 21-22: "There shall no evil happen to the just: but the wicked shall be filled with mischief. Lying lips *are* abomination to the LORD: but they that deal truly *are* his delight."
- a. There is no rest for the wicked (Isa. 48:22; 57:20-21; 2 Thess. 1:6-9). The righteous have the Lord's
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help in life and eternal rewards of peace and blessing in eternity. God will take care of his own, even though difficulties are often necessary for us in this life to develop the spiritual qualities which prepare us for heaven. Hebrews 12:1-13.

- b. The Lord considers lying as an abomination, but delights in those who tell the truth. Something that is abominable is odious and loathsome. Anything the holy God of heaven finds abominable is something we humans would do well to view likewise, and act accordingly! "And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither *whatsoever* worketh abomination, or *maketh* a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life" (Rev. 21:27).
8. Verse 23: "A prudent man concealeth knowledge: but the heart of fools proclaimeth foolishness."
- a. Many times those with the least worthwhile information to impart dominate a conversation, and those with better insight and experience are forced, by congeniality, into silence.
 - b. Foolish men often are loquacious, while wise men are often less talkative. "I had rather be thought a fool than to open my mouth and remove all doubt!" is good counsel.
 - c. There are times when silence is the best policy. The Lord would not so much as speak when Herod examined him, hoping that the Savior would gratify his long-held desire to see a miracle (Luke 23:8-11; 9:9). The Lord told his apostles to withhold certain truths he taught them until the right time (Matt. 16:20; 17:9; Lk. 12:3). The Lord would not give even to his apostles such information that might at the time be too much for them (Jn. 16:12-13). Wisdom dictates that we withhold from a critically ill person (for a time) bad news about a loved one which would likely cause greater suffering.

C. Proverbs 12:24-28: The Diligent, The Righteous, and the Slothful.

1. Verse 24: "The hand of the diligent shall bear rule: but the slothful shall be under tribute."
 - a. "Given enough time, the lazy man will become a slave to the diligent one. Hard work means being a self-starter (not a clock-watcher), a shrewd investor of time and strength, a hearer and responder when opportunity knocks, and a stick-to-it kind of person" (Alden, p.103). A sign near the time-clock in a business announced: "This clock will never be stolen—the employees are always watching it."
 - b. Genesis 47:6: "The land of Egypt *is* before thee; in the best of the land make thy father and brethren to dwell; in the land of Goshen let them dwell: and if thou knowest *any* men of activity among them, then make them rulers over my cattle."
 - c. 1 Kings 11:28: "And the man Jeroboam *was* a mighty man of valour: and Solomon seeing the young man that he was industrious, he made him ruler over all the charge of the house of Joseph."
 - d. Proverbs 22:29: "Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean *men*."
 - e. Matthew 24:45-47: "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed *is* that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods."
 2. Verse 25: "Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop: but a good word maketh it glad."
 - a. Sorrow and discouragement can be seen outwardly. Modern medicine has learned somewhat of the bad effects brought on by stress and sorrow.
 - b. Solomon aptly reminds us that a good word can ease a suffering, discouraged heart.
 3. Verse 26: "The righteous *is* more excellent than his neighbour: but the way of the wicked seduceth them."
 - a. A wicked man is incapable of leading another in the right path; he is more likely to worsen his condition.
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- b. Matthew 23:15: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves."
 - c. The righteous can help him:
 - 1) Matthew 5:16: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."
 - 2) Matthew 7:3-5: "And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam *is* in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye."
4. Verses 27-28: "The slothful *man* roasteth not that which he took in hunting: but the substance of a diligent man *is* precious. In the way of righteousness *is* life; and *in* the pathway *thereof* *there is* no death."
- a. The lazy man enjoys hunting but will not prepare the game he takes. But the man of diligence has great interest in what he has taken. "But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended" (Matt. 13:20-21).
 - b. Death is not in the way of righteousness, for the first death has been removed (in becoming a Christian—Rom. 5:21; 6:1-18; 4:7-8; 1 John 1:7-10), and the second death cannot hurt the faithful child of God (Rev. 2:11; 20:6; John 10:27-28). Christ used an analogy similar to this passage, in Matthew 7:13-14: "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide *is* the gate, and broad *is* the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait *is* the gate, and narrow *is* the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."
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PROVERBS 13

A. Proverbs 13:1-10.

1. Verse 1: "A wise son *heareth* his father's instruction: but a scorner *heareth* not rebuke."
 - a. The son who has a degree of wisdom will heed the instructions and learn from the correction given by the father. Jesus is the perfect example in this as in all other things:
 - 1) Luke 2:51-52: "And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man."
 - 2) Hebrews 5:8-9: "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him."
 - 3) 1 Peter 2:21: "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps."
 - b. The opposite of a wise son in this instance is a scornful son, one who rejects the instruction and correction of the father.
 - 1) Proverbs 15:5: "A fool despiseth his father's instruction: but he that regardeth reproof is prudent."
 - 2) Proverbs 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."
2. Verses 2-3: "A man shall eat good by the fruit of *his* mouth: but the soul of the transgressors *shall eat* violence. He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life: *but* he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction."
 - a. A faithful child of God will speak good words which are a source of blessing to others and provide spiritual sustenance for himself, but the wicked individual will bring a curse to himself by the words he speaks. We reap what we sow.
 - 1) Proverbs 4:23: "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it *are* the issues of life."
 - 2) Proverbs 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."
 - b. Verse three expresses a similar thought to the preceding statement: that the mouth is able to produce good or evil, depending on the nature of the words it utters. One who selects and controls his words by righteousness, preserves his life, but one who exercises improper control will bring destruction upon himself. God gave us two eyes and two ears, but only one tongue (Jas. 3:1-12; 1:19). It is essential that we speak, but the danger is in opening "wide" the lips—speaking rashly and wrongly.
 - 1) Proverbs 12:6: "The words of the wicked *are* to lie in wait for blood: but the mouth of the upright shall deliver them."
 - 2) Proverbs 12:13-14: "The wicked is snared by the transgression of *his* lips: but the just shall come out of trouble. A man shall be satisfied with good by the fruit of *his* mouth: and the recompense of a man's hands shall be rendered unto him."
 - 3) Proverbs 12:18-19: "There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword: but the tongue of the wise *is* health. The lip of truth shall be established for ever: but a lying tongue *is* but for a moment."
 - 4) Proverbs 12:22: "Lying lips *are* abomination to the LORD: but they that deal truly *are* his delight."
3. Verse 4: "The soul of the sluggard desireth, and *hath* nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made

fat."

- a. Here the distinction is drawn again between the sluggard and the diligent; the former will be in need because of his laziness and the latter will have enough because of his industry.
 - 1) Proverbs 10:4: "He becometh poor that dealeth *with* a slack hand: but the hand of the diligent maketh rich."
 - 2) Proverbs 12:24: "The hand of the diligent shall bear rule: but the slothful shall be under tribute."
 - b. If you want to acquire an item, or get something done, or earn a living—do personally what is necessary to bring about the desired end.
4. Verses 5-6: "A righteous *man* hateth lying: but a wicked *man* is loathsome, and cometh to shame. Righteousness keepeth *him that is* upright in the way: but wickedness overthroweth the sinner."
- a. A righteous man not only will not lie, he hates lying; it is something that he will not engage in himself and which he despises with a godly hatred. In contrast to him, the wicked man (who participates in lying, etc.) is loathsome and will come to shame. The Hebrew word translated "loathsome" is "baash," and is translated as "stink" in other Old Testament passages (e.g., Exodus 7:18, 21; 8:14; 16:20; Isa. 50:2; Eccl. 10:1). A wicked man "stinks" in the estimation of God and righteous men.
 - b. Righteousness is pictured as a protecting guide to a traveling man. It keeps him in the proper way. "Keepeth" is from a word which means "to keep, to watch" (cf. Isa. 27:3; 42:6). Wickedness has the opposite effect: it brings about the overthrow of the sinner. "Let integrity and uprightness preserve me; for I wait on thee" (Psa. 25:21).
5. Verse 7: "There is that maketh himself rich, yet *hath* nothing: *there is* that maketh himself poor, yet *hath* great riches."
- a. Those ancient times had people very much like the people of our time, including those who feign wealth or poverty, whichever suits the case. Some rich people dress as if they were poverty-stricken; some will buy used goods, argue over small change, steal, and in other ways, give out that they are poor. There was a wealthy man in Tennessee who owned a lumber company, and although he was about ninety, he still worked in his business every day and dressed in old overalls.
 - b. The motives for a rich person doing such include: genuine humility; pretended humility; an overt attempt to beguile; exaggerated frugality; a bid for sympathy. A poor person might pretend to be rich because of pride.
 - c. Another view of the verse is that those who are poor in this world's goods can be very rich spiritually, and those who are rich in worldly wealth might be morally bankrupt.
6. Verses 8-9: "The ransom of a man's life *are* his riches: but the poor heareth not rebuke. The light of the righteous rejoiceth: but the lamp of the wicked shall be put out."
- a. "The last Proverb rebuketh discontent with our lot, whether of riches or poverty. The wise man here strikes the balance between these two conditions. A man's riches may be the ransom of his life. Extortion of money may prompt false accusation, and riches may be a ransom cheerfully paid. (See Job 2:4). Or they may be the price of deliverance from his enemies....If 'the rich man's wealth is a strong city' (Chap. 10:15), the poor man's poverty is often his safeguard. He is beneath notice. He bears not many a rebuke; he escapes many a danger, which is destruction to his richer neighbour. (2 Kings 24:14; 25:12.) Had Isaac's flocks been less numerous (Gen. 26:13,14), or Jacob less prosperous (ib. 31:1), they would not have heard so much rebuke from their selfish enemies. The poor with his empty pocket travels with security. His cottage offers little temptation to the nightly robber" (Bridges, p.155).

- b. The value of the "light" of a righteous person is beyond our knowledge. Who can estimate the worth of the influence of Abel, though he has been dead for thousands of years? (Cf. Heb. 11:4; Matt. 5:14-16; Phil. 2:15). The lack of the influence of ten righteous souls assured the destruction of Sodom, but the presence of ten righteous souls would have assured its preservation.
- 1) The "lamp" of the wicked will be snuffed out: a figurative description of the penalty their sins will bring upon them.
 - 2) Revelation 2:4-5: "Nevertheless I have *somewhat* against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."
7. Verse 10: "Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised *is* wisdom."
- a. The verse does not say that contention only comes by pride, but rather says that contention (strife) can always be traced to pride. When strife arises between two people or two groups of people, one (or both) has a stubborn pride that will not permit him to submit to what is right.
- 1) Galatians 2:4-5: "And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you."
 - 2) Galatians 2:11: "But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed."
 - 3) 1 Thessalonians 2:2: "But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention."
 - 4) 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12: "And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."
 - 5) Jude 3: "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort *you* that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."
- b. When a false teacher presents his wares, and those who are sound in the faith take issue with his error, the contention can be resolved only if the false teacher renounces his error. The defender of truth is involved because he loves the truth; if the opponent maintains his stance after he has been shown the truth, he does so out of pride (stubbornness). If the strife is over some small matter or opinion, it will be continued only as long as pride is present. Those who do not love the truth are never satisfied for long with abiding in the "old paths" of God's word; they must seek out new ways. Those who love the truth are content to abide in God's word, while keeping their eyes open for better ways of doing the Lord's will (scripturally).
- c. Warfare between individuals or nations is often caused by arrogance or by wounded pride.
- 1) Judges 12:1: "And the men of Ephraim gathered themselves together, and went northward, and said unto Jephthah, Wherefore passedst thou over to fight against the children of Ammon, and didst not call us to go with thee? we will burn thine house upon thee with fire."
 - 2) 2 Kings 14:10: "Thou hast indeed smitten Edom, and thine heart hath lifted thee up: glory *of this*, and tarry at home: for why shouldest thou meddle to *thy* hurt, that thou shouldest fall, *even* thou,
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- and Judah with thee?"
- 3) James 4:1: "From whence *come* wars and fightings among you? *come they* not hence, *even* of your lusts that war in your members?"
- d. Humility is enjoined and pride is denounced in the Scriptures.
- 1) 1 Samuel 15:17: "And Samuel said, When thou *wast* little in thine own sight, *wast* thou not *made* the head of the tribes of Israel, and the LORD anointed thee king over Israel?"
 - 2) Matthew 5:3: "Blessed *are* the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."
 - 3) 1 Corinthians 10:24: "Let no man seek his own, but every man another's *wealth*."
 - 4) Philippians 2:3: "*Let* nothing *be done* through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves."
- e. The beginning point in being saved is to acknowledge that our desires are of secondary importance. When we acquire humility, pride is thereby dismissed. Pride causes contention, but wisdom is demonstrated by those who are well instructed.

B. Proverbs 13:11-25.

1. Verse 11: "Wealth *gotten* by vanity shall be diminished: but he that gathereth by labour shall increase."
 - a. Wealth which has been obtained by vain (evil) means, will not be forever retained. Where is the wealth of Abab? Of Jesse James? Of John Dillinger? Of Al Capone? All earthly wealth is short-lived at best, but spiritual treasures are safe (Matt. 6:19-21). Wealth that is spent on vanity will soon be exhausted, for it is impossible to satisfy the vain desires of men.
 - 1) Proverbs 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."
 - 2) Haggai 1:6: "Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages *to put it* into a bag with holes."
 - b. The contrasting statement in the proverb is that those who obtain their material possessions by honest toil will increase (be blessed by the same and by the benevolent hand of God).
 - c. Righteous people see earthly goods and possessions in the proper perspective: as a means to an end, and not as the end itself.
 - 1) Luke 3:11: "He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise."
 - 2) 1 Corinthians 6:19-20: "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost *which is* in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."
 - 3) 1 Corinthians 7:31: "And they that use this world, as not abusing *it*: for the fashion of this world passeth away."
 - 4) 1 Timothy 6:6-7: "But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into *this* world, *and it is* certain we can carry nothing out."
 - 5) 1 Timothy 6:17: "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy."
 - 6) James 2:14-17: "What *doth it* profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one

of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what *doth it* profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone."

- 7) 1 John 3:17: "But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels *of compassion* from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?"
2. Verse 12: "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick: but *when* the desire cometh, *it is* a tree of life."
 - a. On any level, when hope remains unfulfilled, disappointment fills the heart. One requirement to spiritual maturity is the ability to endure disappointment.
 - b. When hope is realized, the heart is comforted as if by the tree of life.
 - c. Romans 8:24-25: "For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for *it* with perseverance" (NKJV).
3. Verses 13-14: "Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed: but he that feareth the commandment shall be rewarded. The law of the wise *is* a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death."
 - a. This proverb has in view the word of God. One who despises it shall be destroyed, but one who fears it in the sense that he reverently obeys its dictates shall be rewarded. To despise God's word does not require that we think evil of it. We despise it by failing or refusing to obey what it commands (2 Sam. 12:9-10; 2 Chr. 36:16; Luke 10:16; Acts 3:22-23; Heb. 1:1-2; Acts 4:12). God looks with favor upon those who are poor in spirit, have hearts that are contrite, and tremble at his word.
 - 1) Ezra 10:3: "Now therefore let us make a covenant with our God to put away all the wives, and such as are born of them, according to the counsel of my lord, and of those that tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law."
 - 2) Isaiah 66:2: "For all those *things* hath mine hand made, and all those *things* have been, saith the LORD: but to this *man* will I look, *even to him that is* poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word."
 - b. The wise are wise because they follow the word of God; the law of a wise man (God's word of wisdom) is as a fountain of life to him, which also prevents his falling into the many snares encountered in life. God's word blesses in positive and negative ways: it gives rewards and prevents many difficulties which would otherwise confront us.
4. Verse 15: "Good understanding giveth favour: but the way of transgressors *is* hard."
 - a. The general rule of the first part of this proverb is that good understanding provides favor. Joseph, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are excellent examples of the principle. When one conducts himself sensibly and prudently, right-thinking people take note.
 - b. The contrasting statement in the proverb announces a famous truth: the way of the transgressor is hard. Compared with the way of the righteous man who directs his life by good understanding and thus finds favor, the transgressor walks by his own lusts and suffers thereby.
 - c. The man who imbibes alcohol has many troubles: with the law if he gets caught driving while under the influence; with his family when his drinking creates hardship; with others when his conduct becomes unruly; with his work when his drinking interferes; with his health if he has an accident or develops one of the conditions fostered by drinking; and with his own soul, for his drinking violates God's law:
 - 1) Proverbs 23:29-35: "Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they

- that go to seek mixed wine. Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, *when* it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things. 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. 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."
- 2) Romans 6:23: "For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."
 - 3) 1 Corinthians 6:19-20: "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost *which is* in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."
 - 4) Galatians 5:19-21: "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told *you* in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."
 - 5) 1 Thessalonians 5:22: "Abstain from all appearance of evil."
 - 6) 1 John 3:4: "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law."
- d. One who lives in any sin will have trouble sooner or later. Consider the liar, the thief, the fornicator, the covetous person, the blasphemer, the worldly-minded, the false teacher, the follower of religious error, the selfish, the hater, the talebearer, the backbiter, one with malice in the heart, the murderer, et al.
- e. This is a general rule as far as life here is concerned, for many wicked men appear to have easy lives here (Ps. 73:12-19). But generally, the sinner has many difficulties here, and in the Judgment he most assuredly shall face the evil he did in life (John 5:28-29; Gal. 6:79; Rom. 14:10-12; 2 The. 1:6-9).
5. Verse 16: "Every prudent *man* dealth with knowledge: but a fool layeth open *his* folly."
- a. In his various operations in life, the prudent man conducts his affairs according to knowledge. He trains, controls, and directs his family with it; his financial dealings are operated with it; his work is governed by it; and his spiritual life is conducted by the proper knowledge also. A man who is wise will be guided by wisdom's knowledge in all of life's areas. Consider the lives of Abraham, Isaac, Joseph, Christ, and Paul and see the prudence by which they operated; but only in the case of Christ is perfection found.
 - b. On the other hand, the foolish man who operates by folly, will reveal the foolishness by which he conducts his affairs. These things cannot be hidden for long. His wrath is publicly demonstrated even on small matters; his prejudices are proudly announced; his shallow schemes are easily discerned; his pride is worn for all to see.
 - c. "There lies in the word ("layeth open") something derisive: as the merchant unrolls and spreads out his wares in order to commend them, so the fool does with his foolery, which he had enveloped, i.e. had the greatest interest to keep concealed within himself he is puffed up therewith" (Keil, p.281).
 - d. Compare these passages:
 - 1) Isaiah 3:9: "The show of their countenance doth witness against them; and they declare their sin as Sodom, they hide *it* not. Woe unto their soul! for they have rewarded evil unto themselves."
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- 2) 1 Corinthians 5:1-2: "It is reported commonly *that there is* fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you."
6. Verses 17-19: "A wicked messenger falleth into mischief: but a faithful ambassador *is* health. Poverty and shame *shall be to* him that refuseth instruction: but he that regardeth reproof shall be honoured. The desire accomplished is sweet to the soul: but *it is* abomination to fools to depart from evil."
- a. A messenger will demonstrate his character by the way in which he discharges his duty: a wicked man will be negligent and a faithful man will be reliable. The former will betray the trust placed in him, but the latter will prove it was properly placed. The former will damage his master, but the latter will bring health to his master. Gehazi proved himself to be untrustworthy in the end (2 Kings 5:20-27); Eliezer showed that he was worthy of the trust placed in him by Abraham (Gen. 24). The lesson in this proverb is one which teaches us to be loyal to our earthly employer and to our heavenly Master.
 - b. The attitudes and reactions of people have remained virtually unchanged through the centuries and in all societies. There have always been those who refuse instructions, while there are nearly always those who will receive reproof humbly.
 - 1) There are various levels of application for this proverb: in our dealings with God; in the family; at work; in the classroom; on the ball field; in society in general.
 - 2) Spiritually, when one rejects the instructions and reproof offered from God's word, he does so at his own expense, being either ignorant of, or indifferent toward, the blessings available and the penalties awaiting.
 - 3) One who has done something deserving of reproof, and who humbly accepts that reproof, shows wisdom, and the end effect is that he obtains honor for his submission, instead of the shame he deserved for his offence.
 - c. The wise person who walks in righteousness will find his desire will be sweetly fulfilled. Faithful service to God will be richly rewarded (2 Pet. 3:8-9; Heb. 6:10; Matt. 10:42). There is great joy in salvation, of that which we presently enjoy and that which is reserved in heaven for the faithful (Acts 8:39-40; 1 Pet. 1:4-5). But the foolish man considers the prospect of giving up his evil ways as an abomination.
7. Verses 20-25: "He that walketh with wise *men* shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed. Evil pursueth sinners: but to the righteous good shall be repayed. A good *man* leaveth an inheritance to his children's children: and the wealth of the sinner *is* laid up for the just. Much food *is in* the tillage of the poor: but there is *that is* destroyed for want of judgment. He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes. The righteous eateth to the satisfying of his soul: but the belly of the wicked shall want."
- a. The proverb of verse 20 is always a timely lesson for us all, but especially for the young. Peer pressure is a powerful influence—for good or evil. In our society of today, the latter seems to be the usual effect (1 Cor. 15:33; cf. 2 Chron. 24). The influence of a group of people is like leaven: it soon permeates the whole lump of dough. It is important that we have around us as friends the kind of people we wish to be ourselves, for it is almost certain that their influence will affect us.
 - b. Evil follows sinners, and eventually will overtake and destroy them: Cain, Achan, Ahab, Judas. But good awaits the righteous (Heb. 6:10; Mt. 25:21-23; Jn. 5:28-29; 1 Kings 17).
 - c. This is a general truth, for many good people have no material wealth to leave their children. However, in the good influence of a righteous life, such a man has much to leave that will bless future
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generations. Egypt's wealth came to Israel; Haman's fell to Esther and Mordecai (Esth. 8:1-2). See Matthew 25:24-30.

- d. The toil of the diligent produces much food from the land; a large estate produces little or nothing if improperly managed or poorly worked. The produce of the seven years of plenty would have been wasted but for Joseph's wise administration. "When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost" (John 6:12).
 - e. A loving parent will chasten the child betimes (promptly, when needed). Negligence to discipline a child does not show love, but unconcern.
 - 1) Proverbs 19:18: "Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying."
 - 2) Hebrews 12:7: "If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?"
 - f. Godly people will be provided for (materially and spiritually); the ungodly have no such promise (cf. 1 Kings 17).
 - 1) Psalms 37:25: "I have been young, and *now* am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread."
 - 2) Matthew 6:33: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."
 - 3) Cf. Luke 16:24: "And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame."
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PROVERBS 14

A. Proverbs 14:1-9.

1. Verse 1: "Every wise woman buildeth her house: but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands."
 - a. Solomon states that the woman can either tear down or build up the home; the use or the absence of wisdom determines which it will be. Of course, the husband can do the same thing, but here the wise man speaks of the woman. A wise wife can supply what is lacking on the part of her husband. Who can know the amount of harm a foolish woman can wreak on a home? Who can properly estimate the great worth of a good wife and mother? Cf. Sarah, Hannah, Mary, and Eunice.
 - b. A lazy, careless, selfish wife and mother can so influence the children that they become like her; and can so undermine a good husband's efforts as to bring them to nought. Love often blinds the minds of young, inexperienced men to the faults of their sweethearts. Under the best of circumstances, who can know how another person will turn out?
 - c. "What responsibility then belongs to the marriage choice, linked with the highest interests of unborn generations! If ever there was a matter for special prayer and consideration, this is it" (Bridges, p.170).
2. Verse 2: "He that walketh in his uprightness feareth the LORD: but *he that is* perverse in his ways despiseth him."
 - a. Whether one fears or despises the Lord is determined by the individual's attitude toward God's word. One who lives in obedience to God's word, fears him; and one who lives a crooked life, despises God. David is accused of despising the Lord because he committed sin. "Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife *to be* thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife" (2 Sam. 12:9-10). On the occasion described, David despised the Lord in his disobedience to the Lord's commandment.
 - b. The only way we can know what is sinful is to see what the Bible teaches. Although a certain action, attitude, or teaching is popular among men, that does not mean it is pleasing to God. "...That which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God" (Luke 16:15). "...For them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed" (I Sam. 2:30).
 - c. It is extremely important that we come to know everything about God's word that we can learn! Our eternal destinies depend on knowing and sincerely doing what God says.
3. Verse 3: "In the mouth of the foolish *is* a rod of pride: but the lips of the wise shall preserve them."
 - a. The use of words is again addressed, with evil words being described under the figure of "a rod of pride." "Behold the day, behold, it is come: the morning is gone forth; the rod hath blossomed, pride hath budded. Violence is risen up into a rod of wickedness: none of them *shall remain*, nor of their multitude, nor of any of theirs: neither *shall there be* wailing for them" (Ezek. 7:10-11). A rod was an instrument used in punishing someone (Prov. 13:24; 2 Cor. 11:25).
 - b. A "rod of pride" is an instrument of punishment used by pride against another; this "rod" is the wrongful use of words. Only one who is acting foolishly will be guilty of this sin. Words are spoken against God, against faithful Christians, against the truth and against the church. Such evil words are, in the final analysis, most hurtful to the one who spoke them.
 - 1) Matthew 12:37: "For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."

- 2) Romans 14:10-12: "But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, *As I live*, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."
 - 3) 2 Corinthians 5:10: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad."
 - c. The contrasting statement shows that the lips (the words) spoken by wise people will preserve them. "For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Matt. 12:37).
 - d. Compare: "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed *thee*? or thirsty, and gave *thee* drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took *thee* in? or naked, and clothed *thee*? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done *it* unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done *it* unto me" (Matt. 25:34-40).
4. Verse 4: "Where no oxen *are*, the crib *is* clean: but much increase *is* by the strength of the ox."
- a. "God works by means, not by miracles." If we want a crop, we must plant, till, and harvest. In that age, oxen were the means used in farming; if oxen are put to their normal use, crops will be produced, and cribs will be full (not clean, empty).
 - b. The lesson of this verse is one teaching diligent work in providing for our needs. (There is some discussion about the exact rendering of "clean" and "crib"; the ASV agrees with the KJV).
 - c. "This does not mean, as some take it, that labour has its rough, disagreeable side, yet in the end brings profit; but rather that without bullocks to labour in the fields, or cows to supply milk—that is, without toil and industry, and necessary instruments—the crib is empty, there is nothing to put in the granary, there are no beasts to fatten. The means must be adapted to the end. Much increase is by the strength of the ox. This, again, is not an exhortation to kindness towards animals, which makes no antithesis to the first clause; but it is parallel with Prov 12:11, and means that where agricultural works are diligently carried on (the 'ploughing ox' being taken as the type of industry), large returns are secured. Septuagint, 'Where fruits are plentiful the strength of the ox is manifest'"[The Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by Biblesoft].
5. Verse 5: "A faithful witness will not lie: but a false witness will utter lies."
- a. "This might seem to be a truism, unworthy of inspiration. But a closer inspection brings out a valuable maxim of practical wisdom. A faithful witness is moved neither by entreaties nor bribes, neither by promises nor threats, to swerve from truth. He is the man to trust. He will not lie. But a false witness has lost all principle of truth. He will utter lies, without any inducement but his own interest or pleasure" (Bridges, p.172).
 - b. "Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is like a broken tooth, and a foot out of joint" (Prov. 25:19).
 - c. Our true character is tested in seemingly small matters as well as by those situations which appear very important. If we are loyal in the small affairs of life, we will be faithful also in the larger matters; if disloyal in the small, we cannot be trusted to be faithful in greater things. "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much" (Luke
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10:16). One who will tell a falsehood in a small case cannot be trusted when the issue is of more significant weight. Our characters are shaped according to the small decisions and actions of day-to-day living.

6. Verse 6: "A scorner seeketh wisdom, and *findeth it* not: but knowledge *is* easy unto him that understandeth."
 - a. The reason a scorner does not find wisdom (or truth) lies in his own attitude. The Russian cosmonaut did not "see" God when he was sent into space. If one cannot see God on earth, he will not find him in space. Only those who have their minds open will learn. If one seriously searches, with an honest heart, he will find God, truth and wisdom. "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or *whether* I speak from myself" (John 7:17, ASV).
 - b. Evidences which prove the existence of God are manifold; proofs of the inspiration of the Bible are plenteous; the teachings of the Scriptures are clear to all who will look into them with an open, receptive mind.
 - 1) Proverbs 8:9: "They *are* all plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge."
 - 2) Acts 8:31: "And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him."
 - 3) Acts 17:11-12: "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few."
7. Verse 7: "Go from the presence of a foolish man, when thou perceivest not *in him* the lips of knowledge."
 - a. Nothing is to be gained from fellowship with a foolish (sinful) man. We are told to mark and avoid false teachers (Rom. 16:17-18), to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness (Eph. 5:11), and are warned against being unequally yoked together with unbelievers (2 Cor. 6:14-18).
 - b. After we perceive the true nature of such a person, we are to go from his presence.
 - 1) Matthew 7:6: "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you."
 - 2) Matthew 7:15-20: "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither *can* a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."
 - 3) 1 Corinthians 15:33: "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners."
 - 4) 1 Timothy 6:4-5: "He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself."
8. Verse 8: "The wisdom of the prudent *is* to understand his way: but the folly of fools *is* deceit."
 - a. The great folly of the foolish is to be self-deceived; the wisdom of a prudent man is to understand his condition correctly. This verse addresses the heart of every man's problem:
 - 1) What am I doing here?

- 2) Where did I come from?
 - 3) What should I be doing?
 - 4) What is my true condition?
 - 5) What is the real meaning of life?
 - 6) Where am I going?
- b. "This is not the wisdom of the learned, but of the prudent; not abstract and speculative, but sound and practical. It is self-knowledge and self-control looking upward for Divine guidance. And how much is this wisdom needed to understand our way! The restless professor eagerly follows his own impulse. His constitutional bias interprets Providence, and makes openings for himself. Everything is out of place. He is so 'fervent in spirit,' that he becomes 'slothful in business.' He conceives himself to be doing good; the more so, because it is different from his brethren. He pleads the constraint of zeal as an excuse for indiscretion; as if religion was meant to destroy, and not rather to rectify, his judgment" (Bridges, p.174).
- c. Everyone must live with himself, listening to the voice of his conscience, and must decide how he will act, what he will speak, what kind of person he is, and what his attitude will be. The atheist believes his unbelief is right; the profligate person thinks his way of life is good; the false teacher will not examine his true condition in the light of truth; the follower of religious error earnestly believes he is on the right path and will close his mind to the correction of the truth; the lukewarm saint perceives his action to be right and all those reproofs directed his way are set in motion by ignorant fools.
- 1) Isaiah 5:20: "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!"
 - 2) Isaiah 8:20: "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, *it is* because *there is* no light in them."
 - 3) Isaiah 30:10: "Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits."
- d. The Bible demands that Christians continually examine their own hearts in the light of God's word.
- 1) Psalms 119:11: "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee."
 - 2) 2 Corinthians 13:5: "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?"
 - 3) Ephesians 5:17: "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord *is*."
 - 4) 2 Timothy 2:15: "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."
 - 5) 2 Timothy 3:16-17: "All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."
 - 6) Hebrews 5:12-14: "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which *be* the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk *is* unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, *even* those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."
 - 7) 1 Peter 2:1-2: "Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow
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- thereby."
- 8) 1 John 2:1: "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."
- e. Hearts that are deceived have been misled by false information and assumptions. Many warnings are issued by holy writ against being deceived.
- 1) Deuteronomy 11:16: "Take heed to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aside, and serve other gods, and worship them."
 - 2) Jeremiah 17:9: "The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"
 - 3) Obadiah 3: "The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation *is* high; that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground?"
 - 4) Luke 21:8: "And he said, Take heed that ye be not deceived: for many shall come in my name, saying, I am *Christ*; and the time draweth near: go ye not therefore after them."
 - 5) 1 Corinthians 6:9-10: "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God."
 - 6) 1 Corinthians 15:33: "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners."
 - 7) Galatians 6:7: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."
 - 8) 2 Timothy 3:13: "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived."
 - 9) 1 John 4:1: "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world."
- f. As important as sincerity is, sincerity alone is insufficient; we must have truth.
- 1) Proverbs 16:25: "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof *are* the ways of death."
 - 2) Jeremiah 10:23: "O LORD, I know that the way of man *is* not in himself: *it is* not in man that walketh to direct his steps."
 - 3) Matthew 4:4: "But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."
 - 4) John 8:32: "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."
 - 5) John 17:17: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."
 - 6) 1 Corinthians 3:19: "For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness."
 - 7) 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12: "And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."
 - 8) Compare: "And the king commanded, and they brought those men which had accused Daniel, and they cast *them* into the den of lions, *them*, their children, and their wives; and the lions had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces or ever they came at the bottom of the den"
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(Dan. 6:24; cf. Acts 5:1-11).

9. Verse 9: "Fools make a mock at sin: but among the righteous *there is* favour."
 - a. It is common in our society to see foolish men making fun of sin. Many will lie, cheat, steal, kill, curse, blaspheme—and laugh about it! But sin is serious. Who can perceive its dreadfulness? It is not considered as a light thing in the Bible. Its awful nature led to Adam and Eve's eviction from Eden; it brought the sinless Son of God to the cross—as the only possible sacrifice for sin. Sin will lead countless millions into an unending torment in Gehenna.
 - b. Its more personal and immediate consequences are seen in the turmoil about us in human society (crime, war, etc.), in the contrariness of nature, and in disease and death (Gen. 3). Sin introduced these penalties. To view the terrible nature of sin, look at Christ in Gethsemane and hear his cry on the cross.
 - 1) Matthew 27:46: "And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"
 - 2) Luke 22:44: "And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground."
 - c. "How will the wretched mocker call himself in eternity what God calls him now—a fool! The mocking cannot be beyond the grave; except it be the sport of the cruel enemy at the unchangeably hopeless torments of his deluded victim. The damnation of souls is sport in hell. Is not then the poor mocker, rushing into this woe, the object of our pity and prayer? We warn, we weep, we would yearn over him" (Bridges, p.175).
 - d. The contrasting statement of the verse shows that, while fools make mock at sin, those who are righteous bask in the favor of the Almighty.

B. Proverbs 14:10-25.

1. Verses 10-11: "The heart knoweth his own bitterness; and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy. The house of the wicked shall be overthrown: but the tabernacle of the upright shall flourish."
 - a. When someone is in grief or pain, we often say, "I know how you feel." But only the individual is experiencing the pain and grief (cf. 1 Cor. 2:11).
 - 1) Only Hannah could know the awful pain of her barrenness: "And she *was* in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the LORD, and wept sore. And she vowed a vow, and said, O LORD of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the LORD all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head. And it came to pass, as she continued praying before the LORD, that Eli marked her mouth. Now Hannah, she spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard: therefore Eli thought she had been drunken" (1 Sam. 1:10-13).
 - 2) Gehazi was insensitive to the Shunamite woman's woes: "And when she came to the man of God to the hill, she caught him by the feet: but Gehazi came near to thrust her away. And the man of God said, Let her alone; for her soul *is* vexed within her: and the LORD hath hid *it* from me, and hath not told me" (2 Kings 4:27).
 - 3) Job's friends ignored the inner pain of that man of God: "But ye *are* forgers of lies, ye *are* all physicians of no value....I have heard many such things: miserable comforters *are* ye all" (Job 13:4; 16:2).
 - 4) Christ's enemies gloried in his pain and shame: "And they that passed by reviled him, wagging

their heads, And saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest *it* in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. Likewise also the chief priests mocking *him*, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God. The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth" (Matt. 27:39-44).

- b. Others cannot know the full extent of our inner sufferings. "The most poignant sufferings often arise from causes, which cannot be told to our dearest friend" (Bridges, p.176). If we could only know the pain others carry, we would be kinder and more patient!
 - c. Others cannot know the full extent of our inner joys. Michal could grasp her husband's courage but not his joy.
 - 1) 1 Samuel 18:20: "And Michal Saul's daughter loved David: and they told Saul, and the thing pleased him."
 - 2) 2 Samuel 6:16: "And as the ark of the LORD came into the city of David, Michal Saul's daughter looked through a window, and saw king David leaping and dancing before the LORD; and she despised him in her heart."
 - d. "The feeblest state of the upright is more stable than the prosperity of the wicked. They build a house. The earth is their home, where they would settle, and take their rest. The upright—knowing the uncertainty of earth, and seeking a better house—only set up a tabernacle (Heb. 9:9)—weak and trembling. Yet the house is over thrown, and the tabernacle flourishes" (Bridges, p.177). When we look at the seeming might and invincibility of the wicked man who prospers in this world, we tend to misjudge matters. The righteous appear to be so vulnerable and weak, while the wicked appear so strong and thriving, that those who follow God are being short-changed. But God does not provide all of the harvest in October.
 - 1) Job 18:14-2: "His confidence shall be rooted out of his tabernacle, and it shall bring him to the king of terrors. It shall dwell in his tabernacle, because *it is* none of his: brimstone shall be scattered upon his habitation. His roots shall be dried up beneath, and above shall his branch be cut off. His remembrance shall perish from the earth, and he shall have no name in the street. He shall be driven from light into darkness, and chased out of the world. He shall neither have son nor nephew among his people, nor any remaining in his dwellings. They that come after *him* shall be astonished at his day, as they that went before were affrighted. Surely such *are* the dwellings of the wicked, and this *is* the place of *him* that knoweth not God." Cf. Job 21:7ff.
 - 2) Psalms 73:12-19: "Behold, these *are* the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase *in* riches. Verily I have cleansed my heart *in* vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning. If I say, I will speak thus; behold, I should offend *against* the generation of thy children. When I thought to know this, it *was* too painful for me; Until I went into the sanctuary of God; *then* understood I their end. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they *brought* into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors."
 - 3) Jeremiah 12:1: "Righteous *art* thou, O LORD, when I plead with thee: yet let me talk with thee of *thy* judgments: Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? *wherefore* are all they happy that deal very treacherously?"
 - 4) 2 Corinthians 5:7: "For we walk by faith, not by sight."
2. Verse 12: "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof *are* the ways of death."

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- a. God does not assess things as men do.
- 1) 1 Samuel 2:30: "Wherefore the LORD God of Israel saith, I said indeed *that* thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever: but now the LORD saith, Be it far from me; for them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed."
 - 2) 1 Samuel 16:7: "But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for *the LORD seeth* not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart."
 - 3) Isaiah 55:8-9: "For my thoughts *are* not your thoughts, neither *are* your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."
 - 4) Luke 16:15: "And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God."
- b. The broad way is easily found, entered and followed; but it ends in perdition. The narrow way is difficult to find, enter and follow, but the end of that road is life in heaven (Matt. 7:13-14). Solomon's statement, which is repeated in 16:25, states that what a man deems as a good thing may very well be counted by God as evil. Man is simply not equipped to determine how he must live to please the Almighty and to go to heaven (Jer. 10:23).
- c. Many men, ancient and modern, have considered evil things as good and right, and good things as unpleasant and evil.
- 1) Isaiah 30:10: "Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits."
 - 2) John 16:2: "They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service."
 - 3) 2 Timothy 3:1-8: "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith."
- d. Many are deceived into thinking that what the Bible plainly proclaims is wrong and is to be rejected—many accept what the Bible rejects and reject what the Bible accepts.
- 1) Romans 16:17-18: "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple."
 - 2) 2 Corinthians 11:2-3: "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present *you as* a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."
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- 3) Revelation 3:14-17: "And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."
- e. Few, indeed, are those who have the degree of sincerity and honesty to accept everything the Bible teaches to the point that they will quickly forsake their beliefs and practices which are shown to be wrong.
- f. If one follows a religious path which is contrary to God's way, the end awaiting him is the loss of his soul. It will not matter that he has been deceived or honestly thought that he was doing the right thing. While sincerity is absolutely indispensable, truth is also essential.
- 1) John 4:24: "God *is* a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth."
 - 2) John 8:32: "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."
 - 3) John 17:17: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."
 - 4) Romans 6:16-18: "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness."
 - 5) 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12: "And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."
- g. "Terrible indeed will it be to meet the bridegroom with a bright, but unfurnished lamp; to fall from high expectations of heaven into the depths of hell!" (Bridges, p.178).
3. Verses 13-14: "Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful; and the end of that mirth *is* heaviness. The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways: and a good man *shall be satisfied* from himself."
- a. "The author indirectly speaks here of the ultimate fate of every man (cf. Luke 6:25b). Every life ends with death; that certainty overshadows all emotions, experiences, or plans. Of joy and sorrow, the more enduring emotion in this life is sorrow" (Alden, p.112).
 - b. But in this life, even when the worldling laughs, there is cause for him to be sorrowful. "He may feast in his prison, or dance in his chains. He may drink away his trouble. But it is a vain show of happiness. Ask him what is in his bosom. Is not his smile a counterfeit to hide a reality of woe?" (Bridges, p.178).
 - c. The mirth of this life ends in the sorrow of death for us all. But for the child of God, death is the door into a brighter and better world; although we are sorrowed by the approach of death, yet in that sorrow, an unending joy bursts forth, for it is then that the joys of eternal salvation are realized.
 - d. The point of this verse (14) is a re-statement of the old truth: we reap what we sow. The backslider will receive the penalty his unfaithfulness has procured; the good man will be blessed according to his faithfulness. This verse, understandably, gives the Calvinist a hard time.
- 1) 1 Corinthians 10:12-13: "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God *is* faithful, who will not
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- suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."
- 2) Galatians 6:1: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."
 - 3) James 5:19-20: "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."
4. Verses 15-17: "The simple believeth every word: but the prudent *man* looketh well to his going. A wise *man* feareth, and departeth from evil: but the fool rageth, and is confident. *He that is* soon angry dealeth foolishly: and a man of wicked devices is hated."
- a. Shallow thinking people, those who are easily persuaded, will accept almost anything they are told. That is a major reason why false teachers hold such sway in our society. Those who do not love God's truth are also easy prey.
 - 1) 2 Corinthians 11:3: "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."
 - 2) 2 Corinthians 11:13-15: "For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works."
 - 3) 2 Timothy 3:6: "For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts,"
 - b. While we are taught to believe all things (1 Cor. 13:7b), we are not to be gullible.
 - 1) Matthew 7:15-20: "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither *can* a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."
 - 2) Romans 16:17-18: "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple."
 - 3) 1 Thessalonians 5:21: "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."
 - 4) 1 John 4:1: "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world."
 - c. Our souls are far too valuable to be allowed to be deceived by the wiles of the devil's false teachers. Thus, the prudent man will examine things carefully before proceeding.
 - 1) Acts 17:11-12: "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few."
 - 2) 1 Peter 5:8-9: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same
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afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world."

- d. "Fools rush in where angels fear to tread" (Alexander Pope). Movies and books glorify people who show courage and strength, but often what is taken for courage is a rash act which is entered into without proper thought. A wise man exercises caution when a foolish man heedlessly proceeds with false confidence. A foolish man will take God's name in vain, imbibe strong drink, follow his own religion, or reject God altogether; but the wise man will shun all such things. To which man belongs the greater respect? Which has wisdom? Which is courageous? Which is strong? One who fears God and keeps his commandments (Eccl. 12:13-14). One who foolishly exposes himself to certain death by charging a machine gun emplacement, where there is no hope of succeeding, is no more foolish than one who will live in defiance to God's will in this life.
 - e. A quick temper has led to many troubles and has deprived many of benefits they otherwise would have received. Naaman was quick to be angry when the prophet sent word that he dip himself in Jordan (2 Kings 5:11-13).
 - 1) Ephesians 4:26-27: "Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: 27 Neither give place to the devil."
 - 2) James 1:19: "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath."
 - f. The person who does not control his temper can develop into a willful sinner. While a man who is quick tempered is foolish, the one who consciously develops schemes, by which to sin, is the object of hatred. God hates his sinful ways; other men do not want his company.
5. Verses 18-21: "The simple inherit folly: but the prudent are crowned with knowledge. The evil bow before the good; and the wicked at the gates of the righteous. The poor is hated even of his own neighbour: but the rich *hath* many friends. He that despiseth his neighbour sinneth: but he that hath mercy on the poor, happy *is* he."
- a. Foolishness is the consequence of a simple (easily influenced) individual. But the prudent individual wears a crown of knowledge. Folly and knowledge are spoken of as an inheritance which is obtained by the nature of the individual, the reward depending on whether he is foolish or wise.
 - b. It seems the usual case that the righteous are beneath the wicked. Lazarus was at the wicked rich man's gate, begging for bread (Luke 16:19-31). Evil men are in control of societies today, as they have usually been in previous generations. But there have been cases where the wicked were beneath the righteous: the Egyptians and the ten sons of Jacob before Joseph; Pharaoh before Moses following the ten plagues; Haman before Moredcai and Esther. When men are in deep trouble, it is often to the righteous that they go for help. But it appears that the best view of the passage is to understand it as having application to eternity: in the Judgment, the true worth of the righteous will be seen, and the bankruptcy of a life of sin will be exposed for what it is.
 - c. The general trend through the ages is for rich men to be held in high esteem, at least insofar as they are willing to share their wealth; but since the poor man has little or nothing to give, he is usually ignored and even hated. The rich are usually loved out of hypocrisy: for what might be obtained from them. We are commanded to show partiality to no one. "My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, *the Lord* of glory, with respect of persons. For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?" (Jas. 2:1-4).
 - d. Verse twenty-one has a connection with the preceding verse. The poor are rejected, but the rich have
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many friends. One who despises his neighbor (whether he is rich or poor) commits sin in so-doing; but one who has mercy on the poor will be blessed (made happy).

6. Verses 22-25: "Do they not err that devise evil? but mercy and truth *shall be* to them that devise good. In all labour there is profit: but the talk of the lips *tendeth* only to penury. The crown of the wise *is* their riches: *but* the foolishness of fools *is* folly. A true witness delivereth souls: but a deceitful *witness* speaketh lies."
 - a. Those who devise ("plow up") evil—err. But those who devise good, will receive mercy and have the added benefit of knowing they have served truth.
 - b. In all proper labor there are benefits to be had. In the vain talk of the lips there is penury (destitution, poverty). The verse has some limitation implied for not all labor is profitable and not all talk is hurtful.
 - c. Riches, when properly obtained and used, are a crown to the possessor. On the other hand, foolishness has folly as its reward.
 - d. A witness whose testimony is true can deliver the lives of men falsely accused; but if he is deceitful, he will speak lies (which could bring death to others).

C. Proverbs 14:26-35.

1. Verses 26-27: "In the fear of the LORD *is* strong confidence: and his children shall have a place of refuge. The fear of the LORD *is* a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death."
 - a. Unbelievers decry the "ignorance" of those who "fear" God. But those who have a dread of doing anything that would shame the Almighty can live in great confidence. "We fear but we are not afraid."
 - 1) Ecclesiastes 12:13-14: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this *is* the whole *duty* of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether *it be* good, or whether *it be* evil."
 - 2) Romans 14:10-12: "But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, *As* I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."
 - 3) 1 John 4:17-18: "Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love."
 - b. Fearing God (holding him in awe or reverence) will be as a fountain of life to us. We will receive positive blessings and be kept from physical and spiritual snares.
2. Verse 28: "In the multitude of people *is* the king's honour: but in the want of people *is* the destruction of the prince."
 - a. A king's title is meaningful only to the extent of the number of his subjects. If there is no one to honor him, his position is worthless.
 - b. And if there are no subjects, where will his wealth be acquired? The king and the kingdom need each other.
 - c. "This maxim is not in accordance with the views of Oriental conquerors and despots, who in their selfish lust of aggrandizement cared not what suffering they inflicted or what blood they shed; who made a wilderness and called it peace. The reign of Solomon, the peaceful, gave an intimation that war and conquest were not a monarch's highest glory: that a happy and numerous people, dwelling securely

and increasing in numbers, was a better honour for a king and more to be desired (1 Kings 4:20). Increase of population is not, as some political economists would teach, in itself an evil; it is rather a sign of prosperity, and is in agreement with the primeval blessing, 'Increase and multiply;' and though it may be hard to maintain the exact equilibrium between production and consumers, yet wise legislation can foresee and remedy the difficulty, the abundance in one part can supply the scarcity in another, the providence of God watching over all" [The Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by Biblesoft].

3. Verses 29-32: "*He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding: but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly. A sound heart is the life of the flesh: but envy the rottenness of the bones. He that oppressteth the poor reproacheth his Maker: but he that honoureth him hath mercy on the poor. The wicked is driven away in his wickedness: but the righteous hath hope in his death.*"
 - a. This is a plain statement of simple, yet profound, truth. One who is slow to wrath shows immense wisdom; he that is soon angry shows his own foolishness.
 - b. If one's physical heart is sound, the health of the body is enhanced; but one who is permeated by envy, brings harm to himself (physically and spiritually).
 - c. One who oppresses (or refuses to help) the poor, shows disgrace to God, but to help the poor is to show honor to God.
 - 1) Matthew 5:43-46: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?"
 - 2) Matthew 25:40: "And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done *it* unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done *it* unto me."
 - 3) Matthew 25:45: "Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did *it* not to one of the least of these, ye did *it* not to me."
 - d. The righteous man has hope in his death, but the wicked will be dismissed from the presence of God because of his sinfulness. "Wherefore remember, that ye *being* in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ" (Eph. 2:11-13).
4. Verses 33-35: "*Wisdom resteth in the heart of him that hath understanding: but that which is in the midst of fools is made known. Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people. The king's favour is toward a wise servant: but his wrath is against him that causeth shame.*"
 - a. The wisdom of a prudent man resides in his heart; it rests there. What is in the hearts of foolish men is demonstrated by them—foolishness.
 - b. Verse 34 is one of the outstanding, practical truths in Proverbs. During the time when Greece and Rome were in their heyday (from man's point of view), they were in the throes of degradation in God's sight. The nature of a nation is determined by the nature of its individual citizens. To make a nation right, the individuals must be made right.
 - c. What is said here about a king's attitude toward those who show wisdom in his service and those who bring him shame, is God's attitude to these responses.

D. When a Nation's Morality Declines below a Certain Level, God Acts.

1. The case of the Amorites.
 - a. Genesis 15:16: "But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: **for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.**"
 - b. God would not dispossess them of Canaan until their iniquity was full. His longsufferance would delay the entry of Israel into the promised land.
 - c. We wonder why God allows evil nations and men to prevail: His patience is being shown; also his dealings are unbelievably complex; he plans for centuries, not for a momentary situation.
 - d. When their iniquity peaked, the Amorites lost their deed to Canaan; so did Israel: "Therefore it shall come to pass, *that* as all good things are come upon you, which the LORD your God promised you; so shall the LORD bring upon you all evil things, until he have destroyed you from off this good land which the LORD your God hath given you. When ye have transgressed the covenant of the LORD your God, which he commanded you, and have gone and served other gods, and bowed yourselves to them; then shall the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and ye shall perish quickly from off the good land which he hath given unto you" (Josh. 23:15-16).
 2. The case of Sodom and Gomorrah.
 - a. Genesis 18:20: "And the LORD said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous."
 - b. They had crossed the line and must be destroyed! God's mercy and patience have a limit: "And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also *is* flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years" (Gen. 6:3). But for Abraham's sake, he would spare Sodom and Gomorrah if ten righteous people were found therein.
 - c. There should have been at least ten righteous souls in Sodom, in Lot's own family. The following may be gleaned from Genesis 19:12-14: "And the men said unto Lot, Hast thou here any besides? son in law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring *them* out of this place: For we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the LORD; and the LORD hath sent us to destroy it. And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons in law, which married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place; for the LORD will destroy this city. But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons in law." Count them: Lot and his wife; two unmarried daughters; two or more sons; two or more married daughters; two or more sons-in-law.
 - d. Only four were discovered (Lot, his wife, and their two daughters). For lack of six people thousands were destroyed! You are important: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16).
 3. The case of Nineveh.
 - a. Jonah 1:2: "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me."
 - b. They were given forty days to repent; the message terrified them; they repented—Jonah 3 (773 B.C.).
 - c. One hundred and fifty years later they returned to sin and were destroyed: "But with an overrunning flood he will make an utter end of the place thereof, and darkness shall pursue his enemies" (Nahum 1:8, 625 B.C.).
 - d. They were defeated by Babylon in 612 B.C.
 4. The case of Israel.
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- a. Throughout their history as God's chosen people, they ran hot and cold. They reached a point in rebellion that God disowned them after they rejected Christ; he had no further use for them.
 - b. They were overthrown by the Roman army in 70 A.D. "That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, *thou* that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under *her* wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed *is* he that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Matt. 23:35-39; cf. Matt. 24:1-35).
 - c. A remnant obeyed the gospel in the first century—the majority rejected the gospel; a remnant is now in Palestine—the majority is scattered as a reminder of God's sovereignty and as proof of inspiration: "For I *am* with thee, saith the LORD, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished" (Jer. 30:11).
5. God does not change in his righteous character.
- a. Statements from the Scriptures:
 - 1) Malachi 3:6: "For I *am* the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed."
 - 2) Hebrews 13:8: "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever."
 - b. Since he punished wicked nations in ancient times, we may expect he does so now.
 - c. If not, then Old Testament Scriptures are not as important as Romans 15:4 suggests: "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope."
6. What about the future of our own great nation?
- a. Has America become more righteous or less righteous over the past 200 years? By comparing current attitudes with those of the past, we can answer this question.
 - 1) Washington: "It is impossible to rightly govern the world without God and the Bible....He is worse than an infidel who does not read his Bible and acknowledge his obligation to God."
 - 2) Lincoln: "I am profitably engaged in reading the Bible. Take all of this Book...and you will live and die a better man."
 - 3) Webster: "If we abide by the principles taught in the Bible our country will go on prospering, but if we and our posterity neglect its instruction and authority, no man can tell how sudden a catastrophe may overwhelm us and bury us and our glory in profound obscurity."
 - b. Public laws and practices show that a great decline in respect for the Bible has occurred in America. This cannot be done without grievous consequences.
 - 1) Prayers to God and studying his word are now forbidden in public schools.
 - 2) Each year we murder more than 1 million unborn babies.
 - 3) A recent survey of 100,000 women revealed that 90% of those not married admitted they were fornicators; two-thirds of those married confessed adultery or said they desired to do so.
 - 4) Add to this the crime figures, drug problems, sexual perversion, hatred, religious error, suicide rates, child abuse, and sins of other kinds.
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- c. There are many who believe the Bible and follow it; but America has lost much of the former respect it once had for the moral principles of the Bible.
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PROVERBS 15

A. Proverbs 15:1-9.

1. Verse 1: "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger."
 - a. The tongue is described in Proverbs 18:21 as being able to deliver either death or life. James 3:5-6 shows that the tongue can kindle a great fire, though at the first the fire is very small. We wield the mighty power of the tongue when we respond to the things others speak to us. Many wars, strifes, blows, and estrangements could have been avoided by a prudent reply to someone's angry words; and many such things have been prevented.
 - 1) Judges 8:1-3 is an example of soft words defusing a bad situation: "And the men of Ephraim said unto him, Why hast thou served us thus, that thou calledst us not, when thou wentest to fight with the Midianites? And they did chide with him sharply. And he said unto them, What have I done now in comparison of you? *Is* not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer? God hath delivered into your hands the princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb: and what was I able to do in comparison of you? Then their anger was abated toward him, when he had said that."
 - 2) James 3:5-6: "Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue *is* a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell."
 - b. "We yield to irritation; retort upon our neighbour; have recourse to self-justification; insist upon the last word; say all that we could say; and think we 'do well to be angry.' (Jonah 4:9.) Neither party gives up an atom of the will. Pride and passion on both sides strike together like two flints; and 'behold! how great a matter a little fire kindleth!' (Jam. 3:5.)" (Bridges, p.196).
 - c. Humility is one of the great characteristics God's people are required to obtain and exhibit; it can show its importance in responding to angry charges directed toward us. If we are able to reply to harsh words with soft and healing terms, we gain two meaningful victories: over ourselves and our brother's anger.
 - 1) Proverbs 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."
 - 2) Matthew 5:9: "Blessed *are* the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God."
 - 3) Romans 12:19-21: "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but *rather* give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance *is* mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."
 - 4) Romans 14:19: "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another."
 - 5) Ephesians 4:29: "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers."
 - 6) Colossians 4:6: "Let your speech *be* always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man."
 - d. "Solomon, as conservator of the public peace, here tells us, 1. How the peace may be kept, that we may know how in our places to keep it; it is by soft words. If wrath be risen like a threatening cloud,

pregnant with storms and thunder, a soft answer will disperse it and turn it away. When men are provoked, speak gently to them, and give them good words, and they will be pacified, as the Ephraimites were by Gideon's mildness (Judg 8:1-3); whereas, upon a like occasion, by Jephthah's roughness, they were exasperated, and the consequences were bad, Judg 12:1-3. Reason will be better spoken, and a righteous cause better pleaded, with meekness than with passion; hard arguments do best with soft words. 2. How the peace will be broken, that we, for our parts, may do nothing towards the breaking of it. Nothing stirs up anger, and sows discord, like grievous words, calling foul names, as Raca, and Thou fool, upbraiding men with their infirmities and infelicities, their extraction or education, or any thing that lessens them and makes them mean; scornful spiteful reflections, by which men affect to show their wit and malice, stir up the anger of others, which does but increase and inflame their own anger. Rather than lose a jest some will lose a friend and make an enemy" [Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: New Modern Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1991 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.)."

2. Verse 2: "The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright: but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness."
 - a. A wise man will control his tongue, but a foolish man is governed by his tongue. Wisdom is measured, not necessarily by the amount of knowledge possessed by the man, but by the judicial use of that information. The wise man uses his knowledge prudently to bring the favor of God and man upon himself, and to enhance his brother. The foolish man will allow his tongue to gush forth many inane words which bring no credit to God, or to his brother, or to himself. My high school English teacher complained about those people who "rattle on and on," saying very little.
 - b. "The tongue shews the man....He may have a mass of knowledge in possession. But from want of the right use, it runs to waste" (ibid., p.197). He shows he is wise or foolish.
 - c. The Lord had infinite knowledge and wisdom during his earthly ministry; he used wisdom in speaking on the level of the common man (Mark 4:33; 12:37); in silencing his carping critics (Matt. 22); in winning souls (Matt. 11:28-30; John 4). He thus demonstrated the wise use of knowledge.
 - d. The apostle Paul used wisdom in dispensing his inspired knowledge: by feeding people with milk when meat was too strong for them (I Cor. 3:2); by commending King Agrippa's conscience and intelligence (Acts 26:27-29).
3. Verse 3: "The eyes of the LORD *are* in every place, beholding the evil and the good."
 - a. This verse gives a wonderfully clear and thought-provoking statement about God's omniscience. God sees all and knows all, even that which is done in darkness and utmost secrecy; he can even know the innermost workings of a man's mind, discerning his thoughts before they are spoken, and his motives before they are expressed in action. There is no partiality in the eye and ear of the Almighty: he sees and hears both the evil and the good—a comforting thought to the good, but a fear-producing truth to the wicked man.
 - b. "His inspection of the universe so minute, exact, unwearied! [Jer. 23:24; Ps. 11:4.] The first mark of the apostasy was a dread of his presence. [Gen. 3:8.] The ungodly try to forget it [Ps. 10:11], and often succeed in banishing him out of their thoughts (Ps. 10:4)....Heaven, hell, the secret places of the earth, are all open before him" [vs. 11; Ps. 139:8]" (Bridges, p.196).
 - c. God is omniscient—He has the capacity to know everything he wills to know. There is no limit to his knowledge and understanding except as he wills to limit himself.
 - 1) His omniscience is shown by the universe. There is an obvious design and balance in nature. This design is not accidental; it could not have happened without an all-knowing Designer. The laws we observe in nature are dependable, indicating the omniscience of the one who produced those laws. These laws could not have produced themselves.

