

Woodland Baptist Church
 Wednesday, May 28, 2014
 Seeking Wisdom Together - Proverbs 16:1-15

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 16:1-15

a) **MAN PROPOSES/GOD DISPOSES - The plans of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord.**

- i) The meaning of this proverb is similar to that of 16:9. Even though man has freedom to plan, in the end he only fulfills the will of God by what he says. Man plans his words, but what really comes out takes place because God sovereignly controls (cf. Luke 21:12-15). "Man proposes, God disposes," is a common equivalent. God has the last word.¹

(1) "The response of human beings cannot escape divine dominion. Human beings are totally dependent upon him, even though they are at the same time morally responsible agents. The Old Testament thinkers did not attempt to solve that conundrum, which later theologians explored under the theme of freedom of will. The ancients expressed the dilemma, that they must have seen (pace Whybray), but they lived with it [cf. Deut. ²30:15-19].

b) **WEIGHED IN THE BALANCES - 2 All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the spirit.**

- i) Rationalization and self-justification are second nature to fallen humankind, even to those who fear the Lord. But the Lord sees through the smoke screens

¹Constable

²Constable

that we throw up—down to our very motives, which are not always apparent to us. Adam and Eve, in the Garden of Eden after the Fall, tried to justify themselves, but the Lord weighted their motives (Gen. 3).

- ii) Ever since the Fall it has been second nature with man to justify himself. Till brought into the light of God's holiness there is nothing of which he is generally so certain as the defensibility of his own conduct. His ways are clean in his own eyes, but he is not to be trusted in his own judgment, for the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Jehovah weigheth the spirits. His balances are exact. His judgment is unerring; and He it is who solemnly declares, "Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting!" Thus man is shut up to the salvation provided through the finished work of the Son of God on Calvary's cross. Otherwise condemnation alone can be his portion. See Belshazzar (Dan. 5:25–30).

c) 3 Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established.

- i) Committing one's plans (vv. 1, 9) to the Lord is essential to success. This verse, however, does not offer divine assistance to all plans. The fool (1:32) and the sluggard (6:9–11) are said to come to undesirable ends. Commit is literally "roll" (cf. Ps. 37:5).

(1) "God is in no sense obligated to do what we want—divine freedom is the central theme of these sayings [about dependence on God]—but we have no hope at all of seeing our plans take shape unless we depend on Him for grace and guidance."

d) SOME TO HONOR, SOME FOR DISHONOR - 4 The Lord has made everything for its purpose, even the wicked for the day of trouble.

- i) God works all things for His (or "its") own ends (cf. Rom. 8:28), including the wicked for destruction. Though this may be difficult to understand and accept, punishment for the unrepentant is in keeping with God's justice and is a truth frequently taught in the Scriptures (including Prov. 16:5).

(1) This is the same truth expressed in Exodus 9:16 and Romans 9:22, with regard to the Pharaoh of the Exodus. "The free actions of men create no situation by which God would be surprised and compelled to something which was not originally intended by Himself. That is what the above proverb says: the wicked also has his place in God's order of the world."

(2) **2 Timothy 2:21-22** - 20 Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for honorable use, some

for dishonorable. 21 Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.

e) THE ATTITUDE GOD HATES - 5 Everyone who is arrogant in heart is an abomination to the Lord; be assured, he will not go unpunished.

- i) God detests pride, or independence of the Lord (for other things He detests see comments on 11:20); therefore He will punish it. Be sure of this is literally “hand to hand” (see comments on 11:21).
- ii) What is the opposite of pride? Who is the ultimate example of humility and why?

(1) **Matthew 26:53** - 53 Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?

f) A WAY OUT - 6 By steadfast love and faithfulness iniquity is atoned for, and by the fear of the Lord one turns away from evil.

- i) Though unrepentant sin “will not go unpunished” (v. 5), God in His love (*hesed*, “loyal love”) and faithfulness (cf. 3:3; 14:22; 20:28) has provided a way for sin to be atoned for. After a person’s sins have been atoned for by his trust in the Lord, he is not to continue in sin. He is to avoid evil (cf. 16:17) by fearing the Lord (see comments on 1:7; cf. 3:7; 8:13).

(1) We do not atone for our own iniquity by being loving and truthful. This proverb is not a denial of our need for God's atonement. However, we can and should cover (atone for) the mistakes of others lovingly and truthfully (1 Pet. 4:8), as God covers our sins. What will keep us all away from evil is the fear of Yahweh, as it did Joseph (Gen. 39:9; cf. Acts 24:16).

g) IF GOD IS FOR US - 7 When a man's ways please the Lord, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.

- i) Daniel is a good example of the truth of this proverb (Dan. 6:4-5). As with most of the proverbs, there are some exceptions to this one. Not every godly person has been completely free of enemies, through no fault of his own (cf. 1 Pet. 2:20; 3:14, 17; 4:15-16, 19). Yet the point remains: When someone pleases the Lord, the Lord makes him pleasing to others (cf. Gal. 6:7).

(1) **1 Peter 2:20** - 20 For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God.

(2) **Acts 2:46-47** - 46 And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

h) HONESTY AT ALL COSTS - 8 Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues with injustice.

i) It is better to live an upright life and have few possessions ("little"), than to be corrupt and have "great wealth (income)." The reason is that what really matters and satisfies in life is God's approval and fellowship, not the abundance of one's possessions (Luke 12:15). Upright Naboth lived simply but was happy, whereas King Ahab was rich and wicked, and he was miserable (1 Kings 21).

i) OUR PLAN, GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY - 9 The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps.

i) "People frequently think they are having their own way, when in reality the Lord is leading them with 'bit and bridle,' through strange paths, for their discipline and blessing at last [cf. Jer. 10:23]."

ii) A man makes plans for his actions but the Lord determines (or establishes) how he will go (his steps). The meaning here is the same as in verse 1 but "steps" are mentioned instead of "tongue."

j) ABOUT THE KING

i) TO WHOM MUCH IS GIVEN - 10 An oracle is on the lips of a king; his mouth does not sin in judgment.

