

Woodland Baptist Church
Wednesday, May 14, 2014
Seeking Wisdom Together - Proverbs 15:18-33

1) INTRODUCTION

a) All commentary is taken from:

- i) Dr. Thomas Constable, Commentary on Proverbs; UBS Handbook: Proverbs; Proverbs: An Expository Commentary, Ironside; The Bible Knowledge Commentary; Matthew Henry Commentary; Pulpit Commentary

2) READ PROVERBS 15:18-33

a) **SELF CONTROL - 18 A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but he who is slow to anger quiets contention.**

- i) "A wrathful man is of necessity a proud man; otherwise he would not be so easily stirred by what touches himself. A lowly man will be slow to anger, for he has learned not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, and therefore will not readily resent insults and offences."
- ii) **James 1:19-21** - 19 Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; 20 for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. 21 Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

b) **LAZINESS WILL HURT YOU - 19 The way of a sluggard is like a hedge of thorns, but the path of the upright is a level highway.**

- i) As hatred and anger bring problems (15:17–18) so does laziness. Thorns in the path (cf. 22:5; 24:30–31) depict problems that keep a person from getting what he wants; his life has obstructions. The upright, however, are diligent and therefore have fewer problems; their lives are more like a smooth highway (cf. 4:26).
- ii) Remember one of the covenants given early in the Scriptures?
 - (1) **Genesis 2:15** - 15 The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. 16 And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, 17 but of the tree

of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

(2) **2 Thessalonians 3:10** - 10 For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat.

c) CONSEQUENCES OF REJECTING WISDOM - 20 A wise son makes a glad father, but a foolish man despises his mother. 21 Folly is a joy to him who lacks sense, but a man of understanding walks straight ahead. 22 Without counsel plans fail, but with many advisers they succeed.

- i) Verses 20 and 21 speak of the impact of wisdom and folly on one’s life. Love in a home brings peace (vv. 16–17), and obedient and wise conduct brings joy (śāmaḥ) to the parents, but folly does not. In fact only a fool despises his mother. Here rather than stating that folly in a son grieves his mother (as in 10:1) that reaction on her part is implied and the fool’s attitude toward her is stated.
- ii) Delighting in iniquity, determined to have his own way despite every warning and entreaty, the fool plunges on, rejoicing in his folly. The man of integrity, subjecting himself to the fear of God, walks in uprightness, refusing to be decoyed by sinful pleasures and fascinations.
- iii) Four times the Book of Proverbs focuses on the importance of getting advice from others in regard to one’s plans (11:14; 15:22; 20:18; 24:6).

(1) Peter evidently acted without advice when he chose to compromise with the Jews in the Antioch church (Gal. 2:11-13), whereas Paul received the blessing of the apostles in Jerusalem when he sought their support for his mission to the Gentiles (Gal. 2:7-10).

d) TIMING IN SPEECH - 23 To make an apt answer is a joy to a man, and a word in season, how good it is!

- i) In verses 23, 30, 33 the second line begins with and, pointing up synonymous parallelism (see “Literary Style” in the Introduction). Appropriately spoken words (cf. 25:11–12), saying the right thing at the right time, delights (śāmaḥ; see comments on 15:20) not only the hearer but also the one who says them. Timely words (whether of love, encouragement, rebuke, or peacemaking) are beneficial.

(1) It is not just important to speak the truth. One must also speak appropriately in view of the time, place, and circumstances. The right thing said at the right time (“a timely word”) can be a source of joy and

happiness to many people. Such were the words of James at the Jerusalem Counsel (Acts 15:13-21).

e) THE PRUDENT LIVE LONGER - 24 The path of life leads upward for the prudent, that he may turn away from Sheol beneath.

