

Woodland Baptist Church
 Wednesday, March 19, 2014
 Seeking Wisdom Together - Proverbs 12:1-14

1) **READ PROVERBS 12:1-14**

- a) All commentary is taken from the Bible Knowledge Commentary and Dr. Constable's online commentary.

2) **1 Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is stupid.**

- a) The person who loves instruction ("discipline") will demonstrate this by willingly putting himself or herself in the place of a learner. Young King Josiah did this (2 Chron. 34). But the person who does not want knowledge ("hates reproof") will reject information that corrects his or her false opinions, and guards him or her from future mistakes and false steps, and will thus show his or her stupidity (cf. 10:17). The Pharaoh of the Exodus was such a person (Exod. 10:28).¹
- i) What does that say about those that demand to always lead? They believe they are too important and too knowledgeable to be the student?

3) **2 A good man obtains favor from the Lord, but a man of evil devices he condemns.**

- a) Proverbs uses many words to describe the righteous and the wise, such as upright (11:3, 11), blameless (11:5), a man of understanding (11:12), trustworthy (11:13), kind (11:17), generous (11:25), prudent (12:16, 23), truthful (v. 22). In verse 2 good is another characteristic. Such a person is blessed with God's favor (rāṣôn, "acceptance"; see comments on 8:35). But a person who is crafty (cf. 14:17) or deceptively shrewd not only is not favored by God; he is also condemned ("declared guilty"; cf. Ex. 22:9) by God.

4) **3 No one is established by wickedness, but the root of the righteous will never be moved.**

- a) A person, like a tree, whose "roots" go down into "wickedness," will find that he or she will not be able to stand up to the winds of adversity. But a righteous

¹ Constable

person, whose "roots" are anchored in God, will endure the storms of life (cf. 10:25; Matt. 7:24-27). King Saul and King David contrast in these respects.²

i) **Psalm 1** - Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; 2 but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. 3 He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. 4 The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. 5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; 6 for the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

5) 4 An excellent wife is the crown of her husband, but she who brings shame is like rottenness in his bones.

- a) A wife of noble character (cf. 31:10; Ruth 3:11) is like a crown on her husband's head, that is, her strength of character (ḥayil is lit., "strength") makes her husband proud and honored. She adds dignity to him. Conversely a disgraceful wife (one who is not noble or strong morally) decays his bones (cf. comments on Prov. 3:8); her shame gives him inner pain.³
- b) An "excellent" or virtuous wife is one in whom all noble qualities shine (cf. 31:10-31; Ruth 3:11). Such a partner brings *glory to her husband*, like a "crown" does to the head. Sarah was such an asset to Abraham (Gen. 18:12; 1 Pet. 3:1-6). But the wife who brings shame on her husband makes it difficult for him to stand. Job's wife was a liability to him (Job 2:9-10).⁴

i) Can you think of an example of both situations?

6) 5 The thoughts of the righteous are just; the counsels of the wicked are deceitful.

- a) In respect to thoughts (12:5). "The plans of the righteous are right." His designs are well-intentioned and morally sound because the mind of the righteous man is disciplined by wisdom. On the other hand, "the counsels of the wicked are

² Ibid

³ Bible Knowledge

⁴ Constable

deceit." Their warped minds invent crooked methods for reaching their goals. To them the end always justifies the means.⁵

- i) Could these be the elemental spirits that Paul speaks of in Galatians and Colossians?

(1) **Titus 3:10-11** - 10 As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him, 11 knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.

7) 6 The words of the wicked lie in wait for blood, but the mouth of the upright delivers them.

- a) In respect to words and deeds (12:6). "The words of the wicked are a bloody ambush." The wicked conspire together and plot murder (cf. 1:11), or at least their lies, slanders, and false accusations endanger lives (cf. 1 Kgs 21:13). On the other hand, "the mouth of the upright shall deliver them," viz., the victims of the conspirators. If the righteous have the opportunity, they warn the unwary and protect them from the wicked. They plead the cause of the oppressed and use their eloquence in their behalf.⁶

- i) Have you ever had someone ambush you with twisted words in public?
- ii) Think about how the Jewish religious leaders continuously tried to ambush Jesus in public with difficult questions and situations.

