

Woodland Baptist Church
 Wednesday, October 8, 2014
 Seeking Wisdom Together - Proverbs 23:19-35

1) READ PROVERBS 23:19-28

a) Avoid Dissipation (descent into drunkenness/gluttony) - **19 Hear, my son, and be wise, and direct your heart in the way. 20 Be not among drunkards or among gluttonous eaters of meat, 21 for the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty, and slumber will clothe them with rags.**

i) Introduction (23:19). The teacher now begins to warn his pupil about some of the most devastating vices. Again he addresses his student as “my son” and calls upon him to pursue the way of wisdom with his “heart,” the seat of intellect and emotion.

ii) Admonition (23:20–21). A student of wisdom should avoid “winebibbers” (those who gather for the express purpose of drinking) and “gluttons.” The wise one regarded gluttony as evil as drunkenness. Intemperance leads to prodigality (reckless wastefulness), carelessness, and ruin. Excessive indulgence makes a person drowsy and hence unfit for work. For this reason the drunkard and glutton eventually come to poverty.

iii) Deuteronomy 21:18-21 - 18 “If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and, though they discipline him, will not listen to them, 19 then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his city at the gate of the place where he lives, 20 and they shall say to the elders of his city, ‘This our son is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard.’ 21 Then all the men of the city shall stone him to death with stones. So you shall purge the evil from your midst, and all Israel shall hear, and fear.¹

b) Avoid Immorality - **22 Listen to your father who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old. 23 Buy truth, and do not sell it; buy wisdom, instruction, and understanding. 24 The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice; he who fathers a wise son will be glad in him. 25 Let your father and mother be glad; let her who bore you rejoice.**

i) *Introduction* (23:22–26). The teacher calls on his pupil to treat his parents with respect throughout life. He shows this respect by hearkening to the

¹ Psalm and Wisdom Literature, Logos

- instruction and advice of his father; and by not despising his mother by losing patience with her when she is old and garrulous (what does that mean?) (23:22).
- ii) The student will honor his parents by purchasing “truth” (‘emeth), i.e., the true principles for guidance of life. Truth is the highest value, and one should spare no pains, cost or sacrifice to obtain it and then keep it safe. A godly person will not “sell,” i.e., part with truth. One must not barter it for earthly profit or sensual pleasure. One must not permit himself to be reasoned out of it or laughed out of it. One should not part with truth for any consideration.
- (1) **Romans 1:24-25** - 24 Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, 25 because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.
- iii) “Truth” operates in the sphere of wisdom, understanding, and instruction. “Wisdom” (chokhmah) and “understanding” (binah) refer to the perception and practical knowledge of truth. “Instruction” (musar) refers to training in truth. A son who obeys the admonition of the preceding verse will be considered “righteous” and “wise.” Such a son will bring joy to his father and mother (23:23–25).
- iv) In addition to heeding parental advice, the teacher appeals to the student to “give me your heart,” i.e., pay attention to what I am about to say. The teacher calls upon the student to “observe” his ways.²
- c) **Observant of sexual misconduct - 26 My son, give me your heart, and let your eyes observe my ways. 27 For a prostitute is a deep pit; an adulteress is a narrow well. 28 She lies in wait like a robber and increases the traitors among mankind.**
- i) Observation (23:27–28). Now comes the observation concerning the *dangers of sexual misconduct*. The teacher observes that “a harlot is a deep ditch.” A prostitute’s monetary demands can bring a man to poverty. “An alien woman is a narrow pit.” The reference is probably to an adulteress. The “narrow pit” is one with a narrow mouth, from which, if one falls into it, it is difficult to extricate oneself. The expression indicates the seductive nature of the vice of unchastity: how easy it is to be led into it! How difficult to rise from it! (23:27).