- i) Each of verses 24, 26–33 refers directly or indirectly to a characteristic of the godly: wise (v. 24), humble (v. 33), pure (v. 26), honest (v. 27), cautious (v. 28), prayerful (v. 29), joyful (v. 30), teachable (vv. 31–32), and reverent before the Lord (v. 33). Wisdom can keep a person from a premature death, a point often made in Proverbs (cf. 3:2, 16; 4:10; 9:11; 10:27; 14:27).
- ii) Sheol is the world of spirits—the unseen. It refers not to the place of future punishment only, but to what was, even to the children of God, before the Cross, a land of darkness beyond the grave. And, inasmuch as long life was a blessing promised to the faithful Hebrew, an early cutting off from this present life was a calamity to be dreaded. Hence the way of life could be said to lead away from Sheol beneath. Those who trod it would be preserved to an honored old age in the land given by God to His earthly people. Hezekiah's case aptly illustrates the state of mind in regard to death which was common among truly pious persons in the past dispensation. See Isaiah 38 and 2 Kings 20.¹

f) GOD PROTECTS WIDOWS - 25 The Lord tears down the house of the proud but maintains the widow's boundaries.

- i) "Though the Lord be high, yet hath He respect unto the lowly: but the proud He knoweth afar off" (Psa. 138:6). His face is ever set against those who exalt themselves; but from of old He has been the support of the fatherless and the widow who confided in His love and care. He would have His needy people trust His grace more implicitly, assured that His heart is ever towards them. But the haughty and self-inflated have no title to His consideration and loving-kindness. Their house shall fall, and their pride be withered up. Contrast the judgment on Coniah's house (Jer. 22:30) with the Lord's care of the widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17:10–16).
- ii) God typically frustrates "the work (house) of the proud," to teach them that He is sovereign. King Nebuchadnezzar learned this lesson when he lost his mind (Dan. 4). But He also typically guards those who recognize their dependence on Him, such as "widow" who have no one else to turn to for help and who call on the Lord (cf. Ps. 138:6). Naomi learned this lesson when

¹ Expository commentary on Proverbs

God provided for her (Ruth 4), as did the widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17:10-16).

g) GOD LOVES PURE THOUGHTS - 26 The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord, but gracious words are pure.

- i) "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD [v. 8]," but so are their "evil plans"—like Saul's plans to destroy David. "Pleasant words" do not fit with evil plans, because words express one's plans. In other words, God hates both the plans and the words of the wicked, but He delights in the plans and the words of the upright. Their words are pure in His sight because they spring from a true heart. David's psalms contain pleasant words that pleased God because they expressed what was in his (relatively) pure heart.

(1) There is no such thing as private thoughts.

h) GREED DESTROYS THE HOME - 27 Whoever is greedy for unjust gain troubles his own household, but he who hates bribes will live.

- i) The Hebrew word for greedy (*bāša'*, "to cut or break off") suggests making gain unjustly or by violence. (On "a greedy man" see 28:25.) A dishonest father, providing for his family by unjust or violent means, will eventually cause his wife and children to suffer (cf. trouble in 11:29; 15:6). Accepting or giving bribes is a form of dishonesty or greed because they pervert justice (see comments on 6:35). So to reject bribes helps prolong one's life and prevent trouble for one's family.
- ii) **1 Timothy 6:10** - 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

(1) This would be an example of the **Exodus 20:5** - visiting the sins of the fathers on the third and fourth generation. When the leader of the home participates in unjust gain it can bring reproach on the whole family, negatively affecting the lives of the generations to come.

i) RIGHTEOUS AND WICKED SPEECH - 28 The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things.

- i) The mind of the righteous ponders how to answer: Mind, as in verse 14, is literally “heart.” Ponders renders a verb meaning “to meditate.” In this context it refers to thought or reflection. In many languages it is not The mind that thinks but rather the person possessing the mind, so we could translate, for example, “Good people think before giving someone an answer.” But the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things: See verse 2b, where the expression is the “mouths of fools.” Fools and the wicked are often equated in Proverbs. Mouth is parallel with mind or “heart” in the previous line. Pours out was used in verse 2 with “folly” as the object. See there for comments. Pours out means to speak hastily or without thinking, and contrasts with the deliberate pondering or reflecting before speaking in the previous line. Evil things means “bad words,” “accusations,” or “unkind words.”

j) REJECTED PRAYERS - 29 The Lord is far from the wicked, but he hears the prayer of the righteous.

