

Woodland Baptist Church  
 Wednesday, August 27, 2014  
 Seeking Wisdom Together - Proverbs 21:17-31

1) READ PROVERBS 20:17-31

a) **17 Whoever loves pleasure will become poor; whoever loves wine and olive oil will never be rich.**

- i) It was customary at feasts for the participants to drink "wine" and to pour "oil" and other fragrances on people's heads and clothes (cf. 27:9; Amos 6:6). The proverb's point is: be moderate in your celebrations, because excess will drain away your money. The Prodigal Son lost his inheritance because he celebrated immoderately (Luke 15:11-30).<sup>1</sup>

b) **18 The wicked become a ransom for the righteous, and the unfaithful for the upright.**

- i) A ransom is a payment given to free a person from some penalty he has incurred, similar to posting bail to get out of jail. In this case, it appears that God punishes the wicked, and sets the righteous free. Such would be the case if the wicked were oppressing the righteous (cf. 11:8). God delivers the righteous by punishing the wicked who oppress them. For example, when God sends judgment on a group, the wicked who die serve as "a ransom for the just (righteous)" who are spared. Daniel's accusers died in his place (Dan. 6). Rebellious Sheba died in place of the innocent people of Abel Beth-maacah, due to the intervention of a wise woman (2 Sam. 20:14-22).<sup>2</sup>

c) **19 Better to live in a desert than with a quarrelsome and nagging wife.**

- i) Note, 1. 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.

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<sup>1</sup> Constable

<sup>2</sup> Constable,

- ii) 2. 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 neighbors.<sup>3</sup>

**d) 20 The wise store up choice food and olive oil, but fools gulp theirs down.**

- i) The wise man does not live for the present but prudently considers the coming years when strength will fail, and he will be unable to labor as in his youth and prime. Therefore when his days of rest from toil come, he has costily store laid by for the sustenance of those dependent still upon him. The foolish thinks only of the passing moment and spends with a lavish hand; but shall come to want at last. Consider Paul's word as to parents providing for their children (2 Cor. 12:14).<sup>4</sup>

(1) **2 Corinthians 12:14** - 14 Now I am ready to visit you for the third time, and I will not be a burden to you, because what I want is not your possessions but you. After all, children should not have to save up for their parents, but parents for their children.

**e) 21 Whoever pursues righteousness and love finds life, prosperity and honor.**

- i) "One who pursues righteousness and mercy shall find life, righteousness, and honor." To "pursue" righteousness and mercy is to accept these as guiding principles of life. "Righteousness" is the virtue which renders to both God and man their due. "Mercy" (chesed) is brotherly love. Such a one finds "life" more abundant, i.e., a long and prosperous life in this world. He also finds "righteousness" which in the second clause may have the meaning of "blessing" as in Ps 24:5, i.e., righteous treatment from God who is faithful to reward. The "honor" is the respect and reverence among fellow men, not to mention glory in the next world.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Henry

<sup>4</sup> Ironside

<sup>5</sup> Psalm and Wisdom

**f) 22 One who is wise can go up against the city of the mighty and pull down the stronghold in which they trust.**

- i) The courage and strength of valiant men cannot defend a city against the skillful counsel of a wise strategist. And he casteth down the strength of the confidence thereof. He lays low the strength in which the defenders trusted; he not only takes the fortress, but also demolishes it. Wisdom is stronger than bodily might. Thus St. Paul, speaking of the weapons which God gives us to fight withal in the spiritual battle, says (2 Cor. 10:4) that they are “mighty before him to the casting down of strongholds.”<sup>6</sup>

(1) **2 Corinthians 10:4** - 4 The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.

**g) 23 Those who guard their mouths and their tongues keep themselves from calamity.**

- i) By saying no more than he should (guarding "his tongue"), a person can also guard himself from unnecessary trouble (cf. 11:13; 13:3; 15:1; 17:20; 18:6-8; James 3:2-12). Ahimaaz carried the news of Absalom's defeat to David, but he told him only enough to encourage the king, and spared him the bad news of his son's death (2 Sam. 18:19-30).<sup>7</sup>

(1) **James 1:19-20** -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.

