

**Woodland Baptist Church**  
**Wednesday, June 11, 2014**  
**Seeking Wisdom Together - Proverbs 17:1-14**

**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 17:1-14**

**a) 1 Better is a dry morsel with quiet than a house full of feasting with strife.**

- i) We have heard this advice before (cf. 15:16-17). Here the point is the same, but the emphasis is on the value of tranquility ("quietness") as opposed to "strife." A simple meal at home is better than "feasting" with a multitude, where there is apt to be turmoil. It is better to live in peace than to party, though there is a time for both.<sup>1</sup>

(1) It's difficult to look forward to a meal when you know every time you sit down with others there will be arguing and fighting over something.

**b) 2 A servant who deals wisely will rule over a son who acts shamefully and will share the inheritance as one of the brothers.**

- i) Sometimes a servant, because he is wise ("prudent"; trans. "gives heed to instruction" in 16:20), can inherit an estate or part of it and be placed by his master in a powerful position over a disgraceful son (who brings shame to his parents; cf. 19:26). Interestingly Jeroboam rose over Solomon's disgraceful son Rehoboam and became the leader of 10 of the 12 tribes (1 Kings 12).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Constable

<sup>2</sup> Bible Knowledge

**c) 3 The crucible is for silver, and the furnace is for gold, and the Lord tests hearts.**

- i) As precious metals are subjected to intense heat in a "furnace" in order to refine impurities out of them, so the Lord subjects His saints to fiery trials to free us from the base things of the world and to purify us (cf. James 1:1- 18; 1 Pet. 1:6-7). Job is the classic example (Job; cf. Dan. 3:19-26; Mal. 3:3).<sup>3</sup>

(1) **1 Peter 1:6-7** - 6 In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

**d) 4 An evildoer listens to wicked lips, and a liar gives ear to a mischievous tongue.**

- i) A wicked person and a liar both feed on what enhances their characteristics. They readily listen to gossip, evil talk that plots wicked schemes, lies, and slander. Malicious translates *hawwōt*, which means "engulfing ruin, destruction, as accomplished by one person against another." (Cf. "gossip" in 11:13; 16:28; 18:8; 20:19; 26:20, 22.)

(1) The wicked Judahites of Jeremiah's day gladly welcomed the false prophets and arrogant priests (Jer. 5:30-31).<sup>4</sup>

**e) 5 Whoever mocks the poor insults his Maker; he who is glad at calamity will not go unpunished.**

- i) See here, 1. What a great sin those are guilty of who trample upon the poor, who ridicule their wants and the meanness of their appearance, upbraid them with their poverty, and take advantage from their weakness to be abusive and injurious to them. They reproach their Maker, put a great contempt and affront upon him, who allotted the poor to the condition they are in, owns them, and takes care of them, and can, when he pleases, reduce us to that condition. Let those that thus reproach their Maker know that they shall be called to an account for it, Mt. 25:40, 41; Prov. 14:31. 2. What great danger

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<sup>3</sup> Constable

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

those are in of falling into trouble themselves who are pleased to see and hear of the troubles of others: He that is glad at calamities, that he may be built up upon the ruins of others, and regales himself with the judgments of God when they are abroad, let him know that he shall not go unpunished; the cup shall be put into his hand, Eze. 25:6, 7.<sup>5</sup>

**f) 6 Grandchildren are the crown of the aged, and the glory of children is their fathers.**

- i) "A crown of old men are children's children and the glory of children are their fathers." Children are one of the greatest of life's blessings. To be surrounded by a large and devoted band of grandchildren was more desired by the ancient Hebrews than a crown. A large number of children guaranteed the stability of the family. By the same token, children eagerly boast about their fathers if they have reason to. Here is a powerful incentive for a father to live honorably, so that his children should have reason to be proud of him.<sup>6</sup>

**g) 7 Fine speech is not becoming to a fool; still less is false speech to a prince.**

- i) A profound utterance ("excellent speech"), spoken by "a fool," is discordant ("not fitting"), because it is out of harmony with his character. Likewise, falsehood spoken by one looked up to is equally repugnant. There should be consistency between character and conduct. We cringe when we read that Abraham, "the father of the faithful," lied about his relationship to his wife (Gen. 20:1-13). Observers similarly were bewildered when Saul behaved like a prophet (1 Sam. 10:10-12).<sup>7</sup>

(1) How do you determine who you can trust?

**h) 8 A bribe is like a magic stone in the eyes of the one who gives it; wherever he turns he prospers.**

- i) The owner of the bribe is the person who gives it. A bribe is an effective tool. It works like a charm. This proverb is not advocating bribery, only acknowledging that money talks. It describes reality. We need to be aware of its powerful influence. God's view of bribery becomes clear in 17:15 and 23.

