

Woodland Baptist Church
 Wednesday, June 18, 2014
 Seeking Wisdom Together - Proverbs 17:15-28

1) READ PROVERBS 17:15-28

a) **15 He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous are both alike an abomination to the Lord.**

- i) The crooked judge is particularly in view in this proverb, but the principle applies to all people (cf. Isa. 5:20). Pilate justified Barabbas and condemned Jesus, all the while knowing that what he was doing was unjust (Matt. 27:24-26).¹

(1) "Justice, at bottom, is not just a matter of custom or culture, of law or regulation, of power or authority. It is an expression of God's will to be done on earth as in heaven. Failure to maintain it—whether in ancient Israel or modern America—is to profane the heavenly Father's hallowed name."

b) **16 Why should a fool have money in his hand to buy wisdom when he has no sense?**

- i) A fool (*kesil*; cf. vv. 10, 12; see comments on 1:7) is so simple he thinks he can buy wisdom. He comes with money in hand, but fails to realize he lacks the one resource necessary for gaining wisdom: a genuine, heartfelt desire for it.

(1) The idea here is that it is foolish for a fool to try to buy wisdom when he does not have the sense to comprehend it, or does not intend to follow that wisdom. Why go to school and pay good money for tuition if you do not plan to put into practice what you are learning? Foolish Simon Magus senselessly tried to buy the ability to bestow God's free gift of His Spirit (Acts 8:18-19).

(a) "It is possible to be educated and to have no heart for truth, for truth has a moral dimension which education cannot provide."

¹ Constable

c) 17 A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.

i) This intimates the strength of those bonds by which we are bound to each other and which we ought to be sensible of.

(1) 1. Friends must be constant to each other at all times. That is not true friendship which is not constant; it will be so if it be sincere, and actuated by a good principle. Those that are fanciful or selfish in their friendship will love no longer than their humor is pleased and their interest served, and therefore their affections turn with the wind and change with the weather. Swallow-friends, that fly to you in summer, but are gone in winter; such friends there is no loss of. But if the friendship be prudent, generous, and cordial, if I love my friend because he is wise, and virtuous, and good, as long as he continues so, though he fall into poverty and disgrace, still I shall love him. Christ is a friend that loves at all times (Jn. 13:1) and we must so love him, Rom. 8:35.

(2) 2. Relations must in a special manner be careful and tender of one another in affliction: A brother is born to succor a brother or sister in distress, to whom he is joined so closely by nature that he may the more sensibly feel from their burdens, and be the more strongly inclined and engaged, as it were by instinct, to help them. We must often consider what we were born for, not only as men, but as in such a station and relation. Who knows but we came into such a family for such a time as this? We do not answer the end of our relations if we do not do the duty of them. Some take it thus: A friend that loves at all times is born (that is, becomes) a brother in adversity, and is so to be valued.

d) 18 One who lacks sense gives a pledge and puts up security in the presence of his neighbor.

i) This is another proverb that warns against the danger of assuming the financial obligations of someone else (cf. 6:1-5; 11:15; 22:26). Reuben and Judah did this for Benjamin (Gen. 42:37; 44:32), and Paul did it for Onesimus (Phile. 18-19), but both of them had counted the cost and were prepared to take the consequences. There are times when assuming the debts of others may be advisable. But if one does this without counting the cost, he is a fool.

e) 19 Whoever loves transgression loves strife; he who makes his door high seeks destruction.

- i) By transgressing God's will, a person demonstrates that he cares nothing about "strife," because strife will certainly descend on him for his willfulness. Likewise, by elevating himself in pride, a person demonstrates that he cares nothing about "destruction," because destruction inevitably falls on the proud.
 - ii) "Raising the door" does not mean opening it, but building a higher, more splendid door for the sake of impressing others. This practice was common in the ancient Near East. Just as a person "who loves transgression" thereby sets himself up for strife, so the person who loves to display his wealth is setting himself up for destruction. His door publicizes his wealth and attracts the interest of burglars. Examples include Shebna (Isa. 22:15-19), Jehoiakim (Jer. 22:13-19), and Haman (Esther).
- f) 20 A man of crooked heart does not discover good, and one with a dishonest tongue falls into calamity.**
- i) The history of God's ancient people is a picture of a perverse heart, with all its barren results. Whatever their patient God did, they were not satisfied (Psalm 78). And the best of us are too often gripped with the same perversity. Even when we seek to walk with God, how our perverse hearts struggle to walk with a will of their own. May the good Lord give us a mortified spirit, to restrain us from the guidance of corrupt desires! Many erratic courses in the church can be traced to some unhelpful bias that was not disciplined by the divine Spirit and not molded by reverent faith. So should we not cry out and pray, "Not my will, O Lord. Let me have anything but my own way. Leave me not to my perverse heart?" AS the perverse heart must be bridled, so the deceitful...tongue must be subdued.²
- g) 21 He who sires a fool gets himself sorrow, and the father of a fool has no joy.**
- i) The "fool" not only brings about his own ruin (v. 20), but he also breaks the hearts of his parents (cf. v. 25). Absalom had this effect on David (2 Sam. 18:33).³
 - ii) This expresses that very emphatically which many wise and good men feel very sensibly, what a grievous vexatious thing it is to have a foolish wicked child. See here,