- 2) His omniscience is shown clearly by Biblical prophecies and affirmations. These prophecies are found by the hundreds in the Bible, especially in the Old Testament, and their fulfillment in minute detail denotes the infinite knowledge that produced the utterances.
 - 3) Biblical statements affirm God's omniscience:
 - a) Job 28:26: "When he made a decree for the rain, and a way for the lightning of the thunder."
 - b) Psalms 69:5: "O God, thou knowest my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from thee."
 - c) Proverbs 15:3: "The eyes of the LORD *are* in every place, beholding the evil and the good."
 - d) Isaiah 40:26: "Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these *things*, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that *he is* strong in power; not one faileth."
 - e) Acts 15:18: "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world."
 - f) Hebrews 4:13: "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things *are* naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do."
 - g) Psalm 139:1-10: "O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known *me*. Thou knowest my downsitteing and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compasses my path and my lying down, and art acquainted *with* all my ways. For *there is* not a word in my tongue, *but*, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. *Such* knowledge *is* too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot *attain* unto it. Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou *art* there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou *art there*. If I take the wings of the morning, *and* dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me."
 4. Verse 4: "A wholesome tongue *is* a tree of life: but perverseness therein *is* a breach in the spirit."
 - a. "The proverb is a colorful illustration of the effects of a 'healing' or 'deceitful' tongue on others. Scripture does not recommend flattery or something less than honesty, however. It says instead that what we say should always be tempered with kindness rather than cruelty" (Alden, p.118).
 - b. "As the salt, cast into the spring, cleansed the bitter waters (2 Kings 2:21); so when there is grace in the heart, there will be healing in the tongue. (Chap. 12:18)" (Bridges, p.198).
 - c. "A wholesome tongue is a tree of life; a tongue that brings healing, that soothes by its words.... Speech from such a source refreshes and vivifies all who come under its influence, like the wholesome fruit of a prolific tree (comp. Prov 3:18; 11:30)....But perverseness therein— in the tongue—is a breach in the spirit. The perverseness intended must be falsehood, perversion of the truth. This is ruin and vexation (Isa 65:14, where the same word is used) in the spirit, both in the liar himself, whose higher nature is thus terribly marred and spoiled, and in the case of his neighbour, who is injured by his slander and falsehood to the, very core...[The Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by Biblesoft].
 5. Verse 5: "A fool despiseth his father's instruction: but he that regardeth reproof is prudent."
 - a. In the case of a wise father who gives sound instructions to his son only to have it rejected, the foolishness of the son is shown. Only a foolish person would reject the prudent counsel and guidance of one who is obviously wiser and more experienced. "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" (Prov. 30:17).
 - b. "Will those, who despise their earthly father's instructions, listen to their heavenly Father? How surely
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- therefore will this untractable spirit exclude from the Kingdom of God! (Matt. 18:3,4)" (Bridges, p.199).
- c. The father is under divine order to bring up his children in the right paths (Eph. 6:1-4). The son who receives this guidance and correction as it is intended will become wiser for having done so.
6. Verse 6: "In the house of the righteous *is* much treasure: but in the revenues of the wicked is trouble."
- a. The comparisons between the righteous and the wicked, which abound in Proverbs, always exalt the righteous. The righteous person excels the wicked in regard to material wealth. The wicked man has obtained his by evil means; the righteous by decent methods. The wicked spends his wealth generally for the gratification of earthly appetites; the righteous is interested in the Lord's Cause and in helping the needy. The evil man sees wealth as the end; the righteous sees it as the means to a good end. In the average case, the righteous man is not wealthy, but he has spiritual treasures which far surpass the actual wealth of an evil man.
 - b. "The treasures of the wicked are too much for their good, and too little for their lust. They cannot satisfy their senses, much less their souls. (Eccles. 5:10.) They may 'take wings' (Chap. 23:5) at any moment; and, while they continue, unlike the treasures of the righteous (Chap. 10:22), they are burdened with trouble. (Eccles. 4:6)" (Bridges, p.200).
7. Verse 7: "The lips of the wise disperse knowledge: but the heart of the foolish *doeth* not so."
- a. A wise person will receive knowledge, store it up for future use, and will dispense it to others for their benefit, as he has opportunity. This is something foreign to the foolish man.
 - b. "The sin of the wicked is not always, that they 'pour out foolishness' (verse 2), but that they do not so. They neglect to disperse. If they do not abuse their talent, they omit to improve it. If not blots, they are blanks in the Church" (ibid., p.201).
 - c. "This is to the same purport with v. 2, and shows what a blessing a wise man is and what a burden a fool is to those about him. Only here observe further, 1. That we then use knowledge aright when we disperse it, not confine it to a few of our intimates, and grudge it to others who would make as good use of it, but give a portion of this spiritual alms to seven and also to eight, not only be communicative, but diffusive, of this good, with humility and prudence. We must take pains to spread and propagate useful knowledge, must teach some that they may teach others, and so it is dispersed. 2. That it is not only a fault to pour out foolishness, but it is a shame not to disperse knowledge, at least not to drop some wise word or other: The heart of the foolish does not so; it has nothing to disperse that is good, or, if it had, has neither skill nor will to do good with it and therefore is little worth" [Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: New Modern Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1991 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.].
8. Verse 8: "The sacrifice of the wicked *is* an abomination to the LORD: but the prayer of the upright *is* his delight."
- a. A wicked man who offers worship to the Almighty while continuing in his sinful way of life will have his offering rejected as abominable.
 - 1) 1 Samuel 15:22: "And Samuel said, Hath the LORD *as great* delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey *is* better than sacrifice, *and* to hearken than the fat of rams."
 - 2) Psalms 66:18: "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear *me*."
 - 3) Proverbs 28:9: "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer *shall be* abomination."
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- 4) Isaiah 1:10-20: "Hear the word of the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah. To what purpose *is* the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; *it is* iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear *them*. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken *it*."
 - 5) Amos 5:21-27: "I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept *them*: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream. Have ye offered unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel? But ye have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun your images, the star of your god, which ye made to yourselves. Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith the LORD, whose name *is* The God of hosts."
 - 6) Micah 6:6-8: "Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, *and* bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, *or* with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn *for* my transgression, the fruit of my body *for* the sin of my soul? He hath showed thee, O man, what *is* good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"
 - 7) 1 Peter 3:12: "For the eyes of the Lord *are* over the righteous, and his ears *are open* unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord *is* against them that do evil."
- b. The one who lives as he pleases and still puts on the appearance of being righteous, is a hypocrite, and his devotions will stink before God. But the genuinely righteous individual will have his devotions accepted.
9. Verse 9: "The way of the wicked *is* an abomination unto the LORD: but he loveth him that followeth after righteousness."
 - a. The manner of life conducted by the wicked is itself abominable to God, hence, it is no strange thing that his worship is rejected. But the Lord loves the one who follows a life of righteousness. The way we live has a very direct relationship to our worship and our acceptability to our Heavenly Father.
 - b. "This is a reason of what was said in the foregoing verse. 1. The sacrifices of the wicked are an abomination to God, not for want of some nice points of ceremony, but because their way, the whole course and tenour of their conversation, is wicked, and consequently an abomination to him. Sacrifices for sin were not accepted of those that resolved to go on in sin, and were to the highest degree abominable if intended to obtain a connivance at sin and a permission to go on in it. 2. Therefore the prayer of the upright is his delight, because he is a friend of God, and he loves him who, though he have not yet attained, is following after righteousness, aiming at it and pressing towards it, as Paul,
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Phil 3:13" [Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: New Modern Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1991 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.).

- c. Philippians 3:13-15: "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but *this* one thing *I do*, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you."

B. Proverbs 15:10-19.

1. Verse 10: "Correction *is* grievous unto him that forsaketh the way: *and* he that hateth reproof shall die."
 - a. "Sinning is bad enough, but refusing to acknowledge sin is unpardonable" (Alden, p.119). No one enjoys being corrected; we all like to think of ourselves as without error. In our hearts, we all know that even the best saints stumble into sin occasionally. But there is a vast difference between an occasional act of sin and living in sin. It is common to hear someone say that we all are prone to commit sin; but how often do you hear such a one identify the last specific sin they committed?
 - b. If we fall victim to sin, and refuse reproof, we shall die in our guilt. To die in sin is to suffer the second death in eternity (Rev. 20:14; Rom. 6:23); one who seeks to set us aright is our friend, not an enemy (Gal. 4:16; Jas. 5:19-20), and his corrections should be received with gladness (Heb. 12:11).
 - 1) Romans 6:23: "For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."
 - 2) Revelation 20:14: "And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death."
 - 3) Galatians 4:16: "Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?"
 - 4) James 5:19-20: "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."
 - 5) Hebrews 12:11: "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."
2. Verse 11: "Hell and destruction *are* before the LORD: how much more then the hearts of the children of men?"
 - a. Hell (Sheol) and destruction are opened to the eyes of Jehovah; that being the case, it is certain he can see into the hearts of men. View this verse in the light of verses 8-10.
 - b. "Aaron's rebellious feelings were as cognizant to his eye as Moses' angry words. (Num. 20:12,24.) The inward hypocrisy of his people was as open before him, as if it had been stamped upon their foreheads. (Deut. 5:28,29; Zeph. 1:12)" (Bridges, p.203).
 - 1) Numbers 20:12: "And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them."
 - 2) Numbers 20:14: "And Moses sent messengers from Kadesh unto the king of Edom, Thus saith thy brother Israel, Thou knowest all the travail that hath befallen us."
 - 3) Deuteronomy 5:28-29: "And the LORD heard the voice of your words, when ye spake unto me; and the LORD said unto me, I have heard the voice of the words of this people, which they have spoken unto thee: they have well said all that they have spoken. O that there were such an heart

- in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!"
- 4) Zephaniah 1:12: "And it shall come to pass at that time, *that* I will search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are settled on their lees: that say in their heart, The LORD will not do good, neither will he do evil."
3. Verse 12: "A scorner loveth not one that reproveth him: neither will he go unto the wise."
- Another statement regarding the foolishness of a sinful person who rejects efforts to put him aright spiritually. Such a one does not love the reprover and will not seek out the counsel of the wise.
 - "How different from David's spirit, thankful for the 'kind smiting of the righteous' (Ps. 141:5); and from the lovely humility of an Apostle, who shewed before the Church his honour and love to his reprover! (Gal. 2:11-14; 2 Pet. 3:15.)...The scorner has been his own flatterer so long, that he cannot bear to be brought down to his proper level. The truth-telling friend therefore he counts as his enemy. (Gal. 4:15, 16)" (ibid., p.204).
 - Galatians 4:15-16: "Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if *it had been* possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me. Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?"
4. Verse 13: "A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance: but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken."
- A heart that is filled with happiness makes for a cheerful countenance. Generally, we reveal by our facial expressions the thoughts and feelings of the inner man. If we are overflowing with inner sorrow, that will be evident on our face and in our words. This is not always the case, for some are adept at concealing their feelings. The Lord cautioned us against judging according to appearances (John 7:24).
 - "Who has a true right to a merry heart, but he that is walking in the joy of Divine acceptance. (Ps. 32:1,2,11.) This spring of joy lighted up Hannah's sorrowful countenance into godly cheerfulness. (1 Sam. 1:18.) Stephen stood before his judge, with his heavenly prospects beaming in his 'angel face.' (Acts 6:16; 7:55.) Everywhere does the hearty reception of the gospel 'give beauty for ashes,' sunshine for gloom. (Isa. 61:3.)" (ibid., p.205).
 - The plan by which we are saved from our past sins includes repentance; repentance is produced by godly sorrow and is followed by a reformed life which excludes our former sinful practices. But there is joy which results from this godly sorrow, the joy of salvation (Acts 8:35-40). The Lord pronounced the blessing of comfort to those who mourn (over their past sins). He cautions against our being overcome by "overmuch sorrow" (2 Cor. 2:7). "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death" (2 Cor. 7:10). Compare: "Blessed *are* they that mourn: for they shall be comforted" (Matt. 5:4).
5. Verse 14: "The heart of him that hath understanding seeketh knowledge: but the mouth of fools feedeth on foolishness."
- This reminds us of the Lord's statement of Matthew 5:6: "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." One with a measure of wisdom will seek greater understanding.
 - The Queen of Sheba (1 Kings 10), Nicodemus (John 3:1-2), the Ethiopian (Acts 8), Cornelius (Acts 10), and the Bereans (Acts 17:11-12) were people who sought understanding. However, the foolish individual will be fully satisfied with his foolishness, and this is that which he feeds his soul—a poor meal indeed!
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6. Verse 15: "All the days of the afflicted *are* evil: but he that is of a merry heart *hath* a continual feast."
- a. Some poor people are happy and some poor people are unhappy; the same is true with the rich and the middle-class. Economic standing does not determine happiness or sorrow.
 - b. One who lives in sin faces a life that is characterized by evil. On the outside, he may appear to be perfectly happy, and he may consider himself to be happy. But what help does he have here? Only what he can provide for himself. What hope does he have in eternity? None; he has had his reward, and it was only temporary and unsatisfying.
 - c. On the other hand, the child of God who appears so down-trodden and afflicted is not as unhappy as he seems. He understands that his present problems are well worth enduring.
 - 1) Matthew 5:10-12: "Blessed *are* they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when *men* shall revile you, and persecute *you*, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great *is* your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."
 - 2) Romans 8:18: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are* not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us."
 - 3) 2 Corinthians 4:16-18: "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward *man* is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen *are* temporal; but the things which are not seen *are* eternal."
 - 4) 2 Corinthians 5:1-10: "For we know that if our earthly house of *this* tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in *this* tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing *is* God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore *we are* always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) We are confident, *I say*, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad."
 - d. As Bridges suggests, a faithful Christian can sing in prison as well as in a palace (Acts 16:25); he can joyfully endure the spoiling of his possessions (Heb. 10:34); he can praise God even in misery and destitution.
 - 1) Job 1:21: "And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD."
 - 2) Habakkuk 3:17-18: "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither *shall* fruit *be* in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and *there shall be* no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation."
7. Verses 16-17: "Better *is* little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble therewith. Better *is* a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith."
- a. The faithful saint who, by virtue of his faith, fears the Lord, has a better situation than a wealthy man
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of the world. The difference is in the nature of the treasure (Matt. 6:19-21); in the master of the life (Matt. 6:24; Rom. 6:16-18); and the kind of life that is lived (Tit. 2:11f). It is better to be right with the Lord and be at peace, than to have this world's goods in abundance and have trouble (here and hereafter). Mike Tyson, who has made many millions of dollars in the boxing business, stated that he is without happiness in this life, that he hated his life.

- 1) Matthew 6:19-21: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."
 - 2) Matthew 6:24: "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."
 - 3) Romans 16:16-18: "Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you. Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple."
 - 4) Titus 2:11-12: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."
- b. Going hand-in-hand with the preceding statement, Solomon observes that it is better to have a meal consisting only of vegetables under a situation of love, than to feast on a stalled ox where hatred is. The contrast is between the poverty-stricken saint eating his poor meal in an atmosphere of love, and the wicked rich man who dines sumptuously but in the midst of hatred.
- 1) Ecclesiastes 4:6: "Better *is* an handful *with* quietness, than both the hands full *with* travail and vexation of spirit."
 - 2) Ecclesiastes 5:12: "The sleep of a labouring man *is* sweet, whether he eat little or much: but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep."
8. Verse 18: "A wrathful man stirreth up strife: but *he that is* slow to anger appeaseth strife."
- a. This is so obvious that little discussion is needed. "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath" (Jas. 1:19).
 - b. "The man who stirs up dissension is hot tempered, easily irritated, and itching to pick a fight. The peacemaker, on the other hand, is patient, longsuffering, and calm; a man who eases tension rather than adds to it" (Alden, p.120).
 - c. "Here is, 1. Passion the great make-bate. Thence come wars and fightings. Anger strikes the fire which sets cities and churches into a flame: A wrathful man, with his peevish passionate reflections, stirs up strife, and sets people together by the ears; he gives occasion to others to quarrel, and takes the occasion that others give, though ever so trifling. When men carry their resentments too far, one quarrel still produces another. 2. Meekness the great peace-maker: He that is slow to anger not only prevents strife, that it be not kindled, but appeases it if it be already kindled, brings water to the flame, unites those again that have fallen out, and by gentle methods brings them to mutual concessions for peace-sake" [Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: New Modern Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1991 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.].
9. Verse 19: "The way of the slothful *man is* as an hedge of thorns: but the way of the righteous *is* made plain."
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- a. "Another picture of the slothful man drawn to life! He plants his own hedge, and then complains of its hindrance....Every effort is like forcing his way through a hedge of thorns, where every thorn bush tears his flesh. Indecision, delay, and sluggishness, add to his difficulties, and paralyze his exertion.... But to put half the soul to the work; to drag to it as an unavoidable task; to avoid present difficulties in order to find a smoother path, makes a hedge of thorns, harassing to the end of the journey" (Bridges, p.209).
- b. The diligent worker may be discouraged by the size of the job before him; it may seem insurmountable; but if he works patiently, he will soon see the end of the work. In living the Christian life, the way may appear long, dark, and filled with obstacles; but since we cannot eat a feast in one bite, and cannot reach our destination in one step, so the Christian life requires diligence. We eat by taking one bite at a time; we reach our journey's end by continually putting one foot in front of the other; we reach heaven by living and working moment by moment, hour by hour, day by day—and year by year. The way to glory is made plain in God's word.

C. Proverbs 15:20-33.

1. Verses 20-21: "A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish man despiseth his mother. Folly *is* joy to *him that is* destitute of wisdom: but a man of understanding walketh uprightly."
 - a. Parents find great satisfaction and happiness in the success of their children. We rejoice especially when we see them walking in the way of truth. But when they fail our hopes by leaving the Lord's way and following after sin, our hearts are wrenched within us. A parent's gladdest joys and darkest sorrows can come from their offspring. Rebellious children often receive the same treatment by their own offspring.
 - b. The unrighteous man not only walks in folly, it is even a joy to him. "The way of the wicked *is* as darkness: they know not at what they stumble" (Prov. 14:9).
 - c. When one starts into sin, the usual outcome is that he proceeds deeper into it, and soon branches out into many other varieties of transgression. But the wise man will show his understanding by living an upright life. The foolish man gives his heart to sin; the wise man gives his heart to learning and doing God's will.
 2. Verse 22: "Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established."
 - a. Before one takes an important step in life, he shows wisdom if he seeks counsel from others who are in a position to offer it. Without good advice and information, our hopes are often frustrated; but with an abundance of wise counsel, our purposes can be fulfilled.
 - b. This is good counsel for those in government, in business, in conducting the affairs of the Lord's church, and in living the Christian life.
 3. Verse 23: "A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth: and a word *spoken* in due season, how good *is it!*"
 - a. We influence and affect others, for good or for evil, by our words. The effect of harsh words can never be entirely erased; and the effect of kind and good words can never be fully measured this side of eternity.
 - b. "The proverb here stresses the importance of two things: the right word and the right time for that word. The right word at the wrong time can be worse than no word at all; expressing sympathy to a widow months after the death of her husband is poor timing. Instead of comforting her, these untimely words may only succeed in reopening emotional wounds. The wrong words at the right time, on the other hand, can also be disastrous. Think of the times you knew you had to say something but found yourself helplessly searching for the right words. What you had to say needed polishing, but
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timing was so critical that even improper words were better than no words at all. What a joy to be able to say exactly the right thing at the right time!" (Alden, pp.121f). "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger" (Prov. 15:1).

4. Verse 24: "The way of life *is* above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath."
 - a. "Another beam of light and immortality here shines upon the Old Testament Dispensation. For if the life above is beyond animal sensation, it must be the life eternal. The hell beneath, opposed to it, must stretch beyond the grave into eternity" (Bridges, p.214).
 - b. The word which came from above (heaven) will keep us from the hell beneath.
 - c. "The writer means primarily that the wise and good lead such a life as to preserve them from death (Prov 14:32). The path may be steep and painful, but at any rate it has this compensation—it leads away from destruction. It is obvious to read into the passage higher teaching. The good man's path leads heavenward, to a high life here, to happiness hereafter; his conversation is in heaven (Phil 3:20), his affections are set on things above (Col 3:2). Such an upward life tends to material and spiritual health, as it is added, that he may depart from hell (Sheol) beneath. Primarily, a long and happy life is promised to the man who fears the Lord, as in Prov 3:16; secondarily, such a one avoids that downward course which ends in the darkness of hell" [The Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by BibleSoft].
5. Verses 25-26: "The LORD will destroy the house of the proud: but he will establish the border of the widow. The thoughts of the wicked *are* an abomination to the LORD: but *the words* of the pure *are* pleasant words."
 - a. The Lord speaks forth again on the subject of pride; and again, this trait of character is denounced as evil and worthy of punishment. Thus, God will tear down the house of the proud individual. On the other hand, he will take the part of the widow, protecting and blessing her. It has been a common practice in virtually all societies for widows to be abused by unscrupulous men. Many widows are unskilled and ignorant about the business world, and so are vulnerable. The widow has a friend indeed in Jehovah!
 - 1) He provided for the sorrowing heart of Naomi by giving her a faithful daughter-in-law (Ruth). Ruth was also a widow, but through his providence, God made her to become a prominent lady in the lineage of the Savior. He took care of the prophet's widow (2 Kings 4:1-7).
 - 2) Likewise, he blessed the Shunamite woman (2 Kings 8:1-6). He gave instructions for widows and the fatherless to be cared for by his people (Acts 6:1-7; Jas. 1:27; 1 Tim. 5:16).
 - b. The Lord takes note of our thoughts. We often allow our thoughts to run unchecked in our minds, and sometimes these thoughts are evil and of such a nature as to create great problems. If we think evil thoughts, we become more susceptible to living them out in our lives, for we are fashioned according to what is in our hearts (cf. Prov. 4:23; 23:7; Matt. 12:34-37). If we think evil of our brethren, we may conjure up all sorts of evil against them; we may convince ourselves that they are inclined to do us evil, and set them up as enemies who are to be opposed or destroyed. The evil man's thoughts are seen by the Lord, and are judged as abominable by him. However, the words (orally expressed thoughts) of a pure man are pleasant to the Lord's ears.
6. Verse 27: "He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house; but he that hateth gifts shall live."
 - a. A greedy man creates troubles for his own family.
 - 1) Genesis 13:10-11: "And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it *was* well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, *even* as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar. Then Lot chose him all the plain of

- Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other."
- a) Genesis 14:12: "And they took Lot, Abram's brother's son, who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed."
 - b) Genesis 19:30: "And Lot went up out of Zoar, and dwelt in the mountain, and his two daughters with him; for he feared to dwell in Zoar: and he dwelt in a cave, he and his two daughters." Lot's decision to pitch his tent toward Sodom brought him finally into that wicked city, and ultimately he lost his family due to the evil influences which they encountered there.
- 2) Deuteronomy 7:26: "Neither shalt thou bring an abomination into thine house, lest thou be a cursed thing like it: *but* thou shalt utterly detest it, and thou shalt utterly abhor it; for it *is* a cursed thing."
- a) Joshua 7:1: "But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing: for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed thing: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against the children of Israel."
 - b) Joshua 7:15: "And it shall be, *that* he that is taken with the accursed thing shall be burnt with fire, he and all that he hath: because he hath transgressed the covenant of the LORD, and because he hath wrought folly in Israel."
 - c) Joshua 7:24: "And Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver, and the garment, and the wedge of gold, and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep, and his tent, and all that he had: and they brought them unto the valley of Achor."
- 3) 1 Samuel 15:19-26: "Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the LORD, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the LORD? And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and have gone the way which the LORD sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God in Gilgal. And Samuel said, Hath the LORD *as great* delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey *is* better than sacrifice, *and* to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion *is as* the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness *is as* iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from *being* king. And Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD, and thy words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice. Now therefore, I pray thee, pardon my sin, and turn again with me, that I may worship the LORD. And Samuel said unto Saul, I will not return with thee: for thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD hath rejected thee from being king over Israel."
- 4) 1 Kings 21 reports the sad case of Ahab's downfall and death. "And Jehu drew a bow with his full strength, and smote Jehoram between his arms, and the arrow went out at his heart, and he sunk down in his chariot. Then said *Jehu* to Bidkar his captain, Take up, *and* cast him in the portion of the field of Naboth the Jezreelite: for remember how that, when I and thou rode together after Ahab his father, the LORD laid this burden upon him; Surely I have seen yesterday the blood of Naboth, and the blood of his sons, saith the LORD; and I will requite thee in this plat, saith the LORD. Now therefore take *and* cast him into the plat *of ground*, according to the word of the LORD" (2 Kings 9:24-26).
- 5) 2 Kings 5:20-27: "But Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said, Behold, my master hath spared Naaman this Syrian, in not receiving at his hands that which he brought: but, *as* the LORD liveth, I will run after him, and take somewhat of him. So Gehazi followed after Naaman. And
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when Naaman saw *him* running after him, he lighted down from the chariot to meet him, and said, *Is all well?* And he said, *All is well.* My master hath sent me, saying, Behold, even now there be come to me from mount Ephraim two young men of the sons of the prophets: give them, I pray thee, a talent of silver, and two changes of garments. And Naaman said, Be content, take two talents. And he urged him, and bound two talents of silver in two bags, with two changes of garments, and laid *them* upon two of his servants; and they bare *them* before him. And when he came to the tower, he took *them* from their hand, and bestowed *them* in the house: and he let the men go, and they departed. But he went in, and stood before his master. And Elisha said unto him, Whence *comest thou*, Gehazi? And he said, Thy servant went no whither. And he said unto him, Went not mine heart *with thee*, when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee? *Is it* a time to receive money, and to receive garments, and oliveyards, and vineyards, and sheep, and oxen, and menservants, and maidservants? The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever. And he went out from his presence a leper *as white* as snow."

- 6) Jeremiah 6:12-13: "And their houses shall be turned unto others, *with their* fields and wives together: for I will stretch out my hand upon the inhabitants of the land, saith the LORD. For from the least of them even unto the greatest of them every one *is* given to covetousness; and from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely."
- b. God speaks harshly against this "polite" sin:
- 1) Job 31:24: "If I have made gold my hope, or have said to the fine gold, *Thou art* my confidence."
 - 2) Psalms 10:3: "For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, and blesseth the covetous, *whom* the LORD abhorreth."
 - 3) Proverbs 28:22: "He that hasteth to be rich *hath* an evil eye, and considereth not that poverty shall come upon him."
 - 4) Ephesians 5:5: "For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God."
 - 5) Colossians 3:5: "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry."
 - 6) 1 Timothy 6:9-10: "But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."
- c. Bribes are denounced in the last part of the verse. Gifts which would bring dishonor to God or self are to be rejected.
- 1) Genesis 14:22-23: "And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up mine hand unto the LORD, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, That I will not *take* from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take any thing that *is* thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich."
 - 2) Acts 8:18-20: "And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money."
7. Verses 28-29: "The heart of the righteous studieth to answer: but the mouth of the wicked poureth out evil things. The LORD *is* far from the wicked: but he heareth the prayer of the righteous."
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- a. A godly man will think before he speaks. Impulsive talk often leads to trouble.
 - 1) Joshua 9:14-15: "And the men took of their victuals, and asked not *counsel* at the mouth of the LORD. And Joshua made peace with them, and made a league with them, to let them live: and the princes of the congregation sware unto them."
 - 2) 1 Samuel 25:13-21: "And David said unto his men, Gird ye on every man his sword. And they girded on every man his sword; and David also girded on his sword: and there went up after David about four hundred men; and two hundred abode by the stuff. But one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, saying, Behold, David sent messengers out of the wilderness to salute our master; and he railed on them. But the men *were* very good unto us, and we were not hurt, neither missed we any thing, as long as we were conversant with them, when we were in the fields: They were a wall unto us both by night and day, all the while we were with them keeping the sheep. Now therefore know and consider what thou wilt do; for evil is determined against our master, and against all his household: for he *is such* a son of Belial, that *a man* cannot speak to him. Then Abigail made haste, and took two hundred loaves, and two bottles of wine, and five sheep ready dressed, and five measures of parched *corn*, and an hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs, and laid *them* on asses. And she said unto her servants, Go on before me; behold, I come after you. But she told not her husband Nabal. And it was *so, as* she rode on the ass, that she came down by the covert on the hill, and, behold, David and his men came down against her; and she met them. Now David had said, Surely in vain have I kept all that this *fellow* hath in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that *pertained* unto him: and he hath requited me evil for good."
 - 3) Matthew 16:22: "Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee."
 - b. The wicked are separated from God, but he is within reach of all. It is the prayer of the righteous which he hears.
 - 1) Isaiah 59:1-2: "Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid *his* face from you, that he will not hear."
 - 2) Acts 17:27-28: "That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring."
 - 3) Ephesians 2:11-13: "Wherefore remember, that ye *being* in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ."
 - 4) 1 Peter 3:12: "For the eyes of the Lord *are* over the righteous, and his ears *are open* unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord *is* against them that do evil."
 8. Verses 30-31: "The light of the eyes rejoiceth the heart: *and* a good report maketh the bones fat. The ear that heareth the reproof of life abideth among the wise."
 - a. The eyes are the main source of information; what we see often brings joy. But the ears also bring good reports which "fatten up" or "moisten" our bones. "Consider the joy and relief that comes upon receipt of a long-expected letter bearing good news: that's the kind of happiness this verse describes" (Alden, p.123).
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- b. We are to keep our ears open to instructions because of the good it will do us. In so-doing, we will be demonstrating wisdom.
9. Verses 32-33: "He that refuseth instruction despiseth his own soul: but he that heareth reproof getteth understanding. The fear of the LORD *is* the instruction of wisdom; and before honour *is* humility."
- a. One who rejects correction is acting contrary to his soul's own best interests. One who receives that reproof will also obtain wisdom.
 - b. God's children hold him in reverence; this fear causes us to dread doing anything that might be against his holy will; it leads us to obey his will to the best of our sincere ability. This fear produces humility, for if we recognize the proper nature of God, and our own, we will see how great he is and how little we are: "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil. Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter *any* thing before God: for God *is* in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few" (Eccl. 5:1-2).
 - c. Before we can expect to be honored by the Almighty, humility must be present in our hearts.
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PROVERBS 16

A. Proverbs 16:1-9.

1. Verse 1: "The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, *is* from the LORD."
 - a. The literal meaning of this passage as given by Clarke is, "To man are the dispositions of the heart; but from the Lord is the answer of the tongue.' Man proposes his wishes; but God answers as he thinks proper. The former is the free offspring of the heart of man; the latter, the free volition of God. Man may think as he pleases, and ask as he lists; but God will give, or not give, as he thinks proper" (p.746).
 - b. "It is better translated, The plans of the heart are man's: but the answer of the tongue is from Jehovah. Men make plans, arrange speeches, muster arguments, in the mind; but to put these into proper, persuasive words is a gift of God. 'Our sufficiency is of God' (2 Cor 3:5). In the case of Balaam, God overruled the wishes and intentions of the prophet, and constrained him to give utterance to something very different from his original mental conceptions. But the present sentence attributes the outward expression of what the mind has conceived in every case unto the help of God (comp. vers. 9, 33; Prov 15:23)" [The Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by Biblesoft].
 - c. God has the final say about all matters.
 - 1) Proverbs 16:9: "A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps."
 - 2) Proverbs 16:33: "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof *is* of the LORD."
 - 3) Luke 12:20: "But God said unto him, *Thou* fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?"
2. Verse 2: "All the ways of a man *are* clean in his own eyes; but the LORD weigheth the spirits."
 - a. If each person were to be the final judge about the things he does, the words he speaks, the thoughts he processes, and the plans he executes, no one would apt to be condemned. However, God has an absolute standard (John 8:32; 17:17; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Prov. 16:25; Jer. 10:23).
 - b. Man tends to think that his own notions and judgments are correct, and he tends to overlook or rationalize things that may be questionable about them. Man looks at things with his human judgment, often measuring them by their appearance. The vilest of criminals seeks to justify his evil, and the worst false teacher rationalizes his error. Tyrants try to find a semblance of legality for even the vilest of their wicked actions [Hitler tried to convince his people and the world that he had the legal right to invade and conquer other nations].
 - c. But God goes to the heart of the matter, examining the spirit of man.
 - 1) 1 Samuel 15:11: "It repenteth me that I have set up Saul *to be* king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments. And it grieved Samuel; and he cried unto the LORD all night."
 - 2) 1 Samuel 16:7: "But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for *the LORD seeth* not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart."
 - 3) Daniel 5:27: "TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting."
 - 4) Luke 16:15: "And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God."

- 5) Acts 26:9: "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth."
 - 6) Revelation 3:1: "And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead."
- d. Many years ago, a doctor had a patient who was on the verge of death. The doctor, believing in the reality of the human soul, weighed the man just prior to his death and immediately after the man died—the reading was identical. He pronounced, "The soul has no weight." The soul (the spirit) has no material properties, hence no weight. But God is able to "weigh" the value of a soul!
3. Verse 3: "Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established."
 - a. If we commit (literally, "roll over") our lives to the Lord, he will establish our way. "A number of proverbs teach how the Lord frustrates the plans of the wicked; in contrast to that we see here how the Lord encourages the plans of the righteous. The crucial thing is choosing the right plan; one which God will sanction and bless" (Alden, p.126).
 - b. If we seek the Lord first, we are assured that the aspirations of our hearts will be fulfilled.
 - 1) Matthew 6:33: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."
 - 2) Mark 10:29-30: "And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life."
 4. Verse 4: "The LORD hath made all *things* for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil."
 - a. To grasp this verse, one needs to see mankind as God sees them (Alden). God created us for his glory and for our blessing, but man went astray and persists in rebellion. Those who remain thus will be horribly punished in eternity. It was not God's will that men go into sin; he takes no pleasure in their punishment: "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord GOD: *and* not that he should return from his ways, and live?....Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn *yourselves*, and live ye" (Ezek. 18:23, 31-32).
 - b. His infinite powers revealed to him beforehand what man would do; his mercy provided the means for their salvation; but punishment is assured for those who turn down his offer. God is not responsible for the plight of the lost. They earn their punishment just as surely as a criminal merits the punishment pronounced upon him by civil law.
 - c. Ezekiel 18:20-21,30-32: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him. But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die....Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord GOD. Repent, and turn *yourselves* from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn *yourselves*, and live ye."
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- d. John 3:16-17: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved."
 - e. Romans 2:4: "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?"
 - f. 1 Timothy 2:4-5: "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For *there is* one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."
 - g. 2 Timothy 2:10-13: "Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. *It is* a faithful saying: For if we be dead with *him*, we shall also live with *him*: If we suffer, we shall also reign with *him*: if we deny *him*, he also will deny us: If we believe not, *yet* he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself."
 - h. 2 Peter 3:8-14: "But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day *is* with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. *Seeing* then *that* all these things shall be dissolved, what manner *of persons* ought ye to be in *all* holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless."
 - i. Matthew 25:46: "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."
 - j. John 5:28-29: "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."
5. Verse 5: "Every one *that is* proud in heart *is* an abomination to the LORD: *though* hand *join* in hand, he shall not be unpunished."
- a. In his pride, man often exalts himself to a position equal to God. "Son of man, say unto the prince of Tyrus, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thine heart *is* lifted up, and thou hast said, *I am* a God, I sit *in* the seat of God, in the midst of the seas; yet thou *art* a man, and not God, though thou set thine heart as the heart of God" (Ezek. 28:2).
 - b. To see our real relative position with respect to God, one needs only to try to think of anything he can do without the blessings and provisions of God. The very air we breathe, the water we drink, the food we eat, the materials we use in preparing clothing and shelter, the drugs and medicines we use to treat our injured and diseased bodies, the fuel we use to heat our houses and propel our vehicles, and even our mastery over the animal creation—all these God provided.
 - c. Man can neither create nor destroy an atom of matter. God provided our lives and health, and sustains us. What does man have of which to boast? God even gave man the wisdom, ingenuity and knowledge by which he grows his crops and constructs the tools and material he needs. No wonder, therefore, God looks with great displeasure on those who are uplifted in pride!
 - d. It does not matter that many proud men may rise up in unison, joining hand in hand in their opposition to God, it will be God who will ever be victorious.
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- 1) The people at Babel (Gen. 11) thought to defy God's mandate to spread out over the earth; they erected the tower to circumvent God's decree. God won!
 - 2) Pharaoh defied the Lord, but lost (Exodus).
 - 3) Voltaire predicted that within a hundred years, the Bible would be rejected by the masses; his house was turned into the headquarters of an organization distributing Bibles, and his printing press was employed in furthering the Bible.
 - 4) The foundations of Communist Russia, which sought to remove God from his heaven and his word from the minds of men, is even now crumbling.
 - 5) Ahab's efforts to mock God failed miserably.
6. Verse 6: "By mercy and truth iniquity is purged: and by the fear of the LORD *men* depart from evil."
- a. Sin is purged (cleansed) by means of mercy and truth. God's mercy (grace) is expressed through his truth (his word).
 - 1) "That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteous-ness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 5:21).
 - 2) The grace of God teaches us to abstain from certain things and to do other prescribed things: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" (Tit. 2:11-12).
 - b. God's grace and truth, which are accompanied by our fear of God, will keep us from living in sin.
 - 1) Ecclesiastes 12:13-14: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this *is* the whole *duty* of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether *it be* good, or whether *it be* evil."
 - 2) Matthew 7:13-14: "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide *is* the gate, and broad *is* the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait *is* the gate, and narrow *is* the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."
 - 3) Matthew 7:21-27: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it."
7. Verse 7: "When a man's ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him."
- a. There are practical blessings which come to us when we serve the Almighty. In the present verse, those who otherwise stand opposed to us will be favorably inclined toward us. Having the favor of God is often accompanied with the favor of man. "Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47).
 - b. However, there will always be those who hate the truth and will oppose us when we support it. But at the same time, there are others who will look on us with kindness because of our faith. The
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Sanhedrin sought to kill the apostles, but Gamaliel spoke in their behalf (Acts 5:33ff). King Saul pursued David with the intent to kill him, but Jonathan befriended David. Israel was surrounded by enemies in Canaan, yet God would see that they did not take advantage of them during the absence of the men during the three annual feasts which required them to be present at the tabernacle.

- 1) Exodus 34:23-24: "Thrice in the year shall all your menchildren appear before the Lord GOD, the God of Israel. For I will cast out the nations before thee, and enlarge thy borders: neither shall any man desire thy land, when thou shalt go up to appear before the LORD thy God thrice in the year."
 - 2) Luke 6:26: "Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets."
 - 3) Luke 10:25-33: "And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour? And Jesus answering said, A certain *man* went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded *him*, and departed, leaving *him* half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked *on him*, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion *on him*."
 - 4) 2 Timothy 3:12: "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."
 - c. "All our danger lies in his wrath, not in their anger. No creature can touch us without his permission (Job 1:9-12; Ps. 105:13-13). Laban followed Jacob as an enemy, but was constrained to be at peace with him (Gen. 31:24). Esau when about to execute his long brooded threat, was melted down into brotherly endearment (Gen. 27:41; 32:1-4)...The enemies of the godly kings were manacled, and bowed before them (1 Kings 4:21-25; 10:23-29; 2 Chron. 17:10)" (Bridges, p.231).
8. Verse 8: "Better *is* a little with righteousness than great revenues without right."
- a. "Wealth that is acquired through dishonest means results in at least two problems: a bad conscience and fear that one's dishonesty will be exposed, resulting in shame and poverty. Proverbs says it is far better to have little than to have much accompanied by guilt and fear" (Alden, p.127).
 - b. It is far better to be right and have God's approval while having little of this world's goods, than to be well-off and in sin. The widow of Zarepheth was far "richer" even though in poverty, than was Jezebel in her finery (1 Kings 17:10ff; 2 Kings 9:32-37). Lazarus was greater than the rich man (Luke 16:19-31).
9. Verse 9: "A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps."
- a. "Man proposes, but God disposes." The sovereignty of God is emphasized. This verse does not deprive man of his free moral agency and does not charge God with partiality. Man would be a mere machine if he had no freedom to choose, and God would be a despot if he forced man to sin and then punished him for so-doing. God's providence and word offer guidance to man; but man must make the right choices in order for blessings to ensue. God provides the door of opportunity, but man must step through it.
 - b. "How little did Joseph's brethren contemplate the overruling direction to their evil devisings! [Gen. 37:26-28; 14:5] When Saul's heart was devising 'slaughter against the disciples of the Lord' [Acts 9:1-6]; when the renegade slave was running in his own path, little did they think of that gracious direction

of their steps, to the salvation of their souls. When David simply went at his father's bidding, little did he know the grand crisis, to which the Lord was directing his steps [1 Sam. 17:17,18,23,58]. As little did the captive girl calculate upon the weighty results from her banishment from her country [2 Kings 5:2,3]" (Bridges, p.233).

- c. We may not be able to explain the details of how God's providence works, but neither can anyone explain how a miracle was done. But certainly one who believes the Bible, will believe in the providence of God.
 - 1) Esther 4:14: "For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, *then* shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for *such* a time as this?"
 - 2) Ephesians 3:20-21: "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."
 - 3) Philemon 15: "For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever."

B. Proverbs 16:10-19.

1. Verse 10: "A divine sentence *is* in the lips of the king: his mouth transgresseth not in judgment."
 - a. An earthly king carries the power of life and death over his subjects. "Is the meaning as follows? Though divination were applied to a righteous king's lips, to induce him to punish the innocent and spare the guilty, yet would not his lips transgress in judgment; so firmly attached is he to God, and so much is he under the Divine care and influence. Whatever judgment such a one pronounces, it may be considered as a decision from God" (Clarke, pp.747f).
 - b. Alden states, "'The king may speak divination but God directs actions which he says are just.' Now verse 10 sounds like verse 33; what looks like pure chance from our limited perspective is really firmly under God's control (see also 19:21; 16:1, 9; and 20:24)" (p.127).
 - c. When a good king is on the throne, and has God's law as his ruling principle, then his judgments will be just and right.
2. Verse 11: "A just weight and balance *are* the Lord's: all the weights of the bag *are* his work."
 - a. Crookedness in business dealings is denounced in this verse. Merchants and others who overcharge, or who use crooked scales, are violators of God's will. "A false balance *is* abomination to the LORD: but a just weight *is* his delight" (Prov. 11:1).
 - b. Since the previous verse and the following four verses speak of kings, it is possible that this verse should be construed in the light of the king's responsibility to equitable rule.
3. Verse 12: "*It is* an abomination to kings to commit wickedness: for the throne is established by righteousness."
 - a. It is a hated thing when kings engage in wickedness. Not only do they corrupt their own souls, but their influence will be wrought for evil on the people. A righteous king will refrain from wickedness. The rule of any high authority is established by righteousness; it is undermined by unrighteousness.
 - b. A wicked man might hold the throne for many years, but sooner or later his rule will be usurped, either by death or by a more powerful or more subtle contemporary. Many have become evil and lost their throne—Nebuchadnezzar; Belshazzar; Herod (Acts 12).
4. Verses 13-15: "Righteous lips *are* the delight of kings; and they love him that speaketh right. The wrath

of a king *is as* messengers of death: but a wise man will pacify it. In the light of the king's countenance *is* life; and his favour *is* as a cloud of the latter rain."

- a. A righteous king will take delight in those who speak righteous words; and he will be loved by his subjects who value that which is right.
 - b. The king has the power of life and death; this is considered his right by virtue of office (cf. Rom. 13:1ff; Eccl. 8:4). "Every sign of his wrath—even the frown of his face, or word out of his mouth is a messenger of death. (Esth. 7:7-10.) The despot issues his order, and the executioner performs his warrant without delay or resistance. No common wisdom was needed to pacify his wrath. Jonathan appeased his father's wrath [1 Sam. 19:4-6]. Daniel pacified the outrageous autocrat of Babylon [Dan. 2:15,16]" (Bridges, p.235).
 - 1) 1 Samuel 19:4-6: "And Jonathan spake good of David unto Saul his father, and said unto him, Let not the king sin against his servant, against David; because he hath not sinned against thee, and because his works *have been* to thee-ward very good: For he did put his life in his hand, and slew the Philistine, and the LORD wrought a great salvation for all Israel: thou sawest *it*, and didst rejoice: wherefore then wilt thou sin against innocent blood, to slay David without a cause? And Saul hearkened unto the voice of Jonathan: and Saul sware, *As* the LORD liveth, he shall not be slain."
 - 2) Esther 7:7-10: "And the king arising from the banquet of wine in his wrath *went* into the palace garden: and Haman stood up to make request for his life to Esther the queen; for he saw that there was evil determined against him by the king. Then the king returned out of the palace garden into the place of the banquet of wine; and Haman was fallen upon the bed whereon Esther *was*. Then said the king, Will he force the queen also before me in the house? As the word went out of the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face. And Harbonah, one of the chamberlains, said before the king, Behold also, the gallows fifty cubits high, which Haman had made for Mordecai, who had spoken good for the king, standeth in the house of Haman. Then the king said, Hang him thereon. So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then was the king's wrath pacified."
 - 3) Daniel 2:15-16: "He answered and said to Arioch the king's captain, Why *is* the decree *so* hasty from the king? Then Arioch made the thing known to Daniel. Then Daniel went in, and desired of the king that he would give him time, and that he would show the king the interpretation."
 - c. "The king's favour marks the same absolute power. The restoration of Pharaoh's butler to his place was as 'life from the dead' (Gen. 40:20,21). The captive monarch found renewed life in the light of his Master's countenance (2 Kings 25:27-30); Nehemiah's depression was cheered by his Sovereign's kind manners and still kinder indulgence [Neh. 2:1-8]. And was not the golden sceptre, held out to Esther (Esth. 5:2,3; 4:16), as the receiving cloud of the latter rain—the security of the 'joy of harvest?'" (ibid., p.236).
5. Verse 16: "How much better *is it* to get wisdom than gold! and to get understanding rather to be chosen than silver!"
- a. Saul of Tarsus had many things of this world's advantages, but he considered them all as things of no worth when compared with the riches of Christ's blessings: "Yea doubtless, and I count all things *but* loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them *but* dung, that I may win Christ" (Phil. 3:8).
 - b. "It is more valuable (Prov. 3:13-15; 8:10,11,18), more abiding [22:5], more fruitful (Eccl.7:12), more satisfying. It is inexpressibly better....The security of the possession also heightens its value. Multitudes labour night and day for gold; yet miss the treasure. But who was ever disappointed in the

effort to get wisdom?...How rich must be that blessing, of which the Son of God is the storehouse! For 'in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.' (Col. 2:3)...None shall spoil us of our portion" (Bridges, p.237).

6. Verse 17: "The highway of the upright *is* to depart from evil: he that keepeth his way preserveth his soul."
 - a. "Each of us have our own world of evil—an inner circle, where the conflict is far more sharp; where the need of divine discipline is far more sensibly felt, than in the grosser form of sin. Shew great forbearance to others, but none to ourselves....The real injury is not from our living in the world, but from the world living in us. So delicate is the vital principle that it never can emit its glowing influence, except in the atmosphere of heaven" (ibid.).
 - b. Joseph quickly perceived the enticement of Potiphar's wife would lead him into sinning against God (Gen. 39:9-10); David did not see his danger in a similar matter until it was too late (2 Sam. 11). Those children of God who carefully consider their way will preserve their souls.
 - 1) Luke 21:19: "In your patience possess ye your souls."
 - 2) 2 Corinthians 7:1: "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."
 - 3) 1 John 3:3: "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."
7. Verses 18-19: "Pride *goeth* before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall. Better *it is to be* of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud."
 - a. Many eloquent warnings are given in the Scriptures against pride. Many examples of men and women who fell victim to this sin have their stories revealed for all to read in God's word. "Be not highminded, but fear" (Rom. 11:20).
 - 1) The Pharisee (Luke 18) showed his arrogant spirit by the words of his prayer. One with a haughty spirit is one who has his head held high; in looking up, he cannot see where he walks.
 - 2) David gloried in the great number in Israel, but God took away his pride by pestilence (2 Sam. 24).
 - 3) Hezekiah boasted of his treasure, but the Lord caused him to lose it (2 Kings 20:14-18).
 - 4) When King Nebuchadnezzar became proud of his Babylon, he lost his throne (Dan. 4:28-37).
 - 5) See also the case of the vain women of Zion (Isa. 3:16-26). Our pride is our danger.
 - b. The humble publican (Luke 18) is placed in stark, favorable contrast to the highminded Pharisee. Solomon declares that it is better to be of humble spirit and be united with men of low estate (spiritually and materially), than to have a proud disposition and share in the spoils obtained by others of a similar heart. Genuine humility exalts us in God's esteem; but pride leads to spiritual destruction.

C. Proverbs 16:20-33.

1. Verses 20-21: "He that handleth a matter wisely shall find good: and whoso trusteth in the LORD, happy *is* he. The wise in heart shall be called prudent: and the sweetness of the lips increaseth learning"
 - a. Showing wisdom in the affairs of life will often provide good results. And those who trust in the Lord will have reason to be happy. Joseph trusted God and used his natural wisdom in meeting the emergency that developed in Egypt. The apostles used wisdom in handling the problem of the neglected Grecian widows (Acts 6). Wisdom coupled with faith is a powerful combination for good.
 - b. "Whereas common sense (substantially identified with prudent wisdom) is like current coin. We have every day in the ordinary occurrences of life occasion for it. And if we would but call it into action,

- it would carry us much greater lengths than we seem to be aware of" (Bridges, p.241).
- c. The teacher who uses "sweet words" will instill more learning in the students than those who use harsh, bitter tirades.
2. Verse 22: "Understanding *is* a wellspring of life unto him that hath it: but the instruction of fools *is* folly."
 - a. Understanding will encourage more of the same; we can never learn too much or reach a point where we are saturated with wisdom. It is like a spring which never runs dry.
 - b. But nothing profitable is to be gained from the instructions given by foolish men. (Some think the latter part refers to trying to instruct one who is foolish).
 3. Verses 23-24: "The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips. Pleasant words *are as* an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones."
 - a. A wise man will insure that his mouth and lips emit only that which is wise and proper. What is in the heart will be expressed by the mouth: "O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Matt. 12:34-37).
 - b. By the words of the mouth the contents of the heart are known. Many will speak before they take thought, and consequently many foolish and hurtful words spring forth.
 - c. Kind words are like honey: they sweeten the soul and bring health to the bones. Anyone can speak harsh, biting, complaining, destructive words. These do little (if any) good, and much harm.
 - 1) Matthew 7:12: "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets."
 - 2) Romans 14:19: "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another."
 - 3) Ephesians 4:29: "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers."
 - 4) Ephesians 4:32: "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."
 - 5) Colossians 4:6: "Let your speech *be* alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man."
 4. Verse 25: "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof *are* the ways of death."
 - a. There must be some good reason for the repeat of these words, which were also given in Proverbs 14:12. The meaning of the statement is extremely plain: man thinks that the way of his choosing is good, but the end of that road is death. Just because a doctrine or religious practice appears to be good to our thinking, does not mean it is so.
 - b. The Pharisees of the first century thought that their attention to the outward compliance with the Law was good; that their strict adherence to the traditions of the rabbis was excellent. But the Lord denounced their religion (Matt. 23). Although it contained many practices and principles ordained in the Law, they had corrupted it to the point that the resulting religion was not of God, but from their own concepts.
 - c. The Sadducees took a loose approach to religion. What did not measure up to their human views was
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rejected. Hence, they refused to believe in angels, the human soul, and the resurrection of the dead (Acts 23:8). This seemed proper to them, but it was repudiated by the Lord.

- d. There are many today who follow the example of the Pharisees, binding where the Lord did not bind; a greater number of others do as the Sadducees, and loose where the Lord has bound. Such seems right to the participants, but is denounced as error by the Lord.
 - e. Other truths are repeated in different books (cf. the four gospel accounts); and by the same author of a book (Judges 17:6; 18:1; 21:25). We learn by repetition; great precepts are emphasized by other occurrences.
 - f. Other passages:
 - 1) Isaiah 30:21: "And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This *is* the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left."
 - 2) Jeremiah 6:16: "Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where *is* the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk *therein*."
 - 3) John 8:32: "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Cf. John 17:17.
 - 4) Galatians 1:6-12: "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any *man* preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ. But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught *it*, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ."
 - 5) 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12: "And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."
 - 6) Revelation 22:18-19: "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and *from* the things which are written in this book."
5. Verse 26: "He that laboreth laboreth for himself; for his mouth craveth it of him."
- a. "Verse 26 is a fundamental truth; the need for food will motivate even lazy men to work. A sad truth, however, is that throughout history and many parts of the world today many industrious, creative workers are inextricably locked into a life of drudgery because the doors of opportunity are locked against them. Hunger 'drives them on' but is never appeased" (Alden, p.130).
 - b. "A state of labour is the penal appointment of God. (Gen. 3:19.)...This is the necessary condition of the great mass of mankind. Their mouth craveth it of them (Eccles. 6:7), eager as a suppliant to receive the needful food. This is labouring for ourselves. The harvest is our rich recompence. Only take care, that we labour not for vanity [Prov. 23:4,5; Isa. 47:12,13; Hab. 2:13], or for 'evil covetousness' [Hab. 2:9; Isa. 5:8]....And yet all toil, whether bodily or mental, is an evil, if it prevents concentration of interest on the only satisfying object of labour" (Bridges, p.246).
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- c. Matthew 6:19-21: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."
 - d. John 6:26-27: "Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled. Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed."
6. Verse 27: "An ungodly man diggeth up evil: and in his lips *there is* as a burning fire."
- a. The ungodly man is "a man of Belial" (margin). He is not lazy; he is very diligent in digging up evil against another. It is surprising just how energetic and ingenious men are in forwarding some sin or some religious error. They are tireless.
 - b. The evil of the verse is something critical or hurtful which they speak against their victim: "My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation. For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same *is* a perfect man, *and* able also to bridle the whole body. Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. Behold also the ships, which though *they be* so great, and *are* driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue *is* a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: But the tongue can no man tame; *it is* an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet *water* and bitter? Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so *can* no fountain both yield salt water and fresh" (Jas. 3:1-12).
7. Verse 28: "A froward man soweth strife: and a whisperer separateth chief friends."
- a. Following the theme of the preceding verse, Solomon describes the crooked man who sows strife among others, and the whisperer who separates friends by the tales he bears.
 - b. The froward man and the whisperer are synonymous in the verse, and are equal to the man of Belial in verse 27. Slandorous reports, misrepresentations, and lies are spread secretly which are calculated to destroy.
8. Verses 29-30: "A violent man enticeth his neighbour, and leadeth him into the way *that is* not good. He shutteth his eyes to devise froward things: moving his lips he bringeth evil to pass."
- a. A man of violence lures his unsuspecting neighbor into sin. His violence is in what he does to the victim's soul.
 - b. The same man closes his eyes in order to better concentrate on inventing evil; and he speaks devious words by which to implement his wicked scheme.
 - c. "The man of violence (Prov 3:31) is one who wrongs others by injurious conduct, by fraud or oppression. How such a one 'enticeth,' talks a man over, we see in Prov 1:10, etc....And leadeth him into the way that is not good (Ps 36:4; Isa 65:2); a position where he will suffer some calamity, or be induced to commit some wickedness. This verse [30] is better taken as one sentence (so the Septuagint), and translated, as Nowack, 'He that shutteth his eyes in order to contrive froward things,
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he that compresseth his lips, hath already brought evil to pass;’ he has virtually effected it. From such a crafty, malignant man you need not expect any more open tokens of his intentions. He shutteth his eyes (comp. Isa 33:15); either that he may better think out his evil plans, or else he cannot look his neighbour in the face while he is plotting against him....Moving his lips; rather, he who compresseth his lips, to hide the malignant smile with which he might greet his neighbour's calamity (comp. Prov 6:13, etc.; 10:10), or that neither by word nor expression he may betray his thoughts. Others take the two outward expressions mentioned as signals to confederates; but this is not so suitable, as they are the man's own feelings and sentiments that are meant. One who gives these tokens bringeth evil to pass; he has perfected his designs, and deems them as good as accomplished, and you will do well to note what his bearing signifies. Some take the meaning to be, brings punishment on himself; but the warning is not given for the sinner's sake...” [The Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by BibleSoft].

9. Verses 31-33: "The hoary head *is* a crown of glory, *if* it be found in the way of righteousness. *He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city. The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD.*"
 - a. Previous generations had high regard for old men and women, presuming that they had accumulated great wisdom with the passing of years. Old age does not guarantee wisdom, but does give opportunities for the acquisition of it. The white head is a crown of glory IF it has followed the way of righteousness (God's word).
 - b. The most difficult battle anyone fights is over himself. Thus, one who conquers his anger is greater than one who masters a city by the use of force.
 - c. In many Bible cases, important choices were made by the casting of lots. These were thrown into a lap (or jar), with the question to be decided indicated by how the lots fell.
 - 1) Joshua 7:16-20: "So Joshua rose up early in the morning, and brought Israel by their tribes; and the tribe of Judah was taken: And he brought the family of Judah; and he took the family of the Zarahites: and he brought the family of the Zarahites man by man; and Zabdi was taken: And he brought his household man by man; and Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken. And Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the LORD God of Israel, and make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide *it* not from me. And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done.
 - 2) 1 Samuel 14:41-43: "Therefore Saul said unto the LORD God of Israel, Give a perfect *lot*. And Saul and Jonathan were taken: but the people escaped. And Saul said, Cast *lots* between me and Jonathan my son. And Jonathan was taken. Then Saul said to Jonathan, Tell me what thou hast done. And Jonathan told him, and said, I did but taste a little honey with the end of the rod that *was* in mine hand, *and*, lo, I must die."
 - 3) Jonah 1:7: "And they said every one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil *is* upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah."
 - 4) Acts 1:23-26: "And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all *men*, show whether of these two thou hast chosen, That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place. And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles."
 - d. In these cases, God was making known his choice. This was done only during times when miraculous events were prescribed.

PROVERBS 17

A. Proverbs 17:1-9.

1. Verse 1: "Better *is* a dry morsel, and quietness therewith, than an house full of sacrifices *with* strife."
 - a. Our relationship with the people we eat with is more important than the meal itself. The same principle is true with the job we hold and the neighborhood in which we live.
 - b. The "house full of sacrifices" is an allusion to the Hebrew practice of feasting at home on the portions of the leftover sacrifices. Eating a simple meal with peace is said to be better than to feast upon the best meats where strife is prominent.
 - c. "Of the thank or peace offerings part only was burnt upon the altar, the rest was eaten by the offerer and his family; and as the victims were always the choicest animals, 'a house full of sacrifices' would contain the materials for sumptuous feasting (see on Prov 7:4). The joyous family festival often degenerated into excess, which naturally led to quarrels and strife (see 1 Sam 1:5,6,13; 2:13, etc.). So the *agapae* of the early Church were desecrated by licence and selfishness (1 Cor 11:20, etc.)" [Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by Biblesoft].
2. Verse 2: "A wise servant shall have rule over a son that causeth shame, and shall have part of the inheritance among the brethren."
 - a. In a broad sense, wisdom often produces honor and foolishness often brings shame. Thus, the foolish son of a rich man may bring shame to himself, while a wise servant may be elevated to honor. Many kings and other wealthy individuals have had shame brought to their names through having left their fortunes to a foolish son.
 - b. Many sons who have been raised "in the lap of luxury" and "on the knee of indulgence" are ill-prepared in morality and in maturity to assume responsibility for wealth or position.
 - c. Ecclesiastes 10:7: "I have seen servants upon horses, and princes walking as servants upon the earth."
3. Verse 3: "The fining pot *is* for silver, and the furnace for gold: but the LORD trieth the hearts."
 - a. The refiner's furnace is designed to burn away the dross of ore, leaving behind only the pure gold and silver. But God has a means for trying the human heart. A silver refiner watches the liquified ore lest it get too hot; when he can see his reflection in the molten silver, the refining process is complete.
 - b. 1 Kings 8:39: "Then hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place, and forgive, and do, and give to every man according to his ways, whose heart thou knowest; (for thou, *even* thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men)."
 - c. Job 23:10: "But he knoweth the way that I take: *when* he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold."
 - d. Psalms 66:10: "For thou, O God, hast proved us: thou hast tried us, as silver is tried."
 - e. Isaiah 1:25: "And I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin."
 - f. Jeremiah 17:10: "I the LORD search the heart, *I* try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, *and* according to the fruit of his doings."
 - g. 1 Peter 4:12-19: "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy *are ye*; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or *as a*

thief, or *as* an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if *any man suffer* as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf. For the time *is come* that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if *it first begin* at us, what shall the end *be* of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls *to him* in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator."