8) 7 The wicked are overthrown and are no more, but the house of the righteous will stand.

- a) In respect to destinies (12:7). "The wicked are overthrown, and are not," i.e., they cease to exist in their powerful positions. Once overthrown they cannot recover (cf. 10:25). What the stroke is against the wicked is not named. It may be a just judgment by God—financial reversal, sickness, family problems. Whatever it is, the wicked cannot endure. On the other hand, "the house of the righteous shall stand." His "house" (family) can successfully withstand the assaults of misfortune and the schemes of enemies.⁷

⁵ James Smith

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Bible Knowledge

b) The wicked pass off the scene without leaving a lasting legacy—like houses washed away by hurricanes and floodwaters. But the righteous leave a legacy for good that outlasts them. David's dynasty ("house") continued, and will continue forever, whereas the "wicked" heads of the various dynasties in the Northern Kingdom of Israel were fairly quickly "overthrown" and replaced.

i) **Acts 1:19-20** - 19 And it became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in their own language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.) 20 "For it is written in the *Book of Psalms*, "*May his camp become desolate, and let there be no one to dwell in it; and "Let another take his office.'* [Psalm 69:25, 109:8]

9) 8 A man is commended according to his good sense, but one of twisted mind is despised.

a) The prudent person (12:8). "A man is commended according to his intelligence," i.e., common sense, the ability to form a sound judgment in everyday matters. The reference is to a person who gives practical proof of wisdom by life and character. His words and actions show that he is motivated by high views. Such a person is praised and acknowledged by all (cf. 1 Sam 18:5). On the other hand, "he that is of a distorted understanding shall be despised." These warped minds are responsible for disastrous decisions. They have distorted views of things, judge unfairly, and have no sympathy for others.⁸

b) "Even among natural men wisdom is a commendation, while a vain and foolish spirit but exposes to contempt. The world can appreciate sobriety and spiritual intelligence, though it may refuse or even persecute it. But to pretend to either, while bereft of both, is to draw forth the disgust of all reasonable men."⁹

10) 9 Better to be lowly and have a servant than to play the great man and lack bread.

a) *The self-sufficient person* (12:9). "Better is he that is lightly esteemed and is a servant to himself, than he that plays the man of rank and lacks bread." The first picture is of a man who performs the humble tasks of a servant in order to have the money to purchase for his family the necessities of life. The second picture is of one putting on airs, pretending to be what he is not. One should not inflict

⁸ Smith, Wisdom Literature and Psalm

⁹ Constable

privations upon himself to preserve an outward show of affluence which does not correspond with reality.¹⁰

- b) A better translation is, "Better is a man of humble standing who works for himself than one who plays the great man but lacks bread" (RSV; cf. 15:17). "The point seems to be that some people live beyond their means in a vain show . . . whereas, if they lived modestly, they could have some of the conveniences of life, e.g., a servant."
 - i) King Herod Agrippa I lived the high life and died a horrible death (Acts 12:1-23). Barnabas and Paul, on the other hand, sacrificed to spread Christianity and enjoyed the hospitality and friendship of many saints (Acts 12:25).

11) 10 Whoever is righteous has regard for the life of his beast, but the mercy of the wicked is cruel.

- a) The compassion of a righteous person extends even to how he treats his animals, because that is consistent with his character (cf. Deut. 25:4). But even the goodness (best side, "compassion") of the wicked is flawed by cruelty. Jacob's dealings with his children, flocks, and herds demonstrated his righteousness (Gen. 33:13-14). Balaam's wicked character is reflected in how he dealt with his donkey (Num. 22:23-31).
- b) The merciful person (12:10). "A righteous man has regard for the life (lit., knows the soul) of his beast," i.e., he pays attention to the animal's needs. *He is careful to supply his beast with the food he needs. The law of God legislated kindness to animals (Exod 20:10; 23:4, 5; Deut 22:6, 10; 25:4).* In the East generally there is a deep sense that animals are not only the slaves of man, but the creatures of God. A person's behavior toward dumb creatures is an index of character. Furthermore, using the lesser to greater argument: *If one is to be merciful to beasts, how much more to one's spouse and children!* On the other hand, "the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel." The idea seems to be that the kindest acts of a wicked man are still cruel by God's standards. A wicked man does not know the first thing about kindness.¹¹
 - i) This day in time many spouses treat their animals better than each other.