- i) Note, 1. God sets himself at a distance from those that set him at defiance: The wicked say to the Almighty, Depart from us, and he is, accordingly, far from them; he does not manifest himself to them, has no communion with them, will not hear them, will not help them, no, not in the time of their need. They shall be for ever banished from his presence and he will behold them afar off. Depart from me, you cursed. 2. He will draw nigh to those in a way of mercy who draw nigh to him in a way of duty: He hears the prayer of the righteous, accepts it, is well pleased with it, and will grant an answer of peace to it. It is the prayer of a righteous man that avails much, Jam. 5:16. He is nigh to them, a present help, in all that they call upon him for.²

k) GOOD NEWS REJUVENATES - 30 The light of the eyes rejoices the heart, and good news refreshes the bones.

- i) The beaming glance that shows a pure, happy mind and a friendly disposition, rejoices the heart of him on whom it is turned. There is something infectious in the guileless, joyful look of a happy man or child, which has a cheering effect upon those who observe it. The LXX. makes the sentiment altogether personal: “The eye that seeth what is good rejoiceth the heart.” A

² Matthew Henry

good report (good tidings) maketh the bones fat; strengthens them and gives them health (comp. ch. 3:8; 16:24). Sight and hearing are compared in the two clauses, “bones” in the latter taking the place of “heart” in the former. The happy look and good news alike cause joy of heart.³

(1) My Grandmother used to say, “smile when you enter a room, as it relaxes others.”

l) CORRECTION IMPARTS LIFE - 31 The ear that listens to life-giving reproof will dwell among the wise.

- i) Note, 1. It is the character of a wise man that he is very willing to be reproved, and therefore chooses to converse with those that, both by their words and example, will show him what is amiss in him: The ear that can take the reproof will love the reprove. Faithful friendly reproofs are here called the reproofs of life, not only because they are to be given in a lively manner, and with a prudent zeal (and we must reprove by our lives as well as by our doctrine), but because, where they are well-taken, they are means of spiritual life, and lead to eternal life, and (as some think) to distinguish them from rebukes and reproaches for well-doing, which are rather reproofs of death, which we must not regard nor be influenced by. 2. Those that are so wise as to bear reproof well will hereby be made wiser (ch. 9:9), and come at length to be numbered among the wise men of the age, and will have both ability and authority to reprove and instruct others. Those that learn well, and obey well, are likely in time to teach well and rule well.

m) INSTRUCTION IMPARTS INTELLIGENCE - 32 Whoever ignores instruction despises himself, but he who listens to reproof gains intelligence.

- i) This verse carries on and puts the climax to the lesson of the preceding. He that refuseth instruction despiseth his own soul; “hateth himself,” Septuagint; commits moral suicide, because he does not follow the path of life. He is like a sick man who thrusts away (*ἀπωθείται*, Septuagint) the wholesome medicine which is his only hope of cure. He that heareth (listeneth to) reproof getteth understanding; literally, *possesseth a heart*, and therefore does not despise his soul, but “loves it” (ch. 19:8), as the LXX. renders.

³ Pulpit Commentary

n) THE SOURCE OF WISDOM AND HONOR - 33 The fear of the Lord is instruction in wisdom, and humility comes before honor.

- i) The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom; that which leads to and gives wisdom (see ch. 1:3, 7, etc.; 9:10). “No wisdom, no fear of God; no fear of God, no wisdom. No knowledge, no discernment; no discernment, no knowledge.” Before honour is humility (ch. 18:12). A man who fears God must be humble, and as the fear of God leads to wisdom, it may be said that humility leads to the honour and glory of being wise and reckoned among the wise (ver. 31).
 - ii) A man with a lowly opinion of himself will hearken to the teaching of the wise, and scrupulously obey the Law of God, and will be blessed in his ways. For “God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble” (Jas. 4:6; comp. Luke 1:52). The maxim in the second clause has a general application. “He that shall humble himself shall be exalted” (Matt. 23:12; comp. Luke 14:11; Jas. 4:6).
- (1) It is sanctioned by the example of Christ himself, the Spirit itself testifying beforehand his sufferings that were to precede his glory (1 Pet. 1:11; see also Phil. 2:5, etc.). Septuagint, “The fear of the Lord is discipline and wisdom, and the beginning of glory shall answer to it.” Another reading adds, “Glory goeth before the humble,” which is explained to mean that the humble set before their eyes the reward that awaits their humility, and patiently endure, like Christ, “who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:2).