

Woodland Baptist Church
 Wednesday, October 23, 2014
 Seeking Wisdom Together - Proverbs 25
 More Wise Sayings

1) READ PROVERBS 24

- a) Hezekiah [2 Kings 16-21] - **1 These also are proverbs of Solomon which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied.**
- i) As described in the Introduction to Proverbs, Prov 25–29 constitutes a separate book within Proverbs, which is here called “Hezekiah” in accordance with Prov 25:1. Here, as in Prov 10–19, individual proverbs are organized into small collections. The introduction, 25:1, indicates that the following ancient proverbs were compiled and edited by the scribes of Hezekiah. See the commentary introduction for further remarks on the type and characteristics of this collection.¹
 - ii) Hezekiah - began his reign by bringing religious reform to Judah. Hezekiah was not willing to court the favor of the Assyrian kings. The Temple in Jerusalem was reopened. The idols were removed from the Temple. Temple vessels that had been desecrated during Ahaz's reign were sanctified for use in the Temple. The sacrifices were initiated with singing and the sounds of musical instruments. The tribes in the Northern Kingdom (Israel) had been subjected to Assyrian dominance. Hezekiah invited the Israelites to join in the celebration of the Passover in Jerusalem. Places of idol worship were destroyed. Hezekiah even destroyed the bronze serpent Moses had erected in the wilderness (Numbers 21:4-9) so the people would not view the bronze serpent as an object of worship. Hezekiah organized the priests and Levites for the conducting of religious services. The tithe was reinstituted. Plans were made to observe the religious feasts called for in the Law.²
- b) On Dealing with Kings - **2 It is the glory of God to conceal things, but the glory of kings is to search things out. 3 As the heavens for height, and the earth for depth, so the heart of kings is unsearchable. 4 Take away the dross from the silver, and the smith has material for a vessel; 5 take away the wicked from the presence of the king, and his throne will be established in righteousness. 6 Do not put yourself forward in the king's presence or stand in the place of the**

¹ Garrett, New American, B & H

² Holman Bible Dictionary

great, 7 for it is better to be told, “Come up here,” than to be put lower in the presence of a noble.

- i) **Verse 2** - Verse 2 appears to be an intentional tribute to Solomon and Hezekiah as scholar-kings. This proverb comes from a time when academic inquiry and governmental power were closely linked; in the modern world they are more separated. God is glorious in concealing matters in that a certain level of mystery about the divine increases the sense of wonder and awe. Those who assume they have full comprehension of theological truth, however “religious” they may be, lose true piety. On the other hand, people do honor those who uncover truth, be it theological or scientific.
- ii) **Verse 3** - While v. 3 appears to be outlandish praise of the height and depth of royal wisdom, it is in effect more prescriptive than descriptive. This is how a leader must appear. Predictability and lack of imagination are fatal for a ruler, since he no longer will be taken seriously.
- iii) **Verses 4-5** - Although aspects of the Hebrew of v. 4 are disputed, the general sense of vv. 4-5 is clear. As the silversmith must remove impurities from silver in order to create a thing of beauty, so the king must remove evil from his kingdom and especially his court if the kingdom is to be secure.
- iv) **Christ used a similar story to verse 6-7 in Luke 14:7-11** - 7 Now he told a parable to those who were invited, when he noticed how they chose the places of honor, saying to them, 8 “When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in a place of honor, lest someone more distinguished than you be invited by him, 9 and he who invited you both will come and say to you, ‘Give your place to this person,’ and then you will begin with shame to take the lowest place. 10 But when you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place, so that when your host comes he may say to you, ‘Friend, move up higher.’ Then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at table with you. 11 For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

(1) The point is that no one wants to have to look his peers in the face while being publicly humiliated by a superior.³

- c) **Settling Disputes without Litigation - What your eyes have seen 8 do not hastily bring into court, for what will you do in the end, when your neighbor puts you to shame? 9 Argue your case with your neighbor himself, and do not reveal another's secret, 10 lest he who hears you bring shame upon you, and your ill repute have no end.**