**h) 24 The proud and arrogant person—“Mocker” is his name—behaves with insolent fury.**

- i) An arrogant, self-willed spirit is manifested by unbridled words and uncontrolled anger. A humble man is a gentle man; he will not be given to ebullitions of wrath or outbursts of indignation. Of course the “dealer in proud wrath” is to be distinguished from one who on extreme occasions loses control of his temper and utters hasty words under strong provocation. Such an one may afterwards be plunged in deepest sorrow and humiliation over

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<sup>6</sup> Pulpit Commentary

<sup>7</sup> Constable

his sin; but it is otherwise with the proud and haughty scorner. He has no compunction of conscience because of his wrong spirit, but persists in a course of action that is in every way contrary to meekness and forbearance, forgetting that the wrath of man works not the righteousness of God. See Simeon and Levi (Gen. 49:5–7).<sup>8</sup>

**i) 25 The craving of a sluggard will be the death of him, because his hands refuse to work. 26 All day long he craves for more, but the righteous give without sparing.**

i) The "desire" of the slothful ("sluggard") is idleness, and refusing to work will lead him to ruin. Even though he has strong desires for things, he refuses to exert himself. The righteous person, on the other hand, not only works but gives to others part of what he earns. He is a productive and beneficent individual (cf. 12:27; 13:4; 19:24; 20:4). Achan preferred stealing reputation for their generosity (2 Cor. 8:2).<sup>9</sup>

**j) 27 The sacrifice of the wicked is detestable—how much more so when brought with evil intent!**

i) See notes on chaps. 15:8, 9, 26 and 21:4. The sacrifice of the lawless is ever detestable and unacceptable in the eyes of God; but especially so when it is but a cover for hypocrisy. To carry on so-called religious duties to be seen of men and to hide a life of wickedness, is iniquity of the most revolting character. It was this that caused our Lord so sternly to rebuke the scribes and Pharisees of His day. They were punctilious in observing the law and the added directions of the Talmud in regard to the temple-offerings; they made broad their phylacteries; they loved to pray standing on the street-corners to be seen of men; but meantime they profited at the expense of poor widows and were characterized by covetousness and wickedness of the vilest description. Their moral descendants are many in our own day, who can put on a devout expression, use pious words, and ostentatiously give of their wealth, to public charities; but whose inner lives are black and iniquitous. For a time they may cover from the eyes of men, their true condition, but in God's sight their sacrifice is abominable.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Ironside

<sup>9</sup> Constable

<sup>10</sup> Ironside

**k) 28 A false witness will perish, but a careful listener will testify successfully.**

- i) A false witness might incur the death penalty from the court (Deut 19:19), otherwise God would condemn him. The “person who hears” is one who is attentive, who listens before he speaks, and reports only what he has heard. Such a person will speak “continually,” i.e., what he says is never falsified, silenced, or refuted. His truthful testimony cannot be challenged.<sup>11</sup>

**l) 29 The wicked put up a bold front, but the upright give thought to their ways.**

- i) A wicked man puts up a show of confidence, but it is a bluff. His “bold face” reflects a hard heart that holds the opinions and views of others in contempt. 453 The “upright,” on the other hand, does not need to pretend to be something he is not, because he is walking on the right path (“he makes his way sure”). Contrast the testimony of the false witnesses against Jesus with the testimony of the Lord Himself (Matt. 26:59-64; 27:11-14).<sup>12</sup>

**m) 30 There is no wisdom, no insight, no plan that can succeed against the Lord.  
31 The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but victory rests with the Lord.**

- i) Man’s wisdom and planning are of no avail when they are contrary to God’s eternal purposes. “Wisdom” and “understanding” in this verse signify the intelligence which enables a person to think and scheme. “Counsel” refers to consultation with others for the devising and execution of a plan (21:30).
- ii) “A horse is prepared for the day of battle, but to Yahweh is the victory.” The war horse is harnessed and protected with armor. It here symbolizes all the instruments of war. God decides the outcome of battles regardless of the amount of military might which the combatants array against one another. In the spiritual realm this proverb finds an echo in 1 Cor 15:57 (21:31).

2) CLOSE

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<sup>11</sup> Wisdom and Psalms

<sup>12</sup> Constable