4. Verse 4: "A wicked doer giveth heed to false lips; *and* a liar giveth ear to a naughty tongue."
 - a. "Like begets like." "Birds of a feather flock together." One whose heart and life are filled with sinful notions will be attuned to evil communications. "Amnon thus stimulated his own lust, by giving heed to the false lips of his friend [2 Sam. 13:5-6]. Ahab, to secure his desired object, eagerly listened to the counsels of his murderous wife [1 Kings 21:4-7]. The Jews gave delighted ears to the false prophets, who flattered them in their wickedness [Isa. 30:9-11; Jer. 5:30-31; Mic. 2:11; 1 John 4:5]. Active and intense was the malice of the ungodly, in suborning false witness for our Lord's condemnation [Matt. 26:59-60]. Yet, 'there would not be so many open mouths, if there were not as many willing ears to entertain them.' But be it remembered, that the listening ears share the responsibility of the naughty tongue; as all are involved in the treason, that are directly or indirectly acquainted with the plot" (Bridges, pp.256f).
 - b. The lying tongues which pervert truth (heavenly or earthly) are guilty of sin, but so also is the willing ear.
 - c. "The particular calamity primarily intended seems to be that which reduces a person to poverty. Delight in others' misfortunes, even those of enemies, is a most detestable form of selfishness and malice. Job, testifying to his own integrity, was thankful to think that he was free from this vice (Job 31:29)....The pious author looks for retributive punishment on such spitefulness" [The Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by Biblesoft].
 - d. One likes to be around those of his own kind, thus the wicked individual surrounds himself with those who speak what he likes to hear. Crooks and liars like to be in company with others of their ilk. This is a general truth, but the episode of Liberal, Missouri points out that a sin-filled society is disliked by all:
 - a) Years ago, a group of atheists decided to show the world what a fine civilization could be had if only the—and this is they way they put it—the "superstitions of Christianity" were outlawed. They founded the little town of Liberal, Missouri. They boastfully advertised it as the only town of its size in the United States that didn't have a preacher, a priest, a church, that didn't have God, Jesus Christ, hell or the devil.
 - b) The St. Louis Post-Dispatch, a few months later, carried a lengthy article about the little town. It showed that, as a matter of fact, there was little else in the town except the devil. Its hotels had become houses of prostitution. Gambling, stealing, killing—it was the standard conduct for the town.
 - c) The newspaper article was so frightful that the men of Liberal had Clark Braden, the author of the story, arrested for criminal libel. They also sued the Post-Dispatch for \$25,000. In the trial, the evidence was so overwhelming that the jury took only a few minutes to render a verdict—in favor of the defendant. The suit was dismissed and the town of Liberal, Missouri, had to pay all court costs.
 - d) It wasn't long after that before even life-long atheists themselves left the town in absolute disgust. In fact, one of them confessed: "An infidel surrounded by Christians may spout his infidelity and be able to stand it, but a town of atheists is too horrible to contemplate."

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5. Verse 5: "Whoso mocketh the poor reproacheth his Maker: *and* he that is glad at calamities shall not be unpunished."
- God is the Maker of both the poor and the wealthy, both the fortunate and the unfortunate. "There, but for the grace of God, am I." One must never mock the poor for to do so is to mock God, his Creator. If you ridicule the product of a man's hand, you mock the man himself. Suppose you mock the garden a man has spent many days of hard labor and expense to grow: are you not mocking the man himself?
 - One must never rejoice over the calamities which befall some unfortunate person; God will insure that proper punishment is applied if we do. We should not rejoice even when a great tragedy befalls an enemy. Shimei took advantage of David when he was "down." "And when king David came to Bahurim, behold, thence came out a man of the family of the house of Saul, whose name *was* Shimei, the son of Gera: he came forth, and cursed still as he came. And he cast stones at David, and at all the servants of king David: and all the people and all the mighty men *were* on his right hand and on his left. And thus said Shimei when he cursed, Come out, come out, thou bloody man, and thou man of Belial: The LORD hath returned upon thee all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose stead thou hast reigned; and the LORD hath delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom thy son: and, behold, thou *art taken* in thy mischief, because thou *art* a bloody man" (2 Sam. 16:5-8).
6. Verse 6: "Children's children *are* the crown of old men; and the glory of children *are* their fathers."
- Grandfathers rejoice in their grandchildren, and children glory in their fathers. The verse pictures the love and happiness that prevail in the hearts of grandfathers and fathers. This proverb pictures the ideal, but often the opposite is true. What kind of attitude did Rehoboam have toward Solomon, his father? What kind of crown to David was Rehoboam? (Neither David nor Solomon lived to see the kind of king Rehoboam became).
 - Joseph never did anything to shame his grandfather, Isaac; and he held his father in the highest of esteem. "Lo, children *are* an heritage of the LORD: *and* the fruit of the womb *is* his reward. As arrows *are* in the hand of a mighty man; so *are* children of the youth. Happy *is* the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate" (Ps. 127:3-5).
7. Verse 7: "Excellent speech becometh not a fool: much less do lying lips a prince."
- A foolish man is not characterized by excellent speech, and lying lips bring no favor to a prince. If a wicked man were to preach the gospel, he would be held in contempt; likewise with a practicing alcoholic who advocated abstinence. But excellent speech does become a child of God.
 - Philippians 1:27: "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel."
 - Philippians 4:8: "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things *are* honest, whatsoever things *are* just, whatsoever things *are* pure, whatsoever things *are* lovely, whatsoever things *are* of good report; if *there be* any virtue, and if *there be* any praise, think on these things."
 - Colossians 4:6: "Let your speech *be* alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man."
 - No ruler enhances his standing by telling lies; he only weakens his position because he thus rebels against God, who gave him his rank: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For
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rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to *execute* wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore *ye* must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute *is due*; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour" (Rom. 13:1-7).

8. Verse 8: "A gift *is as* a precious stone in the eyes of him that hath it: whithersoever it turneth, it prospereth."
 - a. "A gift is so tempting, that it can no more be refused than a lovely jewel, by him to whom it is presented; and such is its power, it commonly prevails over all men, dispatches all business, carries all causes, and—in a word—effects whatever a man desires.' Such is the sympathy between a lusting eye and a glittering gift. The covetous prophet [Num. 22:7-8,21; 2 Pet. 2:15]—nay even an apostle [Matt. 26:14-16]—was wilfully beguiled by its fascination. The Heathen soldiers sold themselves to its slavery [Matt. 28:12-15]. A King's Minister was won over by its allurements. (Acts 12:20.) Even a King—and such as the man after God's own heart—was sinfully perverted in the snare. (2 Sam. 16:1-4.) Seldom does it fail to prosper whithersoever it turneth. But who would envy a prosperity for evil?" (Bridges, pp.259f).
 - b. Bridges takes the "gift" to be a bribe. Alden takes a broader view: "Verse 8 simply says some people, whether right or wrong, give gifts to motivate others to help them succeed at whatever they're doing" (p.134).
 - c. "The design of this observation is to show, 1. That those who have money in their hand think they can do any thing with it. Rich men value a little money as if it were a precious stone, and value themselves on it as if it gave them not only ornament, but power, and every one were bound to be at their beck, even justice itself. Whithersoever they turn this sparkling diamond they expect it should dazzle the eyes of all, and make them do just what they would have them do in hopes of it. The deepest bag will carry the cause. Fee high, and you may have what you will. 2. That those who have money in their eye, and set their hearts upon it, will do any thing for it: A bribe is as a precious stone in the eyes of him that takes it; it has a great influence upon him, and he will be sure to go the way that it leads him, hither and thither, though contrary to justice and not consistent with himself" [Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: New Modern Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1991 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.].
9. Verse 9: "He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth *very* friends."
 - a. There are many situations in life where forgiveness is to be offered and the cause is to be forgotten and remain unknown to those who have no need to know.
 - 1) Proverbs 10:12: "Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins."
 - 2) James 5:19-20: "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."
 - b. Love is the factor which forgives (or covers). One who forgives (covers) seeks to demonstrate love. On the other hand, if one spreads word about the transgression over the neighborhood, he will often cause true friends to be estranged. Unbridled tongues can cause more damage than war. Wars can be outlived and forgotten, and their evil generally erased; but back-biting tongues can inflict injuries that

cannot be undone, and lead to many precious souls being lost in eternity.

B. Proverbs 17:10-18.

1. Verse 10: "A reproof entereth more into a wise man than an hundred stripes into a fool."
 - a. With some people, a beating brings about no change for the better; but a wise man can be set aright with a few well-chosen words. Reasoning works better in correcting some people than punishment. David was brought to repentance by the little parable related by Nathan (2 Sam. 12:1-14); a look from the Lord melted the heart of Peter: "And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly" (Luke 22:61-62).
 - b. But many stripes could not create true penitence in the hearts of Pharaoh, Ahaz, or Israel.
 - 1) Exodus 9:34-35: "And when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunders were ceased, he sinned yet more, and hardened his heart, he and his servants. And the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, neither would he let the children of Israel go; as the LORD had spoken by Moses."
 - 2) 2 Chronicles 28:22: "And in the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against the LORD: this *is that* king Ahaz."
 - 3) Isaiah 1:5: "Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint."
 - 4) Isaiah 9:13: "For the people turneth not unto him that smiteth them, neither do they seek the LORD of hosts."
 - 5) Jeremiah 5:3: "O LORD, *are* not thine eyes upon the truth? thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, *but* they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return."
2. Verse 11: "An evil *man* seeketh only rebellion: therefore a cruel messenger shall be sent against him."
 - a. Sin is punished. When an evil man persists in his rebellion, a cruel messenger of punishment will be sent against him.
 - b. Consider these Bible cases:
 - 1) Deuteronomy 21:18: "If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and *that*, when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them."
 - 2) 2 Samuel 18:15-16: "And ten young men that bare Joab's armour compassed about and smote Absalom, and slew him. And Joab blew the trumpet, and the people returned from pursuing after Israel: for Joab held back the people."
 - 3) 2 Samuel 20:1: "And there happened to be there a man of Belial, whose name *was* Sheba, the son of Bichri, a Benjamite: and he blew a trumpet, and said, We have no part in David, neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: every man to his tents, O Israel." "Then the woman went unto all the people in her wisdom. And they cut off the head of Sheba the son of Bichri, and cast *it* out to Joab. And he blew a trumpet, and they retired from the city, every man to his tent. And Joab returned to Jerusalem unto the king" (2 Sam. 20:22).
 - 4) 2 Kings 15:27-30: "In the two and fiftieth year of Azariah king of Judah Pekah the son of Remaliah began to reign over Israel in Samaria, *and reigned* twenty years. And he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the LORD: he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin. In the days of Pekah king of Israel came Tiglathpileser king of Assyria,

and took Ijon, and Abelbethmaachah, and Janoah, and Kedesh, and Hazor, and Gilead, and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali, and carried them captive to Assyria. And Hoshea the son of Elah made a conspiracy against Pekah the son of Remaliah, and smote him, and slew him, and reigned in his stead, in the twentieth year of Jotham the son of Uzziah."

3. Verse 12: "Let a bear robbed of her whelps meet a man, rather than a fool in his folly."
 - a. "Look again at man in his folly. The strength and accuracy of the figure can scarcely be surpassed. The savage beast under the strongest excitement—a bear robbed of her whelps—is less dangerous to meet. Witness Jacob's sons putting a whole city to fire and sword for the folly of one man [Gen. 34:25]; Saul slaying a large company of innocent priests [1 Sam. 22:18]; Nebuchadnezzar heating the furnace sevenfold [Dan. 3:13-19]; Herod murdering the children in Ramah [Matt. 2:16]; Saul breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord [Acts 9:1]—was not all this the rage of a beast, not the reason of a man?" (Bridges, p.262).
 - b. A mother bear bereft of her cubs is an extremely dangerous beast; but it is far worse to meet a fool who is in pursuit of his folly: meeting a drunk driver; or an armed criminal who fleeing from the law.
 - c. Clarke gives this interesting story about a mother bear. A remarkable account of maternal affection in a she-bear: 'In the year 1772, the Seahorse frigate and Carcass bomb, under the command of the Hon. Captain C.J. Phipps, afterward Lord Mulgrave, were sent on a voyage of discovery to the north seas. In this expedition the late celebrated admiral Lord Nelson served as midshipman. While the carcass lay locked in the ice, early one morning, the man at the mast-head gave notice that three bears were making their way very fast over the frozen sea, and were directing their course toward the ship. They had no doubt been invited by the scent of some blubber of a seahorse [walrus] that the crew had killed a few days before, which had been set on fire, and was burning on the ice at the time of their approach. They proved to be a she-bear and her two cubs, but the cubs were nearly as large as the dam. They ran eagerly to the fire, and drew out from the flames part of the flesh of the seahorse that remained unconsumed, and ate voraciously. The crew from the ship threw great lumps of flesh of the seahorse, which they had still left upon the ice, which the old bear fetched away singly, laid every lump before her cubs as she brought it, and dividing it, gave each a share, reserving but a small portion to herself. As she was fetching away the last piece, they leveled their muskets at the cubs, and shot them both dead; and in her retreat they wounded the dam, but not mortally. It would have drawn tears of pity from any but unfeeling minds to have marked the affectionate concern expressed by this poor beast in the dying moments of her expiring young. Though she was sorely wounded, and could but just crawl to the place where they lay, she carried the lump of flesh she had fetched away, as she had done the others before, tore it in pieces and laid it down before them; and when she saw that they refused to eat, she laid her paws first upon one, and then upon the other, and endeavoured to raise them up; all this while it was piteous to hear her moan. When she found she could not move them, she went off; and being at some distance, looked back and moaned. This not availing to entice them away, she returned, and smelling around them, began to lick their wounds. She went off a second time, as before; and having crawled a few paces, looked again behind her, and for some time stood moaning. But still her cubs not rising to follow her, she returned to them again, and with signs of inexpressible fondness went around one, and around the other, pawing them and moaning. Finding at last that they were cold and lifeless, she raised her head toward the ship, and growled a curse upon the murderers, which they returned with a volley of musket balls. She fell between her cubs, and died licking their wounds.' Had this animal gotten among the destroyers of her young, she would have soon shown what was implied in the chafed mind of a bear robbed of her whelps" [Adam Clarke's Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1996 by BibleSoft].
 4. Verse 13: "Whoso rewardeth evil for good, evil shall not depart from his house."
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- a. Returning evil for evil is bad; returning evil for good is worse—both are sinful. The individual who gives evil for good will surely be justly punished.
 - b. Consider David who committed adultery with the wife of Uriah, a man who had served David faithfully (2 Sam. 11). Herod the Great (Matt. 2) sought to murder infant Jesus; history shows how miserable was his life. Nero was a very wicked man, and ended his life under sorry circumstances. Regarding the death of Nero: “Hearing that the Praetorian Guard was ready to abandon Nero for proper remuneration, the Senate proclaimed Galba emperor. Nero put some poison into a small box and, so armed, fled from his Golden House to the Servilian Gardens on the road to Ostia. He asked such officers of the Guard as were in the palace to accompany him; all refused, and one quoted to him a line of Virgil: ‘Is it, then, so hard to die?’ He could not believe that the omnipotence which had ruined him had suddenly ceased. He sent appeals for help to various friends, but none replied. He went down to the Tiber to drown himself, but his courage failed him. Phaon, one of his freedmen, offered to conceal him in his villa on the Via Salaria; Nero grasped at the proposal, and rode through the dark four miles out from the center of Rome. He spent that night in Phaon’s cellar, clad in a soiled tunic, sleepless and hungry, and trembling at every sound. Phaon’s courier brought word that the Senate had declared Nero a public enemy, had ordered his arrest, and had decreed that he should be punished ‘after the ancient manner.’ Nero asked what this was. ‘The condemned man,’ he was told, ‘is stripped, is fastened to a post by a fork passing through his neck, and is then beaten to death.’ Terrified, he tried to stab himself; but he made the mistake of testing the poniard’s point first and found it disconcertingly sharp. *Qualis artifex pereo!* He mourned—‘What an artist dies in me!’ As a new day dawned he heard the clatter of horses: the Senate’s soldiers had tracked him down. Quoting a verse of poetry—‘Hark! Now strikes upon my ear the trampling of swift couriers’—he drove a dagger into his throat; his hand faltered, and his freedman Epaphroditus helped him to press the blade home. He had begged his companions to keep his corpse from being mutilated, and Galba’s agents granted the wish. His old nurses, and Acre his former mistress, buried him in the vaults of the Domitii (68). Many of the populace rejoiced at his death and ran about Rome with liberty caps on their heads” (Will Durant, *Caesar and Christ*, pp.283f).
5. Verse 14: "The beginning of strife *is as* when one letteth out water: therefore leave off contention, before it be meddled with."
- a. This proverb illustrates the importance of avoiding strife. Once a leak in a dam or dike has begun in earnest, it is virtually impossible to stop. Strife begins between two individuals or nations over relatively small matters; if the problem can be nipped in the bud, greater problems can be avoided. The world never has enough peacemakers and always too many fomenters of strife.
 - b. "Moses restrained himself in the rising provocation with his wife. Israel wisely refrained from contention with Edom in the churlish refusal of water [Num. 20:14-21]. David answered gently to his brother's irritating suspicion [1Sam. 17:28-29]. He 'was as a deaf man' to his enemies, who were seeking contention with him [Ps. 38:12-14]" (Bridges, p.264).
 - 1) 1 Samuel 17:28-29: "And Eliab his eldest brother heard when he spake unto the men; and Eliab's anger was kindled against David, and he said, Why camest thou down hither? and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart; for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle. And David said, What have I now done? *Is there* not a cause?"
 - 2) Psalms 38:12-14: "They also that seek after my life lay snares *for me*: and they that seek my hurt speak mischievous things, and imagine deceits all the day long. But I, as a deaf *man*, heard not; and *I was* as a dumb man *that* openeth not his mouth. Thus I was as a man that heareth not, and in whose mouth *are* no reproofs."
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- c. Compare: "He that passeth by, *and* meddleth with strife *belonging* not to him, *is like* one that taketh a dog by the ears" (Prov. 26:17).
6. Verse 15: "He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both *are* abomination to the LORD."
 - a. Here is another brief list of actions which are counted as abominable to God: one who justifies the wicked and one who condemns the just. People who do not follow the Bible are often guilty of doing this. "Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits" (Isa. 30:10).
 - b. When a nation's judicial system degenerates to the point that justice is perverted in favor of the criminal and against the innocent, its days as a nation are numbered. When an individual, congregation, or group of people, degenerate to the point that those who stand for the truth are ostracized and those who promote error are warmly received, that individual, congregation or group is facing the greatest danger of their lives. Not only have they forsaken the truth, they are aligned against the truth. "Blessed *is* the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight *is* in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. The ungodly *are* not so: but *are* like the chaff which the wind driveth away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish" (Psalm 1).
 - c. "He that justifieth—in a forensic sense, declares righteous, acquits—the wicked, etc. Two forms of the perversion of justice are censured, viz. the acquittal of a guilty person and the condemnation of an innocent one (comp. Prov 24:24; Isa 5:23)" [Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by Biblesoft].
 7. Verse 16: "Wherefore *is there* a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing *he hath* no heart to it?"
 - a. Some young people will invest the time and money to attend a university, but use their time in pursuit of sensual and worldly pleasures. Governments and families will spend great amounts of money in vain efforts to educate those who have no real interest in obtaining an education. Solomon wisely asks, "Why?"
 - b. There are many in religion who invest time in attending services, but who have no heart to apply themselves to learn and improve.
 - 1) The people of Nazareth were religious but would not open their minds to actually learn from the Lord: "And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath" (Luke 4:28).
 - 2) The cities where many of his marvelous miracles were worked ended up rejecting his word: "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes" (Matt. 11:21).
 - 3) The Gadarenes sent the Lord away from their city, thus depriving themselves of countless blessings: "And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus: and when they saw him, they besought *him* that he would depart out of their coasts" (Matt. 8:34).
 - 4) Pilate was indifferent and the Jews were filled with hatred.
 - a) John 18:38: "Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault *at all*."

- b) Acts 13:46: "Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles."
- 5) Felix sought for a bribe rather than knowledge of the sublime: "And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee. He hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him: wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him. But after two years Porcius Festus came into Felix' room: and Felix, willing to show the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound" (Acts 24:25-27).
8. Verse 17: "A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity."
- a. The friend and brother are good companions in the statement of the verse. A good friend is one whose love will remain steadfast with changing circumstances and through the passing of years. A brother is one who will stand by us in troubles as well as in happy times. Ruth was such to Naomi, and Jonathan was to David.
- b. "A real friend loves his friend in prosperity and adversity; yea, he is more than a friend in time of need—he is a brother, as affectionate and as trusty as one connected by the closest ties of relationship (comp. Prov 18:24)" [Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by BibleSoft].
- c. Consider these passages:
- 1) 2 Samuel 15:19-22: "Then said the king to Ittai the Gittite, Wherefore goest thou also with us? return to thy place, and abide with the king: for thou *art* a stranger, and also an exile. Whereas thou camest *but* yesterday, should I this day make thee go up and down with us? seeing I go whither I may, return thou, and take back thy brethren: mercy and truth *be* with thee. And Ittai answered the king, and said, *As* the LORD liveth, and *as* my lord the king liveth, surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be. And David said to Ittai, Go and pass over. And Ittai the Gittite passed over, and all his men, and all the little ones that *were* with him."
- 2) Proverbs 18:24: "A man *that hath* friends must show himself friendly: and there is a friend *that sticketh* closer than a brother."
- 3) Proverbs 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."
- 4) Philippians 2:25: "Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellowsoldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants."
- 5) 2 Timothy 1:16-18: "The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain: But, when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found *me*. The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day: and in how many things he ministered unto me at Ephesus, thou knowest very well."
9. Verse 18: "A man void of understanding striketh hands, *and* becometh surety in the presence of his friend."
- a. Solomon offers the sound counsel of being hesitant and discriminating in becoming surety for another. It is one who is without understanding that will strike hands with someone, committing himself to repay a debt.
- 1) Proverbs 6:1-5: "My son, if thou be surety for thy friend, *if* thou hast stricken thy hand with a stranger, Thou art snared with the words of thy mouth, thou art taken with the words of thy mouth."
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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. Give not sleep to thine eyes, nor slumber to thine eyelids. Deliver thyself as a roe from the hand of the hunter, and as a bird from the hand of the fowler."

2) Proverbs 11:15: "He that is surety for a stranger shall smart *for it*: and he that hateth suretiship is sure."

b. "Beware of striking hands in agreement without ascertaining, whether we can fulfil our engagement, or whether our friend is not equally able to fulfil it himself....There is no true benevolence in rash engagements, which may involve our name and family in disgrace or ruin" (Bridges, p.269).

C. Proverbs 17:19-28.

1. Verse 19: "He loveth transgression that loveth strife: *and* he that exalteth his gate seeketh destruction."

a. One who loves strife also loves transgression (sin), for strife is sin. We can easily fall into strife not of our making. Compare: "And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle: and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land. And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we *be* brethren" (Gen. 13:7-8).

b. Strife begins oftentimes because of pride, and is perpetuated by pride when one or the other of the parties will not give in. It is better to suffer wrong rather than cause shame to be brought on the Lord's church, or cause a weak brother to stumble into sin.

1) Matthew 5:39-40: "But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have *thy* cloak also." Luke 6:29: "And unto him that smiteth thee on the *one* cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloak forbid not to *take thy* coat also."

2) 1 Corinthians 6:1-8: "Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life? If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church. I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather *suffer yourselves* to be defrauded? Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that *your* brethren."

c. The second part of this verse addresses the subject of pride directly: one who exalts his gate exposes himself to danger. Low gates [low overhead clearance] were used in ancient times as a deterrent to horsemen entering one's courts, but when the gates were increased in height, horsemen could enter, wreaking havoc on the inhabitants. To a proud man, the taller the gate, the greater his prestige.

d. "He who builds a sumptuous house and lives in the way that his magnificent surroundings demand, draws ruin on himself, either because he affects a state which he is unable to support, or acts so as to provoke reprisals and injurious consequences. The entrance to a Palestinian house would usually be of humble dimensions and sparse ornamentation; any doorway of great architectural pretensions would be uncommon, and would be regarded as a token of extraordinary wealth or reprehensible pride. Aben Ezra, taking 'gate' as a metaphor for 'mouth,' explains the hemistich of the danger of random or excessive speech. This makes a good parallel with the first clause; but it is doubtful whether the words will bear this interpretation (see Hitzig); and the two clauses may present two forms of selfishness,

captiousness and ostentation, both of which lead to quarrels and ruin (comp. Prov 16:18)” [The Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by BibleSoft].

- e. “In different parts of Palestine they are obliged to have the doors of their courts and houses very low, not more than three feet high, to prevent the Arabs, who scarcely ever leave the backs of their horses, from riding into the courts and houses, and spoiling their goods. He, then, who, through pride and ostentation, made a high gate, exposed himself to destruction; and is said here to seek it, because he must know that this would be a necessary consequence of exalting his gate. But although the above is a fact, yet possibly gate is here taken for the mouth; and the exalting of the gate may mean proud boasting and arrogant speaking, such as has a tendency to kindle and maintain strife. And this interpretation seems to agree better with the scope of the context than the above” [Adam Clarke's Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1996 by BibleSoft].
2. Verse 20: "He that hath a froward heart findeth no good: and he that hath a perverse tongue falleth into mischief."
 - a. A crooked heart or a crooked tongue creates unnecessary troubles. "The history of God's ancient people is a picture of frowardness with all its barren results. Let their long-suffering God do what he would to them and for them, they found no satisfying good. (Ps. 128.) Self-will, even in its fullest indulgence, instead of bringing the desired good, always ends in disappointment; and, when the perverse tongue breaks out, in frightful mischief" (Bridges, pp.270f).
 - b. What one has in his heart will sooner or later be expressed by the tongue. This principle appears time and again in Proverbs, and in other places in the Bible (Matt. 12:34-37; 15:18-20; Jas. 3). It was because Israel had evil thoughts, desires, and motives in their hearts that they murmured against the Lord. It is therefore extremely important that we guard our hearts to insure evil thoughts and motives do not find lodgement therein. What we maintain in our hearts determines what we do and what we become.
 - c. Our eternal salvation depends on maintaining purity of heart:
 - 1) Proverbs 4:23: "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it *are* the issues of life."
 - 2) Proverbs 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."
 - 3) Matthew 5:8: "Blessed *are* the pure in heart: for they shall see God."
 - 4) 2 Corinthians 7:1: "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."
 - 5) Hebrews 12:14: "Follow peace with all *men*, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."
 - 6) 1 John 3:3: "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."
 3. Verse 21: "He that begetteth a fool *doeth it* to his sorrow: and the father of a fool hath no joy."
 - a. "Notice here (as in other verses on this theme) that parents may be disappointed or even unhappy because of foolish children, but that Scripture does not condemn or censure them because of it...If children, despite good training insist on being foolish, then parents can no longer be blamed" (Alden, p.136).
 - b. Among the types of people called fools in the Bible are those who deny the existence of God (Ps. 14:1) and those who live as if earthly life is the only life there is (Luke 12:13-21).
 4. Verse 22: "A merry heart doeth good *like* a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones."
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- a. A cheerful disposition is uplifting both to the individual having it and to those with whom he has contact. The verse does not address the drunken merriment so beloved by many of every generation.
 - b. Physical and emotional health are enhanced by a happy heart, but a downtrodden heart spreads discouragement within and without.
 - c. "It is healthful to be cheerful. The Lord is for the body, and has provided for it, not only meat, but medicine, and has here told us that the best medicine is a merry heart, not a heart addicted to vain, carnal, sensual mirth; Solomon himself said of that mirth, It is not medicine, but madness; it is not food, but poison; what doth it? But he means a heart rejoicing in God, and serving him with gladness, and then taking the comfort of outward enjoyments and particularly that of pleasant conversation. It is a great mercy that God gives us leave to be cheerful and cause to be cheerful, especially if by his grace he gives us hearts to be cheerful. This does good to a medicine (so some read it); it will make physic more efficient. Or it does good as a medicine to the body, making it easy and fit for business. But, if mirth be a medicine (understand it of diversion and recreation), it must be used sparingly, only when there is occasion, not turned into food, and it must be used medicinally, sub regimine-as a prescribed regimen, and by rule. The sorrows of the mind often contribute very much to the sickliness of the body: A broken spirit, sunk by the burden of afflictions, and especially a conscience wounded with the sense of guilt and fear of wrath, dries the bones, wastes the radical moisture, exhausts the very marrow, and makes the body a mere skeleton. We should therefore watch and pray against all melancholy dispositions, for they lead us into trouble as well as into temptation" [Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: New Modern Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1991 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.].
 - d. See the article at the end of this chapter for information about growing old happily.
5. Verse 23: "A wicked *man* taketh a gift out of the bosom to pervert the ways of judgment."
- a. The subject of bribes is again addressed. A wicked man is pictured as slipping from the folds of his garments a bribe by which justice is perverted.
 - b. How many cases in our judicial system are determined by bribery? God will get to pass the final sentence.
 - c. "A gift out of the bosom; i.e. secretly from the fold of the garment, and not from the purse or bag wherein money was ostensibly carried. A corrupt judge 'taketh,' i.e. receives a bribe conveyed to him secretly (Prov 21:14). To pervert the ways of judgment. The judges had no appointed salaries; hence the unprincipled among them were open to bribery. The strict injunctions of the Law, and the stern denunciations of the prophets, were alike ineffectual in checking corruption (see Ex 23:8; Deut 16:19; Isa 1:23; Jer 22:17; Ezek 13:19; Hos 4:18, etc.)" [Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by Biblesoft].
6. Verse 24: "Wisdom *is* before him that hath understanding; but the eyes of a fool *are* in the ends of the earth."
- a. Wisdom is obtainable to any who desire it ("it is before him"). A foolish man does not obtain it because he never sets his sights on it or is too easily distracted by inconsequential things.
 - b. If a faithful child of God desires to obtain wisdom, it is easily within his reach. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all *men* liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. A double minded man *is* unstable in all his ways" (Jas. 1:5-8).
 - c. Wisdom can be obtained from God's word; all we need to do is apply ourselves to learn as much of
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its truth as we can; with that knowledge, wisdom comes. We can obtain wisdom by observing the people around us, from their errors and successes. With a balanced self-examination, we can learn from our own successes and failures.

7. Verse 25: "A foolish son *is* a grief to his father, and bitterness to her that bare him."
 - a. This thought is stated in other parts of Proverbs. There is reason why this thought is repeated:
 - 1) Proverbs 10:1: "A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish son *is* the heaviness of his mother."
 - 2) Proverbs 15:20: "A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish man despiseth his mother."
 - b. Absalom caused much harm to David and the whole nation of Israel (2 Sam. 15-18). Under the best of circumstances, even after the parents have done all they can do in bringing their children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, children can still be led astray by their peers and by the appeal of the world. The grief and sorrow is all the more painful to such godly parents.
 8. Verses 26-28: "Also to punish the just *is* not good, *nor* to strike princes for equity. He that hath knowledge spareth his words: *and* a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit. Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: *and* he that shutteth his lips *is esteemed* a man of understanding."
 - a. It is evil for innocent citizens to be punished by the authorities and for rulers to be abused by the citizenry.
 - b. A wise man uses words sparingly and is in full control of his spirit. "And I was very angry when I heard their cry and these words. Then I consulted with myself, and I rebuked the nobles, and the rulers, and said unto them, Ye exact usury, every one of his brother. And I set a great assembly against them. And I said unto them, We after our ability have redeemed our brethren the Jews, which were sold unto the heathen; and will ye even sell your brethren? or shall they be sold unto us? Then held they their peace, and found nothing *to answer*. Also I said, It *is* not good that ye do: ought ye not to walk in the fear of our God because of the reproach of the heathen our enemies? I likewise, *and* my brethren, and my servants, might exact of them money and corn: I pray you, let us leave off this usury. Restore, I pray you, to them, even this day, their lands, their vineyards, their oliveyards, and their houses, also the hundredth *part* of the money, and of the corn, the wine, and the oil, that ye exact of them. Then said they, We will restore *them*, and will require nothing of them; so will we do as thou sayest...." (Neh. 5:6-12).
 - c. A foolish man who keeps quiet at a proper time is considered wise in so-doing. Whether one is wise is easily seen by the words which are spoken or which remain unspoken.
 - d. "Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise. Not betraying his ignorance and incapacity by words, a foolish man is credited with possessing sense (comp. Job 13:5)" [Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by BibleSoft]. It is better to be thought a fool, than to open the mouth and remove all doubt.
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Items Which Promote Growing Old Gracefully

Bob Winton

- A. Be Physically Active.** It is obvious to everyone that inactivity leads to physical weakness, makes one an easy target for disease and accident, and can shorten our days. Physical activity promotes good health and strength, and gives us a sense of happiness and usefulness. "Bodily exercise profiteth for a little..." (1 Tim. 4:8, ASV).
- B. Lead an Active Spiritual Life.**
1. "...Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Tim. 4:8).
 2. "But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine: That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience. The aged women likewise, that *they be* in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children" (Tit. 2:1-4).
 3. God blesses his faithful servants. "For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord *are* over the righteous, and his ears *are open* unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord *is* against them that do evil. And who *is* he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" (1 Peter 3:10-13).
- C. Keep Your Mind Active.** Our thoughts determine how we live. "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it *are* the issues of life" (Prov. 4:23). What is in a man's heart determines the kind of person he is or will become. If we fill our minds with godly thoughts and motives, a godly person we will be. But the converse is also true: evil thoughts and motives will corrupt us.
1. The "little voice" inside you is the real you; it is called the inner man, the soul, the spirit, the heart. What it says, plans, and purposes will determine your conduct, words, life, and eternal destiny. It will always be present, even though the body is dead. You cannot get away from your spirit for it is you.
 2. What we do not use, we lose. This rich truth applies to our muscles, our talents, and our mind. If we do not keep our mind active, it will lose some of its normal powers.
- D. Maintain a Positive Attitude.** If we fill our minds with negative, bitter thoughts we will inevitably talk and act accordingly. The dangers involved can be serious. We may lose our friends, for no one enjoys being around a bitter person. We can alienate our family. We might grow so morose that we lose our peace of mind. One who is bitter and negative cannot at the same time be content, a trait that each Christian is expected to maintain. We must avoid complaining too much about our health and personal problems.
1. Just because one is a senior citizen does not mean it is too late to accomplish more. Cato was 85 when he began a study of the Greek language. Tennyson was 83 when he wrote "Crossing the Bar." Verdi was 85 when he wrote "Ave Maria." Abraham was 75 when he began his sojourn in Canaan (Gen. 12:4). Moses was 80 when he was called to lead Israel from Egyptian bondage. Elderly Christians can know they are still worth much to the Lord, especially during this time when apostasy is rending the body of Christ asunder.
 2. Even in the face of declining health, financial problems, and other difficulties, there may be a silver lining. "Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word" (Psalms 119:67). "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are* not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18). "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your
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feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed" (Heb. 12:11-13).

E. Be Interested in Other People.

1. We are told to love our neighbor as we love ourselves (Mark 12:31); we are to be helpful to others. "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all *men*, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:10). "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, *and* to keep himself unspotted from the world" (Jas. 1:27).
2. If we turn inward on ourselves, we are bound to think our problems are greater than anyone's problems. The greatest single problem of society is selfishness. This can afflict older people. There is the danger of withdrawing from others and filling ourselves with self-pity. There are great advantages we have, despite our ailments and personal problems: "I have been young, and *now* am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread" (Ps. 37:25; cf. Matt. 6:33; Phil. 4:13,19; Rom. 8:31-34).

F. **Have a Healthy Sense of Humor.**

1. The Bible speaks of the value of laughter. "A merry heart doeth good *like* a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones" (Prov. 17:22; cf. 15:13,15).
2. The Bible reports some events that appear humorous to us: Elijah's statement to the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18:25-27); the story of Belshazzar's knees knocking because of fear (Dan. 5:5-6); the report of what the demon did to the seven sons of Sceva (Acts 19:13-16).
3. Someone needs to collect and put in a book many of the humorous stories that uplift and encourage. The stories and illustrations are manifold that have done this for us through the years. How dreary our life might otherwise be if we did not have an outlet for our God-given gift of laughter! Since we are made in God's image, the Father of our spirits must have a sense of humor.

These six points were gleaned from interviews with people who were over one hundred years of age. These several people had these six points in common. The principles promote a happier and healthier life on earth. They can help us in our quest for immortality in Heaven.

PROVERBS 18

A. Proverbs 18:1-9.

1. Verse 1: "Through desire a man, having separated himself, seeketh *and* intermeddleth with all wisdom."
 - a. This verse is a difficult passage, and has been subjected to divergent interpretations. "The original is difficult and obscure" (Clarke, p.752). The American Standard Version reads: "He that separateth himself seeketh his own desire. And rageth against all sound wisdom."
 - b. One view, as indicated by the ASV rendering, has the verse describing one who is difficult to get along with; who takes a contrary position for selfish purposes. "These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit" (Jude 19).
 - c. Another view is that it describes one who is interested in a certain affair, and sets his mind wholly to the task of pursuing it.
 - 1) Philippians 3:13: "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but *this* one thing *I do*, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before."
 - 2) 1 Timothy 4:15: "Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all."
 - 3) 2 Timothy 2:4: "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of *this* life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier."
 - d. If verse two is connected with the thought of this verse, this second view seems to be the correct understanding since there would be a contrast drawn between the two types of individuals: one who is dedicated to a good cause (verse 1), and one who is intent on proving himself to be a fool (vs. 2).
2. Verse 2: "A fool hath no delight in understanding, but that his heart may discover itself."
 - a. The foolish man has no delight in obtaining wisdom; his main accomplishment is to reveal the foolishness of his own heart. To be sure, the intent is not to demonstrate his folly, but through foolish chatter, unlearned questions, and irrelevant comments, he exposes his lack of wisdom.
 - b. "He's the one who interrupts meaningful Bible study with offbeat questions...He doesn't really want to learn anything important because he's much more concerned about showing how clever he is" (Alden, p.138).
3. Verse 3: "When the wicked cometh, *then* cometh also contempt, and with ignominy reproach."
 - a. A wicked man is not averse to casting contempt on others, especially the godly. And since one reaps what he sows, he will receive the same kind of treatment as payment for his sinfulness. "Who will render to every man according to his deeds: To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: For there is no respect of persons with God" (Rom. 2:5-11).
 - b. Ignominy means "shame, dishonor, infamy." The point of the proverb seems to be that the wicked heap contempt on others, and with ignominy, they add reproach to their victim. There is never a just cause for one human to hold other humans in contempt (Mark 12:31; Matt. 7:12; Rom. 13:8). But an ungodly person who holds another in contempt will invent *reasons* to justify his hatred.
 - 1) Daniel 6:4-5: "Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he *was* faithful, neither

- was there any error or fault found in him. Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find *it* against him concerning the law of his God."
- 2) Matthew 11:18-19: "For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children."
4. Verse 4: "The words of a man's mouth *are as* deep waters, *and* the wellspring of wisdom *as* a flowing brook."
- a. "When 'a man has intermeddled with all wisdom,' his *words* are in themselves *deep waters*, and in their communication fruitful *as a flowing brook*" (Bridges, p.282). "And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as *one* having authority, and not as the scribes" (Matt. 7:28-29).
- b. A godly person who has spent years studying God's word, and serving God as a faithful Christian, amasses a vast storehouse of understanding; he has the right perspective of things; and thus is able to dispense an unending flow of wise counsel.
5. Verse 5: "*It is* not good to accept the person of the wicked, to overthrow the righteous in judgment."
- a. If it is not good to show favoritism toward a wicked man in a legal matter, then is sinful to do so. In all societies, justice is sometimes perverted by bribery or partiality in favor of the wicked and against the righteous. This was certainly true in the trials of Christ, the apostles and other saints.
- b. 2 Samuel 23:3: "The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men *must be* just, ruling in the fear of God."
- c. Acts 17:30-31: "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by *that* man whom he hath ordained; *whereof* he hath given assurance unto all *men*, in that he hath raised him from the dead."
6. Verses 6-8: "A fool's lips enter into contention, and his mouth calleth for strokes. A fool's mouth *is* his destruction, and his lips *are* the snare of his soul. The words of a talebearer *are* as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly."
- a. The Bible often uses the lips, tongue, mouth, and throat to illustrate the sinful conduct of humanity: "Their throat *is* an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps *is* under their lips: Whose mouth *is* full of cursing and bitterness" (Rom. 3:13-14; cf. Jas. 3:1-12).
- b. Sin is often accomplished by what we say as well as by what we do. In the present case, the fool uses his lips to join in a dispute, and with his mouth he urges that punishment be inflicted on the victim. He speaks to the hurt of others.
- c. His mouth will bring about his own punishment.
- 1) "The wise in heart will receive commandments: but a prating fool shall fall...Wise *men* lay up knowledge: but the mouth of the foolish *is* near destruction" (Prov. 10:8,14).
- 2) "He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life: *but* he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction" (Prov. 13:3).
- d. Bearing tales was strongly prohibited by Moses' Law: "Thou shalt not go up and down *as* a talebearer among thy people: neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbour: *I am* the LORD" (Lev. 19:16). The gospel forbids it by various principles and pronouncements.
- 1) Matthew 7:12: "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even
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- so to them: for this is the law and the prophets."
- 2) Mark 12:31: "And the second *is* like, *namely* this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these."
 - 3) 1 Corinthians 10:24: "Let no man seek his own, but every man another's *wealth*."
 - 4) Ephesians 4:31-32: "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."
 - 5) Philippians 2:4: "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."
 - 6) Titus 3:2: "To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, *but* gentle, showing all meekness unto all men."
 - 7) James 4:11: "Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of *his* brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge."
 - 8) 1 Peter 2:1-2: "Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby."
- e. Gossip causes deep wounds to the defenseless victim. They are effortlessly uttered but result in incurable damage.
7. Verse 9: "He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster."
- a. The slothful man is equated to the wasteful man. The slothful person is one who is lazy; he looks for shortcuts to get the job done more quickly, not for the benefit of the owners, but to make his job easier. He is not interested in a quality product, but a way to make his work easier on himself. Because of this attitude, what he produces will not last and may be dangerous. Thus the sluggard and the prodigal (the wasteful) are brothers.
 - 1) Matthew 25:24-30: "Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strowed: And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, *there* thou hast *that is* thine. His lord answered and said unto him, *Thou* wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strowed: Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and *then* at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give *it* unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."
 - 2) Luke 16:1: "And he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods."
 - b. Some Christians are too lazy to develop their talents and work for the Lord; they waste their lives on profitless pleasures.
- B. Proverbs 18:10-17.
1. Verses 10-11: "The name of the LORD *is* a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe. The rich man's wealth *is* his strong city, and as an high wall in his own conceit."
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- a. The Lord's name is as a strong, fortified tower which is able to offer all of the necessary protection from the enemies of the soul; the righteous are encouraged to flee to it and be safe. The Lord promises to tend to us providentially.
- 1) Psalms 23: "The LORD *is* my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou *art* with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever."
 - 2) Isaiah 41:10: "Fear thou not; for I *am* with thee: be not dismayed; for I *am* thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."
 - 3) Isaiah 50:10: "Who *is* among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh *in* darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God."
 - 4) Philippians 4:19: "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."
 - 5) Hebrews 13:5-6: "*Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.*"
 - 6) 1 Peter 5:6-7: "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you."
- b. He will permit certain hardships to come upon us for our good (Heb. 12:1-11). The worst that any enemy can do to a faithful child of God is to kill him (Matt. 10:28); but even death is the means by which we can enter into our heavenly reward, which is far beyond anything we lose here.
- 1) Romans 8:18: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are* not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us."
 - 2) Philippians 1:21: "For to me to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain."
- c. While God is the protection of the righteous, the wealthy wicked think they can find safety in their riches. This is a fool's plan.
- 1) Proverbs 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."
 - 2) Matthew 6:19-21: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."
 - 3) Mark 10:24: "And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!"
 - 4) 1 Timothy 6:6-18: "But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into *this* world, *and it is* certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of
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all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses. I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and *before* Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; That thou keep *this* commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: Which in his times he shall show, *who is* the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom *be* honour and power everlasting. Amen. Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate."

- 5) Hebrews 10:34: "For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance."
- d. One who trusts his riches is acting with conceit, for he thinks that what his hand has provided will ward off danger. What can wealth do in the face of sickness and death? Or to stay the hand of an enemy who places no value on human life?
2. Verse 12: "Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, and before honour *is* humility."
 - a. This teaches the same truth as Proverbs 16:18: "Pride *goeth* before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall." Pride leads to destruction, and as it is a thing of grave danger, it is to be avoided. But men often judge by the appearance. "Outward appearances are so often deceptive; people whose hearts are proud are not really superior, while those who are humble are not necessarily inferior. How difficult it is to remember this lesson; consider how often we evaluate people on the basis of what they look like instead of trying to find out what's inside" (Alden, p.140).
 - b. "It is hard to persuade a man that he is proud. Every one protests against this sin. Yet who does not cherish the viper in his own bosom? Man so little understands, that dependence upon his God constitutes the creature's happiness, and that the principle of independence is madness, and its end—destruction. (Gen. 3:5,6.) The *haughty* walk on the brink of a fearful precipice....The security of the child of God is, when he lies prostrate in the dust. If he soar high, the danger is imminent, though he be on the verge of heaven. (2 Cor. 12:1-7.)" (Bridges, p.289).
 - c. Before one can be honored by the Almighty, he must humble himself before Him.
 - 1) Proverbs 15:33: "The fear of the LORD *is* the instruction of wisdom; and before honour *is* humility."
 - 2) Matthew 5:3: "Blessed *are* the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."
 - 3) Matthew 20:20-28: "Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping *him*, and desiring a certain thing of him. And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom. But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able. And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but *it shall be given to them* for whom it is prepared of my Father. And when the ten heard *it*, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren. But Jesus called them *unto him*, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great

- exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."
- 4) James 4:10: "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up."
 - 5) 1 Peter 5:5-6: "Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all *of you* be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time."
- d. Men usually are repulsed by one who arrogantly exalts himself. Few enjoy being around a swaggering braggart.
3. Verse 13: "He that answereth a matter before he heareth *it*, it *is* folly and shame unto him."
 - a. It is foolhardy to give answer to a question before it is completely asked; or to give advice and render a judgment before all the facts are revealed. It is a way to bring shame upon ourselves.
 - b. "Some take a pride in being quick. They answer a matter before they hear it, hear it out, nay, as soon as they but hear of it. They think it is their honour to take up a cause suddenly; and, when they have heard one side, they think the matter so plain that they need not trouble themselves to hear the other; they are already apprized of it, and masters of all the merits of the cause. Whereas, though a ready wit is an agreeable thing to play with, it is solid judgment and sound wisdom that do business. Those that take a pride in being quick commonly fall under the just reproach of being impertinent. It is folly for a man to go about to speak to a thing which he does not understand, or to pass sentence upon a matter which he is not truly and fully informed of, and has not patience to make a strict enquiry into; and, if it be folly, it is and will be shame" [Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: New Modern Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1991 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.].
 - c. John 7:51: "Doth our law judge *any* man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?"
 4. Verse 14: "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?"
 - a. "Verse 14 tells us something medical experts are just beginning to give credence to: people who want to be healthy heal more quickly than those who are too depressed to want to get well. Some people almost wish themselves into dying..." (Alden, *ibid.*).
 - b. A man with the will to live has a very high endurance capacity. There have been many cases in history of people enduring tremendous hardships and injuries. We have all known of other people who gave up when stricken with a disease or injury—and promptly died. If one has a sickly, fatalistic attitude, he tends to give up with scarcely a struggle. Thus Solomon asks, "Who can bear up under such a broken spirit?"
 - 1) 1 Samuel 28:15: "And Samuel said to Saul, Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up? And Saul answered, I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams: therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do."
 - 2) 2 Samuel 17:23: "And when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled *his* ass, and arose, and gat him home to his house, to his city, and put his household in order, and hanged himself, and died, and was buried in the sepulchre of his father."
 - 3) 1 Kings 16:18: "And it came to pass, when Zimri saw that the city was taken, that he went into the palace of the king's house, and burnt the king's house over him with fire, and died."
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- 4) Jeremiah 20:4: "For thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will make thee a terror to thyself, and to all thy friends: and they shall fall by the sword of their enemies, and thine eyes shall behold *it*: and I will give all Judah into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall carry them captive into Babylon, and shall slay them with the sword."
- 5) Matthew 27:5: "And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself."
5. Verse 15: "The heart of the prudent getteth knowledge; and the ear of the wise seeketh knowledge."
 - a. Knowledge is essential to salvation and heaven.
 - b. Matthew 28:18-20: "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen."
 - c. Mark 16:15-16: "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."
 - d. John 6:44-45: "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me."
 - e. Acts 17:11-12: "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few."
 - f. 2 Timothy 2:15: "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."
6. Verse 16: "A man's gift maketh room for him, and bringeth him before great men."
 - a. A gift wisely tendered can appease an enemy and open doors (cf. Gen. 33:1-11).
 - 1) Genesis 24:30-32: "And it came to pass, when he saw the earring and bracelets upon his sister's hands, and when he heard the words of Rebekah his sister, saying, Thus spake the man unto me; that he came unto the man; and, behold, he stood by the camels at the well. And he said, Come in, thou blessed of the LORD; wherefore standest thou without? for I have prepared the house, and room for the camels. And the man came into the house: and he ungirded his camels, and gave straw and provender for the camels, and water to wash his feet, and the men's feet that *were* with him."
 - 2) Genesis 32:20: "And say ye moreover, Behold, thy servant Jacob *is* behind us. For he said, I will appease him with the present that goeth before me, and afterward I will see his face; peradventure he will accept of me."
 - 3) Genesis 43:11: "And their father Israel said unto them, If *it must be* so now, do this; take of the best fruits in the land in your vessels, and carry down the man a present, a little balm, and a little honey, spices, and myrrh, nuts, and almonds."
 - 4) Judges 3:17-18: "And he brought the present unto Eglon king of Moab: and Eglon *was* a very fat man. And when he had made an end to offer the present, he sent away the people that bare the present."
 - 5) 1 Samuel 25:18-27: "Then Abigail made haste, and took two hundred loaves, and two bottles of wine, and five sheep ready dressed, and five measures of parched *corn*, and an hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs, and laid *them* on asses. And she said unto her servants,

Go on before me; behold, I come after you. But she told not her husband Nabal. And it was *so, as* she rode on the ass, that she came down by the covert on the hill, and, behold, David and his men came down against her; and she met them. Now David had said, Surely in vain have I kept all that this *fellow* hath in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that *pertained* unto him: and he hath requited me evil for good. So and more also do God unto the enemies of David, if I leave of all that *pertain* to him by the morning light any that pisseth against the wall. And when Abigail saw David, she hasted, and lighted off the ass, and fell before David on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, And fell at his feet, and said, Upon me, my lord, *upon* me *let this* iniquity *be*: and let thine handmaid, I pray thee, speak in thine audience, and hear the words of thine handmaid. Let not my lord, I pray thee, regard this man of Belial, *even* Nabal: for as his name *is*, so *is* he; Nabal *is* his name, and folly *is* with him: but I thine handmaid saw not the young men of my lord, whom thou didst send. Now therefore, my lord, *as* the LORD liveth, and *as* thy soul liveth, seeing the LORD hath withholden thee from coming to *shed* blood, and from avenging thyself with thine own hand, now let thine enemies, and they that seek evil to my lord, be as Nabal. And now this blessing which thine handmaid hath brought unto my lord, let it even be given unto the young men that follow my lord."

b. We must be willing to pay a proper price for what our heart desires.

7. Verse 17: "*He that is* first in his own cause *seemeth* just; but his neighbour cometh and searcheth him."

a. One who exalts himself before us to win us over, bears examination. Solomon warns that he can be found out. We must use discretion in our modern commercial age to discern between mere claim and fact (cf. buying a car, etc.).

b. "He that speaks first will be sure to tell a straight story, and relate that only which makes for him, and put the best colour he can upon it, so that his cause shall appear good, whether it really be so or no. The plaintiff having done his evidence, it is fit that the defendant should be heard, should have leave to confront the witnesses and cross-examine them, and show the falsehood and fallacy of what has been alleged, which perhaps may make the matter appear quite otherwise than it did. We must therefore remember that we have two ears, to hear both sides before we give judgment" [Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: New Modern Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1991 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.].

C. Proverbs 18:18-24.

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

a. In the day when lots were properly used, disputes were often resolved thereby.

b. The Lord used it in some cases.

1) Joshua 7:16-20: "So Joshua rose up early in the morning, and brought Israel by their tribes; and the tribe of Judah was taken: And he brought the family of Judah; and he took the family of the Zarahites: and he brought the family of the Zarahites man by man; and Zabdi was taken: And he brought his household man by man; and Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken. And Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the LORD God of Israel, and make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide *it* not from me. And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done."

2) 1 Samuel 14:41-43: "Therefore Saul said unto the LORD God of Israel, Give a perfect *lot*. And Saul and Jonathan were taken: but the people escaped. And Saul said, Cast *lots* between me and Jonathan my son. And Jonathan was taken. Then Saul said to Jonathan, Tell me what thou hast done. And Jonathan told him, and said, I did but taste a little honey with the end of the rod that

- was* in mine hand, *and*, lo, I must die."
- 3) Jonah 1:7: "And they said every one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil *is* upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah."
 - 4) Acts 1:23-26: "And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all *men*, show whether of these two thou hast chosen, That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place. And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles."
- c. Today, for those who recognize the Bible as the final authority in all spiritual matters, what the Bible teaches settles all disputes.
2. Verse 19: "A brother offended *is harder to be won* than a strong city: and *their contentions are* like the bars of a castle."
 - a. It is often the case that an offended brother is harder to be won back than it is for a city to be taken by an army. The causes often run so deep they cannot be healed. How much better it is to so act and speak that they are never estranged!
 - b. "A brother or a once close friend, when injured or deceived, becomes a potent and irreconcilable enemy. The idea of the preceding verses is carried on, and the primary thought is still concerning lawsuits and matters brought before a judge. This is shown in the second clause by the use of the word 'contentions' (*midyanim*). And their contentions are like the bars of a castle. They close the door against reconciliation, shut the heart against all feeling of tenderness" [The Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by Biblesoft].
 - c. Romans 14:19: "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another."
 3. Verses 20-21: "A man's belly shall be satisfied with the fruit of his mouth; *and* with the increase of his lips shall he be filled. Death and life *are* in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof."
 - a. The power of our words are wholesome or toxic. What comes out of the mouth is first in the heart. We must "eat our words" so make sure they will be palatable!
 - b. Our words can kill or heal, they are that powerful!
 - 1) Proverbs 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."
 - 2) Proverbs 18:8: "The words of a talebearer *are* as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly."
 - 3) Matthew 12:37: "For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."
 - c. "A man may do a great deal of good, or a great deal of hurt, both to others and to himself, according to the use he makes of his tongue. Many a one has been his own death by a foul tongue, or the death of others by a false tongue; and, on the contrary, many a one has saved his own life, or procured the comfort of it, by a prudent gentle tongue, and saved the lives of others by a seasonable testimony or intercession for them. And, if by our words we must be justified or condemned, death and life are, no doubt, in the power of the tongue. Tongues were Aesop's best meat, and his worst. Men's words will be judged of by the affections with which they speak; he that not only speaks aright (which a bad man may do to save his credit or please his company), but loves to speak so, speaks well of choice, and
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with delight, to him it will be life; and he that not only speaks amiss (which a good man may do through inadvertency), but loves to speak so (Ps 52:4), to him it will be death. As men love it they shall eat the fruit of it" [Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: New Modern Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1991 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.].

4. Verse 22: "*Whoso* findeth a wife findeth a good *thing*, and obtaineth favour of the LORD."
 - a. Marriage is a blessed institution. One who has found a good wife or husband has obtained a treasure.
 - b. "A good wife is a great blessing to a man. He that finds a wife (that is, a wife indeed; a bad wife does not deserve to be called by a name of so much honour), that finds a help meet for him (that is a wife in the original acceptation of the word), that sought such a one with care and prayer and has found what he sought, he has found a good thing, a jewel of great value, a rare jewel; he has found that which will not only contribute more than any thing to his comfort in this life, but will forward him in the way to heaven. God is to be acknowledged in it with thankfulness; it is a token of his favour, and a happy pledge of further favours; it is a sign that God delights in a man to do him good and has mercy in store for him; for this, therefore, God must be sought unto" [Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: New Modern Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1991 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.].
 - c. Judges 13:23: "But his wife said unto him, If the LORD were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt offering and a meat offering at our hands, neither would he have showed us all these *things*, nor would as at this time have told us *such things* as these."
 - d. Luke 1:5-6: "There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife *was* of the daughters of Aaron, and her name *was* Elisabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless."
 5. Verse 23: "The poor useth entreaties; but the rich answereth roughly."
 - a. "The poor man who is wise speaks with humility; proud words would certainly reap disfavor. Yet rich men are never given license to answer harshly or with rudeness no matter how much money they have. Arrogance is no man's prerogative" (Alden, p.142).
 - b. Isaiah 66:2: "For all those *things* hath mine hand made, and all those *things* have been, saith the LORD: but to this *man* will I look, *even* to *him that is* poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word."
 - c. "The poor useth intreaties; but the rich answereth roughly....The rich man not only does wrong, but accompanies the injury with passionate language and abuse, as if he were the sufferer; while the poor man has humbly to ask pardon, as if he were in the wrong....Aben Ezra explains the verse as denoting that a poor man making a submissive request from a rich man is answered cruelly and roughly. The hardening effect of wealth is seen in our Lord's parables of Dives and Lazarus (Luke 16), and the Pharisee and the publican (Luke 18)" [The Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by Biblesoft].
 6. Verse 24: "A man *that hath* friends must show himself friendly: and there is a friend *that* sticketh closer than a brother."
 - a. One who is unfriendly will have few friends. If we would have friends, we must show a friendly attitude.
 - b. "Would we have friends and keep them, we must not only not affront them, or quarrel with them, but we must love them, and make it appear that we do so by all expressions that are endearing, by being free with them, pleasing to them, visiting them and bidding them welcome, and especially by doing
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all the good offices we can and serving them in every thing that lies in our power; that is showing ourselves friendly....That it is worth while to do so, for we may promise ourselves a great deal of comfort in a true friend. A brother indeed is born for adversity, as he had said, Prov 17:17. In our troubles we expect comfort and relief from our relations, but sometimes there is a friend, that is nothing akin to us, the bonds of whose esteem and love prove stronger than those of nature, and, when it comes to the trial, will do more for us than a brother will. Christ is a friend to all believers that sticks closer than a brother; to him therefore let them show themselves friendly” [Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: New Modern Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1991 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.].