³ Garrett, New American, B & H

- i) Many times in society, especially over the past 40-50 years, it seems that there are more and more lawsuits. It seems the knee-jerk response is not to work things out amicably but to “sue” someone for what you want. And most of the time it’s not for a fair amount, but for an astronomical amount of money. Are some lawsuits necessary, of course, in fact, many times law suites are all that keep huge corporations in check. According to statistics however, many of these lawsuits are greed-driven, making for an unhealthy obsession with suing people for what you want.
- ii) Solomon gives us very good advice as does Christ, to settle our disputes outside of court as we have no idea what will happen in the court system. Yes, it is the only system and yes, we must have faith in allowing the system to work, however, it would most likely be better in most cases if the matter could be handled between the parties without legal involvement.

- (1) **Luke 12:57-59** - 57 “And why do you not judge for yourselves what is right? 58 As you go with your accuser before the magistrate, make an effort to settle with him on the way, lest he drag you to the judge, and the judge hand you over to the officer, and the officer put you in prison. 59 I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the very last penny.”
- (2) **1 Corinthians 6:1-8** - When one of you has a grievance against another, does he dare go to law before the unrighteous instead of the saints? 2 Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? 3 Do you not know that we are to judge angels? How much more, then, matters pertaining to this life! 4 So if you have such cases, why do you lay them before those who have no standing in the church? 5 I say this to your shame. Can it be that there is no one among you wise enough to settle a dispute between the brothers, 6 but brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers? 7 To have lawsuits at all with one another is already a defeat for you. Why not rather suffer wrong? Why not rather be defrauded? 8 But you yourselves wrong and defraud—even your own brothers!
- (a) Paul seemed to be of the mindset that the church should be able to settle matters without involving the law. It is always better to not get entangled with the law if at all possible, sometimes it is necessary, but if we can avoid it, we should.

d) Fine Jewelry and Fine Counsel - **11 A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver. 12 Like a gold ring or an ornament of gold is a wise reprover to a listening ear.**

i) Rather than misuse, speech in mistaken testimony or slander, words are meant to be spoken at the right time for good purposes. Just as a jewelry maker sets a finely wrought apple of gold into its silver setting, wise people know how to bring the right word to a situation. Each displays a beauty that is the mark of a skilled artist. What is the “word aptly spoken?” it can be a word of reproof or correction, yet it must find a receptive listener. The sender must be careful not only to craft persuasive words but also to exercise discernment in determining when it is best to speak and when to keep silent.⁴

e) Reliable and Unreliable People - **13 Like the cold of snow in the time of harvest is a faithful messenger to those who send him; he refreshes the soul of his masters. 14 Like clouds and wind without rain is a man who boasts of a gift he does not give.**

i) Verse 13 does not mean that it snows at harvest time—that would be an unmitigated disaster. It refers to bringing down snow from the mountains during the heat of harvest and the refreshment that gives to workers.

ii) Verse 14 speaks of clouds that hold the promise of rain for parched crops but pass by without leaving a drop. The proverbs speak of the joy or bitter disappointment that comes from reliable or unreliable employees.⁵

iii) **Jude 1:12** - These are hidden reefs at your love feasts, as they feast with you without fear, shepherds feeding themselves; **waterless clouds**, swept along by winds; fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted;

iv) **2 Timothy 2:2** - 2 And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses **entrust to reliable** people who will also be qualified to teach others.

f) Be Patient with Authorities - **15 With patience a ruler may be persuaded, and a soft tongue will break a bone.**

i) The bones are the most rigid body parts inside of a person, and fracturing the bones here refers to breaking down the deepest, most hardened resistance to an idea a person may possess.

⁴ Koptak, NIV Application

⁵ Garrett, NAC, Logos

(1) Patience is difficult, especially in today's society when everything is electronic and we expect should be faster.

(2) What authorities do we have to be patient with?

(a) Doctor? Dentist? Court system? Crime solving? Parent? Pastor???
Church?????

g) Exercising Caution with People

i) Enough is Enough

(1) 16 If you have found honey, eat only enough for you, lest you have your fill of it and vomit it. 17 Let your foot be seldom in your neighbor's house, lest he have his fill of you and hate you.