¹⁰ Smith, Wisdom Literature & Psalm

¹¹ Smith, Wisdom Literature

12) 11 Whoever works his land will have plenty of bread, but he who follows worthless pursuits lacks sense.

- a) The diligent person (12:11). "He that tills his ground shall have plenty of bread." This is not an admonition to follow agricultural pursuits, but an endorsement of the value of hard work. The person who follows "vain things," i.e., non-productive pursuits, "is void of understanding," i.e., does not display wisdom and prudence. He displays moral weakness and depravity. He puts empty pursuits ahead of making his living secure and thus ultimately (so it is implied) comes to poverty.
- b) Industriousness pays off. Hard-working Jacob left Paddan-aram a rich man (Gen. 31:26-43). King Rehoboam is an example of one who foolishly pursued vain things and came to ruin (1 Kings 12).

13) 12 Whoever is wicked covets the spoil of evildoers, but the root of the righteous bears fruit.

- a) The envious person (12:12). "The wicked man desires the stronghold (metsodah) of evil men." He wants to stabilize his position. He longs for that which evil men regard as guaranteeing security, viz., ill-gotten gain. Yet he gets small return for his labor. On the other hand, "the root of the righteous yields fruit." Without any evil devices or plotting, the righteous gain all that they want as the natural result of their high principles. While the righteous flourish, the security of the wicked man is swept away.¹²
- b) The contrast again appears to be between two kinds of people. The wicked want to gain from the work of other evil people (e.g., skimming money off the top of a gambling operation). On the other hand, the righteous are content to earn wages from their own honest toil.

¹² Ibid

14) 13 An evil man is ensnared by the transgression of his lips, but the righteous escapes from trouble. 14 From the fruit of his mouth a man is satisfied with good, and the work of a man's hand comes back to him.

- a) "In the transgression of lips is an evil snare." False and mischievous talk, aimed at ensnaring others, results in the speaker himself being trapped by his words. By speaking unadvisedly or intemperately one brings trouble upon himself. On the other hand, "a righteous person escapes (lit., goes out of) trouble." The reference is to a person who does not offend with his lips. He avoids the snares of the wicked man. Since his lips speak only truth, the righteous person is ultimately vindicated (12:13).
- b) "From the fruit of the lips one shall be satisfied with good." The reference is again to the righteous person. A man's words are like seeds. If they are wise, pure and kindly, they will bring forth the fruit of love, favor and respect. Furthermore, "the work of the hands of a man shall return to him." The good works of the righteous as well as his good words rebound favorably to himself both in this life and in the life to come (12:14).
- c) An evil person who tells lies usually gets tripped up ("caught"), because his lies become known eventually. But a righteous person does not tell lies, so he escapes such trouble (cf. 29:6).¹³
- d) Satan, the father of lies, will end up in the lake of fire, because God knows his lies and will punish him for them (cf. John 8:44; Rev. 20:10). Jesus did not tell lies (cf. John 8:46; 1 Pet. 2:22). The trouble that He experienced was not due to His righteousness but to the sinfulness of others (1 Cor. 15:3; Gal. 1:4; Heb. 1:3; 1 Pet. 2:24; 1 John 2:2; 3:5; 4:10; Rev. 1:5).
- e) The man in view in the first line of this proverb is a righteous person. Because good words normally flow from the mouths of good people, those words will result in good things coming back to the righteous speaker. Caleb and Joshua, who voted to trust God and enter the Promised Land, received God's blessing of entering it, in spite of the discouragement of the majority of spies. The ten spies illustrate the second line. "How we behave will in large measure dictate how we are treated. Reaping and sowing are social as well as agricultural patterns.

¹³ Constable