(1) We wish this were always true as a proposition, and we ought to make it our prayer for kings, and all in authority, that a divine sentence may be in their lips, both in giving orders, that they may do that in wisdom, and in giving sentence, that they may do that in equity, both which are included in judgment, and that in neither their mouth may transgress, 1 Tim. 2:1.

(a) But it is often otherwise; and therefore,

- (i) 1. it may be read as a precept to the kings and judges of the earth to be wise and instructed. Let them be just, and rule in the fear of God; let them act with such wisdom and conscience that there may appear a holy divination in all they say or do, and that they are guided by principles supernatural: let not their mouths transgress in judgment, for the judgment is God's.
- (ii) 2. It may be taken as a promise to all good kings, that if they sincerely aim at God's glory, and seek direction from him, he will qualify them with wisdom and grace above others, in proportion to the eminency of their station and the trusts lodged in their hands. When Saul himself was made king God gave him another spirit.
- (iii) 3. It was true concerning Solomon who wrote this; he had extraordinary wisdom, pursuant to the promise God made him, See 1 Ki. 3:28.

ii) GOD AND TRADE - 11 A just balance and scales are the Lord's; all the weights in the bag are his work.

(1) Note,

- (a) 1. The administration of public justice by the magistrate is an ordinance of God; in it the scales are held, and ought to be held by a steady and impartial hand; and we ought to submit to it, for the Lord's sake, and to see his authority in that of the magistrate, Rom. 13:1; 1 Pt. 2:13.
- (b) 2. The observance of justice in commerce between man and man is likewise a divine appointment. He taught men discretion to make scales and weights for the adjusting of right exactly between buyer and seller, that neither may be wronged; and all other useful inventions for the preserving of right are from him.
- (c) He has also appointed by his law that they be just. It is therefore a great affront to him, and to his government, to falsify, and so to do wrong under colour and pretence of doing right, which is wickedness in the place of judgment.

iii) THE KING'S BEST INTERESTS - 12 It is an abomination to kings to do evil, for the throne is established by righteousness.

(1) Here is,

- (a) 1. The **character** of a good king, which Solomon intended not for his own praise, but for instruction to his successors, his neighbours, and the viceroys under him. A good king not only does justice, but it is an abomination to him to do otherwise. He hates the thought of doing wrong and perverting justice; he not only abhors the wickedness done by others, but abhors the wickedness done by others, but abhors to do any himself, though, having power, he might easily and safely do it.
- (b) 2. The **comfort** of a good king: His throne is established by righteousness. He that makes conscience of using his power aright shall find that to be the best security of his government, both as it will oblige people, make them easy, and keep them in the interest of it, and as it will obtain the blessing of God, which will be a firm basis to the throne and a strong guard about it.

iv) 13 Righteous lips are the delight of a king, and he loves him who speaks what is right.

- (1) Here is a further character of good kings, that they **love and delight in those that speak right.**

- (a) 1. They hate parasites and those that flatter them, and are very willing that all about them should deal faithfully with them and tell them that which is true, whether it be pleasing or displeasing, both concerning persons and things, that every thing should be set in a true light and nothing disguised, ch. 29:12.
- (b) 2. They not only do righteousness themselves, but take care to employ those under them that do righteousness too, which is of great consequence to the people, who must be subject not only to the king as supreme, but to the governors sent by him, 1 Pt. 2:14. A good king will therefore put those in power who are conscientious, and will say that which is righteous and discreet, and know how to speak aright and to the purpose.

v) THE KING'S POWER - 14 A king's wrath is a messenger of death, and a wise man will appease it. 15 In the light of a king's face there is life, and his favor is like the clouds that bring the spring rain.

- (1) These two verses show the power of kings, which is every where great, but was especially so in those eastern countries, where they were absolute and arbitrary. Whom they would they slew and whom they would they kept alive. Their will was a law. We have reason to bless God for the

happy constitution of the government we live under, which maintains the prerogative of the prince without any injury to the liberty of the subject.

(a) But here it is intimated,

- (i) 1. How formidable the wrath of a king is: It is as messengers of death; the wrath of Ahasuerus was so to Haman. An angry word from an incensed prince has been to many a messenger of death, and has struck so great a terror upon some as if a sentence of death had been pronounced upon them. He must be a very wise man that knows how to pacify the wrath of a king with a word fitly spoken, as Jonathan once pacified his father's rage against David, 1 Sa. 19:6. A prudent subject may sometimes suggest that to an angry prince which will cool his resentments.
- (ii) 2. How valuable and desirable the king's favour is to those that have incurred his displeasure; it is life from the dead if the king be reconciled to them. To others it is as a cloud of the latter rain, very refreshing to the ground. Solomon put his subjects in mind of this, that they might not do any thing to incur his wrath, but be careful to recommend themselves to his favour. We ought by it to be put in mind how much we are concerned to escape the wrath and obtain the favour of the King of kings. His frowns are worse than death, and his favour is better than life; and therefore those are fools who to escape the wrath, and obtain the favour, of an earthly prince, will throw themselves out of God's favour, and make themselves obnoxious to his wrath.

3) CLOSE