- c. A true friend will stick close to us. "He that hath knowledge spareth his words: *and* a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit" (Prov. 17:17). He can be closer than a fleshly brother. But the Lord is the best friend we can have!
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PROVERBS 19

A. Proverbs 19:1-9.

1. Verse 1: "Better *is* the poor that walketh in his integrity, than *he that is* perverse in his lips, and is a fool."
 - a. Honesty is the best policy even though it might keep one in poverty. "Poverty is never a disgrace, except when it is the fruit of ill-conduct. But when adorned with godly *integrity*, it is most honourable" (Bridges, p.304). Job in his misery but with integrity was far greater than ungodly Ahab with his wealth. Lazarus in his rags and covered with sores was greater than the wicked rich man who would not tend to his needs (Luke 16).
 - b. "Death will strip the poor of his rags, and the rich of his purple, and bring them both 'naked to the earth, from whence they came.' (Job 1:21; Eccles. 12:7)" (Bridges, p.304).
 - 1) Hebrews 11:37-38: "They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and *in* mountains, and *in* dens and caves of the earth."
 - 2) Revelation 2:9: "I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and *I know* the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but *are* the synagogue of Satan."
2. Verse 2: "Also, *that* the soul *be* without knowledge, *it is* not good; and he that hasteth with *his* feet sinneth."
 - a. It is not good for the soul to be without knowledge. Knowledge of secular things will expand the mind; knowledge will enable us to make intelligent choices in life; it can keep us from foolish mistakes. A knowledge of God's word will enable us to avoid many foolish and hurtful errors. There could be no salvation for the soul without knowing God's will (John 6:44-45; Mark 16:15-16; Matt. 28:19-20); without growing in our knowledge of his word, we miss heaven (1 Pet. 1:3-11; 2 Pet. 1:5-11; 2 Pet. 3:18; Heb. 5:12-14).
 - b. Man cannot, on his own wisdom and knowledge, direct his own way in this world, rid himself of sin, supply the needed comfort for his troubles, provide the strength to tend to his obligations, or establish hope for himself in eternity. But all of these are offered to us through God's word; we tap that great reserve of wisdom and strength through learning it and following its guidance.
 - 1) Proverbs 10:21: "The lips of the righteous feed many: but fools die for want of wisdom."
 - 2) Hosea 4:6: "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children."
 - 3) 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9: "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."
 - 4) Ephesians 5:11: "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove *them*."
 - c. The second part of the verse describes the practice of acting too quickly and without adequate study. Carpenters are taught to measure twice and saw once. Snap decisions often result in sinful conduct. An angry reply; a story imprudently revealed; acting before all the facts are known—these have wrought unspeakable harm on the innocent, and have contaminated the perpetrator with the guilt of

sin.

- 1) Ecclesiastes 5:2: "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter *any* thing before God: for God *is* in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few."
- 2) James 1:19: "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath."

d. Some Biblical cases of individuals who acted hastily:

- 1) Joshua: "And the men took of their victuals, and asked not *counsel* at the mouth of the LORD. And Joshua made peace with them, and made a league with them, to let them live: and the princes of the congregation sware unto them" (Josh. 9:14-15).
- 2) King Saul: "Therefore said I, The Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication unto the LORD: I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering" (1 Sam. 12:12).
- 3) David: "And the king said, And where *is* thy master's son? And Ziba said unto the king, Behold, he abideth at Jerusalem: for he said, To day shall the house of Israel restore me the kingdom of my father. Then said the king to Ziba, Behold, thine *are* all that *pertained* unto Mephibosheth. And Ziba said, I humbly beseech thee *that* I may find grace in thy sight, my lord, O king" (2 Sam. 16:3-4).
- 4) The Younger Prophet: "He said unto him, I *am* a prophet also as thou *art*; and an angel spake unto me by the word of the LORD, saying, Bring him back with thee into thine house, that he may eat bread and drink water. *But* he lied unto him. So he went back with him, and did eat bread in his house, and drank water" (1 Kings 13:18-19).
- 5) Jehoshaphat did not inquire deeply enough: "Now Jehoshaphat had riches and honour in abundance, and joined affinity with Ahab. And after *certain* years he went down to Ahab to Samaria. And Ahab killed sheep and oxen for him in abundance, and for the people that *he had* with him, and persuaded him to go up *with him* to Ramothgilead. And Ahab king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat king of Judah, Wilt thou go with me to Ramothgilead? And he answered him, I *am* as thou *art*, and my people as thy people; and *we will be* with thee in the war. And Jehoshaphat said unto the king of Israel, Inquire, I pray thee, at the word of the LORD to day" (2 Chron. 18:1-4). "And Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him, and said to king Jehoshaphat, Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the LORD? therefore *is* wrath upon thee from before the LORD" (2 Chron. 19:2).

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

- a. Man gets himself into trouble by foolishly ignoring what God says in his word. He then frets against God, blaming the Almighty for his troubles. God made man upright (Ec. 7:29; Ezek. 28:15) but men are not content to abide in God's way. God gave Adam a beautiful paradise in which to live; he was given only one prohibition (Gen. 2:15-16). But when he violated God's command and incurred the guilt of sin, he tried to blame God for giving him Eve who led him astray (Gen. 3). But Adam could logically blame only himself.
- b. Our attitude ought to be this: when things go well, give God the credit; when they do not go right, do not blame God but accept responsibility for our failure. Our failures are never due to God's indifference (he has none), but are caused by our own folly or weakness, or the circumstances of life over which we have no control, or through the interference of someone else.

4. Verse 4: "Wealth maketh many friends; but the poor is separated from his neighbour."

- a. Proverbs 14:20 relates a similar thought: "The poor is hated even of his own neighbour: but the rich *hath* many friends." A common tendency of man is to favor the rich and ignore the poor. The motive is all too often the hope of getting something out of catering to them.
 - b. We all enjoy being complimented, but in the case at hand, it is flattery and not sincere compliments that is in evidence. Poverty may cause a poor man to be ignored by his neighbors, but no one can separate the righteous poor man from the love of God (Rom. 8).
 - c. James 2:1-4: "My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, *the Lord* of glory, with respect of persons. For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?"
5. Verse 5: "A false witness shall not be unpunished, and *he that* speaketh lies shall not escape."
- a. The false witness and all others who tell lies will not go unpunished. Liars may get away with their falsehoods with men; generally, we believe what we are told unless we have evidence to disprove the story. But no liar will be able to deceive the Lord, or be able to hide his lie from him.
 - b. What is the Christian to do when someone gives him an unfavorable report against a fellow-Christian? If we accept the story at face value, without investigating to learn the whole truth, then we may have believed a falsehood. If it is impossible to learn the full facts, we ought to remain neutral to the story. If we believe the report, we only have the story-teller's word, which might be wrong; but if we disbelieve his report, we are classifying him as a wrong-doer, which may be an unfair and wrongful judgment. We should remain fully neutral until the facts of the case are established; if they cannot be established, we must treat both parties alike: neither believing nor disbelieving the report.
6. Verse 6: "Many will entreat the favour of the prince: and every man *is* a friend to him that giveth gifts."
- a. Bribery is as old as civilization. Those in power are sought out by unscrupulous men who seek their favor by offering bribes.
 - 1) Acts 24:25-26: "And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee. He hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him: wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him."
 - 2) 1 Timothy 5:21: "I charge *thee* before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality."
 - 3) Jude 16: "These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling *words*, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage."
 - b. People in important positions of power or wealth ever have those around them currying favor for personal advantage; and there are many in positions of power who are readily available to receive bribes.
7. Verse 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."
- a. A poor man is unwelcome in the presence of his neighbors when he comes seeking their help. He is shunned by friends, strangers, and relatives. If he pursues them with pleas for help, he is despised, and remains in want.
 - b. "How those that are poor and low are slighted and despised. Men may, if they please, court the prince, and the princely, but they may not trample upon the poor and look at them with disdain. Yet so it often
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is: All the brethren of the poor do hate him; even his own relations are shy of him, because he is needy and craving, and expects something from them, and because they look upon him as a blemish to their family; and then no marvel if others of his friends, that were nothing akin to him, go far from him, to get out of his way. He pursues them with words, hoping to prevail with them by his importunity to be kind to him, but all in vain; they have nothing for him. They pursue him with words (so some understand it), to excuse themselves from giving him any thing; they tell him that he is idle and impertinent, that he has brought himself into poverty, and therefore ought not to be relieved; as Nabal said to David's messengers: 'There are many servants now a days that run away from their masters; and how do I know but that David may be one of them?' Let poor people therefore make God their friend, pursue him with their prayers, and he will not be wanting to them" [Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: New Modern Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1991 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.].

8. Verse 8: "He that getteth wisdom loveth his own soul: he that keepeth understanding shall find good."
 - a. If we seek wisdom with diligence until we obtain it, we are showing love for our own souls. The converse is also true: if we are indifferent to getting wisdom, we show hatred toward our souls.
 - b. Blessings for the soul are obtained by gaining wisdom.
 - c. Material blessings are also procured by exercising wisdom.
9. Verse 9: "A false witness shall not be unpunished, and *he that* speaketh lies shall perish."
 - a. This is almost identical to verse five. The ending verb is the only difference. Verse five says the liar shall not escape; this verse says he shall perish.
 - b. "A repetition of what was said before (v. 5), for we have need to be again and again warned of the danger of the sin of lying and false-witness-bearing, since nothing is of more fatal consequence. An addition to it in one word; there it was said, He that speaks lies shall not escape, and intimated that he shall be punished. Here it is said, His punishment shall be such as will be his destruction: he shall perish; the lies he forged against others will be his own ruin. It is a damning destroying sin" [Henry, *ibid.*].

B. Proverbs 19:10-18.

1. Verse 10: "Delight is not seemly for a fool; much less for a servant to have rule over princes."
 - a. Two inappropriate situations are stated: it is unseemly for a fool to have delight; it is even more unseemly for a servant to rule over a prince. Fools and eloquent speech do not belong together (17:7); honor and fools are strangers (26:1). Here Solomon says that prosperity and fools are a strange and unlikely mix. Imagine a perverse man on the throne or in a position of great responsibility and power.
 - b. There would be far too many occasions for crooked actions which would adversely affect the innocent. If a slave should ascend the throne or obtain a position of responsibility above men of greater ability and intelligence, much evil is possible. He does not have the training and background for such a position. Following the War Between the States, ignorant men were put into high political office; such was intended as insults to the South, and helped to foment racial hatred and discrimination.
 2. Verse 11: "The discretion of a man deferreth his anger; and *it is* his glory to pass over a transgression."
 - a. Solomon teaches the needed lesson of self-control in high-pressure situations. It is easy to give insult for insult, railing for railing; but the Lord demands better conduct of his people; we must rise above the natural tendencies of the flesh to get even with our adversaries.
 - b. Wisdom and spirituality will lead us to overlook offenses, and be patient with the foolish. God counts it a "glory" to us if we ignore offenses. However, when a brother trespasses against us, we are taught
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to show him his fault for the good of his soul.

- 1) Matthew 18:15-18: "Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear *thee*, *then* take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell *it* unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."
 - 2) Mark 11:25: "And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses."
 - 3) Luke 17:3: "Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him."
 - 4) Ephesians 4:31-32: "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."
 - 5) Colossians 3:13: "Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also *do* ye."
3. Verse 12: "The king's wrath *is* as the roaring of a lion; but his favour *is* as dew upon the grass."
- a. Kings on the throne are still mere mortals. They can be as fickle as anyone. A king's wrath can be as frightful as the roaring of a lion and his favor can be as pleasant as the morning dew.
 - b. This may be intended as a caution to the citizens of a kingdom not to expect too much from their king, and a word of warning to the king to use his awesome power prudently.
4. Verse 13: "A foolish son *is* the calamity of his father: and the contentions of a wife *are* a continual dripping."
- a. Two unpleasant situations are described: a foolish son is a grievous burden to his father; and a contentious wife is as irritating as a continual dripping. A steady dripping of a leaky faucet can wear our nerves thin.
 - b. A leaky roof sometimes requires a bucket to catch the water; but think how irritating the sound can be at night when the rain drops through into the partially-filled container. A wife can be a source of great encouragement and help to the husband; but one who is a nagger can be a constant pain.
5. Verse 14: "House and riches *are* the inheritance of fathers: and a prudent wife *is* from the LORD."
- a. The inheritance of ancient days was passed down from father to son; thus, the father in the family was the one to receive the houses and riches as head of the family. With his position also came responsibilities. His wealth came from his father before him.
 - b. But if he has a good wife, that blessing is from the Lord. A good wife is far beyond a material value (Prov. 31:10; 12:4). Husbands ought to recognize the worth of their good wives, and tell them how much they are valued.
 - 1) Proverbs 12:4: "A virtuous woman *is* a crown to her husband: but she that maketh ashamed *is* as rottenness in his bones."
 - 2) Proverbs 31:10: "Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price *is* far above rubies."
6. Verse 15: "Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep; and an idle soul shall suffer hunger."
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- a. Again the wise man addresses the stupidity of laziness. It will cause a man to be oblivious to his responsibilities, and ultimately lead him and his family into the greatest physical deprivations.
 - b. It is in our best interest to be industrious. Ignoring reality will not fill a empty stomach.
7. Verse 16: "He that keepeth the commandment keepeth his own soul; *but* he that despiseth his ways shall die."
- a. Although Solomon does not specify whose commandment he has in mind, the thoughtful student will recognize it to be God's. It is by keeping God's will that the soul is preserved; it is the rejection of God's word that insures spiritual death.
 - b. Sin is the transgression of God's word.
 - 1) Matthew 7:21-23: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."
 - 2) Romans 6:16-18: "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness."
 - 3) 1 John 3:4: "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law."
 - 4) 1 John 3:7: "Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous."
 - 5) 1 John 5:17: "All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death."
8. Verse 17: "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again."
- a. What we do in behalf of the needy is noted by the Lord, and he will repay our kindness many times over.
 - b. The poor will always be with us, so we will always have occasions to help the deserving poor.
 - 1) Deuteronomy 15:11: "For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land."
 - 2) Matthew 26:11: "For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always."
 - 3) 2 Thessalonians 3:10-13: "For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread. But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing."
 - c. President Johnson's "War on Poverty" program was a failure, partly because many people will waste whatever comes into their hands.
9. Verse 18: "Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying."
- a. Here is good counsel for sincere parents. Corporal punishment is necessary in bringing children to
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responsible adulthood. Our natural tenderheartedness toward our offspring should not interfere with essential chastening.

- 1) Proverbs 13:24: "He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes."
 - 2) Proverbs 22:15: "Foolishness *is* bound in the heart of a child; *but* the rod of correction shall drive it far from him."
 - 3) Proverbs 23:13-14: "Withhold not correction from the child: for *if* thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell."
 - 4) Proverbs 29:15: "The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left *to himself* bringeth his mother to shame."
 - 5) Lamentations 3:27: "*It is* good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth."
 - 6) Ephesians 6:4: "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."
 - 7) Colossians 3:21: "Fathers, provoke not your children *to anger*, lest they be discouraged."
- b. Because God loves his children he chastens them. If he left us alone, that would be an indication of unconcern. Parents chasten their children because they love them. Our natural feelings often interfere with chastening. But to ignore wrong in our children is to turn them over to self-indulgence and sin, which is a great act of unconcern.

C. Proverbs 19:19-29.

1. Verses 19-21: "A man of great wrath shall suffer punishment: for if thou deliver *him*, yet thou must do it again. Hear counsel, and receive instruction, that thou mayest be wise in thy latter end. *There are* many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand."
- a. Examples of the principle of verse nineteen:
 - 1) 1 Kings 1:5-6: "Then Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, I will be king: and he prepared him chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him. And his father had not displeased him at any time in saying, Why hast thou done so? and he also *was a* very goodly *man*; and *his mother* bare him after Absalom."
 - 2) 1 Kings 2:24-25: "Now therefore, *as* the LORD liveth, which hath established me, and set me on the throne of David my father, and who hath made me an house, as he promised, Adonijah shall be put to death this day. And king Solomon sent by the hand of Benaiah the son of Jehoiada; and he fell upon him that he died."
- b. A man of wrath will fall victim to his own foolish weakness, time and again; if he is gotten out of one bad situation, he will plunge himself into another before long. This problem is due to a lack of self-control, which was left out of his early upbringing. We punish children to teach them to overcome temptations to sin and foolish and dangerous actions. They must learn to act responsibly by controlling their desires and inclinations.
- c. Seed sown in youth will develop into its own natural crop in later years. The exception is in the case of those who obey the gospel later on. Having given instruction to parents in verse 18, he now calls on the young to be willing to receive counsel and instruction so that wisdom might be theirs in years ahead. Joseph, Daniel, and Timothy did. But the thought of the verse is equally applicable to all: everyone, whether young or old, needs to heed godly counsel and instruction to the end that he will be wise in his latter days and that all will be well with him in eternity.

- d. Since man's initial rebellion against the rule of the Creator (Gen. 3), there has been a continuing conflict between the devices of men and the counsel of God. Man usually persists in his way on earth, but ultimately must meet his Maker in eternity. God will get the final "say" then, and where will man's devices have led him! Many devise plans that are evil; many make their plans without any consideration of God's will; in both cases, man has followed his own will, not the will of the Lord. The evil plot of Joseph's brothers was used by God for their own good. What God decrees will stand, no matter what man might endeavor (Eccl. 7:29, 20; Rom. 1:18-32).
2. Verse 22: "The desire of a man *is* his kindness: and a poor man *is* better than a liar."
- a. The ASV renders this passage in a clearer way: "That which maketh a man to be desired is his kindness; And a poor man is better than a liar." Kindness is loved and appreciated by most people. One who is kind is accepted by others because of his kindness which expresses sincere concern. It is easy to be gruff and unconcerned and harsh; it is a beautiful grace to be kind and tender. In exposing sin and error and in defending the truth against Satan's slanders, firmness of speech is often necessary; but in dealing with men we must never lose sight of kindness for it can melt rebellious hearts. "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Eph. 4:31-32; cf. 2 Sam. 12:1-12).
- b. The second thought of the verse states the truth that, in view of eternity, it is better to be a righteous poor person than to be wealthy liar.
3. Verse 23: "The fear of the LORD *tendeth* to life: and *he that hath it* shall abide satisfied; he shall not be visited with evil."
- a. Holding God in reverential awe will first lead us to obedience; and that good attitude toward him will tend to promote life, for he will providentially help those who seek to follow him. His will also leads us away from sinful habits and practices, thus will preserve our health and life.
- b. Such a one will be satisfied (contented) with his lot in life (cf. Phil. 4:11); and he will be protected from evil (2 Pet. 2:9). What greater earthly advantages could we have than life, satisfaction and security?
4. Verse 24: "A slothful *man* hideth his hand in *his* bosom, and will not so much as bring it to his mouth again."
- a. Solomon graphically describes the grossly lazy man: he is too slothful to remove his hand from its comfortable place in his bosom to feed himself with it. We would never allow ourselves to become this foolish in secular matters, but how many do the same in spiritual affairs?
- b. Many Christians starve themselves to death by ignoring Bible Study and worship services, will not pray, or give, or work as they ought.
5. Verse 25: "Smite a scorner, and the simple will beware: and reprove one that hath understanding, *and* he will understand knowledge."
- a. Punishment of evildoers is an object lesson for others. If a scoffer is exposed, those who are simple (willing to hear and heed) will learn. If an understanding person is reprovved, he will gain knowledge.
- b. Along the same line, if a country practices capital punishment in a timely and equitable fashion, it will deter crime in others.
6. Verse 26: "He that wasteth *his* father, *and* chaseth away *his* mother, *is* a son that causeth shame, and bringeth reproach."
- a. The wise man pictures an extreme case of the sinful son who wastes his father's substance and chases
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his mother from home. Such a person brings shame on his family name and brings reproach upon himself.

- b. 2 Samuel 15:1-14: "And it came to pass after this, that Absalom prepared him chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him. And Absalom rose up early, and stood beside the way of the gate: and it was *so*, that when any man that had a controversy came to the king for judgment, then Absalom called unto him, and said, Of what city *art* thou? And he said, Thy servant *is* of one of the tribes of Israel. And Absalom said unto him, See, thy matters *are* good and right; but *there is* no man *deputed* of the king to hear thee. Absalom said moreover, Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice! And it was *so*, that when any man came nigh *to him* to do him obeisance, he put forth his hand, and took him, and kissed him. And on this manner did Absalom to all Israel that came to the king for judgment: so Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel. And it came to pass after forty years, that Absalom said unto the king, I pray thee, let me go and pay my vow, which I have vowed unto the LORD, in Hebron. For thy servant vowed a vow while I abode at Geshur in Syria, saying, If the LORD shall bring me again indeed to Jerusalem, then I will serve the LORD. And the king said unto him, Go in peace. So he arose, and went to Hebron. But Absalom sent spies throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, As soon as ye hear the sound of the trumpet, then ye shall say, Absalom reigneth in Hebron. And with Absalom went two hundred men out of Jerusalem, *that were* called; and they went in their simplicity, and they knew not any thing. And Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counsellor, from his city, *even* from Giloh, while he offered sacrifices. And the conspiracy was strong; for the people increased continually with Absalom. And there came a messenger to David, saying, The hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom. And David said unto all his servants that *were* with him at Jerusalem, Arise, and let us flee; for we shall not *else* escape from Absalom: make speed to depart, lest he overtake us suddenly, and bring evil upon us, and smite the city with the edge of the sword."
 - c. Romans 1:30-31: "Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful."
7. Verse 27: "Cease, my son, to hear the instruction *that causeth* to err from the words of knowledge."
 - a. Solomon calls on his son to cease giving heed to instruction which causes him to stray from the way of true knowledge. It is right and necessary to warn against sin and error of all kinds.
 - b. "There is that which seems designed for instruction, but really tends to the destruction of young men. The factors for vice will undertake to teach them free thoughts and a fashionable conversation, how to palliate the sins they have a mind to and stop the mouth of their own consciences, how to get clear of the restraints of their education and to set up for wits and beaux. This is the instruction which causes to err from the forms of sound words, which should be held fast in faith and love. It is the wisdom of young men to turn a deaf ear to such instructions, as the adder does to the charms that are designed to ensnare her. 'Dread hearing such talk as tends to instill loose principles into the mind; and, if thou art linked in with such, break off from them; thou hast heard enough, or too much, and therefore hear no more of the evil communication which corrupts good manners'" [Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: New Modern Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1991 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.].
 8. Verse 28: "An ungodly witness scorneth judgment: and the mouth of the wicked devoureth iniquity."
 - a. A false (ungodly) witness has no regards for justice. To such a person, lying is his food and drink. The wicked thrive on evil of every kind.
 - b. "An ungodly witness is one that bears false witness against his neighbour, and will forswear himself
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to do another a mischief, in which there is not only great injustice, but great impiety; this is one of the worst of men. Or an ungodly witness is one that profanely and atheistically witnesses against religion and godliness, whose instructions seduce from the words of knowledge (v. 27); such a one scorns judgment, laughs at the terrors of the Lord, mocks at that fear, Job 15:26. Tell him of law and equity, that the scriptures and an oath are sacred things, and not to be jested with, that there will come a reckoning day; he laughs at it all, and scorns to heed it. They are greedy, and glad of that which gives them an opportunity to sin: The mouth of the wicked eagerly devours iniquity, drinks it in like water, Job 15:16" [Henry, *ibid.*].

9. Verse 29: "Judgments are prepared for scorers, and stripes for the back of fools."
 - a. Those who laugh about sin and scorn righteousness—for such, judgments are prepared. Stripes (just punishment) are awaiting all those who act foolishly, and not according to wisdom's dictates. A man will verily reap what he sows.
 - b. Galatians 6:7-8: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."
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PROVERBS 20

A. Proverbs 20:1-11.

1. Verse 1: "Wine *is* a mocker, strong drink *is* raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise."
 - a. "The history of the world from the days of Noah (Gen 9:21) proves, that the love of *wine and strong drink* is a most insidious vice. The wretched victims are convinced too late, that they have been *mocked* and grievously *deceived*. Not only does it overcome them before they are aware, but it promises pleasures which it can never give. And yet so mighty is the spell, that the besotted slave consents to be *mocked* again and again, till 'at last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.' (Chap. 23:29-32.)" (Bridges, pp.334f). "*It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink: Lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted*" (Prov. 31:4-5).
 - b. If one wonders whether a Christian can partake of alcoholic beverages in a social setting, let him consider I Corinthians 8. Paul shows that even an action that of itself is all right (the eating of meat which had been used earlier in an idol's temple) is wrong if it influences a brother to stumble (8:9-13). When our example influences another Christian to do something that violates his conscience, we sin by causing him to sin! (Rom. 14:21; Matt. 5:13-16; Phil. 2:14-16; Rom. 14:19; 1 Th. 5:22) If one thinks he can drink in the privacy of his own home and thus avoid evil influence, let him ask how he can buy the product and dispose of the containers without others learning of it. And what about the influence on his wife and children? Drunkenness is not in the realm of opinion; it is strongly denounced in the Scriptures.
 - c. Drunkenness is forbidden as sinful. But the word translated *drunken* is from *methusko* [from *methuo*] which "signifies to make drunk, or to grow drunk (an inceptive verb, marking the process of the state expressed [in *methuo*])" (Vine, vol. 1, p.341). The word "inceptive" means: "beginning; introductory; initial." Drunkenness is sinful from its beginning, introductory, initial stage: i.e., with the first swallow!
 - d. In the New Testament, the Greek word "oinos" is the general term for all wine, including grape juice. It is used in the term "winepress" (Rev. 19:15). Grape juice is pressed from the grapes; it is called *oinos*. From the word itself one cannot determine what kind of *wine* is meant—intoxicating or non-intoxicating. It is noteworthy that the Bible never speaks of the contents of the cup in the Lord's Supper as "wine." It is identified as "the fruit of the vine." Though it might be scriptural to serve real wine in the Supper, it is unwise (to say the least) to do so. Reformed alcoholics have been overcome again by alcohol by partaking of the Lord's Supper in which alcoholic wine was served.
 - e. One who thinks he can control his appetite for alcoholic beverages while partaking of it "moderately" is playing the fool! (1 Cor. 10:12; 9:27; 1 Th. 5:21-22). Solomon says that one is "unwise" (i.e., is foolish) who allows himself to be deceived by wine or strong drink. One cannot play with fire without being burned! (Prov. 6:27-28). The first effect of alcohol is against the higher faculties of the mind: breaking down inhibitions, muddling the judgment, and weakening the will.
 2. Verse 2: "The fear of a king *is* as the roaring of a lion: *whoso* provoketh him to anger sinneth *against* his own soul."
 - a. The point of this proverb appears to be this: stay clear of someone who is angry, and do not provoke a king to anger. The wrath of an ancient king might break forth in death, for they had the power of life and death which many of them would exercise capriciously. Since it was so dangerous to upset such a king, how more so it is to incur the wrath the King of Glory who rules by absolute truth and justice!
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- b. Wherein lay the sin that is mentioned? Evidently, in needlessly provoking a king to anger. The gospel commands fathers not to provoke their children to wrath (Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:21); one who does so anyway, commits sin against his own soul. The gospel requires that we treat others as we would be treated ourselves (Matt. 7:12; Mark 12:31). We would not want to be provoked by others; we must not provoke them. If we violate this precept, we commit sin which is charged against our own souls.
 - c. Joab, who had been very courageous in the past, fled in fear from the wrath of King Solomon (1 Kings 2:28ff). See also:
 - 1) 1 Samuel 19:4-6: "And Jonathan spake good of David unto Saul his father, and said unto him, Let not the king sin against his servant, against David; because he hath not sinned against thee, and because his works *have been* to thee-ward very good: For he did put his life in his hand, and slew the Philistine, and the LORD wrought a great salvation for all Israel: thou sawest *it*, and didst rejoice: wherefore then wilt thou sin against innocent blood, to slay David without a cause? And Saul hearkened unto the voice of Jonathan: and Saul sware, *As* the LORD liveth, he shall not be slain."
 - 2) Ecclesiastes 10:4: "If the spirit of the ruler rise up against thee, leave not thy place; for yielding pacifieth great offences."
 3. Verse 3: "*It is* an honour for a man to cease from strife: but every fool will be meddling."
 - a. The foolishness and hurtfulness of strife is often condemned in the Scriptures (Prov. 17:14,19; Jas.4:1). In proclaiming and defending the gospel, controversy is often necessary; but whenever possible, our work ought to be done with quietness.
 - b. Anyone can start or perpetuate dissension, but a peacemaker is often hard to find. Only a foolish person would happily enter or engender strife. Needless strife is sinful.
 - 1) Psalms 133: "Behold, how good and how pleasant *it is* for brethren to dwell together in unity! *It is* like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, *even* Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; As the dew of Hermon, *and as the dew* that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, *even* life for evermore."
 - 2) John 17:20-21: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, *art* in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."
 - 3) 1 Corinthians 1:10-13: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you; but *that* ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them *which are of the house* of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?"
 - 4) 1 Corinthians 3:3: "For ye are yet carnal: for whereas *there is* among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?"
 - 5) James 3:14-16: "But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife *is*, there *is* confusion and every evil work."
 4. Verse 4: "The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold; *therefore* shall he beg in harvest, and *have* nothing."
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- a. A lazy person can always find some excuse for remaining idle. He first develops a strong dislike for labor and an unhealthy love for leisure. As long as he has the basic comforts and necessities of life, he is quite content to ignore what ought to be done and rely on someone else to provide for his future needs.
 - b. Proverbs 6:6,9: "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise....How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep?"
 - c. Proverbs 10:26: "As vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes, so *is* the sluggard to them that send him."
 - d. Proverbs 13:4: "The soul of the sluggard desireth, and *hath* nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat."
 - e. Proverbs 26:16: "The sluggard *is* wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason."
5. Verse 5: "Counsel in the heart of man *is like* deep water; but a man of understanding will draw it out."
- a. "Men of the deepest and most comprehensive minds are rarely apt, unsolicited, to join in any discourse, in which they might appear even to the greatest advantage; but a *man of understanding* will *elicit* this, by questions framed for the purpose, and thus *pump* up the salubrious waters from the deep and capacious well. The metaphor is fine and expressive" (Clarke, p.757).
 - b. One does not always know the true depth of a body of water until he explores it; it may not appear to be deep. Often, those with the deepest and most helpful grasp of wisdom and truth do not appear so on the surface. Many great Bible scholars wear no titles. Deep water runs smoothly and quietly; shallow water bubbles over the stones, making a noise and a sight that is pleasant—but there is no depth.
6. Verses 6-7: "Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness: but a faithful man who can find? The just *man* walketh in his integrity: his children *are* blessed after him."
- a. One who boasts of his own goodness and worth exposes his real shallowness and lack of true value. Absalom proclaimed his own virtues to the people, thus stealing their hearts from the king God had chosen; all the while his aim was treason (2 Sam. 15). Jehu claimed he had a zeal for God, but the Bible states that he did not walk in the way of the Lord (2 Kings 10:16, 19-31). Israel claimed goodness but was practicing evil (Jer. 2:23, 34-35). The scribes and Pharisees were likewise boastful but sinful (Matt. 23). It is easy to find those who think they are righteous and good, but it is hard to find one who truly measures up (Prov. 31:10; Jas. 1:21ff).
 - b. A righteous man proclaims his integrity by the way he lives; his righteousness is not an empty claim. James 2:14-26. The life of a righteous man pays many dividends to his children. If we live in integrity (if we follow the law of the gospel), our children and others around us will be blessed by our godly lives in many ways. Who can place a proper value to a godly life? Who but God can see the full extent of its worth?
7. Verse 8: "A king that sitteth in the throne of judgment scattereth away all evil with his eyes."
- a. Alden observes that "the king scatters evil with his eyes, somewhat like a man who directs a bright light into a closet full of cockroaches. The bugs seek darkness as evil people do and will scatter in all directions away from light. In such a way a just king drives away wicked men from his court" (p.149).
 - b. 1 Kings 3:16-27: "Then came there two women, *that were* harlots, unto the king, and stood before him. And the one woman said, O my lord, I and this woman dwell in one house; and I was delivered of a child with her in the house. And it came to pass the third day after that I was delivered, that this
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woman was delivered also: and we *were* together; *there was* no stranger with us in the house, save we two in the house. And this woman's child died in the night; because she overlaid it. And she arose at midnight, and took my son from beside me, while thine handmaid slept, and laid it in her bosom, and laid her dead child in my bosom. And when I rose in the morning to give my child suck, behold, it was dead: but when I had considered it in the morning, behold, it was not my son, which I did bear. And the other woman said, Nay; but the living *is* my son, and the dead *is* thy son. And this said, No; but the dead *is* thy son, and the living *is* my son. Thus they spake before the king. Then said the king, The one saith, This *is* my son that liveth, and thy son *is* the dead: and the other saith, Nay; but thy son *is* the dead, and my son *is* the living. And the king said, Bring me a sword. And they brought a sword before the king. And the king said, Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one, and half to the other. Then spake the woman whose the living child *was* unto the king, for her bowels yearned upon her son, and she said, O my lord, give her the living child, and in no wise slay it. But the other said, Let it be neither mine nor thine, *but* divide *it*. Then the king answered and said, Give her the living child, and in no wise slay it: she *is* the mother thereof."

- c. How much more can the Great King discern righteousness and expose wickedness!
 - 1) John 3:18-21: "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God."
 - 2) 2 Corinthians 5:10: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad."
 8. Verse 9: "Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?"
 - a. Alden, along with other sectarians who have espoused error, states that this verse "indirectly supports the doctrine of total depravity" (p.150). This doctrine is as false as the devil! If one enters this world guilty of sin, he either derived it from his parents or from God. The latter is unthinkable (1 Pet. 1:16) and the former is specifically denied by the Scriptures: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him" (Ezek. 18:20; cf. Matt. 18:3; 19:14; 2 Sam. 12:23).
 - b. The text simply states that no man has the power in himself to remove the guilt of sin. It is a matter of Scriptural truth that all responsible persons commit sin and thus come short of God's divine standard.
 - 1) Ecclesiastes 7:20: "For *there is* not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not."
 - 2) Romans 3:23: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."
 - 3) 1 John 1:7-8, 10: "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us....If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."
 - 4) 1 John 3:4: "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law."
 - c. Matthew 26:28: "For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."
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- d. John 14:6: "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."
 - e. Acts 2:38: "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."
 - f. Acts 4:11-12: "This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."
 - g. Hebrews 9:22: "And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission."
 - h. 1 Peter 1:19-25: "But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God. Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, *see that ye* love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh *is* as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."
 - i. 1 John 1:7,9: "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin....If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."
 - j. Revelation 1:5: "And from Jesus Christ, *who is* the faithful witness, *and* the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood."
9. Verses 10-11: "Divers weights, *and* divers measures, both of them *are* alike abomination to the LORD. Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work *be* pure, and whether *it be* right."
- a. Other passages dealing with this subject are found in Proverbs 11:1, 16:11, and 20:23. The reference here again exposes the sinfulness of crooked measures which have often been employed by men to cheat. Solomon simply announces that it is an abomination in the sight of God, thus will cause those who are guilty to be lost (Rom. 6:23; Gal. 5:19-21).
 - b. Verse six showed that men do not always live up to their claims. What they do in life proves or disproves their assertions. The discerning eye of a wise parent can see in a child's conduct what he is apt to become as an adult. If a child uses foul language, picks up evil habits, lies, steals, cheats, etc., he will do the same as an adult unless a positive change is made. If a child tells the truth, is obedient, good, trustworthy, honest, pure, etc., he will likely carry these same attributes into adulthood, unless a change is made. The agreement or disagreement between profession and conduct can be seen in both children and adults. By their fruits we can know them.

B. Proverbs 20:12-20.

1. Verse 12: "The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the LORD hath made even both of them."
 - a. God is the creator of the ability to see and hear. Certainly, these senses could not have evolved by some chance operation of blind forces. If the statement was intended to join with the previous verse, the meaning here is that God intends for us to use our senses to determine the truth about someone's profession by examining it in the light of their conduct. If the verse stands alone, it simply attributes the source of these two senses to the goodness of God. Instruction is obtained by means of seeing and

hearing. If a person closes his eyes and ears, he cannot receive instruction. One cannot be made to learn against his will (unless some punishment or other strong influence causes him to open his senses).

- b. The nature of the gospel makes it imperative for people to be taught, but if they close their minds, they will remain lost.
 - 1) Matthew 13:13-15: "Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and *their* ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with *their* eyes and hear with *their* ears, and should understand with *their* heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them."
 - 2) Mark 16:15-16: "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."
 - 3) Acts 7:51,57: "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers *did*, so *do* ye....Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord."
 - 4) Acts 28:23-28: "And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into *his* lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and *out of* the prophets, from morning till evening. And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not. And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with *their* eyes, and hear with *their* ears, and understand with *their* heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and *that* they will hear it."
 - 5) Romans 10:17: "So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."
 - 6) Revelation 2:7: "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God."
 - c. Only those who desire to be saved, can be saved; this desire must be so strong that the seeker is willing to suffer if necessary.
 - 1) Luke 13:24: "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able."
 - 2) Romans 8:16-19: "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with *him*, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are* not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God."
 2. Verse 13: "Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty; open thine eyes, *and* thou shalt be satisfied with bread."
 - a. The lesson of this proverb is one stressing temperance in our sleeping habits. Sleep is essential to health, happiness and life, but one who sleeps overmuch does himself harm.
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- b. Too much sleep will rob us of precious time and opportunity that could have been used profitably, and it will gradually diminish our strength and endurance. If we wish to have the necessities of life, activity is necessary.
3. Verse 14: "*It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer: but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth.*"
 - a. Unscrupulous merchants have been exposed in other passages of Proverbs. Solomon here denounces the buyer who deprecates the item he seeks to buy, so that he can get it at a cheap price, for when he talks to his friends, he boasts how badly he took advantage of the seller.
 - b. His actions are tantamount to lying.
4. Verse 15: "There is gold, and a multitude of rubies: but the lips of knowledge *are* a precious jewel."
 - a. Solomon exalts "the lips of knowledge" above gold and rubies. He teaches the lesson that, while material wealth can be a great blessing, knowledge is even more important.
 - b. One who has wealth but little knowledge and wisdom will soon lose his riches; one who possesses knowledge and wisdom can gain wealth.
5. Verse 16: "Take his garment that is surety *for* a stranger: and take a pledge of him for a strange woman."
 - a. Once again Solomon cautions against becoming surety for a stranger. He states here that the lender ought to protect his interest by requiring collateral, in this case, the borrower's garment. Other passages in the Law forbade taking a poor man's garment as collateral (Ex. 22:26-27; Dt. 24:12-13; cf. Job 22:6; Amos 2:8). In the case Solomon has in mind, the borrower is not poor, or he is one whose trustworthiness is questionable. For one to loan to (or co-sign for) a stranger, would be foolish and perhaps could even bring hardship on his family.
 - 1) Exodus 22:26-27: "If thou at all take thy neighbour's raiment to pledge, thou shalt deliver it unto him by that the sun goeth down: For that *is* his covering only, it *is* his raiment for his skin: wherein shall he sleep? and it shall come to pass, when he crieth unto me, that I will hear; for I *am* gracious."
 - 2) Deuteronomy 24:12-13: "And if the man *be* poor, thou shalt not sleep with his pledge: In any case thou shalt deliver him the pledge again when the sun goeth down, that he may sleep in his own raiment, and bless thee: and it shall be righteousness unto thee before the LORD thy God."
 - 3) Job 22:6: "For thou hast taken a pledge from thy brother for nought, and stripped the naked of their clothing."
 - 4) Amos 2:8: "And they lay *themselves* down upon clothes laid to pledge by every altar, and they drink the wine of the condemned *in* the house of their god."
 - b. The ASV renders the second part thusly: "...And hold him in pledge that is surety for foreigners." The marginal rendering agrees with the KJV that the word *foreigners* could also be translated *a foreign woman*. If the latter is correct, he warns against being surety for a strange woman (a prostitute or one who is from a foreign land) for you have good reason to doubt her sincerity to repay.
6. Verse 17: "Bread of deceit *is* sweet to a man; but afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel."
 - a. The "bread of falsehood" (ASV) is a reference to possessions or advantages which are acquired through deceitful means. Such tastes good at the moment, but the individual must "pay the piper" sooner or later.
 - 1) Proverbs 9:17: "Stolen waters are sweet, and bread *eaten* in secret is pleasant."
 - 2) Galatians 6:7-8: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth

to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

- b. This bread is delicious at the time, but he will later have to eat gravel. Sin promises great things but finally gives only pain and sorrow. Cf. Achan; Gehazi; Judas; David; Jacob.
7. Verse 18: "Every purpose is established by counsel: and with good advice make war."
 - a. Any worthwhile venture ought to be planned and executed with good counsel. If we desire to start a business, get the best advice and information available, and devise a plan according to wisdom. If one is to wage a war, do it with a wise plan of action.
 - b. Our political leaders should have followed this principle in the Vietnam War. Solomon is not advocating war; he is simply showing the importance of wisdom and good counsel in conducting the affairs of life. Wars of ambition and greed cannot be conducted wisely.
 8. Verse 19: "He that goeth about *as* a talebearer revealeth secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips."
 - a. A person given to talebearing is always seeking some new story to announce. He will ask prying questions; he will use flattery as a deceitful means of extracting from others some sensitive information.
 - b. A talebearer is interested in his own glory which he thinks he obtains by being the first to report a certain tale. He has no concern about the possible ill-effects the story might have on others. He does not act out of love. We are warned to have nothing to do with such a person.
 9. Verse 20: "Whoso curseth his father or his mother, his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness."
 - a. This proverb is based on the fifth commandment (Ex. 20:12). One who curses his parent brings punishment upon himself. The punishment is figuratively described as his being without light in "blackness of darkness" (ASV). The Lord pictured the punishment of hell as including "outer darkness" (Mt. 8:12; 25:30).
 - b. Exodus 21:17: "And he that curseth his father, or his mother, shall surely be put to death."
 - c. Matthew 15:4-6: "For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to *his* father or *his* mother, *It is a gift*, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; And honour not his father or his mother, *he shall be free*. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition."

C. Proverbs 20:21-30.

1. Verses 21-23: "An inheritance *may be* gotten hastily at the beginning; but the end thereof shall not be blessed. Say not thou, I will recompense evil; *but* wait on the LORD, and he shall save thee. Divers weights *are* an abomination unto the LORD; and a false balance *is* not good."
 - a. Wealth that is obtained by inheritance is not always appreciated and sometimes will destroy industry and initiative (cf. 13:11). The Prodigal Son wasted his portion of his father's inheritance (Luke 15). Possessions that come easily through inheritance are often wasted, and the person ends up in poverty, without the skills and knowledge needed to make a living. The heir of the Kleenex fortune was on a television report. According to the report, he (an older man) had married a young woman who wasted his money on expensive shopping trips costing \$25,000 or more. He ended up alone, living very modestly.
 - b. The wise man warns against taking vengeance into our own hands. Man is ill equipped to be just in punishing his enemies. The whole spirit of the gospel is that we are to be willing to suffer for righteousness' sake (Mt. 5:10) and to go the second mile (Mt. 5:38-42).

- 1) Deuteronomy 32:35: "To me *belongeth* vengeance, and recompense; their foot shall slide in *due* time: for the day of their calamity *is* at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste."
 - 2) Romans 12:17-21: "Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but *rather* give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance *is* mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."
- c. God judges diverse weights as an abomination.
- 1) Proverbs 11:1: "A false balance *is* abomination to the LORD: but a just weight *is* his delight."
 - 2) Micah 6:10-11: "Are there yet the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and the scant measure *that is* abominable? Shall I count *them* pure with the wicked balances, and with the bag of deceitful weights?"
- d. The practice of cheating others by using two sets of weights has been commonly employed. The methods are different today, but the same effect is achieved: the cheating of others by unscrupulous merchants (cf. car dealers; automobile mechanic; the petroleum industry; the drug industry).
2. Verse 24: "Man's goings *are* of the LORD; how can a man then understand his own way?"
- a. Man prides himself for his free moral agency, his intelligence, his skills, his accomplishments, and his strength. We get the idea that everything depends on us. Our talents and opportunities are gifts from God. We are unwise if we think we are able to tend to all of our needs, and ignore God's part in our affairs. Compare Judges 16:20: "And she said, The Philistines *be* upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the LORD was departed from him."
 - b. Some even think they can save themselves, but Jeremiah wrote, "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (10:23; cf. Isa. 55:8-9; Luke 16:15; 1 Cor. 1:18-31). No man can save himself; no man can devise a way of gaining heaven by his own wisdom and strength. The Lord is the only one who is able to devise such a means, which man is obligated to accept and follow. God did his part and man must do his part.
 - 1) John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."
 - 2) Acts 10:34-35: "Then Peter opened *his* mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him."
 - 3) Philippians 2:12: "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."
 - 4) Titus 2:11-14: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."
 - c. We must walk in the light of God's word, putting our trust in him to lead us aright. Through his word he guides us to salvation and onward to heaven. By his providence he leads us in the performance of
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our duties, away from temptation, and around dangers. We have every reason to distrust our own instincts, and firm grounds to trust God implicitly.

3. Verse 25: "*It is a snare to the man who devoureth that which is holy, and after vows to make inquiry.*"
 - a. The ASV gives this translation: "It is a snare to a man rashly to say, It is holy, And after vows to make inquiry." It is wrong to take what belongs to God and use it for selfish purposes.
 - b. "In every path has the great fowler laid his snares. Perhaps, however, the most subtle are reserved for the service of God. Offerings made *holy to* the Lord often were *devoured* by the hypocritical worshipper, and sacrilegiously appropriated to his own use. Thus Achan, robbing the treasury of the Lord, found *a snare* to his ruin. (Josh. 6:19; 7:1.)" (Bridges, p.359).
 - c. Vows that are sincerely made and honestly fulfilled are tremendously important to the individual and the cause of God. But oftentimes, under the pressure of an emotional moment, man will vow to do *thus and so*, only to find his ardor fades or his ability to fulfill his promise is beyond his means. In either case, he has broken his vow. He may have been operating under a misconception of his ability, or he may have made his decision based on faulty emotion. He needs to use better judgment in the future. Jephthah made a foolish and rash vow which required him to sacrifice his daughter or break the vow: "And Jephthah vowed a vow unto the LORD, and said, If thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands, Then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the LORD'S, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering. So Jephthah passed over unto the children of Ammon to fight against them; and the LORD delivered them into his hands. And he smote them from Aroer, even till thou come to Minnith, *even* twenty cities, and unto the plain of the vineyards, with a very great slaughter. Thus the children of Ammon were subdued before the children of Israel. And Jephthah came to Mizpeh unto his house, and, behold, his daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances: and she *was his* only child; beside her he had neither son nor daughter. And it came to pass, when he saw her, that he rent his clothes, and said, Alas, my daughter! thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me: for I have opened my mouth unto the LORD, and I cannot go back. And she said unto him, My father, *if* thou hast opened thy mouth unto the LORD, do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth; forasmuch as the LORD hath taken vengeance for thee of thine enemies, *even* of the children of Ammon. And she said unto her father, Let this thing be done for me: let me alone two months, that I may go up and down upon the mountains, and bewail my virginity, I and my fellows. And he said, Go. And he sent her away *for* two months: and she went with her companions, and bewailed her virginity upon the mountains. And it came to pass at the end of two months, that she returned unto her father, who did with her *according* to his vow which he had vowed: and she knew no man. And it was a custom in Israel" (Judges 11:30-39).
 - d. We ought not act first and ask questions later. "*Before* entering into the service of God, *make inquiry* into its full requisitions. Beware of a religion of temporary excitement; far different from deep, solid, permanent principle. And whatever be the cost, be true to the consecration of thyself as 'a living sacrifice' (Rom. 12:1) on the altar of thy God" (Bridges, p.360). "And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them, If any *man* come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have *sufficient* to finish *it*? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish *it*, all that behold *it* begin to mock him, Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet

a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:25-33).

4. Verse 26: "A wise king scattereth the wicked, and bringeth the wheel over them."
 - a. A wise and godly king will be able to recognize the differences between the good and the wicked. He will not condone the wicked, but will scatter them, and punish them. The description of the punishment Solomon uses is that of crushing them by running over them with a wheel.
 - b. Godly kings of Israel often identified the wicked in the nation, and punished them severely according to God's directions. Solomon did so (1 Kings 2:25-46). Other cases:
 - 1) 2 Chronicles 15:16: "And also *concerning* Maachah the mother of Asa the king, he removed her from *being* queen, because she had made an idol in a grove: and Asa cut down her idol, and stamped *it*, and burnt *it* at the brook Kidron."
 - 2) 2 Chronicles 24:25: "And when they were departed from him, (for they left him in great diseases,) his own servants conspired against him for the blood of the sons of Jehoiada the priest, and slew him on his bed, and he died: and they buried him in the city of David, but they buried him not in the sepulchres of the kings."
 - 3) 2 Chronicles 25:3-4: "Now it came to pass, when the kingdom was established to him, that he slew his servants that had killed the king his father. But he slew not their children, but *did* as *it* is written in the law in the book of Moses, where the LORD commanded, saying, The fathers shall not die for the children, neither shall the children die for the fathers, but every man shall die for his own sin."
 - 4) Nehemiah 13:28-29: "And *one* of the sons of Joiada, the son of Eliashib the high priest, *was* son in law to Sanballat the Horonite: therefore I chased him from me. Remember them, O my God, because they have defiled the priesthood, and the covenant of the priesthood, and of the Levites."
 - 5) John 2:13-17: "And the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem, And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise. And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up."
 - 6) Acts 5:1-11: "But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, And kept back *part* of the price, his wife also being privy *to it*, and brought a certain part, and laid *it*, at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back *part* of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things. And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried *him* out, and buried him. And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in. And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much. Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband *are* at the door, and shall carry thee out. Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying *her* forth, buried *her* by her husband. And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things."
 - c. A nation that does not punish evildoers will find itself engulfed in anarchy and crime (Rom. 13:1ff).

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5. Verse 27: "The spirit of man *is* the candle of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly."
 - a. God has given to men a heart which is comprised of the intellect, the emotions, the will power, and the conscience. Our mind searches out our motives, desires, and the rightness or wrongness of our actions.
 - b. If our minds have been properly instructed in the way of God, and if our conscience remains uncorrupted, sensitive, and honest, we will seek to do that which is right in God's sight.
 - c. "By the help of reason we come to know men, to judge of their characters, and dive into their designs; by the help of conscience we come to know ourselves. The spirit of a man has a self-consciousness (1 Cor 2:11); it searches into the dispositions and affections of the soul, praises what is good, condemns what is otherwise, and judges of the thoughts and intents of the heart. This is the office, this the power, of conscience, which we are therefore concerned to get rightly informed and to keep void of offence" (Henry, *ibid.*). [The reference to the human spirit in the context of 1 Corinthians 2:8-14 is to use it as an illustration of how the Holy Spirit searches and reveals the mind of God].
 6. Verse 28: "Mercy and truth preserve the king: and his throne is upholden by mercy."
 - a. A king who operates on the foundation of kindness and truth is on safe ground. His throne is secure. One who seeks to secure his future by reigning with harshness and and tyranny is actually assuring his failure.
 - b. Psalms 9:17: "The wicked shall be turned into hell, *and* all the nations that forget God."
 - c. Proverbs 14:34: "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin *is* a reproach to any people."
 7. Verse 29: "The glory of young men *is* their strength: and the beauty of old men *is* the grey head."
 - a. Each stage of our lives has its benefits and strengths. Youth has its physical prowess and strength; old age has its wisdom symbolized by gray hair. Each has its part to play in our development and accomplishments.
 - b. We properly expect different things of different ages. Neither is to be despised. Old men are to show gravity.
 8. Verse 30: "The blueness of a wound cleanseth away evil: so *do* stripes the inward parts of the belly."
 - a. Discipline is stressed here. Pain inflicted on the anatomy of a rebellious son can influence the inner spirit to follow the right path. The ASV says: "Stripes that wound cleanse away evil; And strokes reach the innermost parts."
 - b. Civil punishment of lawbreakers can bring about a change of direction in their lives.
 - c. Church discipline (the withdrawal of fellowship) can bring a rebellious Christian back into the fold (1 Cor. 5: 1-13; 2 Cor. 2:6-8).
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PROVERBS 21

A. Proverbs 21:1-13.

1. Verse 1: "The king's heart *is* in the hand of the LORD, *as* the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will."
 - a. God rules in the kingdom of men.
 - 1) Daniel 4:32: "And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling *shall be* with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will."
 - 2) Daniel 5:21: "And he was driven from the sons of men; and his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling *was* with the wild asses: they fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven; till he knew that the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men, and *that* he appointeth over it whomsoever he will."
 - b. The "rivers of water" is thought by some to be a reference to irrigation systems which could be opened or shut according to the will of the farmer; thus, God is able to influence kings according to his will. It may simply say that God created the rivers and streams, and ordered them according to his will.
 - c. There are several notable Biblical cases in which God also guided and influenced earthly rulers in accomplishing his will.
 - 1) Using the pride of Pharaoh's heart, God hardened him against releasing Israel from bondage so that the power of God could be demonstrated to Israel and the world.
 - 2) He "stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom" (Ezra 1:1-4), permitting the Jews to return to Palestine.
 - 3) His influence was brought to bear upon Caesar Augustus of Rome to bring about a census which brought Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem where Jesus was born (Luke 2:1-7; Micah 5:2).
 - 4) Moreover, those kings and rulers who abide by the principles of the Bible are acting by the will of God, to some degree.
 - 5) When Nehemiah had a request to make of the king, he prayed to the God of heaven that the request might be successful (Neh. 2:4), thus recognizing the power of God to help in bringing about a favorable reaction from that Gentile king.
 - 6) Somehow, God kept Abimelech from Sarah (Gen. 20:6).
 - 7) We are taught to pray for kings and others in authority "that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty" (1 Tim. 2:1-2).
2. Verse 2: "Every way of a man *is* right in his own eyes: but the LORD pondereth the hearts."
 - a. This is similar to the thought in Proverbs 16:2: "All the ways of a man *are* clean in his own eyes; but the LORD weigheth the spirits."
 - b. The point is, man thinks his own actions, attitudes, and beliefs are correct, but God is the one who decides whether they are right. He ponders (weighs; examines) the heart and knows its true state.
 - 1) Jeremiah 17:9: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?."
 - 2) Psalm 139:23: "Search me, O God; know me, try me; know my thoughts."
 - 3) Proverbs 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?"
- 4) Luke 16:15: "And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God."
- c. A Christian who hardens his heart against instruction is fitting himself for Torment; so also do those who will not open their hearts to the gospel plan of salvation (Mt. 13:15).
 - 1) 2 Corinthians 13:5: "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?"
 - 2) 1 Thessalonians 5:21: "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."
 - 3) 2 Timothy 2:15: "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."
 - 4) Hebrews 4:12: "For the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."
3. Verse 3: "To do justice and judgment *is* more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice."
 - a. The ASV gives this rendering: "To do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to Jehovah than sacrifice." God required Israel to offer certain sacrifices in their religious activities; he also required righteousness (doing what God commanded in every other matter) and justice (being fair and impartial in dealing with other people). One could go through the outward acts of the Law of Moses and miss the inward sincerity also required.
 - b. The scribes and Pharisees were very exact in paying tithes of mint, anise, and cummin, but they failed to also follow the weightier matters of the Law: judgment, mercy, and faith (Matt. 23:23).
 - c. God commanded King Saul to destroy the Amalekites and all their flocks and herds. But Saul and his men thought that they could save the best of the animals for selfish purposes, and appease God by offering a sacrifice (1 Sam. 15:1ff). Verse 22 shows that Saul would have better served himself and God by doing what the Almighty had commanded him to do: "To obey is better than sacrifice." His intended sacrifice became an act of disobedience, which led to his being deposed as Israel's king.
 - d. Christianity is more demanding of its adherents than was the Law of Moses of the Jews. They had more details to follow, but none of our service is acceptable unless it is offered sincerely, according to God's word, and done because of faith and love (Col. 3:17; 1 Pet. 4:11; 1 Cor. 4:6, ASV; Gal. 5:6; 1 Cor. 13:1-3). Even if all the right words are spoken and all the right things are outwardly done, if the attitude of heart is not right, it is all in vain.
 4. Verse 4: "An high look, and a proud heart, *and* the plowing of the wicked, *is* sin."
 - a. Pride is denounced again. Pride lifts a man up in his own esteem, and will lead to exalting his own will in place of God's will. A proud heart will be the result if the truths of the two preceding verses are rejected. Here Solomon plainly declares that pride is sinful.
 - b. He also says that "the plowing of the wicked" is sinful. Why? If a man does his obligation as head of the family, but his life is otherwise in rebellion to God, even those good things he does are rejected by the Lord. No one can live in sin and have the approval of God, even though he may do many good things.
 - c. The ASV and the KJV margin give an alternative rendering of the latter clause, suggesting that "plow" could also be "lamp." The ancient Hebrew text did not contain vowels, thus making it difficult in some
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cases to know with absolute certainty how some of the words should be understood. The words for *plow* and *lamp* are the same in the original except for the vowels. The word *Jehovah* is a manufactured word, with the vowels from the Hebrew word for *Lord* being used with the consonants. (The science of Biblical translations is exact, with only a very few words being disputed.)

- d. If the alternate rendering is accepted, the thought in the verse is, "Even the lamp of the wicked is sin."
5. Verses 5-7: "The thoughts of the diligent *tend* only to plenteousness; but of every one *that is* hasty only to want. The getting of treasures by a lying tongue *is* a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death. The robbery of the wicked shall destroy them; because they refuse to do judgment."
- a. The diligent man is contrasted here with the hasty individual. The diligent man is one who acts with prudence and persistence; the hasty man is motivated by impulsiveness and inconsistency. The former will tend toward having plenty; the latter toward being in perpetual want. The lesson taught is one stressing diligence and persistence. A *plodder* who is diligent will accomplish more than one who acts impulsively.
- b. The point of the verse 6 is clear even though the exact wording seems difficult to grasp. The truth taught is that treasure obtained by sinful means is empty, and will not satisfy or remain. The thought is the same in verse 7: the robber will be destroyed by his wicked act—because he does not practice justice. The wages of sin—any sin—is death. One who devotes himself to sinful activities can be said to seek death—separation from God here and in eternity is the result of sin.
- 1) Haggai 1:6: "Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages *to put it* into a bag with holes."
 - 2) Romans 6:23: "For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."
 - 3) 1 Corinthians 6:9-11: "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."
 - 4) Galatians 6:7-8: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."
6. Verse 8: "The way of man *is* froward and strange: but *as for* the pure, his work *is* right."
- a. Sinful men are strange when compared to the condition of Adam and Eve when they were fresh from the Creator's hands (Eccl. 7:29; Ezek. 28:15). Sin is so rampant in the world that those who live godly lives are viewed by the world as strange. But the saint is one who is pure and whose work is right (not crooked or perverse).
- 1) Ecclesiastes 7:29: "Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions."
 - 2) Ezekiel 28:15: "Thou *wast* perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee."
- b. Acts 2:40: "And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation."
- c. Titus 2:11-14: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us
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that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

- d. 1 Peter 2:9: "But ye *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light."
7. Verse 9: "*It is* better to dwell in a corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman in a wide house."
- a. The Bible does not encourage divorce or separation, so this thought contains a word of caution regarding a potential wife who is contentious, as well as a description of the sorry fate of the husband who has such a wife. It is better, Solomon observes, to dwell (alone) in the corner of the (flat) housetop than in a spacious house with a brawling woman.
 - b. This proverb is repeated in 25:24.
8. Verse 10-12: "The soul of the wicked desireth evil: his neighbour findeth no favour in his eyes. When the scorner is punished, the simple is made wise: and when the wise is instructed, he receiveth knowledge. The righteous *man* wisely considereth the house of the wicked: *but God* overthroweth the wicked for *their* wickedness."
- a. A man whose life is steeped in wickedness does not make a pleasant neighbor. There are many alien sinners who make good neighbors, but many do not. A godly man will not find favor in the eyes of another whose heart desires to do evil. Who would want to be around such a person? How grievous it is to live near such a person!
 - b. When a scorner is punished, those who are teachable will learn to avoid repeating the scorner's error. With such instruction comes wisdom and knowledge. "Smite a scorner, and the simple will beware: and reprove one that hath understanding, *and* he will understand knowledge" (Prov. 19:25).
 - c. The righteous person wisely considers the state of a wicked, realizing that God will overthrow him. If the wicked is also wealthy, the wise man (who may be in poverty) still recognizes that the end of all wicked people is harsh.
 - 1) Job 20:5: "That the triumphing of the wicked *is* short, and the joy of the hypocrite *but* for a moment?"
 - 2) Psalms 37:35-36: "I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree. Yet he passed away, and, lo, he *was* not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found."
 - 3) Proverbs 12:7: "The wicked are overthrown, and *are* not: but the house of the righteous shall stand."
 - 4) Proverbs 13:3-6: "He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life: *but* he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction. The soul of the sluggard desireth, and *hath* nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat. A righteous *man* hateth lying: but a wicked *man* is loathsome, and cometh to shame. Righteousness keepeth *him that is* upright in the way: but wickedness overthroweth the sinner."
 - 5) Proverbs 15:25: "The LORD will destroy the house of the proud: but he will establish the border of the widow."
 - 6) 2 Peter 2:4-9: "For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast *them* down to hell, and delivered *them* into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth *person*, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly; And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrhah into ashes condemned

them with an overthrow, making *them* an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly; And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed *his* righteous soul from day to day with *their* unlawful deeds;) The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished."