(a) Verse 17 is obviously the social response to the dietary exhortation of v. 16: just as you get sick of honey when you eat too much, so your friends get tired of you when you are around too much.

(b) We would say it like this, "don't wear out your welcome."

ii) Beware of These People

(1) 18 A man who bears false witness (perjurer) against his neighbor is like a war club, or a sword, or a sharp arrow. 19 Trusting in a treacherous man (undependable) in time of trouble is like a bad tooth or a foot that slips. 20 Whoever sings songs to a heavy heart (tactless) is like one who takes off a garment on a cold day, and like vinegar on soda.

(a) All three of these proverbs are similes (although the word for "like" is not in the Hebrew text), and all concern people one should avoid (the perjurer, the undependable, and the tactless). The point of each is evident. The perjurer is a dangerous weapon, to rely on unreliable people on a day of trouble is futile and excruciatingly painful, and being ebullient (cheerful and full of energy) to the depressed only jolts them and makes matters worse. A sensitive person knows how to sorrow with the sorrowing.

h) Strange but True - **21 If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat, and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink, 22 for you will heap burning coals on his head, and the Lord will reward you.**

- i) These proverbs state the paradoxical truth that one can get back at one's enemy with kindness. Feeding an enemy will "heap burning coals on his head" in the sense that he or she will be humiliated at having to take bread from a hated rival. The metaphor of burning coals implies intense pain; the proverb does not foresee the possibility of reconciliation with one's foe, however true and noble that may be. Still, the implication that one should refrain from extracting vengeance is obvious.
- ii) Paul quoted this proverb in his discussion of "love" in Rom 12:9–21. It must also be noted that Jesus' instruction on the love of enemies (Matt 5:43–47) be read in light of this proverb and that the love of enemy is originally an Old Testament idea that was both enacted and commanded by Jesus.

i) Cold Rain, Cold Look - **23 The north wind brings forth rain, and a backbiting tongue, angry looks.**

- i) The "angry countenance" belongs to the person who is the target of the backbiting (slandering) tongue. Sly words can infuriate people just as a northerly wind brings rain. These are inevitable results.⁶

(1) What does it mean to be slandered? To make a **false spoken statement** that causes people to have a bad opinion of someone.

j) **24 It is better to live in a corner of the housetop than in a house shared with a quarrelsome wife.**

- i) This proverb is almost identical to **Proverbs 21:9 - Better to live on a corner of the roof than share a house with a quarrelsome wife.**
- ii) The meaning is obvious - marriages will occasionally experience quarrels, but should never be steadily quarrelsome. You just want to get away from it, it makes you sick over time.

⁶ Constable

- k) Good Water and Bad Water - 25 **Like cold water to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country. 26 Like a muddied spring or a polluted fountain is a righteous man who gives way before the wicked.**

i) These two proverbs are linked by the implied idea of drinking water.

(1) As nothing is more refreshing than good news from afar, so few things are more disappointing than for a righteous person to yield to pressures to do or assent to evil. The precise significance of “a distant land” is unclear. It may refer to good news “out of the blue,” or it may describe a positive report on a consignment of goods shipped off for trade.

(a) How many of you have liked the good news of the lowest gas prices in over 4 years??

(2) For a thirsty traveler expecting relief, the effect of coming upon a polluted well is disbelief and disappointment, and it serves as an apt metaphor for the profound disillusionment one feels when the righteous yield to evil.

(a) It's when you have been told one thing about your life that was great news, that turned out to be false.

- l) Self Discipline is Self Defense - 27 **It is not good to eat much honey, nor is it glorious to seek one's own glory. 28 A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls.**

i) Two proverbs about self-discipline and restraint use metaphors drawn from the field and city. Honey again is used to recommend moderation (25:16), but this time in comparison with seeking one's own honors. If kings find their glory in searching out the matters of wisdom and right rule, so should those who read these sayings, for asking the quest for honor. A person who does not know when to stop eating honey or to refrain from seeking accolades is a person who lacks self-control - not only troublesome to others but also dangerous to self, vulnerable like a city breached by attackers. Self discipline is self defense.