² Ibid

ii) The “alien woman” was not only a passive pitfall, she was an active danger. Like a robber she goes on the prowl looking for some unsuspecting victim. Her seductive ways make her more dangerous than the prostitute. She “increases the faithless among men.” The harlot leads her victim to be faithless to his God, his spouse, his parents, his teachers and himself (23:28).

d) Avoid Drunkenness - 29 **Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaining? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes?** 30 **Those who tarry long over wine; those who go to try mixed wine.** 31 **Do not look at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup and goes down smoothly.** 32 **In the end it bites like a serpent and stings like an adder.** 33 **Your eyes will see strange things, and your heart utter perverse things.** 34 **You will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea, like one who lies on the top of a mast.** 35 **“They struck me,” you will say, “but I was not hurt; they beat me, but I did not feel it. When shall I awake? I must have another drink.”**

i) The introduction (23:29–30). The indictment of drunkenness is introduced with a riddle consisting of six questions. The questions constitute a strong indictment of alcohol.

- (1) First, strong drink places one in danger: “Who cries, Woe?”
- (2) Second, strong drink brings lamentation: “Who cries, Alas?”
- (3) Third, strong drink often turns one who is civil into a complaining and contentious person: “Who has contentions?” The drunkard’s senses are so dulled that he is under the delusion that he has been wronged.
- (4) Fourth, strong drink produces self-pity: “Who has sorrowful thought?” This self-pity shows itself in complaining about lost fortune, ruined health, and alienated friends.
- (5) Fifth, strong drink brings “wounds without cause.” With no good reason the drunkard becomes aggressive and exchanges blows with another person. Wounds “without cause” are the result of quarrels in which a sober person would never have engaged.
- (6) Sixth, strong drink distorts physical features. “Redness of eyes” is a description of the inflamed condition of the eyes after excessive drinking (23:29).

ii) In 23:30 the answer to the six questions of the preceding verse is given. “They that tarry long at the wine” have all the negative experiences named above. So also do “they that go to seek mixed wine,” i.e., wine mixed with certain spices or aromatic substances. The Hebrew uses two participles to indicate the frequentative action of the winebibbers. Whenever such people hear of a

supply of wine being available, they rush out of their way to sample it. In spite of all its negative effects, people still are drawn to strong drink. Thus to the indictment of strong drink made by way of interrogation, the wise one adds yet another charge. Strong drink creates addiction (23:30).

- iii) The admonition (23:31). The discussion of strong drink now turns to admonition.
- (1) The teacher warns first of the attraction which wine has to the eye. "Look not on the wine when it is red," i.e., do not let yourself be attracted by its beautiful color. The wine is said to give "color [lit., eye] in the cup." It is as though the cup had an eye which glanced at the drinker with a seductive look which he could not resist.
 - (2) Second, the teacher warns of seduction of the taste of wine. Literally the Hebrew reads, Do not be deceived "when it goes by the right road," i.e., by the smooth taste of this beverage as it goes down the throat.
- iv) The explanation (23:32). The so-called "motive clause" for the preceding admonition is now given: "At the last it bites like a serpent and stings like a viper." The deadly nature of strong drink is compared to the painful bite of a poisonous snake.
- v) The amplification (23:33–35). Verses 33–35 appear to be a continuation and amplification of the motive clause with a humorous twist.
- (1) First, strong drink distorts the vision. "Your eyes shall see strange things."
 - (2) Second, strong drink leads to perverse (lit., upside down) speech. The drunkard's notions are distorted, and his words partake of the same character; he confuses right and wrong; he says things which he would never speak if he were in full possession of his senses (23:33).
 - (3) Third, strong drink deadens the brain to reality. The drunkard is "as he that lies down in the midst of the sea." The inebriated person is cut off from all his former pursuits and interests in life. He becomes unconscious of surrounding circumstances.
 - (4) Fourth, strong drink renders a person oblivious to danger. The drunkard will curl up to sleep on the top of a ship's mast from which he surely must fall to his death (23:34).
 - (5) Fifth, strong drink leads to a terrible hangover. Verse 35 vividly reveals the state of the drunkard's mind as he begins to come out of his stupor. He sees and feels the wounds of his body, but has no recollection of the fracas which caused the damage. All he desires is to throw off the effects of this hangover so he can start another round of drinking (23:35).