9. Verse 13: "Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard."
 - a. We do ourselves a great disservice in the long run if we ignore the pleas of the needy, for when **we** come to be in need, our cries will fall on deaf ears. This principle appears often in the Bible, that is, that we reap what we sow. If our judgments against others are harsh and unfair, we can expect to receive the same (Matt. 7:1-5); if we speak and act kindly to others, they will speak and act kindly to us (Mt. 7:12; Rom. 12:17-21).
 - b. The Bible does not require the wealthy to give away their riches; it does teach us all to help the needy as we have opportunity (Gal. 6:9-10). "And Nabal answered David's servants, and said, Who *is* David? and who *is* the son of Jesse? there be many servants now a days that break away every man from his master. Shall I then take my bread, and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give *it* unto men, whom I know not whence they *be*?" (1 Sam. 25:10-11).
 - c. The righteous have the care of God (Ps. 37:25; Matt. 6:33), but he uses others who are righteous and who have the means, in supplying the needs of those in want. We must be willing tools in the hands of God! "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again" (Prov. 19:17; cf. Jas. 2:13ff).

B. Proverbs 21:14-22.

1. Verse 14: "A gift in secret pacifieth anger: and a reward in the bosom strong wrath."
 - a. Often a rift may develop between brethren which can be mended by the giving of some gift, offered sincerely. It is given in secret to keep it from being public knowledge. If others know of it, their knowledge might prevent the resumption of fellowship, for they might think it was offered as a bribe, or they might think the recipient could be *bought*. Doing good to an offended brother or to an avowed enemy can soften his attitude toward us.
 - b. The second part of the proverb is parallel to the first: as a gift offered in secret pacifies anger, so a reward brought to another in the bosom (undercover) can melt strong wrath. "Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but *rather* give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance *is* mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12:17-21).
 - c. "The power that is commonly found to be in gifts. Nothing is more violent than anger. O the force of strong wrath! And yet a handsome present, prudently managed, will turn away some men's wrath when it seemed implacable, and disarm the keenest and most passionate resentments. Covetousness is commonly a master-sin and has the command of other lusts. *Pecuniae obediunt omnia*—Money commands all things. Thus Jacob pacified Esau and Abigail David. The policy that is commonly used in giving and receiving bribes. It must be a gift in secret and a reward in the bosom, for he that takes it would not be thought to covet it, nor known to receive it, nor would he willingly be beholden to him whom he has been offended with; but, if it be done privately, all is well. No man should be too open in giving any gift, nor boast of the presents he sends; but, if it be a bribe to pervert justice, that is so scandalous that those who are fond of it are ashamed of it" [Henry, *ibid.*].

2. Verse 15: "*It is joy to the just to do judgment: but destruction shall be to the workers of iniquity.*" "It is joy to the righteous to do justice; But it is a destruction to the workers of iniquity" (ASV).
 - a. When a righteous person exercises justice, he receives a joyful reward; but one who works iniquity (lawlessness) will be punished with destruction (2 Th. 1:6-10).
 - b. The righteous person enjoys treating others fairly (indicated by the ASV, which also implies that the justice done by the righteous will work out to the discredit of the wicked). By returning good for evil, we can heap coals of fire upon the heads of our enemies.
 - c. "The righteous feel real pleasure in doing what is right; they have the answer of a good conscience, and the feeling that they are, as far as they can, making God's will their will, and this brings deep comfort and stable joy (see some contrary experiences, ver. 10 and Prov 10:23; 15:21). But destruction shall be to the workers of iniquity" [The Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by BibleSoft].
 3. Verse 16: "The man that wandereth out of the way of understanding shall remain in the congregation of the dead."
 - a. The wandering out of the way of understanding implies that the individual being considered was once in that pathway. Many times the offspring of righteous parents will not follow their godly ways. Jehoram did not imitate the righteous ways of his father, Jehoshaphat (2 Chron. 21:1ff). The son of Josiah did not follow the example of his good father (2 Chron. 36:1ff). One who goes astray from true understanding places himself in the company of those who are dead (those who are separated from God, Isa. 59:1-2).
 - b. Luke 9:62: "And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."
 - c. 2 Peter 2:20-22: "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known *it*, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog *is* turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire."
 4. Verse 17: "He that loveth pleasure *shall be* a poor man: he that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich."
 - a. The kind of pleasure mentioned here is obviously sinful pleasure or pleasure that is not wrong of itself, but which is pursued to a sinful extreme. One who sets himself to pursue pleasure above righteousness commits sin in the process (Matt. 6:33; Mark 12: 29-31; Luke 13:24). Solomon says that one who seeks pleasure to an extreme will find poverty in the end, for human appetites cannot be satisfied for long, if at all. His second point, which is parallel to the first, is to say that the one who loves wine and oil will not become rich.
 - b. Riches in those ancient days included more than gold, silver, lands, gems, and houses; wealth was also counted in clothing and those items produced by the vineyards and the fields, such as wine and oil (cf. Luke 12:16-21; 16:19-31). One who sought these to the neglect of his soul would indeed become spiritually poverty-stricken.
 - c. One who sought the wine and oil for the drink and food they produced to the extent of being enslaved to them would come to ruin, materially and spiritually.
 - d. Another possible aspect of this proverb is that luxury belongs to the rich, and one who cannot afford them will bankrupt himself if he seeks them anyhow. "The poor Smith family cannot keep up with the wealthy Jones family."
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5. Verse 18: "The wicked *shall be* a ransom for the righteous, and the transgressor for the upright."
 - a. "The *ransom* is here spoken of only in a popular sense, as equivalent to a substitute. (Ps. 49:7,8.) God sometimes, for wise reasons, involves *the righteous* in the same judgment with *the wicked*. Sometimes the punishment of *the wicked* is the ordained means of averting calamity from a *righteous* nation. (Josh. 7:24-26.) Often, in the Lord's retributive justice, *the wicked* are brought into the very trouble, which they designed for *the righteous*. Thus, suffering in their stead, they are as it were *a ransom for them*....Egypt and Ethiopia were thus *a ransom* for Jerusalem, when God turned Sennacherib's fury against them, and warded off the threatened strokes from the sacred city (Isa. 43:3,4), just as a bait, thrown to a beast of prey, would give opportunity to the devoted victim to escape" (Bridges, p.381).
 - b. Joshua 7:24-26: "And Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver, and the garment, and the wedge of gold, and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep, and his tent, and all that he had: and they brought them unto the valley of Achor. And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? the LORD shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones. And they raised over him a great heap of stones unto this day. So the LORD turned from the fierceness of his anger. Wherefore the name of that place was called, The valley of Achor, unto this day."
 - c. Isaiah 43:3-4: "For I *am* the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt *for* thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee. Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life."
 - d. Psalms 49:7-8: "None *of them* can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him: (For the redemption of their soul *is* precious, and it ceaseth for ever)."
 6. Verse 19: "*It is* better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and an angry woman."
 - a. Parallel to verse 9, this statement says that it is better to dwell in the wilderness than with a contentious woman. The ASV and margin gives "desert land" as an alternative rendering to "wilderness."
 - b. "Unbridled passions embitter and spoil the comfort of all relations. A peevish angry wife makes her husband's life uneasy, to whom she should be a comfort and a meet help. Those cannot dwell in peace and happiness that cannot dwell in peace and love. Even those that are one flesh, if they be not withal one spirit, have no joy of their union. It is better to have no company than bad company. The wife of thy covenant is thy companion, and yet, if she be peevish and provoking, it is better to dwell in a solitary wilderness, exposed to wind and weather, than in company with her. A man may better enjoy God and himself in a wilderness than among quarrelsome relations and neighbours" (Henry, *ibid.*).
 7. Verse 20: "*There is* treasure to be desired and oil in the dwelling of the wise; but a foolish man spendeth it up."
 - a. A wise man will be able to accumulate and retain a measure of wealth; this is due to his wisdom. A wise man, because of wisdom, is able to better use and enjoy his possessions than a foolish man. He understands that material assets are temporary at best. "Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (Touch not; taste not; handle not; Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men?" (Col. 2:20-22).
 - b. On the other hand, a foolish man, even if he obtains a measure of wealth, will not keep it; he will find many ways in which to foolishly spend it.
 - c. We have read about Indians in Oklahoma who became wealthy when oil was discovered on their land,
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but who were unable to use it wisely, thus wasted it. Within this generation, many young men who have obtained great wealth because of their prowess in sports, have likewise demonstrated a singular talent at wasting it.

8. Verse 21: "He that followeth after righteousness and mercy findeth life, righteousness, and honour."
 - a. One who sets his heart on obtaining righteousness and showing kindness, will obtain righteousness, along with life and honor. He will be honored by the Lord and all godly men; he will be right before the Lord; and he will be spiritually alive and have the very best kind of life.
 - b. No one is as well equipped to enjoy earthly life with its blessings than a child of God who sees his earthly sojourn in its proper perspective.
9. Verse 22: "A wise *man* scaleth the city of the mighty, and casteth down the strength of the confidence thereof."
 - a. Wisdom is able to succeed where physical strength fails.
 - 1) Joshua 8:3-22: "So Joshua arose, and all the people of war, to go up against Ai: and Joshua chose out thirty thousand mighty men of valour, and sent them away by night. And he commanded them, saying, Behold, ye shall lie in wait against the city, *even* behind the city: go not very far from the city, but be ye all ready: And I, and all the people that *are* with me, will approach unto the city: and it shall come to pass, when they come out against us, as at the first, that we will flee before them, (For they will come out after us) till we have drawn them from the city; for they will say, They flee before us, as at the first: therefore we will flee before them. Then ye shall rise up from the ambush, and seize upon the city: for the LORD your God will deliver it into your hand. And it shall be, when ye have taken the city, *that* ye shall set the city on fire: according to the commandment of the LORD shall ye do. See, I have commanded you. Joshua therefore sent them forth: and they went to lie in ambush, and abode between Bethel and Ai, on the west side of Ai: but Joshua lodged that night among the people. And Joshua rose up early in the morning, and numbered the people, and went up, he and the elders of Israel, before the people to Ai. And all the people, *even the people* of war that *were* with him, went up, and drew nigh, and came before the city, and pitched on the north side of Ai: now *there was* a valley between them and Ai. And he took about five thousand men, and set them to lie in ambush between Bethel and Ai, on the west side of the city. And when they had set the people, *even* all the host that *was* on the north of the city, and their liers in wait on the west of the city, Joshua went that night into the midst of the valley. And it came to pass, when the king of Ai saw *it*, that they hastened and rose up early, and the men of the city went out against Israel to battle, he and all his people, at a time appointed, before the plain; but he wist not that *there were* liers in ambush against him behind the city. And Joshua and all Israel made as if they were beaten before them, and fled by the way of the wilderness. And all the people that *were* in Ai were called together to pursue after them: and they pursued after Joshua, and were drawn away from the city. And there was not a man left in Ai or Bethel, that went not out after Israel: and they left the city open, and pursued after Israel. And the LORD said unto Joshua, Stretch out the spear that *is* in thy hand toward Ai; for I will give it into thine hand. And Joshua stretched out the spear that *he had* in his hand toward the city. And the ambush arose quickly out of their place, and they ran as soon as he had stretched out his hand: and they entered into the city, and took it, and hastened and set the city on fire. And when the men of Ai looked behind them, they saw, and, behold, the smoke of the city ascended up to heaven, and they had no power to flee this way or that way: and the people that fled to the wilderness turned back upon the pursuers. And when Joshua and all Israel saw that the ambush had taken the city, and that the smoke of the city ascended, then they turned again, and slew the men of Ai. And the other issued out of the city against them; so they were in the midst of Israel, some on this side, and some on that

side: and they smote them, so that they let none of them remain or escape."

- 2) Judges 7:15-25: "And it was *so*, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream, and the interpretation thereof, that he worshipped, and returned into the host of Israel, and said, Arise; for the LORD hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian. And he divided the three hundred men *into* three companies, and he put a trumpet in every man's hand, with empty pitchers, and lamps within the pitchers. And he said unto them, Look on me, and do likewise: and, behold, when I come to the outside of the camp, it shall be *that*, as I do, so shall ye do. When I blow with a trumpet, I and all that *are* with me, then blow ye the trumpets also on every side of all the camp, and say, *The sword* of the LORD, and of Gideon. So Gideon, and the hundred men that *were* with him, came unto the outside of the camp in the beginning of the middle watch; and they had but newly set the watch: and they blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers that *were* in their hands. And the three companies blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers, and held the lamps in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands to blow *withal*: and they cried, The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon. And they stood every man in his place round about the camp: and all the host ran, and cried, and fled. And the three hundred blew the trumpets, and the LORD set every man's sword against his fellow, even throughout all the host: and the host fled to Bethshittah in Zererath, *and* to the border of Abelmeholah, unto Tabbath. And the men of Israel gathered themselves together out of Naphtali, and out of Asher, and out of all Manasseh, and pursued after the Midianites. And Gideon sent messengers throughout all mount Ephraim, saying, Come down against the Midianites, and take before them the waters unto Bethbarah and Jordan. Then all the men of Ephraim gathered themselves together, and took the waters unto Bethbarah and Jordan. And they took two princes of the Midianites, Oreb and Zeeb; and they slew Oreb upon the rock Oreb, and Zeeb they slew at the winepress of Zeeb, and pursued Midian, and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon on the other side Jordan."
- 3) 2 Samuel 5:6-8: "And the king and his men went to Jerusalem unto the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land: which spake unto David, saying, Except thou take away the blind and the lame, thou shalt not come in hither: thinking, David cannot come in hither. Nevertheless David took the strong hold of Zion: the same *is* the city of David. And David said on that day, Whosoever getteth up to the gutter, and smiteth the Jebusites, and the lame and the blind, *that are* hated of David's soul, *he shall be chief and captain*. Wherefore they said, The blind and the lame shall not come into the house." 1 Chronicles 11:4-6: "And David and all Israel went to Jerusalem, which *is* Jebus; where the Jebusites *were*, the inhabitants of the land. And the inhabitants of Jebus said to David, Thou shalt not come hither. Nevertheless David took the castle of Zion, which *is* the city of David. And David said, Whosoever smiteth the Jebusites first shall be chief and captain. So Joab the son of Zeruah went first up, and was chief."

- b. The battle plan of the allies in the recent Mid-East War illustrates the value of careful planning. In combatting the problems and sorrows of this life, we must often use wisdom rather than brawn. Systematically examine the problem; consider the possible solutions; choose one that will work, and execute it.

C. Proverbs 21:23-31.

1. Verse 23: "Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles."
- a. This is a simple truth, but one which humans seldom learn for long. Perhaps most of our troubles arise from the misuse of the tongue. If we are able to master the tongue, we will have prevented a world of difficulties.
- b. "For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Matt. 12:37; cf. Jas. 3:1ff).

2. Verse 24: "Proud *and* haughty scorner *is* his name, who dealeth in proud wrath."
 - a. Other versions give the following:
 - 1) "The proud and haughty man, scoffer is his name; He worketh in the arrogance of pride" (ASV).
 - 2) "Proud and haughty man—'Scoffer' is his name; He acts with arrogant pride" (NKJV).
 - b. A proud and haughty man will be known as a scorner (scoffer); his pride will lift him up and make him think he is above all others: he can do no wrong, and others can do nothing right; his ideas are superior; no one can improve on his wisdom. He deals in the wrath of pride, and woe to the unfortunate victim!
 - c. "Look at this vivid picture in Pharaoh—that haughty scorner bursting out in his proud wrath—'Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?' (Exod. 5:2.) In Sennacherib, 'reproaching and blaspheming the Holy One of Israel.' (2 Kings 28:35; 29:21,22,28.) Haman meets with an affront. His proud wrath kindles. He cares neither for God, nor man. The ruin of his single enemy will not suffice. He must glut himself with the blood of a whole unoffending nation (Est. 3:5,6; 5:9)" (Bridges, p.387).
 - d. "It may be, that this hateful abomination is indulged in God's own children. Yet he will not wink at this sin, nor spare his rod. The glory of their name shall be darkened. His frown shall be made visible. If 'Asa's heart was' in the main 'perfect with God all his days,' yet for the sin of haughtiness and proud wrath, his sun went down in a cloud [1 Kings 15:14; 2 Chron. 16:10-13]" (ibid., p.388).
 - 1) 1 Kings 15:14: "But the high places were not removed: nevertheless Asa's heart was perfect with the LORD all his days."
 - 2) 2 Chronicles 16:10-13: "Then Asa was wroth with the seer, and put him in a prison house; for *he* was in a rage with him because of this *thing*. And Asa oppressed *some* of the people the same time. And, behold, the acts of Asa, first and last, lo, they *are* written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel. And Asa in the thirty and ninth year of his reign was diseased in his feet, until his disease *was* exceeding *great*: yet in his disease he sought not to the LORD, but to the physicians. And Asa slept with his fathers, and died in the one and fortieth year of his reign."
3. Verse 25: "The desire of the slothful killeth him; for his hands refuse to labour."
 - a. The sluggard will not work, which leads to his demise. He wants the good things of earth that make life easy and pleasant, but he is unwilling to put forth his hands to procure them through honest labor.
 - b. "He desires to eat, drink, and be clothed: but as he does not labour, hence he dies with this desire in his heart, envying those who possess plenty through their labour and industry. Hence he is said to covet greedily all the day long, ver. 26, while the righteous, who has been laborious and diligent, has enough to eat, and some to spare" (Clarke, p.761).
4. Verse 26: "He coveteth greedily all the day long: but the righteous giveth and spareth not."
 - a. The slothful man will not work so as to have the necessities of life. But the righteous man, pitying the poor, will be willing to help out those who are in need. But there is a limit to our Christian obligation to such a person: when we determine that he will not work, then our obligation ceases, and he must face his own dilemma.
 - b. 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12: "For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread."
 - c. "Surely poverty for these men is a willful thing rather than a result of unfortunate circumstances. Why should thrifty, hardworking men sacrifice so that lazy, greedy ones can be more comfortable?" (Alden,

p.158).

5. Verse 27: "The sacrifice of the wicked *is* abomination: how much more, *when* he bringeth it with a wicked mind?"
 - a. This is similar to Proverbs 15:8: "The sacrifice of the wicked *is* an abomination to the LORD: but the prayer of the upright *is* his delight."
 - b. The sacrifice of the wicked is considered by the Lord to be an abomination. If his intent is also wicked, his offering is even more an abomination. The common idea in the sectarian world, especially among the more liberal denominations, is that one can live as he pleases during the week, and his worship on Sunday will be perfectly acceptable. The Bible repudiates such a concept!
 - c. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Ps. 66:18).
 - d. "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination" (Prov. 28:9).
6. Verse 28: "A false witness shall perish: but the man that heareth speaketh constantly."
 - a. The ASV has a clearer translation here: "A false witness shall perish; but the man that heareth shall speak so as to endure." The proverb is a contrast: the false witness condemns himself to destruction and his testimony will be exposed as a lie.
 - b. But the man that heareth (who gives true testimony; who testifies what he has heard) will stand by what he has reported, and will live to keep on speaking.
7. Verse 29: "A wicked man hardeneth his face: but *as for* the upright, he directeth his way."
 - a. "A hardened face, without shame or blushing for sin, is a fearful manifestation of a hardened heart. Cain standing boldly in the presence of his God, with his hands reeking with his brother's blood [Gen. 4:8,9]; Gehazi with his fearless lie [2 Kings 5:25]; the Traitor, bearing to be pointed out by his Master, without visible emotion [John 13:21-30], then afterwards with unblushing effrontery kissing his sacred cheeks [Matt. 26:47-49]—how hardened must have been their faces in determined wickedness!" (Bridges, p.392).
 - b. But the upright person considers his way, and directs it according to truth and righteousness. The ungodly person hardens his face against God's word, but the righteous person directs his way by it.
8. Verse 30: "*There is* no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the LORD."
 - a. All the "wisdom" that Satan and evil men may acquire can never successfully stand against the understanding and wisdom of God. All the worldly wisdom that exalts itself against God's truth will one day be exposed for the lie that it is.
 - b. "There is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord; i.e. in opposition to him, which can be compared with his, or which can avail against him (comp. Job 5:13; Ps 33:10,11; Isa 29:14; 1 Cor 1:20; 3:19)" [Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by Biblesoft].
9. Verse 31: "The horse *is* prepared against the day of battle: but safety *is* of the LORD."
 - a. Man may be able to arm himself with powerful offensive weapons, and cover himself with the best protection that he can devise and which money can buy, but in the final analysis, it is only the Lord that is able to give genuine protection. Compare: "Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh *but* in vain" (Ps. 127:1).
 - b. Countless examples of God's overruling providence are given in the Bible of the deliverance of his people.
 - 1) Ahab tried to hide himself amongst the army, wearing a disguise, but the arrow that slew him was

guided by the hand of God.

- 2) When Israel hid themselves behind the protection of God, even the mighty army of Assyria was unable to harm them (Isa. 26).
 - 3) When the enemy sought the life infant Jesus, God protected him.
 - 4) When Paul's life was threatened by the enemies of the gospel, the Lord delivered him (Acts 9:23-25; 22:11-31).
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PROVERBS 22

A. Proverbs 22:1-9.

1. Verse 1: "A *good* name *is* rather to be chosen than great riches, *and* loving favour rather than silver and gold."
 - a. In the Sermon on the Mount, Christ gave a statement which warned against currying favor with the world: "Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets" (Luke 6:26). But this does not mean that we ought to see how many enemies we can make! Giving the counterbalance, Solomon stresses the great importance of having a good name among men. But this does not mean that we are to seek the favor of men at the expense of truth and purity.
 - b. Being favorably received by others is highly prized by any right-thinking person. But the price would be far too high if its cost is drawn from the account of conscience or principle. Because faithful Christians will not compromise, they often are objects of contempt, but having God's favor is of far greater importance.
 - c. If having favor among men is obtained with truth and conscience intact, then the great value attributed to it by Solomon pertains. Such favor is more valuable than great riches. "A *good* name is better than precious oil; and the day of death, than the day of one's birth" (Eccl. 7:1).
 - d. Many of our brethren "water down" the gospel in order to avoid offending the world. Such congregations are apt to increase in number in our pleasure-seeking society, but of what good to the souls of men is their message? A faithful Christian is the enemy of no one, but unless our message is the uncorrupted gospel, it will not convince men of the truth; and unless it exposes sin and error, it cannot bring conviction and repentance. Honest people will repent when they are shown the truth; hard-hearted men will oppose the truth and the bringer of truth.
 - e. Absalom sought the favor of men by flattery (2 Sam. 15:1-6). When one is blessed with a pleasant and pleasing personality, he will naturally have many friends. Absalom had such a personality, but he used it to his own glory. His conceit was so great that he erected a monument to keep his name in remembrance (2 Sam. 18:18). It is his shameful rebellion against his father, David, for which he is remembered, however. Those preachers with the personality and ambition of Absalom are extremely dangerous to the cause of Christ and to the well-being of precious souls under their influence.
 - f. The passage indicates that the choice of having a good name belongs to the individual: a good name is to be *chosen*. We cannot always choose to have the favor of people. In the best of cases, oftentimes we cannot have the approval of many. Paul could not; the Lord could not; and the brethren in Jerusalem did not long have the approbation of the population (Acts 2:47; 8:1,4). It may be that Solomon is simply admonishing us against inciting opposition to ourselves. Notice also that the verse does not identify the ones with whom we choose to have a good name. Everyone assumes that he is speaking about our having the favor of people about us; this certainly is true. But the wise man also has reference to having the favor of God. We can surely choose to have the approval of him who inhabits eternity!
 - g. "A name (that is, a good name, a name for good things with God and good people) is rather to be chosen than great riches; that is, we should be more careful to do that by which we may get and keep a good name than that by which we may raise and increase a great estate" [Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: New Modern Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1991 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.].
 2. Verse 2: "The rich and poor meet together: the LORD *is* the maker of them all."
 - a. God is the maker of both the rich and the poor. This does not say that he pre-programmed some to
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poverty and others to wealth; it says that God is the Creator of both. Most are in poverty through no fault of their own, and many are rich at the expense of others (through craftiness, graft, or crime). Many are poor through their own apathy, and many are rich through diligent effort and wisdom.

- b. There is no difference between the rich and the poor as to (1) their Creator, (2) their worth before God, (3) their need for salvation, and (4) their need for protection and guidance.
 - c. "The rich and poor meet together." A well-balanced, smoothly-running economy requires both the rich man and the poor man. If all were rich, who would do the labor? If all were poor, who would provide the jobs? If all were middle-class, who would establish factories and businesses for jobs? and who would fill the menial roles? The rich and the poor (and the middle-class) need each other!
 - d. Also, in view of those unfortunate people who fall into such deep poverty that they are in danger of starvation, or have no place to live, how could they survive without the benevolence of those who have "this world's goods?" Cf. James 2:14ff.
 - e. As the rich can bless the poor by providing jobs and sustenance, so the poor bless the rich in doing the work the rich man cannot do. Neither should despise the other.
3. Verse 3: "A prudent *man* foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished."
 - a. The contrast is between the wise person and the simple person. The wise man will be able through knowledge and good sense to anticipate trouble, and avoid it.
 - b. The simple individual will stumble into difficulties because of ignorance or foolishness. The one exercises due caution; the other is heedless.
 4. Verse 4: "By humility *and* the fear of the LORD *are* riches, and honour, and life."
 - a. Having humility before God and reverence for God lead to blessings. If we can come to understand God's nature, majesty, goodness and power, we will be humble and reverent before him. We will see our own relative insignificance. And these attitudes of humility and awe for God open the door for God's blessings upon us. He will give us sufficiency in this world's needs; he will give us spiritual riches; we can have honor from those in society who respect godliness; we will be blessed with life, natural and spiritual.
 - b. Some righteous people die young, and some unrighteous live to be aged, but the obedient person has the aid of God in life and in death, however long or short his time on earth may be.
 5. Verse 5: "Thorns *and* snares *are* in the way of the froward: he that doth keep his soul shall be far from them."
 - a. We are taught to stay as far away from evil as possible. Many foolhardy saints try to live as near the devil as they can without getting too close; the opposite must be true of us.
 - 1) 1 Corinthians 10:12: "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."
 - 2) 1 Thessalonians 5:22: "Abstain from all appearance of evil."
 - b. Would you rather ride with a driver who takes foolish and unnecessary risks to show off his driving skills, or with the driver who is careful and cautious on the road? If we are sensible about protecting our lives, even greater sensibility ought to be exercised in the care of our souls! "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matt. 16:26).
 - c. The person who exposes himself to evil, or who willingly lives in evil, is surrounded by many "thorns and snares." "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived" (2 Tim. 3:13).

6. Verse 6: "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it."
- a. "The hopes of at least two generations hang upon this most important rule. How can we look on a child without thoughtful anxiety? An existence is commenced for eternity. No power of earth or hell can crush it. The whole universe does not afford an object of deeper interest. It is an 'arrow in the hand of a mighty man;' a most powerful instrument of good or evil, according to the direction that is given to it. (Ps. 127:4)" (Bridges, pp.401f).
 - b. There is a right way to go, and from which we should not depart. Christianity is not a mere theory; it is a practical way of life. It is called a "way" and a "journey." To be profitable to the individual, it must be *lived*. The way we should go has been marked out by the word of God (Ps. 119:105; cf. Isa. 35:8; Matt. 7:13-14). The attitude parents ought to have in the training of their children should be that disposition the parents of Samson had: "And Manoah said, Now let thy words come to pass: what shall be the ordering of the child, and *how* shall we do unto him?" (Judg. 13:12; cf. 2 Tim. 1:5).
 - c. Children are to be carefully trained in this way. It is plain to the perceptive observer of the American family that many parents have failed. The growing problems of crime, drugs, immorality, rebellion against authority (civil and Scriptural), etc., are undeniable charges against improper upbringing. However, the problems of our society are so complex that Christian parents who sincerely try to bring up their offspring correctly often have their diligent work undermined by the ungodly pressure of ~~the~~ children's peers and teachers, and by the many corrupting features of society: TV, music, movies, literature, etc.
 - 1) The word train is from the Hebrew *chanak* which means "to put something in the mouth." The picture it gives is the feeding of an infant. The Hebrew word *chanik* (Gen. 14:14) describes intensive training, as in the preparation of doctors or air traffic controllers, with years being involved. Young people are to be trained as per *chanak* and *chanik*.
 - 2) Training can be done by instruction. We ought to teach the Bible to our children at home, and we ought fully to utilize the classes, worship services, and gospel meetings as part of their training.
 - 3) Training can be done by example. "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him" (Gen. 18:19). Instruction points the way, and good examples demonstrate and encourage them to follow the information imparted.
 - 4) Training involves proper discipline. "In this day of electricity, everything is controlled by a switch, except children." We are to chasten because it is right, not merely because we may be angry.
 - a) Proverbs 13:24: "He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes."
 - b) Ephesians 6:4: "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."
 - c) Colossians 3:21: "Fathers, provoke not your children *to anger*, lest they be discouraged."
 - d. Youth is the favorable season for this training. Train up a child. Let the child's early training be in the right direction. There are advantages of training a person when he is young: youthful hearts are tender; their minds are pliable.
 - 1) The growth of trees can be guided if it is started when it is but a tender plant. If we wait too long to begin, it may be impossible to guide it aright: this is true of trees and children. If a child is brought up with the regular habit of attending all the services of the church, he is not apt to give it up when he matures.
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- 2) Young minds are open and receptive, thirsting for information and knowledge. If we omit proper instructions, their minds will be filled with improper information. There are many sources of wrong training: TV, movies, magazines and books, and friends. If we neglect sowing the seed of God's kingdom in their minds, we may be sure the enemy will sow his tares there (cf. Matt. 23:24ff). If we neglect to teach them of the Savior when they are young, they may be indifferent or rebellious to such teaching later on.
 - e. The result of this training is good. When he is old, he will not depart from the right way. This is the general rule; there are possible exceptions. Hebrews 9:27 says that all men die, but there have been two notable exceptions (Enoch and Elijah). Romans 3:23 says that all people commit sin and fall short of God's glory, but that is not the case with those who are born with mental deficiencies, or those who die before they reach an accountable age. Solomon departed from the right way, but he returned.
 - 1) If we depart from the right way after being properly grounded as a child, there is still hope. Luke 15.
 - 2) If the child departs after being properly grounded, the parents are free from his blood. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him" (Ezek. 18:20). If the parents did their part, no recriminations will be raised against them in the Judgment.
 - 3) But what if parents neglect their responsibility? They have sinned. The parents can repent of their neglect, but that cannot make up for the omission—the children still have that gap in training.
 - a) Proverbs 22:6: "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it."
 - b) Ephesians 6:4: "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."
 - c) 1 John 3:4: "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law."
 - 4) There are many temptations and struggles with sin that confront all people, those who were properly brought up and those who did not have that advantage. Even with children who have been properly trained, they have to learn to deal with sin and temptation.
 - 5) There are no perfect parents. Even Joseph and Mary did not properly supervise their twelve-year-old son (Jesus); he did not leave Jerusalem with them; they supposed he was with friends (Luke 2).
 - 6) The passage is a general rule: if you train up a child in the way he should go, he will not depart from it when he is old. If this is an absolute rule, then if parents did their job right, their children would never fall away into sin. But every accountable person falls victim to sin (Rom. 3:23).
 - f. Catholics have boasted for a long time, that if a child is given into their control until he is seven years old, he will always be a Catholic.
 - 1) If error can be instilled into young minds so that they will ever retain it, then certainly the truth can also.
 - 2) It is a grave danger to allow young minds to be exposed to error. Error has an appeal to many people. Sectarians know how to make their falsehood appealing by emphasizing fun and frolic. Many will attend their services because of the foot-stomping music and theatrics, as well as the watered-down, pleasing human doctrine.
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- g. Suppose God should place in your hands a priceless diamond. Suppose he asked you to inscribe on it a brief sentence to be read in the Judgment.
- 1) What caution you would use in formulating the words and in inscribing them! You would clearly see the importance of what you were commanded to do.
 - 2) In a manner of speaking, this is what God has done with parents. "Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate" (Psalm 127:3-5).
 - 3) "There is no possession of a man in earthly affairs that is more precious than that of a child—a child of his own flesh and blood and bone, a child with an existence for eternity, a child that is an instrument capable of good or of evil—what a child! what a responsibility! There are two courses which lie before every child—the way that he should go, and the way he should not go....Incumbent upon parents is the obligation to train the child in the way that he should go. Such ideal training on the part of the parents calls for self-discipline, knowledge, wisdom, compassion and love. The training must begin early; it must be supported by godly example; and it must be constant. Such training will necessarily consist of watchful anxieties, of painful experiences, and of protracted patience" (ALC, 1979, p.147).
 - 4) Every word, every deed, every omission, and every demonstrated attitude on the part of the parents, are the instruments by which we make impressions on the lives of our children—for good or for evil. Children can be a source of shame to the parents (1 Sam. 3:11-14) or a source of happiness (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15; Acts 16:1).
- h. "The verb translated 'train' (*chanak*) means, first, 'to put something into the mouth,' 'to give to be tasted,' as nurses give to infants food which they have masticated in order to prepare it for their nurslings; thence it comes to signify 'to give elementary instruction,' 'to imbue,' 'to train.' The Hebrew literally is, Initiate a child in accordance with his way. The Authorized Version, with which Ewald agrees, takes the maxim to mean that the child should be trained from the first in the right path—the path of obedience and religion. This is a very true and valuable rule, but it is not what the author intends. 'His way' must mean one of two things—either his future calling and station, or his character and natural inclination and capacity. Delitzsch and Plumptre take the latter interpretation; Nowack and Bertheau the former, on the ground that *derek* is not used in the other sense suggested. But, as far as use is concerned, both explanations stand on much the same ground; and it seems more in conformity with the moralist's age and nation to see in the maxim an injunction to consider the child's nature, faculties, and temperament, in the education which is given to him. If, from his early years, a child is thus trained, when he is old, he will not depart from it. This way, this education in accordance with his idiosyncrasy, will bear fruit all his life long; it will become a second nature, and will never be obliterated....'What youth learns, age does not forget,' says the Danish proverb" [Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by Biblesoft].
- i. "A great duty enjoined, particularly to those that are the parents and instructors of children, in order to the propagating of wisdom, that it may not die with them: Train up children in that age of vanity, to keep them from the sins and snares of it, in that learning age, to prepare them for what they are designed for. Catechise them; initiate them; keep them under discipline. Train them as soldiers, who are taught to handle their arms, keep rank, and observe the word of command. Train them up, not in the way they would go (the bias of their corrupt hearts would draw them aside), but in the way they should go, the way in which, if you love them, you would have them go. Train up a child according as he is capable (as some take it), with a gentle hand, as nurses feed children, little and often, Deut 6:7....When they grow up, when they grow old, it is to be hoped, they will not depart from it. Good
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impressions made upon them then will abide upon them all their days. Ordinarily the vessel retains the savour with which it was first seasoned. Many indeed have departed from the good way in which they were trained up; Solomon himself did so. But early training may be a means of their recovering themselves, as it is supposed Solomon did. At least the parents will have the comfort of having done their duty and used the means" [Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: New Modern Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1991 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.].

7. Verse 7: "The rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower *is* servant to the lender."
 - a. These two parallel thoughts place the rich and the lender on a level which is a superior level to the poor and the borrower. This is a simple statement of fact. But in some cases, those who have the upper hand maintain it with harshness, pride, and selfishness. In our current American society, the borrower often has the legal apparatus to avoid paying his just debts, and the poor have access, indirectly, into the rich man's capital (i.e., through various poverty programs which levy taxes on the middle and upper income groups).
 - b. Solomon's statement is a caution in regards to borrowing, and a reminder about the general rule in the world that the rich and the lenders hold sway over their counterparts, the poor and the borrowers.
8. Verse 8: "He that soweth iniquity shall reap vanity: and the rod of his anger shall fail."
 - a. The irrevocable rule of "reaping what is sown" applies to the natural world and to the spiritual world. Cotton seed can produce only cotton plants; sin produces only evil, and godliness produces blessings (Gal. 6:7-8). If a person sows kindness, he will reap kindness; if he sows hatred, he will be condemned (by man and God). Thus iniquity produces vanity (emptiness).
 - b. The wise man teaches that sin will destroy its doer. This proverb and the one in verse 9 likely have a direct relationship with verse 7.
 - c. "And the rod of his anger shall fail. The writer is thinking especially of cruelty and injustice practised on a neighbour, as Delitzsch has pointed out, and he means that the rod which he has raised, the violence intended against the innocent victim, shall vanish away or fall harmlessly" [The Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by BibleSoft]. In the final analysis, the anger of an evil man, which he vents upon his victims, will be rendered impotent.
9. Verse 9: "He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed; for he giveth of his bread to the poor."
 - a. The rich often rule the poor with harshness (vs. 7); this verse pronounces a blessing on the person who has a bountiful eye (i.e., he willingly gives to the needy).
 - b. The bountiful eye is the opposite of an evil or insensitive eye. One with a bountiful eye is one who has a caring heart and a helping hand. By helping the needy, one lays up great treasures in heaven.
 - 1) Proverbs 19:17: "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again."
 - 2) Matthew 6:19-21: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."
 - 3) Hebrews 6:10: "For God *is* not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister."

B. Proverbs 22:10-21.

1. Verse 10: "Cast out the scorner, and contention shall go out; yea, strife and reproach shall cease."

- a. When we have a diseased appendix or tonsil, we remove it in order to eliminate the present pain and prevent future problems. If a scorner is removed, the same kind of benefits are obtained: contention, strife and reproach will cease.
 - b. Unruly members of the church are to be disciplined, for their own good and for the good of the whole church.
 - 1) Matthew 18:15-18: "Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear *thee*, *then* take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. *17* And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell *it* unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."
 - 2) 1 Corinthians 5:1-7: "It is reported commonly *that there is* fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you. For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, *concerning* him that hath so done this deed, In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Your glorying *is* not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us."
 - 3) 2 Thessalonians 3:6: "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us."
 - c. An old Jewish proverb says, "When a fool leaves the room it seems as though a wise man entered" (Alden, p.161).
2. Verse 11: "He that loveth pureness of heart, *for* the grace of his lips the king *shall be* his friend."
 - a. Those who are pure in heart and have grace in their lips shall have the king for a friend. From the view point of King Solomon, he would like for those closest to him to have these qualities. Surely no one would wish to have as his close friends or advisors people who were impure of heart and without graceful words (harsh, unkind, contentious in speech).
 - b. Certainly, the King of kings requires these good traits of those close to him.
 - 1) Psalms 15: " LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. *He that* backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour. In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the LORD. *He that* sweareth to *his own* hurt, and changeth not. *He that* putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these *things* shall never be moved."
 - 2) Matthew 5:8: "Blessed *are* the pure in heart: for they shall see God."
 - 3) Hebrews 12:14: "Follow peace with all *men*, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."
 3. Verse 12: "The eyes of the LORD preserve knowledge, and he overthroweth the words of the transgressor."
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- a. God will "see to it" that truth is preserved. The Bible continues to exist even though it has had countless, powerful enemies (1 Pet. 1:24-25). But truth in general will also be preserved. Wicked men may falsely accuse God's faithful, but ultimately the truth will prevail and the righteous will be vindicated! Jesus was condemned to die as a common criminal, but God vindicated him by the resurrection and the spread of the gospel. The innocent apostles were beaten, but they were vindicated. Many ancient records and relics have been preserved by God's power, which vindicate God's word. Ancient uninspired writings have been preserved which shed light on God's word and testify in behalf of it (e.g., the writings of Josephus).
 - b. The ASV gives this rendering: "The eyes of Jehovah preserve *him that hath* knowledge; But he overthroweth the words of the treacherous man." In the first clause, according to this rendering, it is the man who possesses knowledge who is preserved.
 - c. On the other hand, the transgressor's words will not stand; they will be exposed for the lie that they are. Voltaire predicted that within a 100 years, the Bible be would a thing of the past, no one would believe it or follow it. But within a hundred years his writings were generally unread, and his printing press which was used to print his blasphemous and infidelic literature, was being used to print the Bible, and his house was used as a distribution center for the Bible.
4. Verse 13: "The slothful *man* saith, *There is* a lion without, I shall be slain in the streets."
- a. The lazy individual can always find a handy excuse for not doing work. So can the lazy preacher or Christian. When Jonah ran from his duty, the devil provided a handy ship! The cowardly, unbelieving spies came back to Israel's camp with a fear-producing message: "There are giants in the land; it is a land that eats up its inhabitants; we can not subdue the people or the land!"
 - b. Serving the God of heaven often involves activities that are frightening—but they must be done! It is not an easy thing to guide the lost and those who are in religious error to see their true condition. It is easy to rationalize and excuse omission of duty, but a failure to obey is a sin of itself (Jas. 4:17).
5. Verse 14: "The mouth of strange women *is* a deep pit: he that is abhorred of the LORD shall fall therein."
- a. Warnings against strange women are given in several places in Proverbs.
 - 1) Proverbs 2:10-19: "When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul; Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee: To deliver thee from the way of the evil *man*, from the man that speaketh froward things; Who leave the paths of uprightness, to walk in the ways of darkness; Who rejoice to do evil, *and* delight in the frowardness of the wicked; Whose ways *are* crooked, and *they* froward in their paths: To deliver thee from the strange woman, *even* from the stranger *which* flattereth with her words; Which forsaketh the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God. For her house inclineth unto death, and her paths unto the dead. None that go unto her return again, neither take they hold of the paths of life."
 - 2) Proverbs 6:24-29: "To keep thee from the evil woman, from the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman. Lust not after her beauty in thine heart; neither let her take thee with her eyelids. 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. Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned? So he that goeth in to his neighbour's wife; whosoever toucheth her shall not be innocent."
 - 3) Proverbs 7:5: "That they may keep thee from the strange woman, from the stranger *which* flattereth with her words."
 - 4) Proverbs 9:10-18: "The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy *is* understanding. For by me thy days shall be multiplied, and the years of thy life shall be
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increased. If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself: but *if* thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear *it*. A foolish woman *is* clamorous: *she is* simple, and knoweth nothing. For she sitteth at the door of her house, on a seat in the high places of the city, To call passengers who go right on their ways: Whoso *is* simple, let him turn in hither: and *as for* him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him, Stolen waters are sweet, and bread *eaten* in secret is pleasant. But he knoweth not that the dead *are* there; and *that* her guests *are* in the depths of hell."

- b. The wise man here teaches that those who are not guided by the Lord will fall into their deep traps. Those who reject God's truth in some areas will be allowed to be deceived in many other areas as well (2 Thess. 2:10-12; 2 Tim. 3:13); and those who give themselves over to sinful activities will be led into them even more deeply and into other sins.
 - c. But the faithful saint can ask God to lead him away from temptations, and into safe paths (Matt. 6:13). While the sinner will put himself in the way of temptation, the saint will seek to avoid such situations.
6. Verse 15: "Foolishness *is* bound in the heart of a child; *but* the rod of correction shall drive it far from him."
- a. Corporal punishment can drive evil tendencies from the heart of a child. Young people do not have the sound judgment that comes from experience and study, thus they are ripe candidates for doing foolish things. Teenagers race their cars, and foolishly expose themselves and others to grave danger.
 - b. Young people experiment with drugs, not seeing the evil that results. Older and wiser people will divest themselves of all such foolishness. To avoid sinful and dangerous things, parents teach their children the many dangers of this life, and reinforce those instructions (when needed) by punishing their disobedience.
7. Verse 16: "He that oppresseth the poor to increase his *riches*, and he that giveth to the rich, *shall* surely come to want."
- a. One who oppresses the poor to obtain wealth will lose what he thus obtains. Many times this is so in the here and now, but is so in every case in the hereafter. One who seeks to curry favor with the rich by giving presents to them, will also come to poverty.
 - b. Men think that their schemes are so smooth that their motives are unfathomable by those they seek to deceive, but the truth may be that they can be "read like a first grade reader."

C. Proverbs 22:17-27.

1. Verses 17-21: "Bow down thine ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply thine heart unto my knowledge. For *it is* a pleasant thing if thou keep them within thee; they shall withal be fitted in thy lips. That thy trust may be in the LORD, I have made known to thee this day, even to thee. Have not I written to thee excellent things in counsels and knowledge, 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?"
 - a. We here enter another section of Proverbs. Since the beginning of chapter ten each verse, for the most part, contained a separate proverb. Here the same subject is discussed over several verses. In the present passage, Solomon again reminds his auditor that he is to submit to the words of wisdom being provided.
 - b. It is to his advantage to heed to Solomon's wise words. It is pleasant and profitable to do so. The Hebrew literally says, keep these truths "in thy belly" and apply them to the lips. Learn them fully and make the practical use of them as was intended.
 - c. The result of learning and following these truths is that the trust of the pupil will be in the Lord.
 - 1) Proverbs 3:5-6: "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own

- understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."
- 2) Hebrews 13:5-6: "*Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.*"
- d. A rhetorical question is raised, which in effect affirms the very things being asked. Solomon had written excellent things that pertain to counsels and knowledge. The aim was to show the pupil the certainty of the truth (its reliability and permanence). Another result of these words of wisdom was to provide the pupil with the right answer to them who "send unto thee" (or who "send thee"—ASV).
- 1) Luke 1:1-4: "Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word; It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed."
 - 2) 1 Timothy 4:6: "If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained."
 - 3) 1 Timothy 4:13,15-16: "Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.... Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee."
 - 4) 2 Timothy 2:15: "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."
 - 5) 1 Peter 3:15: "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and *be* ready always to *give* an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear."
2. Verses 22-23: "Rob not the poor, because he *is* poor: neither oppress the afflicted in the gate: For the LORD will plead their cause, and spoil the soul of those that spoiled them."
- a. Solomon's wise counsel contains the injunction against robbing the poor and oppressing the afflicted in the gate. Taking another man's property against his will by direct or indirect means is forbidden. It not only is wrong to rob, it is also wrong to obtain another's property through legal means in which oppression is used. The place where legal issues were resolved in those days was "in the gate" of the city.
 - b. What is implied in the latter part of verse 22 is "legal robbery" through perverting justice. This was often done in Israel (cf. 1 Kings 21). The Lord will take up the case of those who have been robbed or defrauded, and his justice will be perfect and full: those who have spoiled others, will themselves be spoiled.
3. Verses 24-25: "Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go: Lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul."
- a. We are warned against taking as close friends, those who have evil habits and ways. If we take up with a person who has a problem with anger, we will develop the same weakness, and are apt to partake of the problems he may bring on himself when we are in his company.
 - b. If we are with someone who picks fights, we might have to do battle with his enemies simply because we are with him.
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- c. The influence of those we are around affects us.
 - 1) Psalms 106:35-36: "But were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works. And they served their idols: which were a snare unto them."
 - 2) 1 Corinthians 15:33: "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners."
 4. Verses 26-27: "Be not thou *one* of them that strike hands, *or* of them that are sureties for debts. If thou hast nothing to pay, why should he take away thy bed from under thee?"
 - a. Another warning against being surety for another, a good general rule to follow. Why should you expose yourself to poverty or shame by "signing a note" for someone who may or may not be able or willing to repay his debt? Why should you lose your bed?
 - b. There are cases where it may be our Christian duty to help out a fellow-Christian in this way.
 5. Verse 28: "Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set."
 - a. The ancient landmarks were boundary stones. An unscrupulous man could, by moving these stones, steal land from his neighbor. This is strictly forbidden.
 - b. Deuteronomy 19:14: "Thou shalt not remove thy neighbour's landmark, which they of old time have set in thine inheritance, which thou shalt inherit in the land that the LORD thy God giveth thee to possess it."
 - c. "We are here taught not to invade another man's right, though we can find ways of doing it ever so secretly and plausibly, clandestinely and by fraud, without any open force. Let not property in general be entrenched upon, by robbing men of their liberties and privileges, or of any just ways of maintaining them. Let not the property of particular persons be encroached upon. The land-marks, or meer-stones, are standing witnesses to every man's right; let not those be removed quite away, for thence come wars, and fightings, and endless disputes; let them not be removed so as to take from thy neighbour's lot to thy own, for that is downright robbing him and entailing the fraud upon posterity" [Matthew Henry, *ibid.*].
 - d. A powerful analogy may be derived from this passage against making unauthorized changes to God's eternal word. He will not hold him guiltless who has tampered with his word, by removing any particle of information from it, or by adding anything to it, or by making changes to it.
 - 1) Deuteronomy 4:2: "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish *ought* from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you."
 - 2) Proverbs 30:6: "Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar."
 - 3) 2 John 1:9-11: "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into *your* house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds."
 - 4) Revelation 22:18-19: "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and *from* the things which are written in this book."
 6. Verse 29: "Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean *men*."
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- a. One who is diligent in his business dealings is apt to be exalted into the very presence of kings. His diligence, coupled with godliness and honesty, will cause him to go far. He will soon be exalted above the obscure people. This was true of Joseph and Esther.
 - b. Those saints who diligently and faithfully do the bidding of the heavenly Master, will be invited into his presence for eternity (Matt. 25:21, 34-40).
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PROVERBS 23

A. Proverbs 23:1-4.

1. Verses 1-3: "When thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what *is* before thee: And put a knife to thy throat, if thou *be* a man given to appetite. Be not desirous of his dainties: for they *are* deceitful meat."
 - a. Solomon tells his readers that when they have the honor to share a meal with a ruler (or some other wealthy individual) at a banquet or eloquent dinner, be cautious. Consider carefully the situation.
 - b. "Put a knife to thy throat"—do not overeat. Alden (p.168) says that this was the Hebrew idiom for restraining the appetite. To be a glutton in such circumstances is to give the "ruler" a bad impression of yourself. This admonition in effect tells us to show good manners and to be on our best behavior.
 - c. The wise man cautions us in verse three against becoming too enamored with the rich dainties of the occasion. If God's child cultivates a taste for the high-society lifestyle, he may lose sight of the his noble, humble calling. Christ gave this warning: "And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting [giddiness caused by wine-bibbing—W.E. Vine] and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares" (Luke 21:34).
 - d. God blesses us with the necessities of life; it is right and necessary that we strive to obtain these, but we are not to lust after the "dainties" of the wealthy.
2. Verses 4-5: "Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom. Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for *riches* certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven."
 - a. A warning against striving for wealth is given. We ought not to set our minds on becoming rich. One whose chief goal in life is to amass a fortune will make everything else subservient to that aim, thus will "fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition" (1 Tim. 6:9).
 - 1) Jeremiah 17:11: "*As* the partridge sitteth *on eggs*, and hatcheth *them* not; *so* he that getteth riches, and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool."
 - 2) Luke 12:15: "And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."
 - 3) 1 Timothy 6:10: "For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."
 - b. There is nothing inherently wrong with having wealth, but one commits great evil if he sets the obtaining and enjoying of wealth over the spiritual requirements of God.
 - 1) Matthew 6:33: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."
 - 2) Mark 10:24: "And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!"
 - 3) John 6:26-27: "Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled. Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed."
 - c. Riches are untrustworthy and deceitful. This is so because of the uncertain nature of wealth: it is easily lost or spent.

- 1) Proverbs 27:24: "For riches *are* not for ever: and doth the crown *endure* to every generation?"
 - 2) Haggai 1:6: "Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages *to put it* into a bag with holes."
 - 3) Matthew 6:19-21: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."
 - 4) 1 Timothy 6:17: "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy."
3. Verses 6-8: "Eat thou not the bread of *him that hath* an evil eye, neither desire thou his dainty meats: For as he thinketh in his heart, so *is* he: Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart *is* not with thee. The morsel *which* thou hast eaten shalt thou vomit up, and lose thy sweet words."
- a. The man with the "evil eye" is one who is stingy and hypocritical. He invites you to eat with him, but his heart is not with you; he pretends to enjoy your company, but he begrudges your eating his food. He has some ulterior motive in his invitation, and his heart is not with you although he may say all the rights words.
 - b. What is in a man's heart determines the kind of person he is or will become. If we fill our minds with godly thoughts and motives, a godly person we will be. But the converse is also true: evil thoughts and motives will corrupt us. The host in the passage has an evil mind and is sure to do what he has planned. We cannot think wrong and do right.
 - 1) Matthew 12:34-37: "O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."
 - 2) Matthew 15:18-20: "But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are *the things* which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man."
 - c. The meal we share with such an individual as the one Solomon here describes will not be pleasant on our stomach. To vomit is not to be understood as literal, but rather it describes the unpleasant effects of a repast with such a stingy, hypocritical host.
4. Verse 9: "Speak not in the ears of a fool: for he will despise the wisdom of thy words."
- a. The wise man cautions his pupil against trying to instruct a foolish person, or in trusting him with significant information. A fool cannot be confided in, and cannot be instructed in wisdom.
 - b. He will despise the wisdom of your words.
 - 1) Matthew 7:6: "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you."
 - 2) Matthew 11:20-24: "Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not: Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have
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- repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee."
- 3) Matthew 13:58: "And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief."
 - 4) Luke 4:16-32: "And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord *is* upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave *it* again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son? And he said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country. And he said, Verily, I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country. But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, *a city of Sidon*, unto a woman *that was* a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian. And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. But he passing through the midst of them went his way, And came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the sabbath days. And they were astonished at his doctrine: for his word was with power."
 - 5) Acts 13:44-51: "And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God. But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded us, *saying*, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region. But the Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts. But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium."
 - 6) Acts 28:17-29: "And it came to pass, that after three days Paul called the chief of the Jews together: and when they were come together, he said unto them, Men *and* brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people, or customs of our fathers, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. Who, when they had examined me, would have let *me* go, because there was no cause of death in me. But when the Jews spake against *it*, I was constrained to appeal unto Caesar; not that I had ought to accuse my nation of. For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see *you*, and to speak with *you*: because that for the hope of
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Israel I am bound with this chain. And they said unto him, We neither received letters out of Judaea concerning thee, neither any of the brethren that came showed or spake any harm of thee. But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against. And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into *his* lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and *out of* the prophets, from morning till evening. And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not. And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with *their* eyes, and hear with *their* ears, and understand with *their* heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and *that* they will hear it. And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, and had great reasoning among themselves."

5. Verses 10-11: "Remove not the old landmark; and enter not into the fields of the fatherless: For their redeemer *is* mighty; he shall plead their cause with thee."
 - a. Another warning is here given forbidding the moving of a boundary marker. This would be tantamount to stealing land from a neighbor. A second thought is attached to this in our present text: do not enter into the fields of the fatherless.
 - 1) Deuteronomy 19:14: "Thou shalt not remove thy neighbour's landmark, which they of old time have set in thine inheritance, which thou shalt inherit in the land that the LORD thy God giveth thee to possess it."
 - 2) Proverbs 22:28: "Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set."
 - b. Evil men in every generation have taken advantage of those who cannot defend themselves, especially families having no male leadership. Widows and their fatherless children have been defrauded many times by wicked men. To "enter into the fields of the fatherless" is to take possession of the crops therein, or of the fields.
 - c. Such unfortunate persons seem to be utterly defenseless and vulnerable, but God has appointed himself as their defender (redeemer). He will not lose the case! One who seeks to defraud the fatherless will find the Lord arrayed against him!
 - 1) Psalms 10:14: "Thou hast seen *it*: for thou beholdest mischief and spite, to requite *it* with thy hand: the poor committeth himself unto thee; thou art the helper of the fatherless."
 - 2) Psalms 10:17-18: "LORD, thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear: To judge the fatherless and the oppressed, that the man of the earth may no more oppress."
 - 3) Proverbs 22:22-23: "Rob not the poor, because he *is* poor: neither oppress the afflicted in the gate: For the LORD will plead their cause, and spoil the soul of those that spoiled them."
 - d. The "redeemer" in the usual case was the nearest relative of the deceased father. But since Solomon spoke of this *redeemer* (defender) as *mighty*, his reference is to God. Ordinary men could not be properly called mighty.
 6. Verse 12: "Apply thine heart unto instruction, and thine ears to the words of knowledge."
 - a. No one ever reaches the state where he needs no further instruction. We need to be reminded on a continuing basis of the fundamentals of Christianity lest we lose sight of their importance.
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Temptations of sin and religious error are rampant.

- b. To defend ourselves against these, we need a ready knowledge of God's word.
 - 1) Psalms 119:11: "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee."
 - 2) 2 Peter 1:12: "Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know *them*, and be established in the present truth."
 - 3) 2 Peter 3:1: "This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in *both* which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance."
 - 4) 1 John 2:1: "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."
7. Verses 13-14: "Withhold not correction from the child: for *if* thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell."
 - a. Children need corrective discipline. They must learn to respect and obey their parents and other authorities. They must learn to avoid doing things that are dangerous to themselves or others. They must learn to avoid things that corrupt their spirits. These lessons need occasionally to be re-enforced by punishment.
 - b. No caring parent can punish his child without feelings of remorse and pity. But properly administered punishment will not kill the child, and his tears ought not deter our doing the right thing. If the end result is the deliverance of his soul from hell, the punishment was in the child's best interest; it was the outgrowth of love, not hatred. "Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying" (Prov. 19:18).

B. Proverbs 23:15-28.

1. Verses 15-16: "My son, if thine heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine. Yea, my reins shall rejoice, when thy lips speak right things."
 - a. The godly parent is well-pleased when his child shows wisdom and speaks right words. Parents are rightly concerned about their children's health, education, happiness and success in their earthly endeavors. They ought to be far more concerned about their spiritual condition.
 - b. How thankful and happy ought we to be when our children live good and faithful Christian lives!
2. Verses 17-18: "Let not thine heart envy sinners: but *be thou* in the fear of the LORD all the day long. For surely there is an end; and thine expectation shall not be cut off."
 - a. The tendency many of us have is to be envious of sinful people who have met with "success" in this world. We see some wealthy man who lives "the lifestyle of the rich and famous," and our hearts may ache because we cannot have the same advantages. These verses warn us away from such thoughts and inclinations.
 - 1) Proverbs 3:31: "Envy thou not the oppressor, and choose none of his ways."
 - 2) Proverbs 24:1: "Be not thou envious against evil men, neither desire to be with them."
 - 3) Proverbs 24:19: "Fret not thyself because of evil *men*, neither be thou envious at the wicked."
 - b. Those who appear to be so successful and happy may not be happy at all. Howard Hughes was one of the world's most wealthy men—and one of its most miserable!
 - c. Material prosperity cannot satisfy for long. There are only so many cars in which one can glory. One can only eat so much in a day's time. One has the time and strength to participate in only a certain amount of pleasures. Although wealth might give one the privilege of traveling all over the world,

travel soon becomes boresome.