² Bridges, 145

³ Constable

- (1) 1. How uncertain all our creature-comforts are, so that we are often not only disappointed in them, but that proves the greatest cross in which we promised ourselves most satisfaction. There was joy when a man-child was born into the world, and yet, if he prove vicious, his own father will wish he had never been born. The name of Absalom signifies his father's peace, but he was his greatest trouble. It should moderate the desire of having children, and the delights of their parents in them, that they may prove a grief to them; yet it should silence the murmurings of the afflicted father in that case that if his son be a fool he is a fool of his own begetting, and therefore he must make the best of him, and take it up as his cross, the rather because Adam begets a son in his own likeness.
- (2) 2. How unwise we are in suffering one affliction (and that of an untoward child as likely as any other) to drown the sense of a thousand mercies: The father of a fool lays that so much to heart that he has no joy of any thing else. For this he may thank himself; there are joys sufficient to counterbalance even that sorrow.

h) 22 A joyful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.

- i) The cheerful heart is one that rejoices, linking this saying with the one before; the grief of the fool's family is countered here with the positive effects of joy. Unlike the perverse heart of 17:20, this heart makes for "good." Can we say that the rejoicing heart knows contentment and gratitude while the perverse heart schemes to gain more no matter how? In Proverbs, the "crushed spirit" is brought on by heartache and is hard to bear.⁴

(1) ". . . the difference between exhilaration and depression depends more on a person's spiritual resources than on his circumstances (cf. Acts 16:25)."

i) 23 The wicked accepts a bribe in secret to pervert the ways of justice.

- i) Secretly the lawbreaker, conscious of his evildoing, would endeavor, by a gift, to bribe those who are called to sit in judgment on his crimes. Such a course is a tacit acknowledgment of guilt. It is hard indeed to deal faithfully with a man to whom one is indebted for a favor. Therefore the need of sternly refusing ought from those who are bent upon a sinful course. It was when the king of Babylon sent letters and a present to Hezekiah that even so godly a king as he was taken off his guard, and acted without seeking counsel of

⁴ Koptac, 439

Jehovah, as he had so readily done when it was a letter of blasphemy he had received (Isa. 39:1, and contrast chap. 37:14).⁵

(1) What about giving gifts to enhance business relationships?

j) 24 The discerning sets his face toward wisdom, but the eyes of a fool are on the ends of the earth.

- i) A man of understanding concentrates on wisdom, but a fool lacks concentration. His mind roams everywhere. Paul warned Timothy about teachers who taught "strange doctrines." They did not concentrate on God's Word but became distracted by "myths and endless genealogies" (1 Tim. 1:3-4).⁶

(1) 1 Timothy 1:3-7 - 3 As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, **4** nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship[a] from God that is by faith. **5** The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. **6** Certain persons, by swerving from these, have wandered away into vain discussion, **7** desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions.

k) 25 A foolish son is a grief to his father and bitterness to her who bore him.

- i) Surely the divine Spirit did not repeat this proverb for no reason (21). Was it not to deepen our sense of parental responsibility and final obligation? Can parents be unmoved to the prospect of this grief? Can children be hardened into the unnatural selfishness of piercing a parent's heart with such bitterness? The mother's anguish is here added to the father's grief. We should link our children when they are very young to the church. We should train their first years under God's yoke. Then instead of bringing us grief, they will restore life to us (Ruth 4:15). Instead of causing us bitterness because they are rebels against God, the Lord will own them and seal them so that they will declare his righteousness and set forth his praise.⁷

⁵ Ironside, logos

⁶ Constable

⁷ Bridges, 148

l) 26 To impose a fine on a righteous man is not good, nor to strike the noble for their uprightness.

i) It is "not good" to punish a good person ("the righteous") when he or she does not deserve it. Neither is it good to punish blameless leaders ("the noble") for being upright. It is an age-old trick for guilty people to blame the innocent in order to divert blame from themselves. Such behavior is another perversion of justice. Ishmael assassinated Gedaliah, and then massacred 80 men from Shechem, Shiloh, and Samaria, to conceal his crime (Jer. 41:1-7).⁸

m) 27 Whoever restrains his words has knowledge, and he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding. 28 Even a fool who keeps silent is considered wise; when he closes his lips, he is deemed intelligent.

i) See notes on chaps. 12:23 and 15:2. It is the simpleton who is always babbling. The man who has knowledge will not be continually airing his acquirements. He is of a quiet spirit, and can bide his time. A man who must always be talking is generally one whose grasp of things in general is very slight; and, among Christians, an ever-running tongue certainly is no commendation to the discerning. He whose knowledge is limited is esteemed wise when his words are few. One who lives in the fear of God sets a value upon words that the careless soul cannot understand; for he remembers that "for every idle word that men shall speak they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." Even that which he has experienced of God's love and favor is not always to be told lightly to others. Paul seems to have kept for fourteen years the secret of his having been caught up to the third heaven, till a seasonable time came to relate it (2 Cor. 12:1-7). Note the self-control of Elisha in this respect when going out after Elijah (2 Kings 2:3).

2) CLOSE

⁸ Constable