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<sup>5</sup> Matthew Henry

<sup>6</sup> James Smith, Wisdom and Psalms

<sup>7</sup> Constable

Haman's "gift" to King Artaxerxes effectively won the king's support of Haman's plot to destroy the Jews (Esth. 3:7-13).<sup>8</sup>

**i) 9 Whoever covers an offense seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates close friends.**

- i) Note, 1. The way to preserve peace among relations and neighbors is to make the best of every thing, not to tell others what has been said or done against them when it is not at all necessary to their safety, nor to take notice of what has been said or done against them when it is not at all necessary to their safety, nor to take notice of what has been said or done against ourselves, but to excuse both, and put the best construction upon them. "It was an oversight; therefore overlook it. It was done through forgetfulness; therefore forget it. It perhaps made nothing of you; do you make nothing of it."
- ii) 2. The ripping up of faults is the ripping out of love, and nothing tends more to the separating of friends, and setting them at variance, than the repeating of matters that have been in variance; for they commonly lose nothing in the repetition, but the things themselves are aggravated and the passions about them revived and exasperated. The best method of peace is by an amnesty or act of oblivion.<sup>9</sup>

(1) **1 Corinthians 13:1-7** - 4 Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant 5 or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; 6 it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. 7 Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

**j) 10 A rebuke goes deeper into a man of understanding than a hundred blows into a fool.**

- i) Verses 10–16 each refer to some form of evil or foolish action. Verse 10 contrasts the receptivity of a discerning person with that of a fool. A mere rebuke (see comments on 1:23) helps a wise person more than the physical punishment of 100 lashes given to a fool (kesil; cf. 17:12, 16; see comments on 1:7). Since no more than 40 lashes were allowed by Law (Deut. 25:2–3), this reference to 100 lashes is probably hyperbole. The wise are sensitive and learn

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<sup>8</sup> Constable

<sup>9</sup> Matthew Henry

readily, but a thickheaded fool is unresponsive even after extreme measures of correction.<sup>10</sup>

**k) 11 An evil man seeks only rebellion, and a cruel messenger will be sent against him.**

- i) Almost all of the close to 100 references to a "rebellious" (Heb. meri) person in the Old Testament describe one who is willfully defiant against God. Cain is one example of such a person. The "cruel messenger" that God sends to judge such a person could be: his or her king, God's angel, or death. In Joab's case, it was Benaiah, King Solomon's commander-in-chief (1 Kings 2:28-34).<sup>11</sup>

**l) 12 Let a man meet a she-bear robbed of her cubs rather than a fool in his folly.**

- i) Note, 1. A passionate man is a brutish man. However at other times he may have some wisdom, take him in his passion ungoverned, and he is a fool in his folly; those are fools in whose bosom anger rests and in whose countenance anger rages. He has put off man, and is become like a bear, a raging bear, a bear robbed of her whelps; he is as fond of the gratifications of his lusts and passions as a bear of her whelps (which, though ugly, are her own), as eager in the pursuit of them as she is in quest of her whelps when they are missing, and as full of indignation if crossed in the pursuit.
- ii) 2. He is a dangerous man, falls foul of every one that stands in his way, though innocent, though his friend, as a bear robbed of her whelps sets upon the first man she meets as the robber. Ira furor brevis est—Anger is temporary madness. One may more easily stop, escape, or guard against an enraged bear, than an outrageous angry man. Let us therefore watch over our own passions (lest they get head and do mischief) and so consult our own honor; and let us avoid the company of furious men, and get out of their way when they are in their fury, and so consult our own safety. Currenti cede furori—Give place unto wrath.

**m) 13 If anyone returns evil for good, evil will not depart from his house.**

- i) Jesus taught His disciples to return good for evil (Matt. 5:43-45). But the person who "returns evil for good" can count on evil hounding his household

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<sup>10</sup> Bible Knowledge

<sup>11</sup> Constable

from then on. David experienced this after he returned evil for Uriah's good service.

(1) **2 Samuel 12:9-12** - 9 Why have you despised the word of the Lord, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and have taken his wife to be your wife and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. 10 Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.' 11 Thus says the Lord, 'Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house. And I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun. 12 For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel and before the sun.'

**n) 14 The beginning of strife is like letting out water, so quit before the quarrel breaks out.**

i) The contentious (17:14). "He who releases water [so is] the beginning of strife; therefore before it bursts forth, abandon the contention." A quarrel begins like a small hole in a dam, letting out a tiny trickle. If it is not stopped immediately, the hole is enlarged and a flood pours forth. If one senses irritation and agitation, that is the time to break off the activity before the contention bursts forth.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> James Smith, *Wisdom and Psalms*