- d. Those who live in sin are far beneath the status of a faithful Christian. He has his reward in the here and now, together with many anxieties and troubles, but in eternity the sinner can have only anguish and loss. The faithful saint sees this world as a training stage through which he must pass in preparation for eternity. By avoiding sinful urges and practices, and developing holy habits and godly lives, we can have happiness and contentment here, and an eternal life of glory in the hereafter.
3. Verses 19-21: "Hear thou, my son, and be wise, and guide thine heart in the way. Be not among wine-bibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh: For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe *a man* with rags."
 - a. Solomon warns his pupil here against keeping company with drunkards and gluttons. First, he urges his son to be wise, and to guide his heart in the right way. The wise man then tells him to keep away from the wine-bibbers and gluttons (cf. 1 Cor. 15:33). We are influenced by those we have as companions, thus ought we to select our friends with care. Many young people are not popular with their peers, and when someone who has evil habits comes along and shows an interest in them, they want a friend so much that they might overlook the unsavory influence he exerts.
 - b. Those who are wine-bibbers and gluttons will come to poverty, thus they are to be avoided for economic reasons. But these actions are sinful, and to participate with them is to make me a sinner also.
 - c. A wine-bibber is one who drinks wine. Solomon says that the way of the wine-bibber is to be avoided. Rather, we are to follow wisdom and be guided in the way (the true and right way; the way of God).
 - d. The way of gluttony is to be avoided, and the right way is to be wisely followed. A glutton is one who overeats to the extreme. Eating is not wrong, but gorging oneself is. The ancient glutton would gorge himself, then disgorge in order to re-gorge! The historian, Will Durant, offers the following about the eating practices of ancient Rome: "Custom allowed the diner to empty his stomach with an emetic after a heavy banquet. Some gluttons performed this operation during the meal and then returned to appease their hunger; *vomunt ut edant, edunt ut vomant*, said Seneca—"they vomit to eat, and eat to vomit." Such behavior was exceptional, and no worse than the braggart drunkenness of American conventioners" (Will Durant, *Caesar and Christ*, p.377).
 - e. "Drunkenness rattles and stupefies the mind and renders the person affected thereby unfit for responsible position or skill. Gluttony clogs the body, producing drowsiness, and renders a person unfit for a gainful trade, or skill, or profession. The result of either or both would be inevitably an end of poverty and rags. Solomon would have his son to walk in the right way and to never come into company with those who walked in such a drunken, gluttonous way" (ALC, 1979, pp.152f). If he is to avoid their company, he is also to avoid their practices.
 - 1) Romans 13:13-14: "Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to *fulfil* the lusts *thereof*."
 - 2) 1 Corinthians 11:21: "For in eating every one taketh before *other* his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken."
 4. Verse 22: "Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old."
 - a. Solomon instructs his son (and any student of his writings) to heed the words of his father. He urges him to despise not his mother in her latter years.
 - b. This last part does not imply that the son can despise his mother before she becomes old. His point

is based on the common lot of mothers to be forgotten or ignored in their declining years. Such ought not be the case!

5. Verses 23-25: "Buy the truth, and sell *it* not; *also* wisdom, and instruction, and understanding. The father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice: and he that begetteth a wise *child* shall have joy of him. Thy father and thy mother shall be glad, and she that bare thee shall rejoice."
 - a. The son is urged to buy the truth and sell it not. The truth is extremely important to our well-being: spiritual and physical.
 - 1) John 8:32: "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."
 - 2) John 17:17: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."
 - 3) Romans 1:16-17: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith."
 - 4) Romans 6:1-18: "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness* of *his* resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members *as* instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness."
 - 5) Romans 10:1-3: "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."
 - 6) 1 Peter 1:22-25: "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, *see that ye* love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh *is* as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."
 - b. The truth is to be highly prized.
 - 1) Matthew 13:45-46: "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly

pearls: Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it."

- 2) Revelation 3:18: "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and *that* the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see."
- c. Many counterfeits are offered by men.
- 1) 2 Corinthians 2:17: "For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ."
 - 2) 2 Corinthians 11:3: "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."
 - 3) 2 Corinthians 11:13-15: "For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works."
 - 4) 1 John 4:1: "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world."
- d. With the truth also comes wisdom, instruction, and understanding. The father of such a righteous son will have reason to rejoice; both the father and mother will be glad. There is nothing more pleasing to Christian parents than to see their children walking in the glorious light of the gospel.
6. Verses 26-28: "My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways. For a whore *is* a deep ditch; and a strange woman *is* a narrow pit. She also lieth in wait as *for* a prey, and increaseth the transgressors among men."
- a. Although the words ostensibly are addressed by Solomon to his son, the fact is that these are the words of God addressed to his offspring. The son is instructed to behold the ways being presented, and to follow them. The danger of attending to the call of prostitutes is described as a deep ditch and a narrow pit.
 - b. The harlot is described as one who lies in wait for the approach of an unsuspecting victim, as a wild beast skulks in hiding, allowing its prey to draw near, unaware of the imminent danger. Solomon also declares that such a woman causes sin to increase.

C. Proverbs 23:29-35.

1. Verses 29-30: "Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine."
- a. The wise man graphically depicts the awful danger of strong drink. He lists six questions in verse 29. He describes one who has woe, sorrow, contentions, babbling, wounds without cause, and redness of eyes. His answer is in verse 30: they that tarry long at wine; that go to seek mixed wine. This is the longest single passage on the subject of alcohol in the Bible; its information should not be ignored or depreciated.
 - b. The "mixed wine" of verse 30 is said to be the strongest kind (Bridges, p.442). "They that go to seek mixed wine; i.e. go to the wine house, place of revelry, where they may taste and give their opinion upon 'mixed wine,' *mimsak*, wine mingled with certain spices or aromatic substances, or else simply with water, as it was too luscious to be drunk undiluted (see on Prov 9:2)" [Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by BibleSoft].

- c. Those who come under the influence of alcohol are prone to exaggerate their troubles, become contentious, speak without making sense, get into brawls which cause injuries for no purpose, and develop redness of eyes. When a man begins a bout of drinking, he may be calm and composed for a while, without any apparent effect to the casual observer. But before long, the power of the drug is unleashed in the man, and its presence cannot be denied. Some men turn into crying babies; others become obnoxious or belligerent; some who are usually quiet will become extremely talkative. The end result is the unconscious state and the hangover.
 - d. Scientific studies have shown that the higher faculties of the mind are first affected by alcohol. The individual's ability to make accurate judgments becomes diminished. A drunken person will speak foolish things; he will attempt feats he would not consider when sober. His will-power is overridden, breaking down his inhibitions. Hence, one under the influence of alcohol will do things he would not do if sober: curse, commit fornication, gamble, take drugs, rob, murder, etc. One who has imbibed sufficient alcohol for these faculties to be adversely affected will deny that they have been affected. He simply is in no condition to understand his true condition. How can any person think that he can "hold his liquor" or that he "knows his limit?" In the movies, drunkenness is exalted; the drunken antics of the character being portrayed are presented as safe, with few or any dangers to him-self or others. But this is not the way it is in the real world!
2. Verse 31: "Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, *when* it moveth itself aright.
- a. He commands that we keep ourselves away from the temptation of wine. There is something pleasant and appealing to the advertisements of the liquor industry. The glass filled with sparkling wine has a certain appeal. The passage describes the wine as moving "itself aright" in the cup, which pictures its *life, texture, and body*. The saliva glands can even be activated by a quick look, for the mind vividly recalls the pleasing taste! If there were nothing wrong with drinking alcoholic beverages, why was this warning issued?
 - b. To those who think the Savior produced alcoholic wine (John 2), could the Lord have remained sinless while directly opposing the sentiment of this verse? If he produced alcoholic wine for the wedding feast, he most assuredly would have been encouraging the very thing Solomon is forbidding! If he drank alcoholic beverages, he would have been violating the very precept Solomon gives here!
3. Verse 32: "At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder."
- a. Here he graphically describes its end result: It bites like a serpent and stings like an adder! The results of any drinking bout that leads to drunkenness include redness of eyes, plus the effects of a hangover. The results of a life of such bouts is the intense craving for the effects of alcohol, in many cases the effects of "DTs," and often times an early death. Some of the by-products of drunkenness are: lives which are destroyed in accidents caused by drunk driving; economic hardships on the family of the drinker; lost jobs and wages; abuse of family members; destroyed health and happiness.
 - b. But the worst consequence is the lost soul of the drunkard.
 - 1) 1 Corinthians 6:9-11: "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."
 - 2) Galatians 5:19-21: "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which
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I tell you before, as I have also told *you* in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

4. Verse 33: "Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things."
 - a. The wise man shows some of these side effects of drinking. One who is under the influence of this drug will often take interest in other women (or men); they are also prone to speak perverse things.
 - b. The natural product of sin is more sin. Before one starts drinking, he needs to be aware of the fact that he may be led to do things he would not even consider doing when he is in his right mind. Stopping for a "little drink with the boys" can easily lead to a destroyed marriage and home!
 5. Verse 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."
 - a. Solomon points out the foolishness that characterizes many who become drunken. They are as apt to try to sleep in the sea or lie down on the mast of a ship. How many men have lost their lives by going to sleep on a railroad track or on a busy highway, not realizing their great danger? We would know a man was playing the fool if he thought he could lie down in water for a little nap, or that he could sleep on the horizontal part of a ship's sail structure.
 - b. How many people have committed robbery, or rape, or murder while under the influence of alcohol, never comprehending the criminal nature of their actions?
 6. Verse 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."
 - a. Here the writer discusses some of the things that others can do to a man who has passed out from drunkenness. He can be beaten, and never be aware of it at the time. Drunks are the prime targets of petty crooks; they can be "rolled" with hardly any danger of arrest.
 - b. The foolhardiness of a man given to alcohol is seen by the wise man's final thought: "When shall I awake? I will seek it yet again." Drunks find it hard to learn the simplest lessons!
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Have A Drink?

What is the proper outlook on the drinking of wine?

A. INTRODUCTION

1. Drunkenness is one of the most serious national problems in the US.
 - a. It has been called the number 1 social problem ("Gospel Advocate," 3/29/73).
 - b. It is called the third most serious health problem (ibid., 9/12/68).
 - c. There are upwards of 30 million alcoholics/problem drinkers.
 - d. In 1974 there were 450,000 child alcoholics (Memphis "Commercial Appeal," 10/20/74).
 - e. Mississippi sold 1,640,151 cases of liquor in 1974 (ibid., 2/2/75).
2. The lines dividing right from wrong are being erased in our society.
 - a. It is more difficult now to show people the difference between sin and righteousness, and between truth and error.
 - b. More and more are advocating "moderate drinking"—even in the church.
3. We must be seriously concerned about the purity of the church.
 - a. Young people are especially vulnerable to the enticements of the world.
 - b. We must teach the truth on "doctrinal" issues and moral issues.
4. Drunkenness is plainly forbidden in the Bible.
 - a. The Old Testament gave prohibitions against it.
 - 1) Leviticus 10:9: "Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die: *it shall be* a statute for ever throughout your generations."
 - 2) Proverbs 20:1: "Wine *is* a mocker, strong drink *is* raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise."
 - 3) Proverbs 23:29-31: "Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine. Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, *when* it moveth itself aright."
 - 4) Isaiah 28:7,11,13: "But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble *in* judgment.....For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people....But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, *and* there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken."
 - b. The New Testament gives prohibitions.
 - 1) Ephesians 5:18: "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is **excess**; but be filled with the Spirit" [*Excess* ("riot"—ASV)]. The same Greek word is used in Luke 15:13: "And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with **riotous** living." Drunkenness leads to riotous, shameful, reckless living.

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- 2) Warnings are given against it:
 - a) Luke 21:34: "And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and *so* that day come upon you unawares."
 - b) Romans 13:13: "Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying."
 - 3) Drunkenness will keep one from entering heaven.
 - a) 1 Corinthians 6:10: "Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God."
 - b) Galatians 5:21: "Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told *you* in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."
 - 4) We are to withdraw fellowship from drunkards:
 - a) 1 Corinthians 5:11: "But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat."
 - b) 2 Thessalonians 3:6: "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us."
 - c. To be drunken is to commit sin: "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (Jas. 1:13-15; cf. 1 John 3:4; 5:17).
 - 1) This condition affects one's body, his mind, and his relations with others.
 - 2) It has its most awful effects on the soul!
5. When is one drunk?
- a. At which point:
 - 1) When his speech is slurred and his movements unsteady?
 - 2) When he sees double?
 - 3) When he passes out?
 - b. Which point is meant here?
 - 1) 1 Corinthians 6:9-10: "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God."
 - 2) Ephesians 5:18: "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit."
 - c. The difference between social drinking and drunkenness is a difference in degree, not a difference in kind.
 - 1) *Methusos* is used in 1 Corinthians 6; it means "one softened with drink" (Young). The word *soften* means "to weaken the resistance or opposition."
 - 2) *Methuskos* is used in Ephesians 5:18 (different form of the same word); it means "to begin to be
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softened" (Young).

- 3) One is drunk when he *begins* to be softened (according to the definition).
- 4) Medical studies have shown that 0.005% (1 drop:20,000 drops of blood) causes the will power, judgment, self-control to be weakened ("Gospel Advocate," 3/29/73). One-half can of beer or one-half cocktail provides this level of contamination.
- 5) One drink makes a man one drink drunk; if 10 drinks makes him falling-down drunk, 1 drink makes him one tenth drunk; a difference in degree, not in kind.

6. Objections.

a. "Wine is mentioned in the Bible."

- 1) But *wine* does not always mean intoxicating wine.
 - a) Sometimes intoxicating wine is meant:
 - (1) Genesis 49:12: "His eyes *shall be* red with wine, and his teeth white with milk."
 - (2) Luke 1:15: "For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb."
 - b) Non-alcoholic wine is indicated in other passages:
 - (1) Isaiah 16:10: "And gladness is taken away, and joy out of the plentiful field; and in the vineyards there shall be no singing, neither shall there be shouting: the treaders shall tread out no wine in *their* presses; I have made *their vintage* shouting to cease."
 - (2) Isaiah 65:8: "Thus saith the LORD, As the new wine is found in the cluster, and *one* saith, Destroy it not; for a blessing *is* in it: so will I do for my servants' sakes, that I may not destroy them all."
 - (3) Matthew 9:17: "Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved."
- 2) *Yayin* (Hebrew; Old Testament) and *oinos* (Greek; New Testament) are the original words; one must consult the context to learn if it is intoxicating or non-intoxicating. In English, *wine* only has reference to an intoxicating drink.

b. "Jesus turned water into alcoholic wine (John 2:1-11)."

- 1) If so, then how do you reconcile that action with the inspired word?
 - a) Proverbs 20:1: "Wine *is* a mocker, strong drink *is* raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise."
 - b) Proverbs 23:29-35: "Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine. Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, *when* it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things. 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. 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."
 - c) Habakkuk 2:15: "Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that putteth thy bottle to *him*, and maketh *him* drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness!"

- d) 1 Corinthians 6:10: "Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God."
 - 2) If he encouraged drinking, he encouraged drunkenness. Six waterpots of wine were produced; each container held 2-3 firkins each, which equals to 100-150 gallons (8½ gallon per firkin). These waterpots were handmade, thus would not all be exactly the same size.
 - 3) Ancient writers said the best wines were unintoxicating; that the ordinary Roman drink was grape juice mixed with spices ("Gospel Advocate," 5/9/74).
 - 4) To keep grape juice, they boiled it down into a substance like molasses; it was consumed by spreading it on bread; or mixed with water and spices or herbs, and drunk either hot or cold (ibid.).
 - 5) The guests could recognize the high quality of the wine Jesus produced even after having "drunk freely" (John 2:10).
 - 6) There is no proof that Jesus made intoxicating wine; we have good reason to say that he did not.
 - c. "Paul's statement to Timothy: 'Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities' (1 Tim. 5:23)."
 - 1) This was for a medicinal use, not for social purposes.
 - 2) He was told to use a little wine for his stomach's sake, and for other ailments.
 - 3) The context does not indicate whether it was intoxicating or non-intoxicating.
 - d. "Jesus drank wine: 'For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children' (Matt. 11:18-19)."
 - 1) Was this intoxicating or intoxicating wine? It must be reconciled with the strong prohibitions of Proverbs. 20:1 and 23:29-35. Since our Lord never committed an act of sin, thus never violated a single principle of the Old Testament Law, we know the argument is false.
 - a) John 8:46: "Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?"
 - b) Hebrews 4:15: "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as *we are, yet* without sin."
 - c) Hebrews 10:7: "Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God."
 - d) 1 Peter 2:21-22: "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth."
 - 2) The source of the statement (Matt. 11:18-19) was his enemies: they say. The same people said that John had a devil! Christ's enemies also said he had a devil and was mad (John 10:20). Were these people right?
 - 3) If they were right in saying Jesus was a winebibber, they were also right in saying he was a glutton. But they were wrong in both charges! "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, *see that ye* love one another with a pure heart fervently" (1 Pet. 2:22).
 - 4) John ate locust and wild honey (a strange diet); Jesus ate regular food. This is the contrast the Lord made in the passage.
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- e. "Much wine is forbidden of deacons; this implies they can be given to a little wine. 'Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous....Likewise *must* the deacons *be* grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre' (1 Tim. 3:3,8).
- 1) But how much is much and how much is little? Since the individual's will power and judgment are affected almost immediately, how could the imbiber have the sound judgment to know when he has had enough, and how could he have the conviction to be able and willing to stop? What is the safe course? Total abstinence.
 - 2) To "be given to" is from the Greek *prosecho* which means: "to give one's self up to, be addicted to, engage in, be occupied with" (*Analytical Greek Lexicon*, p.349). Is a Christian right if he is addicted to a little wine. What is forbidden is being addicted to any wine.
 - 3) What proves too much proves nothing. The qualifications of deacons (and elders) is to appoint those men who have the highest spiritual characters. The qualifications are to set them apart from the rest of the saints.
 - a) Their not being given to much wine set the deacons apart from the rest of the brethren.
 - b) If deacons are forbidden to be given to much wine, but have the right to be given to a little wine, then the rest of the church can be given to much wine.
 - c) But it is admitted that to be given to much wine is to be a drunkard.
 - 4) "The elder is not to indulge in the use of any beverage, especially alcoholic, that would tend to unbalance mind and body. Every Christian should avoid such. The priests under the Old Testament were forbidden to use wine or strong drink (Lev. 10:9). All Christians are priests (1 Pet. 5:4-9), the antitype of Old Testament priests, therefore, should refrain from intoxicants. Since deacons were forbidden to be 'given to *much* wine' (1 Tim. 3:8), it is argued they and elders may drink some wine. Paul told Timothy to 'use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities' (1 Tim. 5:23), therefore, the use of wine was limited to medicinal purposes, not for regular or social use" (Hearn, MSOP Lectures, pp.72f).
- f. "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 6:9-10).
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PROVERBS 24

A. Proverbs 24:1-16.

1. Verses 1-2: "Be not thou envious against evil men, neither desire to be with them. For their heart studieth destruction, and their lips talk of mischief."
 - a. The wise man warns against being envious of evil people or having a desire to be with them. These warnings are given in view of the fact evil men are preparing themselves for destruction, and their speech has the doing of mischief as its object. One who seeks to please God will avoid these pitfalls. Obedience to God pays off, although the payday may not be immediately forthcoming.
 - b. "Be not thou envious against evil men (see on Prov 23:17, where a similar warning is given, and comp. Ver. 19 below). 'Men of wickedness,' wholly given over to evil. Neither desire to be with them. Their company is pollution, and association with them makes you a partner in their sinful doings.... For their heart studieth destruction. The grounds of the warning are here given, as in Prov 1:15. 'Destruction' (*shod*); Vulgate, *rapinas*, 'violence' of all kinds, e.g., robbery, murder. Their lips talk of mischief; utter lies and slanders which may injure other people or bring themselves profit. Admiration of such men and intercourse with them must be repugnant to every religious soul" [The Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by BibleSoft].
2. Verses 3-4: "Through wisdom is an house builded; and by understanding it is established: And by knowledge shall the chambers be filled with all precious and pleasant riches."
 - a. Wisdom must be used in constructing a house, by understanding it is established, and good knowledge must be employed in order to fill it with pleasant and precious riches. The iniquity of the evil man (verses 1-2) cannot establish his house; it is like an elaborate sand castle on the beach—it will stand only until high tide; and like a beautiful snow-man—it can last only until the weather warms.
 - b. But the *house* of a righteous man is constructed on the firm foundation of God's word; it will stand the ravages of trouble, tormentors, and time.
 - 1) Matthew 7:21-27: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it."
 - 2) Luke 6:48: "He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock."
 - c. The present treasures of a spiritual life are far superior to the literal treasures of earth (1 Pet. 3:3-4; John 6:27). Its ultimate reward far surpasses the treasures of wickedness (Matt. 6:19-21; Rom. 8:18; 2 Pet. 1:1-4). "Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh *but* in vain (Ps. 127:1).
 - d. Verse three also teaches the grand truth that a house does not happen—it is built by someone. "For every house is builded by some *man*; but he that built all things *is* God" (Heb. 3:4).

3. Verses 5-6: "A wise man *is* strong; yea, a man of knowledge increaseth strength. For by wise counsel thou shalt make thy war: and in multitude of counsellors *there is* safety."
- a. The righteous man who possesses wisdom does not need what the wicked man can give him (verses 1-2); he is able to build and establish his spiritual house (verses 3-4); and he has greater strength than the wicked (verses 5-6). Wisdom and knowledge give strength.
 - b. In secular affairs, wisdom and knowledge have been able to produce machines which give their operators powers to do wonderful things. We have conquered distance by modern means of transportation and communication. We have defeated many diseases. We have become able to wage war decisively. Rehoboam rejected the wise counsel of his oldest advisors, and heeded that of the young men: "And king Rehoboam consulted with the old men, that stood before Solomon his father while he yet lived, and said, How do ye advise that I may answer this people? And they spake unto him, saying, If thou wilt be a servant unto this people this day, and wilt serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be thy servants for ever. But he forsook the counsel of the old men, which they had given him, and consulted with the young men that were grown up with him, *and* which stood before him: And he said unto them, What counsel give ye that we may answer this people, who have spoken to me, saying, Make the yoke which thy father did put upon us lighter? And the young men that were grown up with him spake unto him, saying, Thus shalt thou speak unto this people that spake unto thee, saying, Thy father made our yoke heavy, but make thou *it* lighter unto us; thus shalt thou say unto them, My little *finger* shall be thicker than my father's loins. And now whereas my father did lade you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke: my father hath chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions" (1 Kings 12:6-11).
 - c. Wisdom and knowledge help us to avoid many mistakes. Secular rulers can know if a proposed war is likely to be disastrous, thus stay out of it. In private affairs, we can often learn whether a business venture is apt to fail, thus make other plans.
 - d. Wisdom and knowledge concerning spiritual realities can guide us into the way of life that pleases God, that rewards the soul, and which leads to heaven. A righteous man possesses knowledge and wisdom which is unowned by the wicked man, and thus makes the righteous person far stronger. The wicked shall not "stand" in the Judgment, but the righteous man will have the strength to do so because he has followed God in life.
 - 1) Psalms 1: "Blessed *is* the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight *is* in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. The ungodly *are* not so: but *are* like the chaff which the wind driveth away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish."
 - 2) 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10: "*Which is* a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer: Seeing *it is* a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day."

- e. The passage extols the power possessed by the wise and knowledgeable individual. He operates by
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wisdom in all his affairs, and will seek the counsel of others who possess sound wisdom.

4. Verse 7: "Wisdom *is* too high for a fool: he openeth not his mouth in the gate."
 - a. One who is accounted foolish by Solomon will not obtain wisdom, for it is above his head. The foolish man in the Bible is not necessarily one who is without intelligence. Some are foolish because of physical deficiencies or injuries; but some are fools because they choose to be foolish.
 - b. One who denies the existence of God is described as a fool (Ps. 14:1). We have many today who are highly educated and intelligent in worldly affairs, but because they deny God, they are foolish men. Only a foolish mind would reject the concept of the Supreme Being, since there are so many plain and undeniable evidences of his existence. One who rejects the Bible as God's word is likewise foolish in view of the many strong, plain, and irrefutable proofs that it originated with God. Those who live for pleasure, wallow in sin, and otherwise live as if there were no God in heaven to whom there is accountability, are foolish. How could anyone be called anything but foolish when he willfully closes his mind to the truth?
 - c. Those who are naturally foolish are not selected to be judges in the gate. A fool's counsel is not respected. (Some who have a cynical view of politicians and political appointees may question this conclusion!) The foolish have little that is profitable to say; many of these know that and remain silent; others will speak their foolishness but what they say will go unheeded by the wise.
5. Verses 8-9: "He that deviseth to do evil shall be called a mischievous person. The thought of foolishness *is* sin: and the scorner *is* an abomination to men."
 - a. God has nothing good to say about those who devise evil in their hearts. Such a person's actions are hated by the Lord (Prov. 6:18). Our modern English word *mischievous* denotes something that a little child or a puppy or kitten does. The word used by the inspired writer carries a much more serious thought: "wicked device" (Young, p.664).
 - b. The thought of foolishness is sinful. He is not saying that the mere presence of a foolish notion constitutes a sin. Everyone has foolish thoughts to pop into their minds. What makes it wrong is the lodgment of such a thought, that is, if we give it room, and invite it to stay. Another thing making it wrong is if we give voice or action to its evil intent. "You cannot keep the birds from flying over your head, but you can prevent their building a nest in your hair." You cannot keep wrongful thoughts from unexpectedly appearing in your mind, but you can evict them. But by filling our minds with the beautiful things of the gospel, we can avoid many foolish and hurtful notions: "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things *are* honest, whatsoever things *are* just, whatsoever things *are* pure, whatsoever things *are* lovely, whatsoever things *are* of good report; if *there be* any virtue, and if *there be* any praise, think on these things" (Phil. 4:8).
 - c. A parallel thought is given in the second part of verse 9: as God considers the foolish thought to be sin, so men count scorners to be abomination. Both things are wrong.
6. Verse 10: "*If* thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength *is* small."
 - a. A simple truth, but profound at the same time. It is simple because it is so easy to grasp; it is profound because it is difficult to correct. He states: if one faints in the day of adversity, his strength is too small (narrow; inadequate).
 - 1) Jeremiah 12:5: "If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and *if* in the land of peace, *wherein* thou trustedst, *they wearied thee*, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?"
 - 2) Hebrews 12:4: "Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin."

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- b. God does not throw us into tribulations and temptations which are too great for us to handle (provided we are sincerely following him: praying, worshiping, living right).
- 1) Matthew 6:13: "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen."
 - 2) 1 Corinthians 10:12-13: "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God *is* faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear *it*."
7. Verses 11-12: "If thou forbear to deliver *them that are* drawn unto death, and *those that are* ready to be slain; 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?"
- a. Solomon again gets into the human mind, and examines its workings. If one who considers himself a child of God will not offer assistance to one who is about to die when it is within his power to help, and he tries to feign ignorance of the need, how can he hide his omission of duty from God?
- 1) Jeremiah 11:20: "But, O LORD of hosts, that judgest righteously, that triest the reins and the heart, let me see thy vengeance on them: for unto thee have I revealed my cause."
 - 2) John 1:48: "Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee."
 - 3) Revelation 2:23: "And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works."
 - 4) James 4:17: "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth *it* not, to him it is sin."
- b. God knows our hearts: our motives are completely open to him; our actions are naked to his eye; he knows what our abilities and opportunities are; he will render judgment according to our works.
- 1) Ezekiel 3:17-21: "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked *man* shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul. Again, When a righteous *man* doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumblingblock before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless if thou warn the righteous *man*, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he is warned; also thou hast delivered thy soul."
 - 2) Acts 20:26-27: "Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I *am* pure from the blood of all *men*. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God."
 - 3) Romans 14:10-12: "But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, *As* I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."
 - 4) 2 Corinthians 5:10: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad."
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- 5) Hebrews 4:13: "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things *are* naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do."
 - 6) Hebrews 6:10: "For God *is* not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister."
 - c. We are all to be judged in the last day, therefore we must not withhold the gospel from other men or from our own lives.
 - 1) Jeremiah 20:9: "Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But *his word* was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not *stay*." Mark 16:15-16: "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."
 - 2) Acts 4:19-20: "But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."
 - 3) Romans 1:14-17: "I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith."
 - 4) 1 Corinthians 9:16: "For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!"
 - 5) Revelation 20:12-15: "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."
 8. Verses 13-14: "My son, eat thou honey, because *it is* good; and the honeycomb, *which is* sweet to thy taste: 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."
 - a. The wise man enjoins his student to eat honey because it is good for him and is pleasant to the taste. Solomon recognized the food value of honey, as well as its good taste. But his statement is intended as an illustration, as he quickly shows.
 - b. What honey is to the palate, let wisdom be to the mind; as we naturally crave the things which satisfy the taste buds, so must we desire to give the soul that which sustains and satisfies it. In so doing, we will not lose our reward or have our expectations disappointed.
 - c. We are to cultivate a taste for the truth—a genuine love for the Gospel.
 - 1) Matthew 5:6: "Blessed *are* they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."
 - 2) Psalms 19:7-14: "The law of the LORD *is* perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD *is* sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD *are* right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD *is* pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD *is* clean,
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enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD *are* true *and* righteous altogether. More to be desired *are they* than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: *and* in keeping of them *there is* great reward. Who can understand *his* errors? cleanse thou me from secret *faults*. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous *sins*; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer."

9. Verses 15-16: "Lay not wait, O wicked *man*, against the dwelling of the righteous; spoil not his resting place: For a just *man* falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief."
 - a. The wicked man is warned against lying in wait to take over the house of the righteous. A righteous man may fall victim to his enemies, but the Lord will see to it that he ultimately succeeds, even though he may be afflicted many times; but the wicked man will be sorely punished for his outrages.
 - b. Matthew 5:10-12: "Blessed *are* they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when *men* shall revile you, and persecute *you*, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great *is* your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."
 - c. Romans 8:18: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are* not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

B. Proverbs 24:17-34.

1. Verses 17-18: "Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth: Lest the LORD see *it*, and it displease him, and he turn away his wrath from him."
 - a. We are cautioned against rejoicing when our enemy suffers a sore defeat. To do so violates the very spirit of the religion of Christ, and was here forbidden to the Old Testament saints.
 - b. But there is little sympathy in the world for others, even in our great country where the gospel has had its best influence in modern times. Lack of genuine concern over the heartaches and troubles of the unfortunate is caused by the sin of selfishness, which also lies at the core of most sins and crimes. Occasionally, some special case arises (as when a hurricane strikes) which catches the public fancy, and a great amount of money is forthcoming, but thousands of day-to-day cases go unnoticed.
 - c. Many times, in the Lord's church, members are unconcerned over the weaknesses of some and apostasy of others. Then there are others who suffer in silence from want of the daily necessities, and the rich take no notice.
 - d. A sympathetic heart ought to be in evidence when a brother falls into sin or trouble; or when an enemy has hardships. There is no room for a happy heart when anyone has troubles, except in regards to the success of truth.
 - e. If we rejoice over the fall of an enemy, the Lord will take note of our attitude; it shows the absence of love and the presence of malice. The Lord is apt to take away the punishment, and perchance visit it upon us.
2. Verses 19-20: "Fret not thyself because of evil *men*, neither be thou envious at the wicked; For there shall be no reward to the evil *man*; the candle of the wicked shall be put out."
 - a. Lest his student get the idea that he ought to envy the wicked, Solomon warns him of the end result of that kind of life: there is no reward for him; his "candle" will be extinguished.
 - b. Psalms 73:1-18: "Truly God *is* good to Israel, *even* to such as are of a clean heart. But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped. For I was envious at the foolish, *when* I saw

the prosperity of the wicked. For *there are* no bands in their death: but their strength *is* firm. They *are* not in trouble *as other* men; neither are they plagued like *other* men. Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain; violence covereth them *as* a garment. Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish. They are corrupt, and speak wickedly *concerning* oppression: they speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth. Therefore his people return hither: and waters of a full *cup* are wrung out to them. And they say, How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the most High? Behold, these *are* the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase *in* riches. Verily I have cleansed my heart *in* vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning. If I say, I will speak thus; behold, I should offend *against* the generation of thy children. When I thought to know this, it *was* too painful for me; Until I went into the sanctuary of God; *then* understood I their end. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction."

- c. Luke 12:47-48: "And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not *himself*, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many *stripes*. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few *stripes*. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more."
 - d. 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9: "In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."
3. Verses 21-22: "My son, fear thou the LORD and the king: *and* meddle not with them that are given to change: For their calamity shall rise suddenly; and who knoweth the ruin of them both?"
- a. Other versions:
 - 1) "My son, fear the LORD and the king; Do not associate with those given to change; For their calamity will rise suddenly, And who knows the ruin those two can bring?" (NKJV).
 - 2) "My son, fear thou Jehovah and the king; And company not with them that are given to change: For their calamity shall rise suddenly; And the destruction from them both, who knoweth it?" (ASV).
 - b. Solomon instructs his son to fear the Lord and the king. The Bible is clear in its teachings that civil rulers are serving in a role granted by God (Rom. 13:1-5; 1 Pet. 2:13-17). If we fear God, we will respect and support civil authorities (1 Tim. 2:1-3).
 - 1) Romans 13:1-5: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to *execute* wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore *ye* must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake."
 - 2) 1 Peter 2:13-17: "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: As free, and not using *your* liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honour all *men*. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king."
 - 3) 1 Timothy 2:1-2: "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, *and*

- giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and *for* all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty."
- c. The wise man commands his son not to have anything to do with those who are "given to change" (i.e., rebels seeking the overthrow of government). Calamity for rebels can come suddenly, both from the Lord and the king. We cannot know the full extent of the ruin that shall be given.
4. Verses 23-26: "These *things* also *belong* to the wise. *It is* not good to have respect of persons in judgment. He that saith unto the wicked, Thou *art* righteous; him shall the people curse, nations shall abhor him: But to them that rebuke *him* shall be delight, and a good blessing shall come upon them. *Every man* shall kiss *his* lips that giveth a right answer."
- a. Further words of wisdom are given, including the thought of verse 23b: It is not good (therefore, it is evil) to show partiality in judgment. One of the great sins of ancient Israel was their perversion of justice. The rich and powerful often perverted justice to their own enrichment, and that of their friends.
- 1) Isaiah 29:21: "That make a man an offender for a word, and lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate, and turn aside the just for a thing of nought."
 - 2) Amos 2:6: "Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not turn away *the punishment* thereof; because they sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes."
- b. The civil code included in the Law of Moses would have insured fairness to all, when followed faithfully. The U.S. constitution affords us with the best man-made government, but sometimes it is applied inconsistently and unfairly. In our day, we have seen the rights of criminals enhanced, while the rights of victims of crime and the safety of the general population is ignored.
- c. One who says, legally or privately, to a wicked man that he is righteous, incurs the wrath of right-thinking people and nations—and of God.
- 1) Isaiah 5:20: "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!"
 - 2) Isaiah 30:10: "Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits."
 - 3) John 16:2: "They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service."
- d. Those who expose and rebuke unrighteousness will be a delight to right-thinking people and nations and God.
- 1) Galatians 2:11-14: "But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before *them* all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?"
 - 2) 2 Timothy 4:1-5: "I charge *thee* therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be
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- turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry."
- 3) Titus 1:9-11: "Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake."
 - 4) Titus 1:13: "This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith."
 - e. Verse 26 is a figure of speech which illustrates the delight of right-thinking people and nations (and God) when truth is pronounced (in a trial or in behalf of godliness). When truth prevails, those who love truth rejoice.
5. Verse 27: "Prepare thy work without, and make it fit for thyself in the field; and afterwards build thine house."
- a. "This rule of prudence applies to all worldly matters" (Bridges, p.458). In our terminology, "First things first." In other words, use good judgment in your affairs.
 - b. On the American frontier, the father would sometimes go on ahead of the family to clear the fields for planting, before moving his family on to the new homestead.
 - c. "Get an estate into good order before erecting a house on it. To 'build a house' may, however, be equivalent (compare Ex 1:21; Deut 25:9; Ruth 4:11) to 'founding a family;' and the words a warning against a hasty and imprudent marriage. The young man is taught to cultivate his land before he has to bear the burdens of a family. Further, in a spiritual sense, the 'field' may be the man's outer common work, the 'house' the dwelling-place of his higher life. He must do the former faithfully in order to attain the latter. Neglect in one is fatal to the other. Compare Luke 16:10-11" [Barnes' Notes, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by Biblesoft].
 - d. "Prepare thy work without. The proverb enjoins a man to look well to his resources before he undertakes to build a house or to establish a family. 'Without' (*chuts*) (Prov 7:12; 8:26); in the fields. Put in due order all immediate work in thy farm. And make it fit for thyself in the field; and get ready for what has to come next. That is, in short, steadily and with due foresight cultivate your land; provide abundant means of subsistence before you attempt to build up your house. A suitor had, as it were, to purchase his bride from her relations by making considerable presents; it was therefore necessary to provide a certain amount of wealth before contemplating matrimony. And afterwards build thy house. This is, indeed, the meaning of the passage; but the Hebrew makes a difficulty, as it is literally, 'afterwards and thou shalt build'....In a spiritual sense, the heart must be first cleared of thorns, and opened to genial influences, before the man can build up the fabric of virtuous habits, and thus arrive at the virtuous character' [Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by Biblesoft].
6. Verses 28-29: "Be not a witness against thy neighbour without cause; and deceive *not* with thy lips. Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me: I will render to the man according to his work."
- a. We must not be a witness against a neighbor without just cause. If we dislike someone, that should not be the cause of our raising our voice against him separate and apart from real guilt on his part.
 - b. All too often, men are eager to make assumptions against a person who is in their disfavor, without proper regards to the facts. When a report appears which places the "enemy" in bad light, it is seized upon and believed, and used against the individual—without a full investigation. "These things ought not so to be."
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- c. Even if one has done something to hurt us, we have no right to pervert justice, and thus wreak our vengeance. Even a criminal deserves his day in court and a fair trial. "Far sweeter will be the recollection of injuries forgotten than revenged....And yet too often its exercise is so feebly cherished, that natural feelings gain the ascendancy; and, if there be not an actual recompense of evil, there is merely a negative obedience to the rule, a refraining from the ebullition, rather than an active exercise of the opposite principle. The wise man sets out in this book the true rule, more lovely, more constraining, as enforced by the divine example [Matt. 5:44; Luke 23:34; 1 Pet. 2:21-23]. Humility and tenderness mark the self-knowing Christian, who forgives himself little, his neighbor much" (Bridges, pp.459f).
 - d. Vengeance belongs to the Lord: "Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but *rather* give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance *is* mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12:17-21).
7. Verses 30:34: "I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, *and* nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down. Then I saw, *and* considered *it* well: I looked upon *it*, *and* received instruction. *Yet* a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: So shall thy poverty come *as* one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man."
- a. Solomon gives an illustration of a slothful farmer. He describes himself passing by the field of such a man, and found it overgrown by thorns and nettles, and its stone wall in a state of disrepair. One quick look reveals the kind of farmer the owner is.
 - b. The slothful man is also described in verse thirty as a man who is void of understanding. Thus, a lazy man is an unwise and unknowing man. If he knew the end of such a life, and was concerned about it, he would do more and better.
 - c. Solomon said he considered the situation well, and was instructed thereby. When he saw the sorry state of the man's farm, he saw the even sorer state of the man himself. The lesson learned was the determination not to fall into the same condition.
 - d. In verse thirty-three, Solomon describes the attitude of the slothful man: It was as if he had said unto himself, "A little more sleep; a little more slumber; a little more of time folding my arms in sleep; then I shall arise and tend to my obligations; but for now, there is still time to rest." Christians often find all kinds of excuses to put off doing their duty: "It is too hot today; I have a headache; no one cares; I want to go fishing instead, and the fish are biting now; when I retire, I will work for the Lord; I would like to work for the Lord, but I have got a garden to raise."
 - e. The results of this kind of attitude and practice as demonstrated by the lazy farmer is poverty. It will come as poverty does to one that travelleth (a robber, ASV), or to one who is an armed man. Robbers come to poverty—sooner or later.
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PROVERBS 25

A. Proverbs 25:1-15.

1. Verse 1: "These *are* also proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied out."
 - a. Hezekiah began his reign in Judah about 726 B.C., almost 300 years after Solomon succeeded David on the throne (about 1015 B.C.). The verse states that the following are also the proverbs of Solomon, proverbs which the men of Hezekiah copied out. It appears that these proverbs were not widely circulated for a long time.
 - b. The men referred to made copies of them, which would enable others to benefit from the truths they held. We are not told how many copies were made, or who made them. Since Isaiah was the prominent prophet of the era, he may have been involved in this work.
 2. Verses 2-3: "*It is* the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings *is* to search out a matter. The heaven for height, and the earth for depth, and the heart of kings *is* unsearchable."
 - a. God expected and demanded that the kings of Israel be not only civil rulers, but also examples of godly obedience to the will of God. It was part of God's glory that he was able to conceal certain things from the prying eyes of men—in nature and in things pertaining to his great plan (Gen. 12:1-3; Eph. 3:1-11).
 - b. When men expend tireless efforts in searching out some hidden truth in nature, which may provide mankind with some advancement in medicine, transportation, manufacturing, or communication, they have not bested God. God put it there; man merely found it. If man did not have to work for what he obtains, he would become lazy and worthless. God was doing us a favor by hiding many things from us. Also, due to sin, man brought upon the race many hardships (Gen. 3), and may have deprived himself of much knowledge that could prevent or cure illnesses, and solve many other problems.
 - c. God concealed the details of his great plan for many centuries, until such time that the New Testament was fully revealed. There are a very great many truths "concealed" in the Bible that man must study diligently throughout his life to "uncover." But God cannot be charged with making things difficult for man. What comes easy to us we do not appreciate; what we learn or obtain only through much effort and pain is dear to us. Diligent study of God's word is essential to the development of the spiritual character (2 Tim. 2:15; 2 Pet. 1:1-11; 1 Tim. 4). Only through years of dedicated study are we able to ascertain the deep truths and precepts of the Bible.
 - d. God's glory is seen by the fact that he could conceal things; the glory of kings (the godly monarchs in Israel) was to search out those things. It is to our glory also if we apply ourselves to their discovery.
 - e. The heavens and the earth contain vast treasures of knowledge yet unknown to man. God made them so. Man cannot probe the deep recesses of God's wisdom and knowledge. As our knowledge of God exists only to the extent that he reveals it to us, so a king's heart is unfathomable to his subjects, except as he wills to reveal himself to them.
 3. Verses 4-5: "Take away the dross from the silver, and there shall come forth a vessel for the finer. Take away the wicked *from* before the king, and his throne shall be established in righteousness."
 - a. Silver ore is not ready to be turned into a beautiful vessel until the impurities have been removed. When the dross is burned away, then the silversmith can do his work. "But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he *is* like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap" (Mal. 3:2).
 - b. This serves as an illustration for verse 5. The king can be established in righteousness on his throne if the influence of wicked men is removed from him. What is said about a king is also true with us:
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"Be not deceived: Evil companionships corrupt good morals" (1 Cor. 15:33, ASV).

- c. When Solomon became king, he sent Benaiah to slay certain enemies so that his reign might be safe (1 Kings 2).
4. Verses 6-7: "Put not forth thyself in the presence of the king, and stand not in the place of great *men*: 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."
 - a. This good counsel will help us to avoid unnecessary embarrassment. If we put ourselves forward in the presence of a king or some other great person, we might be hurt if we were to be asked to step down to a lower position. It is better, the wise man states, to be invited into a higher place of honor than to be relegated to a lower position.
 - b. The Lord gave a similar lesson in Luke 14:7-11: "And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms; saying unto them, When thou art bidden of any *man* to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him; And he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee. For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."
 5. Verses 8-10: "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. Debate thy cause with thy neighbour *himself*; and discover not a secret to another: Lest he that heareth *it* put thee to shame, and thine infamy turn not away."
 - a. One must use wisdom and caution before entering into strife. Carefully consider the facts before initiating a law suit, or bringing charges against another, or beginning a contention with a neighbor. If your cause is not just, shame will be your penalty, coupled with perhaps a financial cost.
 - b. Settle differences on a private basis if such is the case and is possible. Do not betray secrets to another lest it be used against you (cf. Judg. 9:26-40; Ps. 14:2; 22:6; 2 Chron. 35:21-22).
 6. Verses 11-12: "A word fitly spoken *is like* apples of gold in pictures of silver. *As* an earring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, *so is* a wise reprove upon an obedient ear."
 - a. Solomon exalts the beauty and fitness of the properly spoken word. He describes it as like "apples of gold in pictures of silver" ("net work of silver"—ASV).
 - b. "The Asiatics excel in filigree silver work....The silver wire by which it is done they form into the appearance of numerous flowers; and though these wires are soldered everywhere at their junctions with each other, yet this is done with such delicacy and skill as to be scarcely perceptible. I have seen animals formed on this filigree work, with all their limbs, and every joint in its natural play. Fruit-baskets are made also in this way, and are exquisitely fine. The wise man seems to have this kind of work particularly in view; and the contrast of the golden yellow fruit in the exquisitely wrought silver basket, which may be all termed picture work, has a fine and pleasing effect upon the eye, as the contained fruit has upon the palate at an entertainment in a sultry climate. So the word spoke judiciously and opportunely is as the golden apples in the silver baskets" (Clarke, p.774).
 - c. Verse 12 uses the illustrations of a golden earring and an ornament of fine gold to illustrate the same point about our words. One who finds it necessary to reprove another, will use wisdom in choosing his words so that the proper result is gained.
 - d. Our speech reveals the condition of our hearts (Mt. 12:34-35; 15:19). Christians ought to endeavor to always speak pure and helpful words. It is a wonderful gift to be able to know what to say and

when to say it.

7. Verse 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."
 - a. The beauty and freshness of a new-fallen snow is used as an illustration of the bracing, satisfying effect a faithful messenger has on his employer.
 - b. "And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide: and he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and, behold, the camels *were* coming. And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she lighted off the camel" (Gen. 24:63-64). Abraham had sent his servant to find a wife for Isaac. The passage shows the happy return of the faithful servant after a successful mission.
 - c. How refreshing it must be to God when his children walk in the truth: "The elder unto the wellbeloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth. Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth. For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth" (3 John 1-4).
8. Verse 14: "Whoso boasteth himself of a false gift *is like* clouds and wind without rain."
 - a. One who makes empty claims about his own greatness and worth is compared to a cloud without rain: it promises much, but gives nothing. It is easy, under the pressures of a situation, to make promises which one finds later he is unable to fulfill; it is easy for one with no intention of keeping a promise to make a false vow.
 - b. Compare: "These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds *they are* without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots" (Jude 12).
9. Verse 15: "By long forbearing is a prince persuaded, and a soft tongue breaketh the bone."
 - a. This proverb teaches a lesson on the power of gentle persistence. In the case used, a ruler is persuaded of the rightness of the request by the petitioner continuing the appeal. By means of gentle appeals, the "soft tongue breaketh the bone."
 - b. Proverbs 15:1: "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger."
 - c. "The proverb says that such an officer is led to take a favourable view of an accused person's case when he sees him calm and composed, ready to explain the matter without any undue heat or irritation, keeping steadily to the point, and not seduced by calumny or misrepresentation to forget himself and lose his temper. Such a bearing presupposes innocence and weighs favourably with the judge....A soft answer (Prov 15:1), gentle, conciliating words, overcome opposition, and disarm the most determined enemy, and make tender in him that which was hardest and most uncompromising....Similar proverbs are found elsewhere, though probably in a different sense. Thus in modern Greek, 'The tongue has no bones, yet it breaks bones;' in Turkish, 'The tongue has no bone, yet it crushes;' again, 'One drop of honey,' says the Turk, 'catches more bees than a ton of vinegar'" [Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by Biblesoft].

B. Proverbs 25:16-29.

1. Verses 16-17: "Hast thou found honey? eat so much as is sufficient for thee, lest thou be filled therewith, and vomit it. Withdraw thy foot from thy neighbour's house; lest he be weary of thee, and *so* hate thee."
 - a. Too much of a good thing can be troublesome. We can "stomach" only so much chocolate, ice cream, or candy. His point here is a lesson on moderation. "Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord *is* at hand" (Phil. 4:5).

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- b. We are to satisfy our needs but banish our sinful lusts and control our other appetites.
 - 1) Luke 21:34: "And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and *so* that day come upon you unawares."
 - 2) Romans 8:12-14: "Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."
 - 3) Colossians 3:5: "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry."
 - c. "Don't let even a good thing get us in a hammerlock!" The principle is applied in verse 17 to "overstaying our welcome." Relatives sometimes take advantage of hospitality.
2. Verse 18: "A man that beareth false witness against his neighbour *is* a maul, and a sword, and a sharp arrow."
 - a. The Bible frequently warns against the evils of bearing false witness. God knows of its common occurrence. Few would be willing to commit perjury on the witness stand, but many will do so in common affairs, in both personal and business matters. The kind Solomon addresses is that which is given for the purpose of hurting another. He depicts it as a maul, a sword, and a sharp arrow in the hurtful effect it has. We would not consider beating our neighbor's brains out with a club, or running him through with a sword, or killing him with a sharp arrow, but some are happy to do so with harsh words.
 - b. "Death and life *are* in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof" (Prov. 18:21; cf. Jas. 3:1-12).
 3. Verse 19: "Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble *is like* a broken tooth, and a foot out of joint."
 - a. Placing confidence in a disloyal man is like trying to eat with a broken tooth or walk on a foot that is out of joint: there is much pain involved! A friend who turns on us is no friend. An employee who shuns his responsibilities is no asset.
 - b. Judges 17:7-12: "And there was a young man out of Bethlehemjudah of the family of Judah, who *was* a Levite, and he sojourned there. And the man departed out of the city from Bethlehemjudah to sojourn where he could find *a place*: and he came to mount Ephraim to the house of Micah, as he journeyed. And Micah said unto him, Whence comest thou? And he said unto him, I *am* a Levite of Bethlehemjudah, and I go to sojourn where I may find *a place*. And Micah said unto him, Dwell with me, and be unto me a father and a priest, and I will give thee ten *shekels* of silver by the year, and a suit of apparel, and thy victuals. So the Levite went in. And the Levite was content to dwell with the man; and the young man was unto him as one of his sons. And Micah consecrated the Levite; and the young man became his priest, and was in the house of Micah."
 - c. Judges 18:20-24: "And the priest's heart was glad, and he took the ephod, and the teraphim, and the graven image, and went in the midst of the people. So they turned and departed, and put the little ones and the cattle and the carriage before them. *And* when they were a good way from the house of Micah, the men that *were* in the houses near to Micah's house were gathered together, and overtook the children of Dan. And they cried unto the children of Dan. And they turned their faces, and said unto Micah, What aileth thee, that thou comest with such a company? And he said, Ye have taken away my gods which I made, and the priest, and ye are gone away: and what have I more? and what *is* this *that* ye say unto me, What aileth thee?"
 - d. 2 Samuel 16:1-4: "And when David was a little past the top *of the hill*, behold, Ziba the servant of
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Mephibosheth met him, with a couple of asses saddled, and upon them two hundred *loaves* of bread, and an hundred bunches of raisins, and an hundred of summer fruits, and a bottle of wine. And the king said unto Ziba, What meanest thou by these? And Ziba said, The asses *be* for the king's household to ride on; and the bread and summer fruit for the young men to eat; and the wine, that such as be faint in the wilderness may drink. And the king said, And where *is* thy master's son? And Ziba said unto the king, Behold, he abideth at Jerusalem: for he said, To day shall the house of Israel restore me the kingdom of my father. Then said the king to Ziba, Behold, thine *are* all that *pertained* unto Mephibosheth. And Ziba said, I humbly beseech thee *that* I may find grace in thy sight, my lord, O king."

- e. 2 Samuel 19:24-28: "And Mephibosheth the son of Saul came down to meet the king, and had neither dressed his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the day he came *again* in peace. And it came to pass, when he was come to Jerusalem to meet the king, that the king said unto him, Wherefore wentest not thou with me, Mephibosheth? And he answered, My lord, O king, my servant deceived me: for thy servant said, I will saddle me an ass, that I may ride thereon, and go to the king; because thy servant *is* lame. And he hath slandered thy servant unto my lord the king; but my lord the king *is* as an angel of God: do therefore *what is* good in thine eyes. For all *of* my father's house were but dead men before my lord the king: yet didst thou set thy servant among them that did eat at thine own table. What right therefore have I yet to cry any more unto the king?"
 - f. Psalms 41:9: "Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up *his* heel against me." Compare: "I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me" (John 13:18).
4. Verse 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."
- a. Taking a man's coat in cold weather would be inhumane.
 - 1) Deuteronomy 24:12,17: "And if the man *be* poor, thou shalt not sleep with his pledge....Thou shalt not pervert the judgment of the stranger, *nor* of the fatherless; nor take a widow's raiment to pledge."
 - 2) Job 24:7-10: "They cause the naked to lodge without clothing, that *they have* no covering in the cold. They are wet with the showers of the mountains, and embrace the rock for want of a shelter. They pluck the fatherless from the breast, and take a pledge of the poor. They cause *him* to go naked without clothing, and they take away the sheaf *from* the hungry."
 - 3) Isaiah 58:7: "*Is it* not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?"
 - b. Pouring vinegar upon nitre (soda) causes a violent effervescence.
 - 1) "The nitre of Scripture is not that salt that commonly goes by the name, but a soda or mineral alkali (the Roman *natrum*) which strongly ferments with all acids...'In many parts of Asia it is called soap-earth, because it is dissolved in water, and used like soap in washing'" (Bridges, p.475, fn.).
 - 2) "Nitre or natron (Hebrew, nether, from *nathar*, to dissolve) is potash; this, mixed with oil, was used as soap (Jer 2:22). Vinegar poured on it causes it to effervesce and lose its force. As the 'nitre' takes ill the admixture of vinegar, as opposed and alien to it, so joyous songs are incongruous to an heavy heart (Ps 132:4; Dan 6:18)" [Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary,

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- c. As these actions are inappropriate, so singing to a sad person is ill-advised. A silly ditty is out of place at a funeral.
5. Verses 21-22: "If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee."
- a. These thoughts are familiar to those who know Romans 12:17-21: "Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but *rather* give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance *is* mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."
 - b. Elisha treated his enemies with kindness: "And he answered, Thou shalt not smite *them*: wouldest thou smite those whom thou hast taken captive with thy sword and with thy bow? set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink, and go to their master" (2 Kings 6:22). The religions of men contain no such tenet.
 - 1) Exodus 23:4-5: "If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him."
 - 2) Matthew 5:43-48: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more *than others*? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."
 - c. By treating an enemy with loving kindness (giving him food and water) makes him see his own shortcomings. Kindness burns his conscience, causing him to change attitude, doing what violence could never do.
 - 1) "For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head—melting him into sorrow, pain, and shame, at having been thine enemy. Either he shall be like wax melted by fire, or like clay hardened by it. In either case, 'the Lord shall reward thee.' The Lord shall reward thee. Even if thy love fail to melt him, thy labour will not be lost; it will redound to thy good (cf. Ps 35:13; Luke 10:5). [Jamieson, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by Biblesoft].
 - 2) "For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head. This expression has been taken in various senses. It has been thought to mean that the forgiveness of the injured person brings to the cheek of the offender the burning blush of shame. But heaping coals on the head cannot naturally be taken to express such an idea. St. Chrysostom and other 'Fathers' consider that Divine vengeance is implied, as in Ps 11:6, 'Upon the wicked he shall rain snares; fire and brimstone and burning wind shall be their portion;' and Ps 140:10, 'Let burning coals fall upon them.' Of course, in one view, kindness to an evil man only gives him occasion for fresh ingratitude and hatred, and therefore increases God's wrath against him. But it would be a wicked motive to act this beneficent part only to have the satisfaction of seeing your injurer humbled or punished. And the gnome implies that the sinner is benefited by the clemency shown to him, that the requital of evil by good brings the offender to a better mind, and aids his spiritual life. 'Coals of fire' are a metaphor for the

penetrating pain of remorse and repentance. The unmerited kindness which he receives forces upon him the consciousness of his ill doing, which is accompanied by the sharp rain of regret” [Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by BibleSoft].

- 3) In the days of the American Revolutionary War there lived in Ephrata, Pennsylvania, a preacher by the name of Peter Miller who enjoyed the friendship of General George Washington. Where also dwelt in that town one Michael Wittman, an evil-minded man who did all in his power to abuse and oppose this preacher. One day Michael Wittman was involved in treason and was arrested and sentenced to death. When the old preacher heard this news, he started out on foot and walked the whole seventy miles to Philadelphia to plead for this man’s life. He was admitted into Washington’s presence and at once begged for the life of the traitor. Washington said, “No, Peter, I cannot grant you the life of your friend.” The preacher exclaimed, “My *friend!* Why, this man is the bitterest *enemy* I have.” Washington cried, “What? You’ve walked seventy miles to save the life of an *enemy*? Now that puts the matter in a different light. I will grant the pardon.” And so he did. And Peter Miller took Michael Wittman from the very shadow of death back to his own home in Ephrata—no longer as an enemy, but as a friend.
6. Verse 23: "The north wind driveth away rain: so *doth* an angry countenance a backbiting tongue."
 - a. "The north wind bringeth forth rain: So doth a backbiting tongue an angry countenance" (ASV; See KJV margin). As the north wind drives away rain, so an angry countenance banishes a backbiting tongue. If the north wind brings rain, let a backbiter bring a response of righteous indignation.
 - b. “The north wind usually produces fair weather (Job 37:22). The Hebrew for ‘driveth away’...is, literally, to cause to grieve, so to put to flight. But the Syriac and Chaldaic translate, as the Hebrew also means, to give birth to (from the pain of childbirth): 'The north wind bringeth forth, so, (doth) a backbiting tongue an angry countenance'—namely, on the part of him so backbitten toward the backbiter; also on the part of the hearer of the secret slander toward the object of the slander. The English version gives an excellent idea: If you do not listen to, but frown on, the backbiter, you put him to silence. The receiver of slanders gives impetus to, and shares the guilt of, the slanderer (Rom 1:32). Backbiters would have no place if there were not ears itching to hear their tales” [JFB, *ibid.*].
 - c. Mark 3:1-5: "And he entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had a withered hand. And they watched him, whether he would heal him on the sabbath day; that they might accuse him. And he saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth. And he saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace. And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched *it* out: and his hand was restored whole as the other."
 - d. Ephesians 4:26-27: "Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil." Cf. Matthew 23.
 7. Verses 24-26: "*It is* better to dwell in the corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman and in a wide house. *As* cold waters to a thirsty soul, so *is* good news from a far country. A righteous man falling down before the wicked *is as* a troubled fountain, and a corrupt spring."
 - a. Proverbs 21:9: "*It is* better to dwell in a corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman in a wide house."
 - b. Good news from afar is as welcome and refreshing as a drink of cold water is to a thirsty man. "And told him, saying, Joseph *is* yet alive, and he *is* governor over all the land of Egypt. And Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not. And they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them: and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father

revived: and Israel said, It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die" (Gen. 45:26-28).

- c. A righteous man who gives in to a wicked man is like a spring that is stirred up or fouled: neither is any good.
 - 1) 2 Samuel 11:2: "And it came to pass in an eveningtide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman *was* very beautiful to look upon."
 - 2) 2 Samuel 12:14: "Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also *that is* born unto thee shall surely die."
 - 3) Matthew 26:69-72: "Now Peter sat without in the palace: and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee. But he denied before *them* all, saying, I know not what thou sayest. And when he was gone out into the porch, another *maid* saw him, and said unto them that were there, This *fellow* was also with Jesus of Nazareth. And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man."
8. Verses 27-28: "*It is not good to eat much honey: so for men to search their own glory is not glory. He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.*"
 - a. Other versions:
 - 1) "It is not good to eat much honey: So for men to search out their own glory is grievous. He whose spirit is without restraint Is like a city that is broken down and without walls" (Prov. 25:27-28, ASV).
 - 2) "It is not good to eat much honey; So to seek one's own glory is not glory. Whoever has no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down, without walls" (Prov. 25:27-28, NKJV).
 - b. Too much honey is not good; a man who seeks his own glory is also sickening. One who does not practice self-discipline is like a city that is broken down and without walls: it is useless and helpless.
 - c. John 8:34: "Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin."
 - d. Romans 6:16: "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?"
 - e. 2 Peter 2:19: "While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage."
 - f. "Here is, 1. The good character of a wise and virtuous man implied. He is one that has rule over his own spirit; he maintains the government of himself, and of his own appetites and passions, and does not suffer them to rebel against reason and conscience. He has the rule of his own thoughts, his desires, his inclinations, his resentments, and keeps them all in good order. 2. The bad case of a vicious man, who has not this rule over his own spirit, who, when temptations to excess in eating or drinking are before him, has no government of himself, when he is provoked breaks out into exorbitant passions, such a one is like a city that is broken down and without walls. All that is good goes out, and forsakes him; all that is evil breaks in upon him. He lies exposed to all the temptations of Satan and becomes an easy prey to that enemy; he is also liable to many troubles and vexations; it is likewise as much a reproach to him as it is to a city to have its walls ruined, Neh 1. 3" [M. Henry, *ibid.*).

PROVERBS 26

A. Proverbs 26:1-16.

1. Verse 1: "As snow in summer, and as rain in harvest, so honour is not seemly for a fool."
 - a. Snow is beneficial to the soil by providing nutrients which it needs, and, with the cold that accompanies it, can kill harmful insects. But snow is inappropriate and unwelcome in the summer. Crops cannot be grown without rain (or irrigation), but if it falls at harvest time, it can destroy the fruit of the farmer's labor. As snow in the growing season and rain in the harvest can ruin the crop, so honor is not beneficial to the fool. Snow is out of place in the summer; rain is out of place in the harvest; honor is out of place for a foolish man.
 - b. A foolish man who is encouraged in his folly by bestowing honor upon him will be spurred on to more and greater foolishness. If he is mentally deficient, or if he is morally bankrupt, no good will come from giving him encouragement. He does not merit it and does not know how to use it.
 2. Verse 2: "As the bird by wandering, as the swallow by flying, so the curse causeless shall not come."
 - a. Solomon produced 3,000 proverbs and 1005 songs; he spoke about trees, beasts, birds, creeping things, and fish (1 Kings 4:32-33). The present chapter discusses several such things. This verse in the ASV reads: "As the sparrow in her wandering, as the swallow in her flying, So the curse that is causeless alighteth not."
 - b. The wise man draws a parallel between birds which fly all around us and curses which have no foundation in truth: neither will do us any harm. Someone has well-said that the one who utters a curse against us will likely forget it before the one does who was cursed.
 - c. We have no more need to fear the groundless curse than we do the birds flying over our heads. We often fear many things that are groundless or imaginary. It is easy to put too much emphasis on a word, or a facial expression, or an attitude manifested, which we either misinterpret or imagine to be a blow toward us. The Bible forbids "evil surmisings" (1 Tim. 6:4).
 - d. Even if someone curses us, if we are without fault in the matter, the curse can only harm our soul as much as we allow it to do so. The curse of the Moabites did not hurt Israel (Num. 22:4-6; 23:8; Dt. 23:4-5). Goliath's curse did not harm David (1 Sam. 17:43; cf. 2 Sam. 16:12; Jer. 15:10).
 3. Verse 3: "A whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass, and a rod for the fool's back."
 - a. Three things that are put in parallel with each other: to control a horse, a whip is needed; an ass requires a bridle to be controlled; and a fool is manageable only by the use of a rod. Animals which are brought under the control of man requires some measure of discipline, sometimes.
 - b. The foolish person under consideration will not heed the instruction of wisdom, hence he needs discipline. This is true in civil government, in the family, in schools, and in the church (2 Th. 3:6).
 4. Verses 4-5: "Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him. Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit."
 - a. Critics of the Bible assert that Solomon is guilty of a contradiction in these two verses, but obviously there is no clash between the two sentiments expressed, for the wise man, being truly wise, would not have committed such an error. If the contradiction is alleged against the compilers (25:1), the same response is in order: they would not have done something so foolish! We know there is no contradiction between the statements because of the different reasons attached to them.
 - b. In the first instance, Solomon is warning his pupil against putting himself on the level of a foolish man in the answer he gives to his foolishness. If a rabid critic of the Bible assails it with harsh, vulgar
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charges, the defender of the faith is not to respond with similar harshness and vulgarity. We are warned not to answer the fool according to his folly lest we also be like him. If our intended answer to this kind of fool will put us on his level, abandon the response! Someone has said, "When a wise man discusses truth with a fool, two fools are involved." Jesus responded to Herod's demands to see a miracle with the dignity of complete silence (Lk. 23:8-11).

- 1) 2 Kings 18:36: "But the people held their peace, and answered him not a word: for the king's commandment was, saying, Answer him not."
 - 2) Jeremiah 28:11: "And Hananiah spake in the presence of all the people, saying, Thus saith the LORD; Even so will I break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon from the neck of all nations within the space of two full years. And the prophet Jeremiah went his way."
 - 3) 1 Peter 3:9: "Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing."
 - 4) Jude 9: "Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee."
- c. But if another foolish man is not given a proper answer, he might be emboldened to even greater folly. This proverb considers a case where a response is proper for the benefit of the foolish person himself or for others under his influence. The Lord gave his foolish enemies strong replies to their questions (Matt. 22); he sternly denounced the hypocrisy of some of his foolish foes, as he sought to expose their errors, to themselves and to the people (Matt. 23).
- d. Our response to foolish men is determined by the time, occasion, and circumstances, plus the nature of the individual. Silence might be called for, or a quiet answer, or perhaps even a reply as in Matthew 23 or Acts 13:8-10, 45-46. A failure to reply might in some cases be seen as an inability to respond, thus allow a false doctrine to appear acceptable and true.
5. Verses 6-9: "He that sendeth a message by the hand of a fool cutteth off the feet, *and* drinketh damage. The legs of the lame are not equal: so *is* a parable in the mouth of fools. As he that bindeth a stone in a sling, so *is* he that giveth honour to a fool. *As* a thorn goeth up into the hand of a drunkard, so *is* a parable in the mouth of fools."
- a. Solomon gives in this passage several statements revealing the emptiness and uselessness of the work of a fool. Keep in mind the different kinds of fools.
 - b. In the first instance (verse 6), one who sends a message by a fool is, in effect, cutting off his own feet: the message will not be delivered properly. The service we intended will not be done; in fact, more harm will be done ("we will drink in damage"). Thus, important matters are not to be entrusted to unworthy messengers. Cf. 1 Kings 11:26ff.
 - c. The second proverb likens the legs of a lame man and the parable of a fool: both are uneven and unbalanced. A lame man cannot compete in a serious race, and a fool cannot be expected to display great wisdom. A false teacher cannot be expected to teach the truth.
 - d. Thirdly, giving honor to a foolish person is no better than tying a stone in a sling. A stone that is bound in a sling cannot be thrown, but might in fact cause injury to the one using the sling. A foolish man who is praised, thus encouraged in his folly, might become a danger to the flatterer and others. Give honor to an atheist or false teacher, and his efforts will be intensified. An alternate rendering of this verse is: "As he that putteth a precious stone in a heap of stones."
 - e. The last verse compares a thorn that pierces the hand of a drunkard and a parable in the mouth of fools. Someone has described this proverb in these words: "It is no more fit for a fool to meddle with a wise speech, than for a drunken man to handle a thorn bush" (see Bridges, p.488). A drunken man
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can be injured and not realize it, thus make his injury more serious; a foolish man's words can likewise cause himself harm. The Bible in the hands of a false teacher is perverted to cause great damage to himself and those who hear him.

6. Verse 10: "The great *God* that formed all *things* both rewardeth the fool, and rewardeth transgressors."
 - a. This verse is difficult to translate as evidenced by the alternate renderings: "A great man grieveth all, and he hireth the fool, he hireth also transgressors" (margin). "As an archer that woundeth all, So is he that hireth the fool and he that hireth them that pass by" (ASV). The KJV has "God" in italics, indicating that the translators had a doubt about the proper rendering. The Hebrew can be translated as "great God" or "great man," depending on the context.
 - b. If "great God" is intended, Solomon is saying that God will render to the fool and transgressor what they deserve, for God is the creator, thus has the right to do so. The half-wit is not responsible for his actions; those who reject God and his word are willful fools, and will be punished, as will all transgressors. "And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not *himself*, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many *stripes*. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few *stripes*. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more" (Luke 12:47-48).
 - c. If some godly "great man" is intended, Solomon is saying that he will render to the fool and transgressor as they deserve. In this case, he "formed all things" in the sense that through his influence he *shaped* the attitudes, etc. of those around him.
 - d. If the ASV rendering is accepted, the meaning is simply that one who hires fools and passers by, putting trust in them indiscriminately, is like an archer who shoots his missiles without aiming or without concern over who might be injured needlessly.
 - e. If the KJV margin is correct, then the great man who hires fools and passersby brings grief to many other people.
7. Verse 11: "As a dog returneth to his vomit, *so* a fool returneth to his folly."
 - a. As a dog often returns to his vomit, so a fool returns to his folly; he never learns.
 - b. 2 Peter 2:20-22: "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known *it*, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog *is* turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire."
8. Verse 12: "Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? *there is* more hope of a fool than of him."
 - a. One who is haughty has less hope than a fool. A fool might be able to change with the proper help and circumstances, but pride blinds one to the truth.
 - 1) Romans 1:19-21: "Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed *it* unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified *him* not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened."
 - 2) Ephesians 4:18: "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart."

- b. "A fool who is conscious of unwisdom may be set right; but one who fancies himself perfect, and needing no improvement, is beyond cure; his case is hopeless. So the sinner who feels and acknowledges his iniquity may be converted; but the self-righteous Pharisee, who considers himself to have no need of repentance, will never be reformed" [Pulpit Commentary].
- 1) Luke 15:7: "I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance."
 - 2) Luke 18:9-14: "And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men *are*, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as *his* eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."
9. Verses 13-16: "The slothful *man* saith, *There is* a lion in the way; a lion *is* in the streets. *As* the door turneth upon his hinges, so *doth* the slothful upon his bed. The slothful hideth his hand in *his* bosom; it grieveth him to bring it again to his mouth. The sluggard *is* wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason."
- a. The lazy person will not work, and can invent many *rationalizations*. He turns on his bed as a door on its hinges. He is so lazy that it is a grief to him to have to "bend his elbow." "A slothful *man* hideth his hand in *his* bosom, and will not so much as bring it to his mouth again" (Prov. 19:24). He has a problem with conceit: he thinks he is smart for avoiding work, smarter than anyone else, even those who are wise.
 - b. "The door moves on its hinges and makes no progress beyond its own confined sphere of motion; so the slothful man turns himself on his bed from side to side, but never leaves it to do his work. Other analogies have been found in this proverb. Thus: The door opens to let the diligent go forth to his daily business, while the sluggard is rolling upon his bed; the door creaks when it is moved, so the lazy man groans when he is aroused; the door now is opened, now is shut, so the sluggard at one time intends to rise, and then falls back in his bed, and returns to his sleep (comp. Prov 6:9,10; 24:33)...The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit. The sluggard is here one who is too idle to think a matter out, and considers his own cursory view as sure to be right. He is one who deems study to be an unnecessary weariness of the flesh (Eccl 12:12), and flatters himself that he is quite able without it to give a satisfactory account of any question presented to him. Than seven men that can render a reason. 'Seven' is the number of completeness (comp. Prov 6:31; 9:1; 24:16). The idle fool sets more value by his own judgment than by the sense of any number of wise men" [Pulpit Commentary].

B. Proverbs 26:17-28.

1. Verse 17: "He that passeth by, *and* meddleth with strife *belonging* not to him, *is like* one that taketh a dog by the ears."
 - a. Solomon illustrates the foolishness of getting involved in strife unnecessarily by likening it to grabbing a dog (who is minding his own business) by the ears. The dog will most likely defend himself. One who interposes himself in a squabble in which he has no stake, sets himself up for much trouble. Often when one tries to breakup a family dispute, both parties will turn on the intruder.
 - b. The point: leave strife alone if it does not concern you. Of course, there are many cases where it is the Christian's duty to be a peacemaker. Wisdom will help us to know when to leave it alone or to help. Our Lord kept out of a family matter in Luke 12:13-14: "And one of the company said unto him,
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Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?"

2. Verses 18-19: "As a mad *man* who casteth firebrands, arrows, and death, So *is* the man *that* deceiveth his neighbour, and saith, Am not I in sport?"
 - a. What one may consider as harmless sport, another might take as a very serious affront. Solomon compares such a "jokester" with one who carelessly uses firebrands and arrows, and death. Much damage has been done by people who were "only joking." For example, making fun of someone's baldness, slimness, height, weight, clothing, etc. Not everyone can take a joke.
 - b. Harmful, crude, vulgar, hurtful jesting is wrong: "Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks" (Eph. 5:4).
3. Verse 20: "Where no wood is, *there* the fire goeth out: so where *there is* no talebearer, the strife ceaseth."
 - a. The Bible uniformly condemns talebearing, and links it to strife. Countless friends and brethren have been divided by a tale, whether true or false. A report that is apt to do damage to another ought to be suppressed. If it is true, there are scriptural guidelines to follow (2 Th. 3:6; cf. Matt.18:15-17).
 - b. "Thou shalt not raise a false report..." (Ex. 23:1). "Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people: neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbour: I am the Lord" (Lev. 19:16). God knew the destructive power of such.
 - c. "But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or *as a busybody in other men's matters*" (1 Pet. 4:15). "And that ye study to be quiet, and *to do your own business*, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you" (1 Th.4:11). "For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are *busybodies*" (2 Th. 3:11). "And withal they [younger widows] learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but *tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not*" (1 Tim. 5:13).
 - d. Solomon declares that as the fire goes out when the wood is gone, so strife ceases when the talebearer is removed.
 - e. The man who receives stolen goods is no better than the thief, if he knows or believes them to be stolen. One who gladly receives evil reports against another is no better than the one who brings the story. A gossip would soon go out of business if there was no market for the product!
4. Verse 21: "*As* coals *are* to burning coals, and wood to fire; so *is* a contentious man to kindle strife."
 - a. A contentious man is next described by the wise man. As coals and wood are to the fire in providing the fuel and heat to keep the blaze going, so a contentious man furnishes the impetus to strife. This kind of person will "kindle" the strife, and keep it supplied with fresh fuel.
 - b. A contentious person is one who enjoys stirring up controversy; he is the kind that will ignite trouble by asking such questions as, "Did you know what _____ said about you?" Or by "egging on" two parties who are "having words."
 - c. Christians are to live peaceably with others and be peacemakers.
 - 1) Proverbs 15:18: "A wrathful man stirreth up strife: but *he that is* slow to anger appeaseth strife."
 - 2) Romans 12:18: "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men."
 - 3) Romans 14:19: "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another."
 - 4) James 3:13-18: "Who *is* a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. But if ye have bitter envying and strife

- in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife *is*, there *is* confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, *and* easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace."
5. Verse 22: "The words of a talebearer *are* as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly."
 - a. This is also stated in Proverbs 18:8: "The words of a talebearer *are* as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly."
 - b. Grievous wounds can be inflicted by the words of a talebearer. Families have been split asunder, wars have been started, partnerships have been dissolved, and friends have been separated by such words. When we learn of evil words that have been spoken against us, there is a sharp, virtually physical, pain that pierces our bosoms. Despite repentance on the part of the offender, we still bear a memory of the harsh pain inflicted on us, although we bear no malice or anger.
 6. Verse 23: "Burning lips and a wicked heart *are like* a potsherd covered with silver dross."
 - a. A potsherd is a piece of broken pottery, having no marketable value. The dross of silver is the residue of the refining process; it is of no value. Burning lips and a wicked heart, Solomon says, are of similar value to a potsherd coated with silver dross: without worth to anyone.
 - b. But another possible interpretation of the proverb is given by Alden: "...People dipped their pottery vessels in glaze or slip in order to make them shiny. The shiny pots are compared in this verse to 'fervent lips with an evil heart,' the Greek translation reads 'smooth' instead of 'fervent' or fiery,' but whatever the meaning is of this uncertain word, the lesson of the proverb is clear; the hypocrisy of these lips is like veneer laid over a heart that is cheap and profane. Jesus' illustration was of whitewashed tombs (Matt. 23:27)" (p.189).
 7. Verses 24-26: "He that hateth dissembleth with his lips, and layeth up deceit within him; When he speaketh fair, believe him not: for *there are* seven abominations in his heart. *Whose* hatred is covered by deceit, his wickedness shall be showed before the *whole* congregation."
 - a. In this passage, Solomon describes a man who is filled with hatred. One who has hatred in his heart will not speak true words, but will dissemble (speak hypocrisy; say one thing but mean something else).
 - b. Verse 25 cautions that when such a man speaks fair words to you, beware; he is merely deceiving you with flattering words designed to gain an advantage for himself or to hurt you. His words are not intended to express love, but hatred (verses 24, 26).
 - c. Verse 26 plainly states that this man's words mask his deceit. Even though he might get by with it for the present, in time and/or in eternity—his wickedness will be fully disclosed. Think about the awful shame that will attend those whose deceit is openly displayed in the Judgment! As horrible as that may be, it will be nothing to the tragedy of being lost in torment.
 8. Verse 27: "Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein: and he that rolleth a stone, it will return upon him."
 - a. See also these verses:
 - 1) Psalms 7:15: "He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch *which* he made."
 - 2) Psalms 9:15: "The heathen are sunk down in the pit *that* they made: in the net which they hid is their own foot taken."
 - 3) Psalms 57:6: "They have prepared a net for my steps; my soul is bowed down: they have digged
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a pit before me, into the midst whereof they are fallen themselves."

- b. This is another description and declaration of the age-old principle that we reap what we sow. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Gal. 6:7-8).
9. Verse 28: "A lying tongue hateth *those that are* afflicted by it; and a flattering mouth worketh ruin."
- a. One who tells lies about someone is expressing his hatred for that person. This is so even if he does not realize it, and would deny his hatred. Flattery falls from lying lips, not from a truthful heart.
 - b. James 3:5-6: "Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue *is* a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell."
 - c. Proverbs 18:21: "Death and life *are* in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof."
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PROVERBS 27

A. Proverbs 27:1-10.

1. Verse 1: "Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth."
 - a. This proverb does not argue against good planning for the future, but warns against having overconfidence in what we shall do tomorrow: "Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what *shall be* on the morrow. For what *is* your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye *ought* to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that" (Jas. 4:13-15). Earthly life is very uncertain, with many potential dangers, including disease, accident, what someone else might do, the weather, political turmoil, and death.
 - b. Farmers must act today as if there will be a harvest in the fall. Manufacturers must plan today for the products they expect to sell later. Families must act and plan for the tomorrow so as to be prepared for the future. But these are matters of good sense, and do not violate the precept of this verse.
 - c. If we should grow arrogant and self-sufficient, and think that we have a firm grasp on the future, our pomposity will likely bring us grief. One who boasts about what he will do tomorrow, may very well be condemning himself.
 - 1) 2 Samuel 3:9-10: "So do God to Abner, and more also, except, as the LORD hath sworn to David, even so I do to him; To translate the kingdom from the house of Saul, and to set up the throne of David over Israel and over Judah, from Dan even to Beersheba."
 - 2) 2 Samuel 3:27: "And when Abner was returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside in the gate to speak with him quietly, and smote him there under the fifth *rib*, that he died, for the blood of Asahel his brother."
 - 3) Esther 5:12: "Haman said moreover, Yea, Esther the queen did let no man come in with the king unto the banquet that she had prepared but myself; and to morrow am I invited unto her also with the king."
 - 4) Esther 7: "So the king and Haman came to banquet with Esther the queen. And the king said again unto Esther on the second day at the banquet of wine, What *is* thy petition, queen Esther? and it shall be granted thee: and what *is* thy request? and it shall be performed, *even* to the half of the kingdom. Then Esther the queen answered and said, If I have found favour in thy sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request: For we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish. But if we had been sold for bondmen and bondwomen, I had held my tongue, although the enemy could not countervail the king's damage. Then the king Ahasuerus answered and said unto Esther the queen, Who is he, and where is he, that durst presume in his heart to do so? And Esther said, The adversary and enemy *is* this wicked Haman. Then Haman was afraid before the king and the queen. And the king arising from the banquet of wine in his wrath *went* into the palace garden: and Haman stood up to make request for his life to Esther the queen; for he saw that there was evil determined against him by the king. Then the king returned out of the palace garden into the place of the banquet of wine; and Haman was fallen upon the bed whereon Esther *was*. Then said the king, Will he force the queen also before me in the house? As the word went out of the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face. And Harbonah, one of the chamberlains, said before the king, Behold also, the gallows fifty cubits high, which Haman had made for Mordecai, who had spoken good for the king, standeth in the house of Haman. Then the king said, Hang him thereon. So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then was the king's wrath pacified."

- 5) Luke 12:15-21: "And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, *and* be merry. But God said unto him, *Thou* fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So *is* he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."
 - 6) Luke 17:26-29: "And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed *them* all."
- d. If we wait until tomorrow to obey God, we might be waiting too long. "For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2).
2. Verse 2: "Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips."
 - a. Bridges quotes an old commentator as follows: "Praise is a comely garment. But though thyself doth wear it, *another* must put it on, or else it will never sit well about thee. Praise is sweet music, but it is never tuneable in *thine own mouth*. If it cometh from the mouth of *another*, it soundeth most tuneably in the ears of all that hear it. Praise is a rich treasure, but it will never make thee rich, unless *another* tell the same" (p.502).
 - b. If we praise ourselves, we lose rather than gain, glory. No one likes to be around one who is perceived as a braggart.
 - c. We are told to let others, even a stranger, give us praise, rather than giving it to ourself. It is more seemly, in view of the Lord's requirement for humility. And the disposition with which we receive and handle praise likewise calls for sobriety.
 3. Verse 3: "A stone *is* heavy, and the sand weighty; but a fool's wrath *is* heavier than them both."
 - a. A foolish man's wrath is heavier than the weight of a stone or sand. Since a wise man's wrath can be dangerous to his soul, how much more so is the anger of a fool!
 - b. David gave vent to his anger, but subdued it quickly (1 Sam. 25:32-33; cf. Eph. 4:26). Absalom let his wrath smolder for two years before it broke out (2 Sam. 13:22-29).
 - 1) 1 Samuel 25:32-33: "And David said to Abigail, Blessed *be* the LORD God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me: And blessed *be* thy advice, and blessed *be* thou, which hast kept me this day from coming to *shed* blood, and from avenging myself with mine own hand."
 - 2) 2 Samuel 12:22-29: "And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell *whether* GOD will be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me. And David comforted Bathsheba his wife, and went in unto her, and lay with her: and she bare a son, and he called his name Solomon: and the LORD loved him. And he sent by the hand of Nathan the prophet; and he called his name Jedidiah, because of the LORD. And Joab fought against Rabbah of the children of Ammon, and took the royal city. And Joab sent messengers to David, and said, I have fought against Rabbah, and have taken the city of waters. Now therefore

gather the rest of the people together, and encamp against the city, and take it: lest I take the city, and it be called after my name. And David gathered all the people together, and went to Rabbah, and fought against it, and took it."

- 3) Ephesians 4:26: "Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:"
 4. Verse 4: "Wrath *is* cruel, and anger *is* outrageous; but who *is* able to stand before envy?"
 - a. As bad as wrath can be, envy (jealousy) can be so strong that it is difficult to control. Anger and wrath are hard for the individual to master, but so also is envy. Anger, wrath, and envy are likewise difficult to defend against when they arise from someone else.
 - b. Ephesians 4:31-32: "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."
 5. Verses 5-6: "Open rebuke *is* better than secret love. Faithful *are* the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy *are* deceitful."
 - a. An open rebuke is better than secret love, for the former is productive of good while the latter is empty because it is unexpressed. A rebuke can be an expression of love. In verse six, Solomon declares that the wounds inflicted by a friend (rebukes that are offered out of love) are better than the kisses from a sly enemy. Judas gave Christ a kiss, but his intent was to identify him to the mob sent to arrest the Lord.
 - b. The Lord often rebuked those caught up in sin, but he did it for their own good. Paul told the Galatians that he was not their enemy, but their friend, when he spoke the truth to them bluntly (4:16). One who winks at our sins is not a friend, and one who points out our errors is no enemy.
 6. Verse 7: "The full soul loatheth an honeycomb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet."
 - a. One can get too much, even of the finest things of life, to the point that they are repulsive to him. Cake, ice cream, and candy are delicious, but when we have eaten our fill, the thought of more is nauseating. But if one is hungry enough, even the most unsavory food is desirable.
 - b. In life, there are those who have more than enough to eat or wear, to the extent that they take no pleasure in them any longer. At the same time, there are others who are happy to have whatever they get.
 - c. In our country where the gospel is available to all, it is often unappreciated, but in other places, it is highly prized because it is scarce. In America, there are many copies of the Bible for every citizen, but there are many people in other lands who have never even seen a copy of God's word.
 - d. Members of the church who have ready access to the gospel often ignore it because they are hardened against it. Other members cannot get enough of its truths, and eagerly drink it in with delight.
 7. Verse 8: "As a bird that wandereth from her nest, so *is* a man that wandereth from his place."
 - a. There is a similarity between a wandering bird and a wandering man. The bird's nest is a haven of peace and safety; the home of a man is his haven of peace and safety. If one takes to wandering, he gives up the protection and stability of home. This verse teaches a lesson on the value of having a stable situation.
 - b. Jacob's daughter was safe as long as she remained at home, but when she went to see the daughters of the land, she fell into trouble (Gen. 34:1ff). The idle young women of 1 Timothy 5:13 wandered from house to house, and became busybodies. One who is so unstable that he keeps moving about, or is ever changing jobs, is not apt to find happiness.
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8. Verses 9-10: "Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so *doth* the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel. 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.*"
- As ointment and perfume are pleasant to our sense of smell, so the good counsel of a loving friend is appreciated by the wise. Such advice stems from his soul, and is good for our soul, even if it is severe.
 - One who has been a friend to the family through the years can be very supportive during a calamity, more so even than a member of the family who is distant. Joseph found greater friendship among strangers than from his own brothers (Gen. 39:4, 21; 41:39-45; 37:4-18). An old and true friend is of great value; a far off brother is of much less worth. We can pick our friends, but we have no choice about our relatives. A friend may help because he wills to help; a brother might help only out of family obligation.

B. Proverbs 27:11-27.

- Verses 11-13: "My son, be wise, and make my heart glad, that I may answer him that reproacheth me. A prudent *man* foreseeth the evil, *and* hideth himself; *but* the simple pass on, *and* are punished. Take his garment that is surety for a stranger, and take a pledge of him for a strange woman."
 - A son who shows wisdom will bring happiness to his father's heart, and gives the father strong support when he is reproached. If the reproach is on account of the son, the father can show by the son's wisdom that the criticism is unjust. If the father is involved in a conflict over some other matter, knowing his son's uprightness will lend strength to him in the trouble.
 - "My son, be wise, and make my heart glad. The exhortation of a father to his son, or of a teacher to his pupil....Such development of wisdom delights a father's heart, as Prov 10:1; 23:15,24. That I may answer him that reproacheth me (Ps 119:42; comp. Ps 127:5; Eccles. 30:2). If the pupil did not show wisdom and morality in his conduct, the teacher would incur blame for the apparent failure of his education; whereas the high tone of the disciple might be appealed to as a proof of the merit and efficacy of the tutor's discipline. On the other hand, the evil doings of Hebrews often made the Name of God to be blasphemed among the Gentiles; just as nowadays the inconsistent lives of Christians are the greatest impediment to the success of missionary efforts in heathen countries" [Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by Biblesoft].
 - "Children are here exhorted to be wise and good, 1. That they may be a comfort to their parents and may make their hearts glad, even when the evil days come, and so recompense them for their care, Prov 23:15. 2. That they may be a credit to them: 'That I may answer him that reproaches me with having been over-strict and severe in bringing up my children, and having taken a wrong method with them in restraining them from the liberties which other young people take. My son, be wise, and then it will appear, in the effect, that I went the wisest way to work with my children.' Those that have been blessed with a religious education should in every thing conduct themselves so as to be a credit to their education and to silence those who say, A young saint, an old devil; and to prove the contrary, A young saint, an old angel"[Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: New Modern Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1991 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.].
 - Wisdom opens the eyes to see trouble coming, and so we can avoid it. But those without this perception go on heedlessly, and meet with calamity of some kind. "A prudent *man* foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished" (Prov. 22:3).
 - Verse thirteen is a repeat of 20:16. It teaches prudence in financial dealings with others, especially strangers. It calls for good judgment, not for selfishness. - Verse 14: "He that blesseth his friend with a loud voice, rising early in the morning, it shall be counted
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a curse to him."

- a. A warning is issued against heaping praise upon a friend, using a loud voice when many can hear. Instead of blessing the friend, the speaker's sincerity will be brought into doubt. The early hour in which the praise is given suggests the person is in a hurry to do so, before someone else beats him to it. Also, voices carry far in the early morning.
 - b. "He who praises you more than he was wont to do, has either deceived you, or is about to do it" (Italian proverb, quoted by Clarke, p.779).
3. Verses 15-16: "A continual dropping in a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike. Whosoever hideth her hideth the wind, and the ointment of his right hand, *which* bewrayeth itself."
- a. As the rain which keeps on falling all day soon gets on our nerves, so does the continual nagging of a contentious woman.
 - b. One who thinks to restrain her from her chosen course would have as much success trying to restrain the wind (ASV). He would be as apt to be successful in quieting her tongue as in trying to keep others from smelling a pungent ointment on his right hand. The Hebrew in the last clause is obscure.
4. Verse 17: "Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend."
- a. Metal rubbed against a knife blade sharpens its edge. Friends sharpen each other by their contact with each other. When one is discouraged, the other can lift up his friend. When one is in trouble, the other can aid him. When one is in sin, the other by rebuke can help him to see his error. The strengths of each can be communicated, and both are improved.
 - b. As the skill of ball players is sharpened by higher competition, so friends enhance each other's strength.
 - 1) Acts 17:5: "But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people." The mob found strength in each other's presence.
 - 2) 2 Corinthians 7:6: "Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus." Paul found comfort and encouragement by Titus' arrival.
 - 3) Romans 15:32: "That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed."
5. Verse 18: "Whoso keepeth the fig tree shall eat the fruit thereof: so he that waiteth on his master shall be honoured."
- a. One who goes to the expense and labor to raise a fig tree has the privilege of partaking of its fruits; a faithful servant will be honored by his master. We are here taught again the principle of reaping what we sow.
 - b. 2 Kings 2:3-5: "And the sons of the prophets that *were* at Bethel came forth to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the LORD will take away thy master from thy head to day? And he said, Yea, I know *it*; hold ye your peace. And Elijah said unto him, Elisha, tarry here, I pray thee; for the LORD hath sent me to Jericho. And he said, *As* the LORD liveth, and *as* thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they came to Jericho. And the sons of the prophets that *were* at Jericho came to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the LORD will take away thy master from thy head to day? And he answered, Yea, I know *it*; hold ye your peace."
 - c. Luke 7:2: "And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear unto him, was sick, and ready to die."
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- d. 1 Corinthians 9:7-14: "Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? Or saith he *it* altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, *this* is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown unto you spiritual things, *is it* a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? If others be partakers of *this* power over you, *are* not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ. Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live *of the things* of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel."
6. Verse 19: "As in water face *answereth* to face, so the heart of man to man."
- a. As the pool of water reflects an accurate image of the face peering into it, so when we look at each other there are many similarities to be found. While there are many differences between individuals, yet there are many things we have in common. All of us have our temptations, guilt, weaknesses, problems, worries, fears, and hopes.
- b. "As in clear water the face of the gazer is reflected, so man finds in his fellow man the same feelings, sentiments, passions, which he has himself. He sees in others the likeness of himself; whatever he knows himself to be, he will see others presenting the same character. Self-knowledge, too, leads to insight into others' minds; 'for what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him?' (1 Cor 2:11). There is a solidarity in human nature which enables us to judge of others by ourselves. The difficulties in the construction and wording of the sentence do not affect the interpretation" [Pulpit Commentary, *ibid.*].
- c. Before being critical of others, think how that same criticism would feel. "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets" (Matt. 7:12).
7. Verses 20-22: "Hell and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied. *As* the fining pot for silver, and the furnace for gold; so *is* a man to his praise. Though thou shouldest bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, *yet* will not his foolishness depart from him."
- a. Hell (Sheol) and destruction (Abaddon) are never full, so man's lusts can never be fully and finally satisfied: "All the labour of man *is* for his mouth, and yet the appetite is not filled" (Eccl. 6:7). Death, which ushers us into hades, is never sated; and destruction (hell) always has room for one more lost soul.
- b. The fire burns the dross from silver and gold, and praise puts our hearts to the test. It can urge us to greatness, or cause us to lose our worth by becoming haughty.
- c. Foolishness cannot be removed from a stubborn man even though he is pounded like wheat in a mortar. *Braying* (crushing or pounding into powder) separates the grain from the husk, but cannot remove folly from a man's heart. Only God's word can do that.
8. Verses 23-27: "Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, *and* look well to thy herds. For riches *are* not for ever: and doth the crown *endure* to every generation? The hay appeareth, and the tender grass showeth itself, and herbs of the mountains are gathered. The lambs *are* for thy clothing, and the goats *are* the price of the field. And *thou shalt have* goats' milk enough for thy food, for the food of thy household, and *for* the maintenance for thy maidens."
- a. A lesson is given here showing that diligence and wisdom must be employed in tending to one's livestock, fields, and riches. None of these material blessings are certain, no more so than that the
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crown will pass on to each generation without fail. Dynasties are frequently overthrown and kingdoms end. If the individual tends to his business, he will have clothing and food, sufficient for all his household.

- b. “Money and other kinds of wealth may be lost or wasted; it is therefore expedient to have the resources of agriculture, land and herds, to depend upon. Chosen (Prov 15:6), translated ‘riches,’ is ‘strength,’ ‘abundance,’ ‘treasure laid up.’ Delitzsch renders, ‘prosperity’ ...And doth the crown endure to every generation?....These positions are not secure from generation to generation; much less stable, in fact, than the possession of farms and cattle....” [Pulpit Commentary, *ibid.*].
 - c. Riches are good only for what they are able to purchase. One cannot eat silver, or gold, or cash. What good is a great store of wealth if there is no food or clothing to buy? One who is poor in money, but has a farm, with its lands and livestock, has the materials at hand for food and clothing.
 - d. 1 Timothy 5:8: "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."
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PROVERBS 28

A. Proverbs 28:1-9.

1. Verse 1: "The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion."
 - a. Guilt is said to be the parent of fear. Adam had no fear until his conscience was attacked by the guilt of his sin (Gen. 2:25; 3:1-11). When Israel entered Canaan, God told the unfaithful that they would flee when there was no enemy (Lev. 26:17,36).
 - 1) Leviticus 26:17: "And I will set my face against you, and ye shall be slain before your enemies: they that hate you shall reign over you; and ye shall flee when none pursueth you."
 - 2) Leviticus 26:36: "And upon them that are left *alive* of you I will send a faintness into their hearts in the lands of their enemies; and the sound of a shaken leaf shall chase them; and they shall flee, as fleeing from a sword; and they shall fall when none pursueth."
 - 3) Deuteronomy 28:25: "The LORD shall cause thee to be smitten before thine enemies: thou shalt go out one way against them, and flee seven ways before them: and shalt be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth."
 - 4) Deuteronomy 32:30: "How should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, except their Rock had sold them, and the LORD had shut them up?"
 - b. If a guilty conscience can produce fear, then the removal of guilt should produce boldness. The child of God can have confidence even in the face of strong hostile enemies, but the child of the devil may be smitten with terror in a similar situation. These are general rules.
 - c. Children of God are in different stages of spiritual strength, even as children of the devil are in different stages of hardness of heart; and different individuals have varying degrees of personality strengths, whether they are Christians or not. Just because a Christian has fears does not make him a non-Christian (1 Cor. 2:3; 2 Cor. 11:24-27), and just because a sinful man is strong and apparently without fear, he does not by this act of courage become a saint.
 - d. Bible examples:
 - 1) Caleb and Joshua were fearless before the Canaanites: "And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, *which were* of them that searched the land, rent their clothes: And they spake unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying, The land, which we passed through to search it, *is* an exceeding good land. If the LORD delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey. Only rebel not ye against the LORD, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they *are* bread for us: their defence is departed from them, and the LORD *is* with us: fear them not. But all the congregation bade stone them with stones. And the glory of the LORD appeared in the tabernacle of the congregation before all the children of Israel" (Num. 14:6-10).
 - 2) Moses did not fear Pharaoh.
 - a) Exodus 10:28-29: "And Pharaoh said unto him, Get thee from me, take heed to thyself, see my face no more; for in *that* day thou seest my face thou shalt die. And Moses said, Thou hast spoken well, I will see thy face again no more."
 - b) Hebrews 11:27: "By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible."
 - 3) The apostles did not fear the Jewish council: "And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple, and

- in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ" (Acts 5:41-42)
- 4) But King Belshazzar was terrified when he saw the handwriting on the wall (Dan. 5).
2. Verse 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."
- a. God has concern over the individual sparrow (Matt. 10:29) and for the state of great nations (Dan. 4:25). In a country where there are many sins, there is instability in the government, and thus turmoil and trouble for the population (1 Kings 12:16-24; Ps. 9:17; Prov. 14:34; Dan. 4:30-32). As Clarke pointed out, nations will not be judged in the Judgment as nations; everyone will be judged as individuals. God judges nations in the here and now (p.781).
 - b. When political unrest and revolution occur, we may look to sin as being the underlying cause. The War Between the States was brought about by (1) the evils of slavery, (2) by a lack of longsuffering on the part of abolitionists, and (3) by pride and arrogance and greed and hatred on the part of both sides.
 - c. When evil men vie for advantage in a nation, the people are bound to suffer; when men of understanding and knowledge are in charge of the nation, its future and condition are on a sure foundation.
 - d. David and Solomon were basically good kings, and prosperity and strength characterized their reigns. But length of rule does not necessarily mean that the king is godly: Manasseh, a wicked person, reigned for 55 years (2 Kings 21).
3. Verse 3: "A poor man that oppresseth the poor *is like* a sweeping rain which leaveth no food."
- a. A poor man who oppresses another poor man is like a strong rain storm which sweeps away the crops, destroying them. Rain is just what the crops need, but the destructive nature of the winds and water does more harm than good. We might assume that one poor man would naturally be inclined to aid another poor man, but that is not always the case: he might take advantage of him because of greed.
 - b. "Is like a sweeping rain which leaveth no food; literally, and not bread. A violent storm coming at seed time and washing away soil and seed, or happening at harvest time and destroying the ripe corn" [The Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by Biblesoft].
 - c. Consider the case of the unforgiving servant in Matthew 18:23-35: "Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took *him* by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses."
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4. Verse 4: "They that forsake the law praise the wicked: but such as keep the law contend with them."
 - a. One who turns his back on the law is more apt to praise those of his own stripe, rather than those who obey the law. The word for law here is "torah," indicating that the Law of God is under consideration.
 - b. A man living in violation to God's word is acting as an enemy of God, not as his friend, even though he may think of himself as a good man: "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad" (Matt. 12:30).
 - c. On the other hand, one who sincerely seeks to do the will of God will contend with those who are wicked. "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort *you* that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3).
 5. Verse 5: "Evil men understand not judgment: but they that seek the LORD understand all *things*."
 - a. Those who live in rebellion to God's law do not comprehend justice. They do not always show justice to their fellowman and they live as if there were no such thing as divine justice.
 - b. But the individual who seeks to follow the will of God obtains a good understanding of such things.
 - 1) John 7:17 (ASV): "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or *whether* I speak from myself."
 - 2) 2 Timothy 2:15: "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."
 - c. "Evil men understand not judgment; or, what is right. An evil man's moral conception is perverted, he cannot distinguish between right and wrong; the light that was in him has become darkness (comp. Prov 29:7). Many men, by giving themselves over to wickedness, are judicially blinded, according to John 12:89, 40. They who seek the Lord understand all things. These who do God's will, seeking him in prayer, know what is morally right is every circumstance, have a right judgment in all things (comp. Eccl 8:5; 1 Cor 2:15)" [Pulpit Commentary, *ibid.*].
 6. Verse 6: "Better *is* the poor that walketh in his uprightness, than *he that is* perverse in his ways, though he *be* rich."
 - a. Of the two kinds of life, it is better to be poor and righteous than to be rich and unrighteous.
 - 1) Job 1:21: "And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD."
 - 2) Proverbs 19:1: "Better *is* the poor that walketh in his integrity, than *he that is* perverse in his lips, and is a fool."
 - 3) Hebrews 11:37-38: "They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and *in* mountains, and *in* dens and caves of the earth."
 - 4) Revelation 2:9: "I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and *I know* the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but *are* the synagogue of Satan."
 - b. "The Hebrew literally is, perverse of two ways; i.e. who, going one way, pretends to go another; the 'two ways' being the evil which he really pursues, and the good which he feigns to follow. Delitzsch calls him 'a double-going deceiver'....'A double-minded man,' says James (James 1:8), 'is unstable in all his ways.' It is not the endeavouring to serve God and mammon at the same time that is meant, but putting on the appearance of religion to mask wicked designs—in the present case in order to gain
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- wealth. Septuagint, 'A poor man walking in truth is better than a rich liar' [Pulpit Commentary, *ibid.*].
7. Verse 7: "Whoso keepeth the law *is* a wise son: but he that is a companion of riotous *men* shameth his father."
- a. Former generations set great store in the conduct of the younger generation. The deportment of a son or daughter had strong effect on the parents. A son who kept the law was seen as wise, but one who associated with the riotous (gluttons), brought shame upon his father. A sinful son or daughter reflects badly on the parents, who may have done their duty in bringing up that child.
 - b. "Bad companionship is opposed to keeping the law. The law makes wise by illuminating the understanding (2 Tim 3:15-16) and guiding the will (Deut 17:19; Ps 119:9). Boon companionship is the snare of youth, because of the love of pleasure so common to the young (Luke 15:13; cf. Prov 13:20)" [Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by BibleSoft].
 - 1) Deuteronomy 17:19: "And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them."
 - 2) Psalms 119:9: "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed *thereto* according to thy word."
 - 3) Proverbs 13:20: "He that walketh with wise *men* shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed."
 - 4) Luke 15:13: "And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living."
 - 5) 2 Timothy 3:15: "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."
8. Verse 8: "He that by usury and unjust gain increaseth his substance, he shall gather it for him that will pity the poor."
- a. Covetousness is a cruel master; it drives the one under its spell to mistreat others in every conceivable way for the purpose of self-enrichment. It might be by outright theft, or by charging exorbitant interest or prices.
 - b. The wise man declares that such conduct will eventually miss its aim. In many cases, the one who is righteous (by having compassion on the poor) will inherit the covetous man's ill-gotten gain. For certain, he cannot carry it with him when he dies, and he must face the consequences of his action in the final judgment.
 - c. The Lord will avenge the righteous who have been abused by money-hungry fiends: "I know that the LORD will maintain the cause of the afflicted, *and* the right of the poor" (Psalms 140:12). He will bless those who put spiritual gain above the material.
 - 1) Matthew 6:33: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."
 - 2) Luke 12:15: "And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."
 - 3) 1 Timothy 4:8: "For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."
 - 4) 1 Timothy 6:6: "But godliness with contentment is great gain."
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9. Verse 9: "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer *shall be* abomination."
- a. Alden (p.195) says that the Hebrew does not have a separate word for *hear* and *obey*, the two ideas being expressed by the same word. Solomon is teaching that one who does not obey God's word forfeits his right to be heard when he prays. The prayer of one who lives in rebellion to God's word is abominable to God.
 - 1) Psalms 66:18: "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me."
 - 2) Proverbs 1:24, 28: "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded...Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me."
 - 3) Matthew 7:21: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."
 - 4) John 9:31: "Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth."
 - b. "It is by the word and prayer that our communion with God is kept up. God speaks to us by his law, and expects we should hear him and heed him; we speak to him by prayer, to which we wait for an answer of peace. How reverent and serious should we be, whenever we are hearing from and speaking to the Lord of glory! If God's word be not regarded by us, our prayers shall not only not be accepted of God, but they shall be an abomination to him, not only our sacrifices, which were ceremonial appointments, but even our prayers, which are moral duties, and which, when they are put up by the upright, are so much his delight. See Isa 1:11,15. The sinner whose prayers God is thus angry at is one who wilfully and obstinately refuses to obey God's commandments, who will not so much as give them the hearing, but causes his ear to decline the law, and refuses when God calls; God will therefore justly refuse him when he calls" [Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: New Modern Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1991 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.].

B. Proverbs 28:10-18.

1. Verse 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."
 - a. The influence we wield on others must be controlled. One who causes a righteous person to transgress God's will shall suffer for his error.
 - 1) Matthew 18:7: "Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!"
 - 2) 1 Corinthians 8:9-13: "But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling-block to them that are weak. For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols; And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend."
 - 3) Matthew 23:14-15: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves."
 - b. But the upright individual, having good influence on others, shall be properly blessed.
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- 1) Matthew 5:13-16: "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."
 - 2) Philippians 2:14-16: "Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain."
 - c. "The doom of seducers, who attempt to draw good people, or those who profess to be such, into sin and mischief, who take pride in causing the righteous to go astray in an evil way, in drawing them into a snare, that they may insult over them....But they shall fall themselves into their own pit; and having been not only sinners, but tempters, not only unrighteous, but enemies to the righteous, their condemnation will be so much the greater, Matt 23:14-15. The happiness of the sincere. They shall not only be preserved from the evil way which the wicked would decoy them into, but they shall have good things, the best things, in possession..." [Matthew Henry's Commentary, *ibid.*].
2. Verse 11-14: "The rich man *is* wise in his own conceit; but the poor that hath understanding searcheth him out. When righteous *men* do rejoice, *there is* great glory: but when the wicked rise, a man is hidden. He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh *them* shall have mercy. Happy *is* the man that feareth alway: but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief."
 - a. The ungodly rich man is wise only in his own eyes; the poor, but righteous, wise person is able to "see through him." The drug dealer, the criminal, the financial "high roller," the gambler, the covetous business man or merchant—these are wise in their own eyes, but the righteous saint can see their true condition, and will want no part of it.
 - b. When righteous men have reason to rejoice, the good of all is present. But when evil men are exalted, the righteous are endangered (and hide themselves), and society in general must suffer. "Being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, *and are* the offscouring of all things unto this day" (1 Cor. 4:13).
 - c. One who hides his sin by hypocrisy shall not prosper; God knows his true state and others are apt to learn it. But the one who confesses his sins and renounces them, his soul shall find mercy. This is ever true.
 - 1) Isaiah 55:7: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."
 - 2) Ezekiel 18:31-32: "Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn *yourselves*, and live ye."
 - 3) Acts 17:30: "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent."
 - 4) 1 John 1:8-10: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."
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- d. One who always fears the Lord will be happy (blessed) for he will keep himself in the love of God (Jude 21; 1 John 5:3). But the man who hardens his heart against God and his word will face "mischief" sooner or later.
- 1) 1 John 5:2-3: "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous."
 - 2) Jude 21: "Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."
3. Verses 15-18: "*As* a roaring lion, and a ranging bear; *so is* a wicked ruler over the poor people. The prince that wanteth understanding *is* also a great oppressor: *but* he that hateth covetousness shall prolong *his* days. A man that doeth violence to the blood of *any* person shall flee to the pit; let no man stay him. Whoso walketh uprightly shall be saved: but *he that is* perverse in *his* ways shall fall at once."
- a. A wicked ruler is like a roaring lion and a ranging (running to and fro) bear. A roaring lion and a ranging bear are in search of food, and a danger to their prey. So the wicked ruler is a danger to the poor for he has no compassion on their plight.
 - b. This is akin to the preceding verse. The unwise ruler is a great oppressor, but on the other hand, the ruler who rejects covetousness shall be prolonged.
 - c. One who sheds blood is fleeing to the pit. His crimes of violence are surely leading him to eternal punishment. Such a criminal is to be punished, not pitied; let God's decree be carried out.
 - 1) Genesis 9:4-6: "But flesh with the life thereof, *which is* the blood thereof, shall ye not eat. And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man."
 - 2) Romans 13:1-5: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to *execute* wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore *ye* must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake."
 - 3) 1 Peter 2:13-14: "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well."
 - d. The preeminence of upright living, a life of obedience to God, is shown. Those who are righteous will be delivered (from their spiritual and worldly troubles); but the spiritually-crooked man shall fall (surely, suddenly).
4. Verses 19-22: "He that tilleth his land shall have plenty of bread: but he that followeth after vain *persons* shall have poverty enough. A faithful man shall abound with blessings: but he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent. To have respect of persons *is* not good: for for a piece of bread *that* man will transgress. He that hasteth to be rich *hath* an evil eye, and considereth not that poverty shall come upon him."
- a. "He that tilleth his land shall be satisfied with bread: but he that followeth vain *persons is* void of understanding" (Prov. 12:11). One who diligently works his land will be filled with bread, but one
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- who concerns himself with empty people or things will be filled with want. The prodigal son knew that there was bread and to spare in his father's house, while he had wasted his substance on empty living.
- b. One who is faithful (to God) will be given what he needs, but one who "takes shortcuts" to become rich (i.e., seeks his fortune by crooked means), shall not be unpunished (margin).
 - 1) Galatians 6:7-8: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."
 - 2) 1 Timothy 6:9-10: "But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."
 - 3) 1 Timothy 6:17-19: "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life."
 - c. The person described is willing to pervert justice for his own gain, thus even for a piece of bread will he transgress. Partiality is not good, thus is sinful.
 - d. Again, getting rich by evil means is denounced, and has a promise of punishment.
5. Verses 23-25: "He that rebuketh a man afterwards shall find more favour than he that flattereth with the tongue. Whoso robbeth his father or his mother, and saith, *It is* no transgression; the same *is* the companion of a destroyer. He that is of a proud heart stirreth up strife: but he that putteth his trust in the LORD shall be made fat."
- a. Greater rewards are found from rebuking a transgressor than from flattering him. Flattery might result in some momentary advantage from the man, but the one who properly rebukes a transgressor God will reward.
 - b. Robbing one's parent, by indirect means, is friend to a destroyer. Some ignore their parents in their old age, or deprive them of their goods. "And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death: But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, *It is* Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; *he shall be free*. And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother; Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye" (Mark 7:9-13).
 - c. Pride results in strife. "Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised *is* wisdom" (Prov. 13:10). Strife robs us of peace and happiness. But one will be made spiritually fat when he trusts in God (rather than in himself).
6. Verses 26-28: "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered. He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack: but he that hideth his eyes shall have many a curse. When the wicked rise, men hide themselves: but when they perish, the righteous increase."
- a. Being delivered represents receiving the blessings of God. One who trusts in himself is foolish, but one who trusts God (i.e., walks wisely) will be delivered.
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- b. One who helps the needy will be taken care of by the Lord; but one who shuts his eyes to the needy will have "many a curse."
- 1) Proverbs 19:17: "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again."
 - 2) Galatians 2:10: "Only *they would* that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do."
 - 3) James 1:27: "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, *and* to keep himself unspotted from the world."
- c. When wicked men rise to power, godly men must hide themselves, but when these wicked rulers perish, the righteous thrive.
- 1) Esther 8:15-17: "And Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white, and with a great crown of gold, and with a garment of fine linen and purple: and the city of Shushan rejoiced and was glad. The Jews had light, and gladness, and joy, and honour. And in every province, and in every city, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a good day. And many of the people of the land became Jews; for the fear of the Jews fell upon them."
 - 2) Proverbs 28:12: "When righteous *men* do rejoice, *there is* great glory: but when the wicked rise, a man is hidden."
 - 3) Acts 12:23-24: "And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost. But the word of God grew and multiplied."
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PROVERBS 29

A. Proverbs 29:1-9.

1. Verse 1: "He, that being often reproved hardeneth *his* neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."
 - a. One who rejects reproof, time and again, will become obstinate and stubborn, and thus place himself beyond correction. "The intractable ox, *hardening his neck* against the yoke (Jer. 31:18), is but too apt a picture of the stubborn sinner, casting off the restraints of God. This was the uniform complaint against Israel (Exod. 32:9; 2 Chron. 36:13-16; Neh. 9:29; Isa. 48:8; Jer. 17:23; Zech. 7:11,12; Acts 7:51), a true picture of the mass of the ungodly before our eyes" [Bridges, p.555].
 - 1) Exodus 32:9: "And the LORD said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it *is* a stiffnecked people."
 - 2) 2 Chronicles 36:13-16: "And he also rebelled against king Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God: but he stiffened his neck, and hardened his heart from turning unto the LORD God of Israel. Moreover all the chief of the priests, and the people, transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen; and polluted the house of the LORD which he had hallowed in Jerusalem. And the LORD God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place: But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against his people, till *there was* no remedy."
 - 3) Nehemiah 9:29: "And testifiedst against them, that thou mightest bring them again unto thy law: yet they dealt proudly, and hearkened not unto thy commandments, but sinned against thy judgments, (which if a man do, he shall live in them;) and withdrew the shoulder, and hardened their neck, and would not hear."
 - 4) Isaiah 48:8: "Yea, thou heardest not; yea, thou knewest not; yea, from that time *that* thine ear was not opened: for I knew that thou wouldest deal very treacherously, and wast called a transgressor from the womb."
 - 5) Jeremiah 17:23: "But they obeyed not, neither inclined their ear, but made their neck stiff, that they might not hear, nor receive instruction."
 - 6) Zechariah 7:11-12: "But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear. Yea, they made their hearts *as* an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the LORD of hosts hath sent in his spirit by the former prophets: therefore came a great wrath from the LORD of hosts."
 - 7) Acts 7:51: "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers *did*, so *do* ye."
 - b. The more knowledge a rebel has, the more hardened his heart is (Heb. 6:1-6; 10:23-31). His stubborn will must compensate for the greater amount of truth he rejects. For Biblical examples, consider:
 - 1) Pharaoh.
 - a) Exodus 9:27: "And Pharaoh sent, and called for Moses and Aaron, and said unto them, I have sinned this time: the LORD *is* righteous, and I and my people *are* wicked."
 - b) Exodus 9:34: "And when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunders were ceased, he sinned yet more, and hardened his heart, he and his servants."
 - c) Exodus 10:27-28: "But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let them go."

And Pharaoh said unto him, Get thee from me, take heed to thyself, see my face no more; for in *that* day thou seest my face thou shalt die."

- d) Exodus 14:28: "And the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, *and* all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them."
- 2) Eli's sons.
 - a) 1 Samuel 2:25: "If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him: but if a man sin against the LORD, who shall entreat for him? Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the LORD would slay them."
 - b) 1 Samuel 2:34: "And this *shall be* a sign unto thee, that shall come upon thy two sons, on Hophni and Phinehas; in one day they shall die both of them."
 - c) 1 Samuel 4:11: "And the ark of God was taken; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were slain."
 - 3) Ahab.
 - a) 1 Kings 18:18: "And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and thou hast followed Baalim."
 - b) 1 Kings 21:20: "And Ahab said to Elijah, hast thou found me, O mine enemy? And he answered, I have found *thee*; because thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the LORD."
 - c) 1 Kings 22:28: "And Micaiah said, If thou return at all in peace, the LORD hath not spoken by me. And he said, Hearken, O people, every one of you."
 - d) 1 Kings 22:34: "And a *certain* man drew a bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness: wherefore he said unto the driver of his chariot, Turn thine hand, and carry me out of the host; for I am wounded."
 - 4) Judas.
 - a) Matthew 26:14-16: "Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, And said *unto them*, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him."
 - b) John 13:21, 24-30: "When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me....Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of whom he spake. He then lying on Jesus' breast saith unto him, Lord, who is it? Jesus answered, He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped *it*. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave *it* to Judas Iscariot, *the son* of Simon. And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly. Now no man at the table knew for what intent he spake this unto him. For some *of them* thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, Buy *those things* that we have need of against the feast; or, that he should give something to the poor. He then having received the sop went immediately out: and it was night."
 - c) Acts 1:25: "That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place."
- c. The result of rebellion against God is destruction (eternal punishment):
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- 1) Matthew 25:46: "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."
 - 2) Matthew 10:28: "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."
 - 3) Luke 12:4-5: "And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him."
 - 4) Luke 12:47-48: "And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not *himself*, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many *stripes*. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few *stripes*. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more."
 - 5) 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9: "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."
- d. The wise man's statement encompasses the alien sinner and the religious apostate. It is essential that children of God guard their way carefully: "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let *them* slip. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard *him*; God also bearing *them* witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?" (Heb. 2:1-4).
2. Verse 2: "When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn."
 - a. A righteous ruler makes for a peaceful and pleasant time for the people, but the opposite is generally true when a wicked person holds sway in a nation.
 - b. The wicked ruler has his own selfish interests as his chief end, but the godly ruler holds the good of the people as paramount. When Mr. Clinton took the presidential office in 1993, he immediately began promoting the homosexual agenda. Among the things he did was to override the centuries-old policy of forbidding sexual perversion in the military. Only time can reveal the full extent of this disastrous move.
 3. Verse 3: "Whoso loveth wisdom rejoiceth his father: but he that keepeth company with harlots spendeth *his* substance."
 - a. The young man who loves wisdom, and follows its dictates as he has been taught by his parents, causes his father to rejoice.
 - b. But the young man who takes up with harlots will bring himself to poverty by so doing, to say nothing of the shame he thus heaps upon his parents.
 4. Verse 4: "The king by judgment establisheth the land: but he that receiveth gifts overthroweth it."
 - a. A king can establish his kingdom by justice, but one who receives bribes (thus is a respecter of persons) will undermine his own throne and weaken his kingdom. As Bridges pointed out, "Of what avail are the best laws, if they be badly administered? Partiality and injustice absolutely make them
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null and void" (p.558).

- b. A large nation that practices injustice, though it has a mighty army, is less secure than a righteous country although its army is small.
5. Verse 5: "A man that flattereth his neighbour spreadeth a net for his feet."
 - a. One who succumbs to flattery is ensnared thereby. Most of us enjoy a compliment, but praise that is undeserved, or which is insincerely offered for the purpose of gaining some advantage, is designed for the benefit of the one using the smooth words, not for the purpose of enhancing the object of the flattery.
 - b. David was able to withstand the curses of Shimei, but fell victim to the enticing words of Ziba (2 Sam. 16:1-12; 19:24-30). The Lord's enemies tried the same tactic on him, but were met with exposure (Matt. 22:15ff; cf. 1 Cor. 3:19).
 - c. 1 Corinthians 3:19: "For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness."
 6. Verse 6: "In the transgression of an evil man *there is* a snare: but the righteous doth sing and rejoice."
 - a. The sins of a spiritual rebel later become the means of his defeat. Such a man may go merrily through life, enjoying the fruits of his iniquity, but sooner or later must face his evil (Gal. 6:7-8). As sure as the punishment of the sinner, just that certain is the reward of the righteous.
 - b. The wise man is not saying that the righteous will sing and rejoice over the punishment of the wicked. He is saying that the godly are to be richly blessed for their faithfulness, but the transgressor will be punished.
 7. Verse 7: "The righteous considereth the cause of the poor: *but* the wicked regardeth not to know *it*."
 - a. Another distinction between the righteous and the wicked is found in the attitude each has for the poor: the righteous man duly considers the plight of the poor, but the evil man ignores it. Wicked men are governed by selfishness, not by truth, justice, or mercy. The righteous fight against selfishness, and strive to follow truth, to be just, and to show mercy.
 - b. The judge of Luke 18:1-5 was not as much interested in justice as he was in his own ease, thus he granted the widow's petition. Felix turned Paul and the gospel away; he had no sincere interest in truth, justice or mercy; he hoped that Paul would give him a bribe, thus gratifying his avarice (Acts 24:25-27).
 - 1) Luke 18:1-5: "And he spake a parable unto them *to this end*, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me."
 - 2) Acts 24:25-27: "And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee. He hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him: wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him. But after two years Porcius Festus came into Felix' room: and Felix, willing to show the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound."
 - c. Being considerate of the poor lies at the heart of Christianity. Selflessness, not selfishness, rules in our hearts.
 - 1) Acts 10:38: "How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went

- about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him."
- 2) Galatians 2:10: "Only *they would* that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do."
 - 3) Galatians 6:9-10: "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all *men*, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."
 - 4) James 1:27: "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, *and* to keep himself unspotted from the world."
8. Verse 8: "Scornful men bring a city into a snare: but wise *men* turn away wrath."
- a. Another contrast is drawn by the wise man, between the scornful who bring a city into a snare, and the wise man who turns away wrath. "'Proud and foolish men kindle the fire, which wise and good men must extinguish'" (Bridges, p.564).
 - b. Many of Israel's kings brought shame and pain upon the nation, but other kings were righteous and brought God's protection and blessings. These two types of people are also seen among the citizens of all lands, and in the church.
9. Verse 9: "*If* a wise man contendeth with a foolish man, whether he rage or laugh, *there is* no rest."
- a. Contending with a foolish man will produce no good results. The fool might react by raging against you or by laughing at you; in either case, the problem has not been resolved. One might be able to reason with a foolish man, provided he will listen; one might be able to shame him into compliance.
 - b. But if we descend to the level of folly, no good solution will ensue. "Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him. Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit" (Prov. 26:4-5).

B. Proverbs 29:10-18.

1. Verse 10: "The bloodthirsty hate the upright: but the just seek his soul."
 - a. Another contrast is shown between the bloodthirsty man who hates those who are upright and the just man who seeks good for an unjust man's soul. Why did Cain kill his brother? "Not as Cain, *who* was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous" (1 John 3:12). An evil person develops hatred in his heart against the righteous simply because the godly life of that saint exposes his own life as sinful.
 - b. When Saul sought to kill David, Jonathan protected the sweet psalmist.
 - 1) 1 Samuel 18:1-4: "And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father's house. Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that *was* upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle."
 - 2) 1 Samuel 18:11: "And Saul cast the javelin; for he said, I will smite David even to the wall *with it*. And David avoided out of his presence twice."
 - 3) 1 Samuel 18:25: "And Saul said, Thus shall ye say to David, The king desireth not any dowry, but an hundred foreskins of the Philistines, to be avenged of the king's enemies. But Saul thought to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines."
 - c. Evil Queen Jezebel tried to kill the Lord's prophets, but Obadiah hid them: "And it came to pass *after*

many days, that the word of the LORD came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go, show thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth. And Elijah went to show himself unto Ahab. And *there was* a sore famine in Samaria. And Ahab called Obadiah, which *was* the governor of *his* house. (Now Obadiah feared the LORD greatly: For it was *so*, when Jezebel cut off the prophets of the LORD, that Obadiah took an hundred prophets, and hid them by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water)" (1 Kings 18:1-4).

- d. Jeremiah was likewise delivered from those who sought his life (Jer. 38:1-13).
 - e. Paul was aided in escaping from his enemies at Damascus.
 - 1) Acts 9:20-25: "And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God. But all that heard *him* were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests? But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ. And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him: But their laying await was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him. Then the disciples took him by night, and let *him* down by the wall in a basket."
 - 2) 2 Corinthians 11:32-33: "In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me: And through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands."
2. Verse 11: "A fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise *man* keepeth it in till afterwards."
- a. Being completely and fully open to others is not always in the best interest of truth or souls. There is a time to speak and a time to keep silent (Eccl. 3:1ff). The Lord would not speak to Herod, but discussed certain things with Pilate during his several trials. Samson should have kept quiet about his strength (Judg. 16:17).
 - b. "The Apostle was two years at Ephesus, without *uttering all his mind* against the worship of Diana. But was this cowardice shrinking from the truth? His weeping ministry, and unceasing efforts proved his faithfulness (Acts 19:10, 23ff). His open protest *kept in till afterwards* was self-discipline, consistent with Christian courage and decisiveness" (Bridges, p.568).
 - c. Preachers and teachers can do harm by being premature in addressing some subjects. Young and weak Christians must be given time to grow and develop; they must be fed milk before the meat is served.
 - 1) 1 Corinthians 3:1-4: "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, *even* as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able *to bear it*, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas *there is* among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I *am* of Apollos; are ye not carnal?"
 - 2) Hebrews 5:12-14: "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which *be* the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk *is* unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, *even* those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."
 - 3) 1 Peter 2:1-2: "Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby."
 - d. There are some reports that have the potential to do much harm and little if any good. Suppose someone brings up a negative tale about another person, and you have already learned something that
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would make the report even more harmful; keeping your information quiet would in many cases be the right thing to do (the exceptions would be in a situation where disciplinary action in behalf of a sinful brother's soul is being discussed and planned).

3. Verse 12: "If a ruler hearken to lies, all his servants *are* wicked."
 - a. "A king sets his own policy, but he must depend on information from advisers to help him formulate that policy. If he only listens to lies from advisers (like King Ahab who rejected the prophecy of Micaiah in 1 Kings 22), then all the men who surround him will cater to his depravity and become wicked" (Alden, p.201).
 - b. Once a ruler has shown his predilection toward welcoming pleasant lies rather than distasteful truths, his assistants will be sure to give him a steady dose of what pleases him. Compare: "And king Rehoboam consulted with the old men, that stood before Solomon his father while he yet lived, and said, How do ye advise that I may answer this people? And they spake unto him, saying, If thou wilt be a servant unto this people this day, and wilt serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be thy servants for ever. But he forsook the counsel of the old men, which they had given him, and consulted with the young men that were grown up with him, *and* which stood before him: And he said unto them, What counsel give ye that we may answer this people, who have spoken to me, saying, Make the yoke which thy father did put upon us lighter? And the young men that were grown up with him spake unto him, saying, Thus shalt thou speak unto this people that spake unto thee, saying, Thy father made our yoke heavy, but make thou *it* lighter unto us; thus shalt thou say unto them, My little *finger* shall be thicker than my father's loins. And now whereas my father did lade you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke: my father hath chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions" (1 Kings 12:6-11).
4. Verse 13: "The poor and the deceitful man meet together: the LORD lighteneth both their eyes."
 - a. Solomon brings up a comparison between the poor man and the deceitful man: they both have their eyes lightened by the Lord. God gave eyes (sight) to both. He sends his rain and sun upon the evil and the good.
 - 1) Matthew 5:45: "That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."
 - 2) Acts 14:17: "Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness."
 - 3) 1 Timothy 4:10: "For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe."
 - b. Both these types of men are given the same law to follow if they would be blessed by God.
 - 1) Mark 16:15-16: "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."
 - 2) Romans 1:16-17: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith."
 - c. "The doctrine of this proverb, as of one similar to it (Chap. 22:2), seems to be the real equality of the divine dispensations under apparent inequalities. The rich seem to be intended by *the deceitful*; so called, from the deceitfulness of riches [Chap. 23:5; Matt. 13:22], and of the means, by which they are too often obtained [1 Tim.6:9]....There was not one prize for the soul of the poor, and another for the rich. There was not one table for the meaner guests, and another for the greater" (Bridges, p.569).

5. Verse 14: "The king that faithfully judgeth the poor, his throne shall be established for ever."
 - a. Kings naturally want to maintain their thrones to the next generation, giving it to one of their own choosing. Some try to establish their reign by military power, or by harshness, or by worldly alliances.
 - 1) 1 Kings 11:26: "And Jeroboam the son of Nebat, an Ephrathite of Zereda, Solomon's servant, whose mother's name *was* Zeruah, a widow woman, even he lifted up *his* hand against the king."
 - 2) 2 Chronicles 11:22-23: "And Rehoboam made Abijah the son of Maachah the chief, *to be* ruler among his brethren: for *he thought* to make him king. And he dealt wisely, and dispersed of all his children throughout all the countries of Judah and Benjamin, unto every fenced city: and he gave them victual in abundance. And he desired many wives." Compare: "And it came to pass, when Rehoboam had established the kingdom, and had strengthened himself, he forsook the law of the LORD, and all Israel with him" (2 Chron. 12:1).
 - 3) 2 Chronicles 28:16-20: "At that time did king Ahaz send unto the kings of Assyria to help him. For again the Edomites had come and smitten Judah, and carried away captives. The Philistines also had invaded the cities of the low country, and of the south of Judah, and had taken Bethshemesh, and Ajalon, and Gederoth, and Shocho with the villages thereof, and Timnah with the villages thereof, Gimzo also and the villages thereof: and they dwelt there. For the LORD brought Judah low because of Ahaz king of Israel; for he made Judah naked, and transgressed sore against the LORD. And Tilgathpilneser king of Assyria came unto him, and distressed him, but strengthened him not."
 - b. David did not follow either of these: "Then the king arose, and sat in the gate. And they told unto all the people, saying, Behold, the king doth sit in the gate. And all the people came before the king: for Israel had fled every man to his tent" (2 Sam. 19:8). Those who honor God will be honored by him.
 - 1) 1 Samuel 2:30: "Wherefore the LORD God of Israel saith, I said indeed *that* thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever: but now the LORD saith, Be it far from me; for them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed."
 - 2) Psalms 9:16: "The LORD is known *by* the judgment *which* he executeth: the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands. Higgaion. Selah."
 - 3) Proverbs 14:34: "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin *is* a reproach to any people."
6. Verse 15: "The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left *to himself* bringeth his mother to shame."
 - a. Solomon again returns to a significant theme in the book—parental discipline of children. Wisdom is taught the child through the judicial use of the rod. But he says that a child that is left to his own devices will surely bring shame to the mother. If oral instruction will work, that is enough; but if it is ignored, it must be enforced by the rod. "Either the child's will, or the parent's heart, must be broken. Without a wise and firm control, the parent is miserable; the child is ruined" (Bridges, p.573).
 - b. Eli apparently spared the rod and spoiled his sons (1 Sam. 2:22-25; 3:13). Applying the "rod" without instructions will do no better.
 - 1) 1 Samuel 2:22-25: "Now Eli was very old, and heard all that his sons did unto all Israel; and how they lay with the women that assembled *at* the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And he said unto them, Why do ye such things? for I hear of your evil dealings by all this people. Nay, my sons; for *it is* no good report that I hear: ye make the Lord's people to transgress. If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him: but if a man sin against the LORD, who shall entreat for him? Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the LORD would slay them."

- 2) 1 Samuel 3:13: "For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not."
- c. "The mother cannot conjecture the future stature, health, talents, or prospects of her new-born infant. But of one thing she may be absolutely certain—a corrupt and wayward will. The poison however does not appear at first. No special anxiety is excited. The child is not nurtured in wickedness, or under the influence of bad example. He is only *left to himself*. *Left!* The restive horse, with his rein loosened, full of his own spirit, plunges headlong down the precipice. The child, without government, rushes on under the impetuous impulse of his own will" (Bridges, p.571).
7. Verse 16: "When the wicked are multiplied, transgression increaseth: but the righteous shall see their fall."
- a. One sin leads to another. A theft calls for a lie to cover up the theft. When one man enters sin, he often takes someone else with him. Thus, sin is increased. But the righteous will see the fall of transgressors.
- b. Noah saw his wicked generation meet a horrible end; Abraham saw the Sodomites consumed; Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the seashore. Faithful saints who are opposed and besieged by weak brethren often live to see their stand vindicated. In the Judgment, righteousness will be fully blessed.
8. Verse 17: "Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul."
- a. Correction given to children will redound to the glory of godly parents, and to the salvation of the children.
- b. Crops that are properly cared for will give the farmer his due harvest; fruit trees which are carefully pruned will bring forth good fruit for the benefit of the owner; children properly raised will be a source of help and comfort to their parents.
9. Verse 18: "Where *there is* no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy *is* he."
- a. Without vision, the people "cast off restraint" (ASV). The verse shows that he speaks of revelation from God, not merely the making of good plans for the future (1 Sam. 3:1). Where there is no vision (from God), people wander into sin. When Israel cast away God's word, fearful judgments were sent against them.
- 1) 1 Kings 12:28-32: "Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves *of* gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan. And this thing became a sin: for the people went *to worship* before the one, *even* unto Dan. And he made an house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi. And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that *is* in Judah, and he offered upon the altar. So did he in Bethel, sacrificing unto the calves that he had made: and he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places which he had made."
- 2) 2 Chronicles 15:3-5: "Now for a long season Israel *hath been* without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law. But when they in their trouble did turn unto the LORD God of Israel, and sought him, he was found of them. And in those times *there was* no peace to him that went out, nor to him that came in, but great vexations *were* upon all the inhabitants of the countries."
- 3) Psalms 74:9: "We see not our signs: *there is* no more any prophet: neither *is there* among us any that knoweth how long."
- 4) Lamentations 1:4: "The ways of Zion do mourn, because none come to the solemn feasts: all her
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gates are desolate: her priests sigh, her virgins are afflicted, and she *is* in bitterness."

- 5) Lamentations 2:9: "Her gates are sunk into the ground; he hath destroyed and broken her bars: her king and her princes *are* among the Gentiles: the law *is* no *more*; her prophets also find no vision from the LORD."
 - 6) Ezekiel 7:26: "Mischief shall come upon mischief, and rumour shall be upon rumour; then shall they seek a vision of the prophet; but the law shall perish from the priest, and counsel from the ancients."
 - 7) Hosea 3:4: "For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and *without* teraphim."
 - 8) Hosea 4:6: "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children."
 - 9) Amos 8:11: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD." [This prophecy pointed to the time between Malachi and Matthew, when no new revelations would be given].
- b. When men reject the Bible, God sends them strong delusion (2 Thess. 2:10-12). Christ warned the church at Ephesus that they must repent and do the first works or else he would remove their candlestick (Rev. 2:1-5; cf. 3:1-3, 15-16). "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD" (Amos 8:11). We need to have a great appreciation and love for God's word. In a land where it is available to all, it is most often ignored, rejected, and opposed.

C. Proverbs 29:19-26.

1. Verse 19: "A servant will not be corrected by words: for though he understand he will not answer."
 - a. There were some servants then as there are some workers now who cannot be corrected by words only. They will ignore instructions even though they understand them.
 - b. Some measure of discipline is necessary.
2. Verse 20: "Seest thou a man *that is* hasty in his words? *there is* more hope of a fool than of him."
 - a. A man who exercises no restraint over his words is as difficult to correct as a foolish man is. There is little hope for either.
 - b. Until the hasty man sees his problem, he cannot be helped.
 - 1) Leviticus 24:12: "And they put him in ward, that the mind of the LORD might be showed them."
 - 2) James 1:19: "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath."
3. Verse 21: "He that delicately bringeth up his servant from a child shall have him become *his* son at the length."
 - a. His point seems to be that servants are to be disciplined just as children are. If a servant is pampered (brought up delicately), he may try to become an heir (son). But the Bible does not sanction cruelty to animals or slaves.
 - b. "The verb *panak*, which is not found elsewhere in the Old Testament, is rightly here translated...It refers to the spoiling a person by over-refinement, luxury, and pampering—a treatment peculiarly unsuitable in the case of a bond servant, and one which makes such forgetful of his dependent

position....Shall have him become his son at the length; i.e. at length, like 'at the last,' equivalent to 'at last' (Prov 5:11)....[Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by Biblesoft].

- c. "It is an imprudent thing in a master to be too fond of a servant, to advance him too fast, and admit him to be too familiar with him, to suffer him to be over-nice and curious in his diet, and clothing, and lodging, and so to bring him up delicately, because he is a favourite, and an agreeable servant; it should be remembered that he is a servant, and, by being thus indulged, will be spoiled for any other place. Servants must endure hardness. It is an ungrateful thing in a servant, but what is very common, to behave insolently because he has been used tenderly. The humble prodigal thinks himself unworthy to be called a son, and is content to be a servant; the pampered slave thinks himself too good to be called a servant, and will be a son at the length, will take his ease and liberty, will be on a par with his master, and perhaps pretend to the inheritance. Let masters give their servants that which is equal and fit for them, and neither more nor less. This is very applicable to the body, which is a servant to the soul; those that delicately bring up the body, that humour it, and are over-tender of it, will find that at length it will forget its place, and become a son, a master, a perfect tyrant" [Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: PC Study Bible].
4. Verse 22: "An angry man stirreth up strife, and a furious man aboundeth in transgression."
 - a. Anger, in and of itself, is not sinful. Christ expressed anger (Mark 3:5), and Christians are told to keep sin out of their anger (Eph. 4:26-27).
 - b. Anger can easily stir up strife; it can drive a man to fight over small matters. Solomon teaches a lesson here against being hot-tempered, which leads to unnecessary strife and sin.
 5. Verse 23: "A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit."
 - a. Men think that "show" is necessary to greatness; many would not be caught dead in out-of-fashion clothing.
 - b. But the wise man says that pride will bring a man low, while humility will bring honor.
 - 1) Isaiah 57:15: "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name *is* Holy; I dwell in the high and holy *place*, with him also *that is* of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."
 - 2) Matthew 5:3: "Blessed *are* the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."
 - 3) Matthew 18:4: "Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven."
 - 4) James 4:10: "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up."
 - 5) 1 Peter 5:6-7: "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you."
 6. Verse 24: "Whoso is partner with a thief hateth his own soul: he heareth cursing, and bewrayeth *it* not."
 - a. The partner of a thief is one who takes his stolen goods. He is as guilty as the thief—he hates his own soul. If the thief is caught, and gives false testimony in a court, his partner who knows it is a lie, will not expose him. And if he is called to give testimony, he himself will commit perjury.
 - b. One sin leads to another. Or, the type of person who would aid and abet a thief, will also consider cursing as nothing.
 7. Verse 25: "The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe."
 - a. One who fears other people ensnares himself. If a judge fears the criminal, he is not apt to render justice; if a preacher fears the sinners or the brethren, he is not apt to preach the whole truth; if elders
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fear the brethren, they are not fit to serve. Abraham showed fear when he lied about his wife (Gen. 12:11-13; 20:2,11); Aaron feared Israel (Ex. 32:22-24).

- b. We have no real reason to fear man.
 - 1) Matthew 10:28: "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."
 - 2) Revelation 2:10: "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast *some* of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."
 - 3) Hebrews 13:5-6: "*Let your conversation be* without covetousness; *and be* content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord *is* my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me."
8. Verse 26: "Many seek the ruler's favour; but *every* man's judgment *cometh* from the LORD."
 - a. If a king or judge finds a guilty man innocent, that does not remove his guilt before God. Prominent people charged with crime are sometimes freed, although their guilt seems manifest.
 - b. In the final analysis, we must all stand before God's supreme bar of justice to receive the things we have done in this body (2 Cor. 5:10); nothing will be hidden on that day (Rom. 14:10-12).
9. Verse 27: "An unjust man *is* an abomination to the just: and *he that is* upright in the way *is* abomination to the wicked."
 - a. To a righteous man, an unjust man is an abomination. To a wicked man, a just man is abominable.
 - 1) Isaiah 5:20: "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!"
 - 2) Isaiah 30:8-10: "Now go, write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever: That this *is* a rebellious people, lying children, children *that* will not hear the law of the LORD: Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits."
 - b. The righteous seek the salvation of the wicked.
 - 1) Romans 9:1: "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost."
 - 2) Romans 10:1: "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved."
 - c. The wicked seek the hurt of the righteous.
 - 1) John 15:18-21: "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before *it hated* you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me."
 - 2) Romans 8:7: "Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."
 - 3) 1 John 3:12-13: "Not as Cain, *who* was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. Marvel not, my

brethren, if the world hate you."

PROVERBS 30

A. Proverbs 30:1-17.

1. Verse 1: "The words of Agur the son of Jakeh, *even* the prophecy: the man spake unto Ithiel, even unto Ithiel and Ucal."
 - a. There has been much discussion among Bible students through the centuries about the identity of Agur, Jakeh, Ithiel, and Ucal. Some take the words as descriptive of characters, rather than individuals; others take them as the proper names of definite people who lived in those ancient times. Some think that Agur is Solomon, Jakeh is David, and the other two names refer to Christ.
 - b. There is nothing in the statement to require a figurative interpretation of the names, hence, we take them as references to real people of that time, who are otherwise unknown to us today. As Bridges suggested, we know the real Author (the Holy Spirit), even though we may not know who the penman was.
 - 1) Proverbs 30:5-6: "Every word of God *is* pure: he *is* a shield unto them that put their trust in him. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar."
 - 2) 2 Peter 1:21: "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake *as they were* moved by the Holy Ghost."
 - c. The writings are ascribed to Agur, son of Jakeh, which he spake to Ithiel and Ucal.
 - d. It is likely that the "men of Hezekiah" copied the proverbs of Agur even as they had done with Solomon's: "These *are* also proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied out" (Prov. 25:1).
 - e. Another commentator offered this opinion: "There is no reason to emend the first verse to read—The words of Agur the son of Jakeh, the oracle which the man saith. The names Ithiel and Ucal present more of a problem. The most unusual explanation suggested is that given by Charles C. Torrey ('Proverbs, Chapter 30,' JBL, LXXIII (1954), 93-96). He argues that these words are not names but an Aramaic phrase. The letters as they stand in the original, with slightly different vowels, can be translated, 'I am not God.' They then form a contrast to verse 2, 'For I am more brutish than a man.' In favor of Torrey's suggestion is the well-known fact that in Prov 31:2 the Aramaic word for 'son' is used three times" [from The Wycliffe Bible Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1962 by Moody Press].
2. Verses 2-3: "Surely I *am* more brutish than *any* man, and have not the understanding of a man. I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy."
 - a. The writer openly admits that in comparison to the perfect standard of holiness and truth, he was a brutish man, and was without wisdom or knowledge. This is a common attitude among the godly men and women of God in those days. Paul spoke of himself as the "chief of sinners" (1 Tim. 1:13-15). These sentiments are not false humility since they were spoken by inspiration (cf. 1 Cor. 14:37).
 - b. No man, no matter how far advanced he may seem to be in spiritual attainments, has any right to boast. In contrast to the absolute purity and majesty of the Almighty, man is a mere weakling; and in relation to the perfect standard of God's word, who among us can say that he measures up wholly?
 - 1) 1 Corinthians 10:12: "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."
 - 2) Philippians 3:12-14: "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but *this* one thing *I do*, forgetting those things which are

- behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."
- 3) 1 John 1:8-10: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."
 - c. Therefore, genuine humility is becoming of a man for he is dependent upon God, and recognizes his dependence, and is quick to confess it. That attitude is to his glory, not to his shame.
 - 1) Isaiah 55:7: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."
 - 2) Isaiah 66:2: "For all those *things* hath mine hand made, and all those *things* have been, saith the LORD: but to this *man* will I look, *even to him that is* poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word."
 3. Verse 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?"
 - a. No mere man had ever ascended to heaven or descended from heaven. That is God's domain and prerogative. Who has gathered the wind in his fists? Only God could do so. Who set bounds about the waters? Only God. And only God could establish the ends of the earth. These questions are reminiscent of those in Job 38.
 - b. What is his name? Names were more meaningful then than now, for the parents often captured the character of the child by the name they chose. God often gave names to his people, by which he stressed certain aspects of their nature. Thus, the wise man asks who can identify and describe the nature of the One spoken of above.
 - c. To this he adds, "What is the name of his son?" The reference is to God the Father in the first part of the verse; here the reference is to the Son of God (Christ).
 - 1) John 3:13: "And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, *even* the Son of man which is in heaven."
 - 2) Ephesians 4:8-10: "Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things)."
 4. Verses 5-6: "Every word of God *is* pure: he *is* a shield unto them that put their trust in him. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar."
 - a. That God is the subject of the preceding verse is indicated by a direct reference to his word in this passage. Every word of God is pure; there is nothing impure about it; there is nothing impure that is produced by it.
 - 1) Psalms 12:6: "The words of the LORD *are* pure words: *as* silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times."
 - 2) Psalms 18:30: "*As for* God, his way *is* perfect: the word of the LORD is tried: he *is* a buckler to all those that trust in him."
 - 3) Psalms 119:128: "Therefore I esteem all *thy* precepts *concerning* all *things to be* right; and I hate every false way."
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- b. God has promised to be a shield to those who put their trust in him. Trusting God is far more than a mere assertion of trust; it is more than a mental acceptance of the precept of trusting in him. It means that we rely upon him to perform what he has promised to do. We cannot save ourselves, but he can save us; we trust him to do his part when we meet the conditions he has set. We cannot make all the essential plans and preparations for all our future needs; we trust God to do what we cannot do. We cannot foresee the future; we trust God to be at our side to protect us and help us.
- 1) Psalms 23: "The LORD *is* my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou *art* with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever."
 - 2) Matthew 6:19-34: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great *is* that darkness! No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, *shall he* not much more *clothe* you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day *is* the evil thereof."
 - 3) 2 Corinthians 6:14-18: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."
 - 4) Hebrews 13:5-6: "*Let your conversation be* without covetousness; *and be* content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord *is* my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me."
 - 5) 1 Peter 5:6-7: "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you
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in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you."

- c. Because God is God, let no man presume to add to his words (Deut. 4:2; Rev. 22:18-19; Gal. 1:6-12; 1 Cor. 4:6, ASV; 2 John 9). But many have added to (and deleted from) God's word regarding (1) the plan of salvation, (2) worship, (3) the nature, identity, organization, and work the Lord planned for his church, (4) the nature and destiny of man, (5) the nature and work of Christ, and a host of other matters. Man has the prideful notion that he may handle God's word as he pleases without any evil consequences.
 - 1) Matthew 22:29: "Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God."
 - 2) 2 Corinthians 2:17: "For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ."
 - 3) 2 Corinthians 4:1-5: "Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake."
 - 4) 2 Peter 2:3: "And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not."
5. Verses 7-9: "Two *things* have I required of thee; deny me *them* not before I die: Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: 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*."
 - a. The wise man requests two things of the Lord; these are stated in verses 8-9. "Though Agur had confessed his *brutishness* before his God; yet his prayers (the most accurate test of a man of God) prove him to have been possessed of deep spiritual understanding" (Bridges, p.596). He asks that these two matters be done before he died.
 - b. He requested that God would remove vanity and lies far from him. The world is full of vain things and lies. Sin promises happiness, but its rewards are empty of good and full of mischief (destroyed health, lives, families, souls). Therefore, its message is characterized by falsehood.
 - c. He asked that he be delivered from poverty, lest he should steal and take the name of God in vain. Everyone is willing to pray to be kept free from poverty. Poverty can be a real danger to the soul. His opposition to poverty was not merely because of the suffering and deprivations it caused the body, but for the perils it had for the soul.
 - d. He prayed that he be free of riches. How many today would be willing to seriously make this request? Riches can be a danger to the soul, but few would turn down wealth if it were offered to them, or be willing to give most of it away if it should become a detriment to their salvation. A grave problem with wealth, even a relatively small amount of it, is that the individual may think he is self-sufficient, and does not need God.
 - 1) Matthew 6:19-21: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

- 2) Mark 10:24: "And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!"
 - 3) Luke 12:13-21: "And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you? And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, *and* be merry. But God said unto him, *Thou* fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So *is* he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."
 - 4) 1 Timothy 6:17-19: "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life."
 - e. He asked that he be given "food convenient for me." This is the essence of the Lord's statement in the model prayer: "Give us this day our daily bread." God gave Israel the amount of manna that would satisfy their needs, not their wants: "And when they did mete *it* with an omer, he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack; they gathered every man according to his eating" (Ex. 16:18).
6. Verse 10: "Accuse not a servant unto his master, lest he curse thee, and thou be found guilty."
- a. One who makes a false charge or mettles in affairs which are not his own, is apt to suffer the consequences. The specific point of the verse is that one ought not accuse a servant unto his master. The idea of slander is evidently in the accusation for the latter part says that the accuser would be "found guilty."
 - b. This passage is not teaching us to wink at sin, or to allow the master to be defrauded in some way by a disloyal servant if we are able to do something about it.
 - c. But it might be hurtful to a servant to make a false charge against him to his master, since a servant could not always be able to establish his innocence. David suffered from false accusations made against him.
- 1) 1 Samuel 22:9-23: "Then answered Doeg the Edomite, which was set over the servants of Saul, and said, I saw the son of Jesse coming to Nob, to Ahimelech the son of Ahitub. And he inquired of the LORD for him, and gave him victuals, and gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine. Then the king sent to call Ahimelech the priest, the son of Ahitub, and all his father's house, the priests that *were* in Nob: and they came all of them to the king. And Saul said, Hear now, thou son of Ahitub. And he answered, Here I *am*, my lord. And Saul said unto him, Why have ye conspired against me, thou and the son of Jesse, in that thou hast given him bread, and a sword, and hast inquired of God for him, that he should rise against me, to lie in wait, as at this day? Then Ahimelech answered the king, and said, And who *is so* faithful among all thy servants as David, which is the king's son in law, and goeth at thy bidding, and is honourable in thine house? Did I then begin to inquire of God for him? be it far from me: let not the king impute *any* thing unto his servant, *nor* to all the house of my father: for thy servant knew nothing of all this, less or more.
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And the king said, Thou shalt surely die, Ahimelech, thou, and all thy father's house. And the king said unto the footmen that stood about him, Turn, and slay the priests of the LORD; because their hand also *is* with David, and because they knew when he fled, and did not show it to me. But the servants of the king would not put forth their hand to fall upon the priests of the LORD. And the king said to Doeg, Turn thou, and fall upon the priests. And Doeg the Edomite turned, and he fell upon the priests, and slew on that day fourscore and five persons that did wear a linen ephod. And Nob, the city of the priests, smote he with the edge of the sword, both men and women, children and sucklings, and oxen, and asses, and sheep, with the edge of the sword. And one of the sons of Ahimelech the son of Ahitub, named Abiathar, escaped, and fled after David. And Abiathar showed David that Saul had slain the LORD'S priests. And David said unto Abiathar, I knew *it* that day, when Doeg the Edomite *was* there, that he would surely tell Saul: I have occasioned *the death* of all the persons of thy father's house. Abide thou with me, fear not: for he that seeketh my life seeketh thy life: but with me thou *shalt be* in safeguard."

- 2) 1 Samuel 26:19: "Now therefore, I pray thee, let my lord the king hear the words of his servant. If the LORD have stirred thee up against me, let him accept an offering: but if *they be* the children of men, cursed *be* they before the LORD; for they have driven me out this day from abiding in the inheritance of the LORD, saying, Go, serve other gods."
 - d. Following the counsel in this proverb would remove a great many causes of friction in the workplace today, in cases where one envious worker tells some hurtful story about another employee.
7. Verses 11-14: "*There is* a generation *that* curseth their father, and doth not bless their mother. *There is* a generation *that are* pure in their own eyes, and *yet* is not washed from their filthiness. *There is* a generation, O how lofty are their eyes! and their eyelids are lifted up. *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."
- a. The writer gives reports about four different generations, or possibly he makes four different charges against the same generation. In verse 11, he decries the generation which curses their father and does not bless their mother. The same penalty was prescribed by the Law of Moses for those who curse their parents and those who curse God (Lev. 20:9; 24:11-16). Cursing one's parents is proscribed by the fifth commandment (Ex. 20:12). "And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death: But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, *It is* Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; *he shall be free*. And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother; Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye" (Mark 7:9-13).
 - b. Verse 12 describes the generation which thinks it is pure, but in fact it is still covered with filth. It is difficult for us to see our own typing mistakes, but the errors of another's production we can quickly perceive. The same is often true with our own sins and inconsistencies: we can see them in others, but not in ourselves. It is essential that we continually examine our motives, thoughts, words, and actions, comparing them with the Bible.
 - 1) 2 Corinthians 13:5: "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?"
 - 2) 2 Timothy 3:5: "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away."
 - 3) James 1:21-25: "Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. But be ye doers of the word, and

- not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth *therein*, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."
- c. Verse 13 pictures the haughtiness of the generation that has lofty eyes. This type of character thinks itself incapable of error; it has a superiority complex which does not allow it to consider those of "lesser" importance; it will not admit making a mistake.
- 1) Romans 3:23: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."
 - 2) 1 John 1:7-10: "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."
- d. Verse 14 depicts the harshness of a generation that has no concern for the poor. This character has sword-like teeth and a knife-like jaw with which they devour the poor and needy. There is a readiness to hurt but no offer of compassion.
- 1) Psalms 14:4: "Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up my people *as* they eat bread, and call not upon the LORD."
 - 2) Psalms 57:4: "My soul *is* among lions: *and* I lie *even among* them that are set on fire, *even* the sons of men, whose teeth *are* spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword."
8. Verses 15-16: "The horseleech hath two daughters, *crying*, Give, give. There are three *things that* are never satisfied, *yea*, four *things* say not, *It is* enough: The grave; and the barren womb; the earth *that* is not filled with water; and the fire *that* saith not, *It is* enough."
- a. The horseleech is a large leech that is said to attach itself to a horse's mouth while it is drinking water. This *bloodsucker* is used to describe the unsavory character that is never satisfied. This character is said to have two daughters who continually cry, "Give, give."
 - b. Someone has said that the horseleech is covetousness, and its two daughters are avarice and ambition. The writer is not merely pointing out some obvious facts of life; he is teaching us that there are some appetites which we may have which cannot be satisfied.
 - c. Based on this figure of the leech, the wise man names four things which are never satisfied:
 - 1) The grave (Sheol): Hades always has room for another dead person.
 - 2) The barren womb: Barrenness was one of the greatest curses a Hebrew woman could have. There was always the wish for a child; it could not be satisfied.
 - 3) The earth: It can always absorb water—somewhere. A flood may saturate the earth at one point, but if the water was spread about, it would all be absorbed.
 - 4) The fire: A fire will burn as long as there is fuel to be consumed.
9. Verse 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."
- a. One who mocks at his father and despises his mother's instructions will suffer a horrible penalty. Under the figure of a mocking eye, the writer says that the ravens would pluck it out and the eagles shall eat it.
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b. terrible end (2 Sam. 18).

B. Proverbs 30:18-33.

1. Verses 18-19: "There be three *things which* are too wonderful for me, yea, four which I know not: 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."
 - a. Four things which are beyond his comprehension; that cannot be searched out.
 - 1) How is it that an eagle can fly through the air? And who can track its flight path back through the air to its beginning point?
 - 2) A snake cannot be tracked across a rock, for he leaves no trail thereon. And how does a snake move since he has no legs?
 - 3) A ship leaves no trail on the face of the sea, thus it cannot be tracked. Although it leaves behind a wake that is visible, it quickly disappears.
 - 4) A man with a maid.
 - b. Possible views of the fourth point:
 - 1) "Not less mysterious is *the way of a man with a maid*. Eminently practised is the seducer in 'the depths of Satan,' and a thousand arts does he employ to allure the affections of his unwary victim. And it is often as difficult to penetrate his designs, and to escape his snares, as to trace *the way of the eagle, the serpent, or the ship*. Let this be a warning to young and inexperienced females, not to trust to their own purity, or to the strength of their own resolutions, or to place themselves in unprotected situations" (Bridges, pp.606f).
 - 2) "The way of a man with a maid. This maid is the famous word ('alma), 'maiden,' used in Isa 7:14; Gen 24:43 (of Rebecca); Ex 2:8 (of Miriam); Ps 68:25; and Song 1:3; 6:8 (where the 'virgins' are distinguished from queens and concubines). The word nowhere refers to a married woman. In the case of the girl Miriam, it could hardly refer to a marriageable girl. It means a virgin and a young virgin. The root means 'conceal.' Probably the word refers to a maiden still kept in her father's house. Toy, Oesterley, Fritsch, and Greenstone take the point of our verse to be not the marvels of courtship, but the mysteries of procreation. But Delitzsch points out that there are other words —'male and female,' or 'man and wife'—to express this. Here the words are literally, strong man and (maiden). Delitzsch takes the proverb as a reference to sin, immorality concealed. However, the 'virgin' seems to be contrasted with the adulteress of verse 20. And adultery as it is repeatedly pictured in Proverbs is never represented as wonderful or 'past knowledge.' There seems to be no good reason why the more romantic view cannot still be held: Wonderful is the way of courtship, issuing at last in the mysteries of love and life begotten' [Wycliffe Bible Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1962 by Moody Press].
 - 3) "The proverb says that the sinful act to which it alludes leaves no outward sign by which it can generally be recognized; it escapes man's knowledge. This is exemplified and confirmed in the following verse. It is not sufficient to refer the saying to the insidious arts of the seducer, by which he saps the principles and inflames the passions of his victim. The sin of unchastity is signified, which demands secrecy and affords no token of its commission" [Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by BibleSoft].
2. Verse 20: "Such *is* the way of an adulterous woman; she eateth, and wipeth her mouth, and saith, I have done no wickedness."
 - a. The wording of this verse indicates a connection with the foregoing passage. The way of an

adulterous woman is likewise concealed by her wiles. It is as if she has eaten, and wipes away the crumbs from her mouth, and denies that she has tasted any food!

- b. The adulterous woman is not apt to admit wrongdoing, but develops the skill to hide her guilt from others, and is not averse to lying to cover her blame. One who is able to do such, has advanced deeply into sin. Where there is no shame over sin, the destruction of the individual is imminent.
3. Verses 21-23: "For three *things* the earth is disquieted, and for four *which* it cannot bear: For a servant when he reigneth; and a fool when he is filled with meat; For an odious *woman* when she is married; and an handmaid that is heir to her mistress."
 - a. He names four things that cannot be tolerated. These are out of place. **A servant who has assumed a position of authority.** This is not saying that a man of lowly position does not have the ability to rule in a country. Joseph was a slave and a prisoner, but he rose to great prominence in Egypt. But a servant who takes over the authority of his master is out of place.
 - 1) Jeroboam conspired against his master Solomon; he led a revolt against Solomon's son Rehoboam; he led the ten northern tribes in rebellion against God.
 - a) 1 Kings 11:26-28: "And Jeroboam the son of Nebat, an Ephrathite of Zereda, Solomon's servant, whose mother's name *was* Zeruah, a widow woman, even he lifted up *his* hand against the king. And this *was* the cause that he lifted up *his* hand against the king: Solomon built Millo, *and* repaired the breaches of the city of David his father. And the man Jeroboam *was* a mighty man of valour: and Solomon seeing the young man that he was industrious, he made him ruler over all the charge of the house of Joseph."
 - b) 1 Kings 12:27-30: "If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, *even* unto Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam king of Judah. Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves *of* gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan. And this thing became a sin: for the people went *to worship* before the one, *even* unto Dan."
 - 2) Another case is given in 1 Kings 16:9-20: "And his servant Zimri, captain of half *his* chariots, conspired against him, as he was in Tirzah, drinking himself drunk in the house of Arza steward of *his* house in Tirzah. And Zimri went in and smote him, and killed him, in the twenty and seventh year of Asa king of Judah, and reigned in his stead. And it came to pass, when he began to reign, as soon as he sat on his throne, *that* he slew all the house of Baasha: he left him not one that pisseth against a wall, neither of his kinsfolks, nor of his friends. Thus did Zimri destroy all the house of Baasha, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake against Baasha by Jehu the prophet, For all the sins of Baasha, and the sins of Elah his son, by which they sinned, and by which they made Israel to sin, in provoking the LORD God of Israel to anger with their vanities. Now the rest of the acts of Elah, and all that he did, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? In the twenty and seventh year of Asa king of Judah did Zimri reign seven days in Tirzah. And the people *were* encamped against Gibbethon, which *belonged* to the Philistines. And the people *that were* encamped heard say, Zimri hath conspired, and hath also slain the king: wherefore all Israel made Omri, the captain of the host, king over Israel that day in the camp. And Omri went up from Gibbethon, and all Israel with him, and they besieged Tirzah. And it came to pass, when Zimri saw that the city was taken, that he went into the palace of the king's house, and burnt the king's house over him with fire, and died, For his sins which he sinned in doing evil in the sight of the LORD, in walking in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin which he did, to make Israel to sin. Now the rest of the acts of Zimri, and his treason that he

- wrought, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?"
- b. **A fool who has been filled with meat.** The wise man is not saying that fools should be poorly fed, but that such a person can be arrogant if he gets all he wants. Nabal (1 Sam. 25:36), Elah (1 Kings 16:9-10; Hos. 7:5), and Belshazzar (Dan. 5) are examples.
 - c. **An odious woman who is married.** *Odious* means "arousing or deserving hatred or loathing; disgusting; offensive." Jezebel was a woman who was full of hatred (1 Kings 16:31; 21:25). She brought misery to many people; she was certainly out of place as queen in Israel. Herodias brought evil upon her husband (Matt. 14). A hateful woman will do her husband evil, be he king or laborer.
 - d. **A handmaid who is heir to her mistress.** This is like the first; it describes one who takes her mistress' position or wealth. Hagar, through Sarah's scheme, brought hardship upon Abraham's household, and much evil upon the world, indirectly, through the descendants of her son. "Anne Boleyn and Jane Seymour were *handmaids*, and unhappily *heirs*, to their respective mistresses while living, in the affections of the sovereign. The royal example of selfishness and lust was a national grievance, in which *the handmaids* were not wholly guiltless" (Bridges, p.609).
4. Verses 24-28: "There be four *things which are* little upon the earth, but they *are* exceeding wise: The ants *are* a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer; The conies *are but* a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks; The locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands; The spider taketh hold with her hands, and is in kings' palaces."
- a. He names four things which are wise, though very small. The ants, which prepare their winter food during the summer; the conies, which establish their houses in the rocks; the locusts, which go forth together even though there is no king over them; and the spider, who spins her webs in the lowest hovel and in kings' palaces.
 - b. Wisdom is shown in the industry of the ants, the place where the conies make their homes, the unity of the locusts, and in the fearlessness of the spider in where she builds her web.
5. Verses 29-31: "There be three *things which go well*, yea, four are comely in going: A lion *which is* strongest among beasts, and turneth not away for any; A greyhound; an he goat also; and a king, against whom *there is* no rising up."
- a. He names four beings who display comeliness of bearing: the strong lion who shows a majestic presence; a greyhound (*war-horse*, margin); a male goat who rules over the flock; and a king who inspires awe in his subjects.
 - b. There is much beauty in God's creation, and great wisdom and design are manifest throughout the universe and the earth.
 - c. Concerning the greyhound, the Pulpit Commentary offers the following: "A greyhound... 'girt in the loins' ...an expression very vague, and, as the name of an animal, occurring nowhere else in the Old Testament. In post-biblical Hebrew *zarzir* is found as the name of some pugnacious bird, and the Septuagint, Vulgate, and Syriac call it here the cock. So also Aquila and Theodotion. But if the word is onomatopoeic, it would seem to apply with more propriety to one of the raven tribe; and then what is to be made of the allusion to the loins? And how comes it that amid the quadrupeds in the gnome a bird should suddenly be introduced, as one stately in going? It seems certain that some quadruped is here meant, but what? What animal has as characteristic tight-girded loins or slender or active loins? There are, indeed, many that might be so designated, but none that, as far as we know, appropriated this unique appellation. Hence various opinions are held by commentators concerning the identification. The zebra, say some, with its stripes, which may be thus denoted; the war horse, say others, comparing Job 39:19,25, and considering the trappings with which, as we see in ancient sculptures, he was adorned; others, again, fix upon the leopard as the beast intended. But that of the Authorized

Version seems, on the whole, to be the most likely rendering, the slender, agile make of the greyhound having given cause for the appropriation of the term used in the text. Delitzsch compares the German word *windspiel*, which designates the greyhound without the necessity of using the full term, *wiadspielhund*. The only points which may be considered adverse to this view are these two, viz. the ill repute in which dogs were held by the Hebrews, Scripture consistently disparaging and despising them; and the fact that, as far as we have information, the Jews did not use dogs for hunting purposes, though nowadays the Arabs keep a kind of Persian greyhound for sporting, and Assyrian monuments have familiarized us with the appearance of hounds employed in the chase of the lion and the wild ox. Agur may be referring to what he has seen elsewhere, but what was well known to these for whom he wrote.”

6. Verses 32-33: "If thou hast done foolishly in lifting up thyself, or if thou hast thought evil, *lay* thine hand upon thy mouth. 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."
 - a. One who had done foolishly in committing sin ought to lay his hand upon his mouth restraining himself from further evil.
 - b. The churning of milk produces butter; the wringing of the nose brings forth blood; and the forcing of wrath produces strife, strife that could have been prevented by restraining the anger that produced it.

PROVERBS 31

A. Proverbs 31:1-9: The Words of King Lemuel.

1. Verse 1: "The words of king Lemuel, the prophecy that his mother taught him."
 - a. We have about as much certain information about Lemuel as we do about Agur (30:1). I Kings 4:32 says that Solomon authored 3,000 proverbs and 1,005 songs. Ecclesiastes 12:9 reports that he sought out and set in order many proverbs. This may mean that he collected the proverbs of Agur and Lemuel and placed them among his own inspired proverbs, which were all later placed in the book which is attributed to Solomon. All of the truths are inspired, and many were quoted by New Testament speakers and writers.
 - b. The present text simply attributes the words which follow to King Lemuel, words which he had learned from his mother. Some think that Lemuel is another name for Solomon, but there is nothing certain about that conclusion.
 - c. "The name Lemuel, or Lemoel (ver. 4), means 'unto God,' i.e. dedicated to God, like Lael (Num 3:24); hence it is regarded by many authorities, ancient and modern, as an appellation of Solomon, one from infancy dedicated to God and called by him Jedidiah, 'beloved of the Lord' (2 Sam 12:25). But there is nothing in the contents of this section to confirm this idea; indeed, there are expressions which militate against it. Possibly Hezekiah may be meant, and his remarkable piety somewhat confirms the opinion; yet we see no reason why he should be here addressed under a pseudonym, especially if we consider that he himself was concerned in making this collection. On the whole, it seems best to take Lemuel as a symbolical name, designating an ideal king, to whom an ideal mother addressed the exhortation which follows. Solomon's own proverbs contain many warnings against the very sins of which this mother speaks, so that the section is conceived in the spirit of the earlier portion of the book, though it is assigned to a different author and another age. The prophecy (*massa*); the inspired utterance (see on ch. 30:1). This maternal counsel forms one compact exhortation, which might with more propriety be so termed than the words of Agur. His mother. The mother of a reigning king was always regarded with the utmost respect, taking precedence of the king's wife. Hence we so often find the names of kings' mothers in the sacred record; e.g. 1 Kings 2:19; 14:21; 15:2; 2 Kings 12:1.... There are many wise women mentioned in Scripture; e.g. Miriam, Deborah, the Queen of Sheba, Huldah, etc., so there is nothing incongruous in Lemuel being instructed by his mother in wisdom" [Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by BibleSoft].
 - d. A prophecy was an inspired message delivered through revelation from God to a particular prophet. A prophet received the revealed message and reported it to other people. One who was instructed in this message could teach it to someone else. But only the first prophet was inspired. No one living today receives an inspired revelation directly from Heaven; but all of God's inspired revelations are found in the Bible; when one studies and learns God's word, he is able to communicate his knowledge of that information to others. King Lemuel's mother was an inspired prophetess or she passed on to her son an inspired message delivered through some prophet. Compare: "When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also" (2 Tim. 1:5; cf. 3:15-17).
2. Verse 2: "What, my son? and what, the son of my womb? and what, the son of my vows?"
 - a. The mother addresses her son Lemuel. The questions here raised suggest the idea, "What shall I say unto you, the son of my womb, the son of my vows?" It is as if she was searching her heart for proper words of guidance to give her beloved offspring. In some way, she had made vows in regards to him. Hannah made vows to God for her requested son (Samuel). She had pleaded that God grant her a son, whom Hannah vowed to bring up as a servant of the Lord.

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- b. "If there were more Hannahs, would there not be more Samuels?" (Bridges, p.617).
3. Verse 3: "Give not thy strength unto women, nor thy ways to that which destroyeth kings."
- a. One worthy and practical precept any son needs is stated here. Do not give your strength to women, the doing of which has destroyed kings. Ahab might have been a better man if he had not acquired Jezebel.
- b. Solomon fell victim to this vice by his acquiring 700 wives and 300 concubines; They turned his heart away from God unto idols in his old age.
- 1) 1 Kings 11:1-4: "But king Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, *and* Hittites; Of the nations *concerning* which the LORD said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: *for* surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love. And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart. For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, *that* his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as *was* the heart of David his father."
- 2) Nehemiah 13:25-26: "And I contended with them, and cursed them, and smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair, and made them swear by God, *saying*, Ye shall not give your daughters unto their sons, nor take their daughters unto your sons, or for yourselves. Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? yet among many nations was there no king like him, who was beloved of his God, and God made him king over all Israel: nevertheless even him did outlandish women cause to sin."
4. Verses 4-7: "*It is* not for kings, O Lemuel, *it is* not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink: Lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted. Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts. Let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more."
- a. The wise mother warned her son that alcoholic beverages were not for kings or princes; the consumption of such is apt to lead them to forget the law they are supposed to uphold, or cause them to pervert justice against those who are afflicted.
- b. Elah and Benhadad fell victim to strong drink.
- 1) 1 Kings 16:8-9: "In the twenty and sixth year of Asa king of Judah began Elah the son of Baasha to reign over Israel in Tirzah, two years. And his servant Zimri, captain of half *his* chariots, conspired against him, as he was in Tirzah, drinking himself drunk in the house of Arza steward of *his* house in Tirzah."
- 2) 1 Kings 20:16: "And they went out at noon. But Benhadad *was* drinking himself drunk in the pavilions, he and the kings, the thirty and two kings that helped him."
- 3) Daniel 5 tells the sad end of Belshazzar, ruler of Babylon.
- c. Strong drink is fit for one who is ready to perish, and for those who have a soul filled with bitterness. This is not a recommendation that these individuals be given strong drink; she is saying that the strong drink will "finish him off."
- d. Continuing the thought of verse six, the mother says that if the individual who is filled with anguish and about to perish (lost in sin and bound for perdition), strong drink fits his condition; he is the kind of person who has prepared himself for this *coup de grace* which alcohol can effectively deliver!
- e. Clarke thinks that verse seven calls for those who are about to perish and those who are in anguish be
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given medicinal doses of alcohol (p.791). Bridges agrees, adding that it would be better that the king use it to relieve the suffering of men rather than using it for his own pleasure (p.618). Alcohol is a basis for many worthwhile medicines, and as such may be used (1 Tim. 5:23). If this view is correct, the individual described is on the verge of death, and the medicine might give him some ease from his pain in his last moments.

5. Verses 8-9: "Open thy mouth for the dumb in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction. Open thy mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy."
 - a. The youthful king is advised by his wise mother to speak in behalf of those who are being abused, and are powerless to defend their own cause. This is a plea that he show mercy, and make sure that justice is done for the poor and needy.
 - b. The emphasis of the case described is in the legal arena where the poor man has no one to speak for him.

B. Proverbs 31:10-31: The Virtuous or Worthy Woman.

1. Verses 10-12: "Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price *is* far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life."
 - a. The value of something is usually determined by its rarity. Gold and diamonds maintain their worth because they are relatively scarce. Land had little value in frontier days since there was far more of it than there were those to till it, thus our phrase, "Cheap as dirt." A virtuous woman is more valuable than gems because her kind is not easily found and because of what she means to her husband. Many husbands mistreat their wives, being ignorant of their true worth.
 - 1) Just because a man is more powerful or more assertive than the woman, does not mean that she is of less value than he. In a great many cases, she is much more valuable to the family, and to God, than the mean husband! Many Christian ladies have the doleful lot in life to live with husbands who do not appreciate them.
 - 2) Galatians 3:26-29: "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye *be* Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."
 - 3) 1 Peter 3:1-7: "Likewise, ye wives, *be* in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; While they behold your chaste conversation *coupled* with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward *adorning* of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But *let it be* the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, *even the ornament* of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement. Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with *them* according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered."
 - b. The ASV has "worthy" in lieu of the KJV rendering of "virtuous." Having set forth a warning against consorting with evil women who would destroy his strength, his mother lists for Lemuel some characteristics of a good wife. She who is a good wife is virtuous and has great worth; she is pure; she has strength to contribute to her husband. The 22 verses which conclude the chapter are acrostic; each verse begins with a different, consecutive letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

- c. There is nothing amiss about her that would make it dangerous for her husband to invest his trust in her; she is utterly trustworthy; he does not have to guard her virtue with a chastity belt; he does not have to watch her every action. She manages her financial affairs so well that he does not have to resort to spoils to pay for her expenditures. She is not flighty, but constant and permanent; she will do him good and not evil throughout their life together.
 - d. Ruth was so warmly attracted to her mother-in-law that she would not leave Naomi: "And she said, Behold, thy sister in law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister in law. And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, *or* to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people *shall be* my people, and thy God my God: Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, *if ought* but death part thee and me" (Ruth 1:15-17). By way of contrast, consider the man whose wife is a burden, not a helper.
2. Verses 13-16: "She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar. She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens. She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard."
- a. In those days, women not only made garments, they also made the cloth from which the garments were fashioned. Thus, the worthy woman is willing to seek wool and flax from which to make the cloth and then the garments. Verse 14 illustrates her procuring the goods her family needs under the figure of merchants' ships which bring the essentials home. She is cheerful and diligent in performing her obligations; her heart is in her work. Doing for her loved ones is a joy, not an unpleasant drudgery. She seeks the best prices, thus is frugal and not a spendthrift.
 - b. She does not lie abed and make the family provide their own breakfast before going out for their day's activities. She makes sure that her maidens (servant girls) also receive their portion. She is good to her family and to those who work for her.
 - c. When it is in keeping with her husband's authority, and wisdom, she extends her labors outside the house. Her industry leads her to add to the family's possessions. The case in point: she considers a field and buys it; she invests her labor in planting a vineyard. This would be more in keeping with ancient situations than today; land and other items are so expensive that it would not likely be wise for a good wife to act independently in buying something significant without her husband's approval.
3. Verses 17-20: "She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms. She perceiveth that her merchandise *is* good: her candle goeth not out by night. She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff. She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy."
- a. She is not afraid of work; she is not a weakling who would shun her duties. But rather she is energetic and enthusiastic as she goes about her routine. She takes care of her own health; her many activities keep her in good health and strength.
 - b. That which is produced by her labors is good, not shoddy; she puts interest and effort into her work. She is diligent to the extent that, when necessary, she is up even to late hours of the night; "she burns the midnight oil." Many times a good wife will be up at all hours, tending to a sick child or husband.
 - c. The spindle (distaff) was the instrument on which the wool or flax was rolled, the most ancient tools used in spinning. Before the cloth can be weaved, the threads must first be made; the process was time-consuming and laborious. Yet there is no complaint from this worthy woman!
 - d. Even with all the time and efforts expended on her family, she does not lose sight of the needs of a poor neighbor. Godly women through the centuries have been quick to note the needs of others, and have the willingness to lend a helping hand. Lucy O'Dear, of Franklin County, Tennessee, was a
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woman widely-known for good works.

4. Verses 21-22: "She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household *are* clothed with scarlet. She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing *is* silk and purple."
 - a. When winter time comes, she does not fear the suffering brought on by inclement weather: her family is well-clothed. The marginal rendering of *scarlet* is "double garments," a reference to warm clothing. "This colour was supposed, and rightly, to absorb and retain heat, as white to repel it; being made of wool, the garments would be warm as well as stately in appearance.... Warm garments were the more necessary as the only means of heating rooms was the introduction of portable chafing dishes containing burning charcoal (see Jer 36:22, etc)" [The Pulpit Commentary, *ibid*].
 - b. Her diligent industry for her family does not mean that she must do without. She also provides for her own needs. She is interested in her own appearance (thus she is clothed with silk and purple); she is interested in the appearance of her house (so she makes coverings of tapestry). The "coverings of tapestry" is rendered "carpets" or "cushions" of tapestry in the ASV (margin). She dresses herself and her home in the proper way, in keeping with her station in life.
5. Verse 23: "Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land."
 - a. Through her industry and support, she enhances her husband's reputation and influence in the community and in his business affairs. "Behind every successful man is a good woman." In this case, he is elevated to a position of authority and respect among his peers.
 - b. The elders of a city met at the gates (cf. Ruth 4:1-12).
6. Verses 24-27: "She maketh fine linen, and selleth *it*; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant. Strength and honour *are* her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come. She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue *is* the law of kindness. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness."
 - a. Somehow, she finds the time and energy to make fine linen, with enough left over to sell. She is willing to work to enhance the family's income.
 - b. She exhibits strength and honor, which are pictured figuratively as clothing she wears. She has no cause to fret and worry about the future; she has reason to be composed and confident. She is a godly woman, and as such has the promise of heavenly assistance.
 - 1) Psalms 37:25: "I have been young, and *now* am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread."
 - 2) Psalms 112:7: "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the LORD."
 - 3) Matthew 6:33: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."
 - 4) Hebrews 13:5-6: "*Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.*"
 - c. This is a well-rounded individual. She not only tends to her family's needs, but she had developed sufficient wisdom which enables her to give wise counsel. And she is not harsh in her dealings with others, but is kind. "Even so *must their wives be* grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things" (1 Tim. 3:11). This good lady does not participate in "gossip bees" or talebearing, neither is she a "nagger."
 - d. Plainly stating her qualities which have already been illustrated by her many industrious endeavors, she is said to look well to her household and is not partaker of idleness. She is likewise interested in

- the moral well-being of her family. "That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience. The aged women likewise, that *they be* in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, *To be* discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed" (Tit. 2:2-5).
7. Verses 28-29: "Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband *also*, and he praiseth her. Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all."
 - a. Her efforts and demeanor do not go unnoticed or unappreciated. Her children recognize her good merits and bless her because of them. Her husband tenders to her the praise of which she is worthy.
 - b. The statement of verse 29 is from her husband, who states unashamedly that while there have been many other good ladies, in his view she excels them all. A timely and appropriate word of praise can go far toward cementing a marriage and home.
 8. Verse 30: "Favour *is* deceitful, and beauty *is* vain: *but* a woman *that* feareth the LORD, she shall be praised."
 - a. Worldly women place their greatest interests and emphasis on popularity and physical beauty. But these are said here to be deceitful, in the first instance, and empty, in the second. Regardless how popular one may be in human society, the time inevitably comes when that favor fades away. And it matters not how much beauty a person may possess, given sufficient time, that beauty will surely dissipate.
 - b. People are fickle; even the Lord's favor with the Jews was eroded when the false teachers spread their lies among them. The aging process shows no favorites, afflicting the great beauties as well as the homely.
 - c. By way of contrast, the wise words of Lemuel's mother affirm that one who fears the Lord will ever be praised. In the final analysis, only the praise of God will profit in eternity. The important thing is to have proper fear (reverence) toward God.
 - 1) Proverbs 1:7: "The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of knowledge: *but* fools despise wisdom and instruction."
 - 2) Ecclesiastes 12:13-14: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this *is* the whole *duty* of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether *it be* good, or whether *it be* evil."
 - 3) Hebrews 12:28-29: "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God *is* a consuming fire."
 9. Verse 31: "Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates."
 - a. May she long enjoy the fruits of her labors. Compare: "For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy *shalt* thou *be*, and *it shall be* well with thee" (Ps. 128:2). Other Bible ladies who obtained the praise of those who knew them include Dorcas, Naomi, Ruth, Hannah, Eunice and Lois.
 - b. "Let her not want the just commendation of her pious labours. But while some are magnified for the nobleness of the stock, from whence they sprung; others for their fortune; others for their beauty; others for other things; let the good deeds, which she herself hath done, be publicly praised in the greatest assemblies; where, if all men should be silent, her own works will declare her excellent worth.' Add to this—as *her works praise her in the gates*, so will they follow her...(Rev. 14:13; Prov. 10:7)" [Bridges, p.628].
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