

Woodland Baptist Church
Wednesday, May 14, 2014
Seeking Wisdom Together - Proverbs 15:1-17

1) READ PROVERBS 15:1-17

- a) **A SOFT ANSWER** - 1 A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.
- i) Think of the example of Hannah - how she responded to Eli's harsh words regarding her presumed drunkenness.
 - ii) Nabal's harsh answer to David - 1 Samuel 25
- b) **A WISE ANSWER** - 2 The tongue of the wise commends knowledge, but the mouths of fools pour out folly.
- i) We must be accurate in what we say and we must be very careful about speculation, as speculation can be disastrous, although at times, it is all we have in a given situation.
 - ii) We should be sure we have all the facts and consider them carefully before we speak. It is foolish to jump to conclusions. It is even more foolish to blurt them out without respect to time, place or circumstance.¹
 - iii) The images compares speech to water or some other rushing liquid - too much spouting out too quickly, neither controlled or contained. Knowledge by contrast is worth keeping when it comes out.
- c) **ACCOUNTABLE** - 3 The eyes of the Lord are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good.
- i) This verse is why we need to be accurate...because God sees and knows all, therefore nothing we do or say or think is hidden from God.
 - ii) Human tongues speak, while heavenly eyes watch.
- (1) **Psalm 139:23-24** - Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! 24 And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!

¹ Phillips, 413

- d) **A SWEET ANSWER - 4** A gentle tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit.
- i) "... no product of modern technology—not the computer, not the fax machine, not the magnetic price scanner—has rendered obsolete a single saying in the Proverbs. Speech has as much power to help or hurt today as it ever had. It lies so close to the center of human life that it is still the most important art for each of us to master."

2) TEACHING - MY WAY OR WISDOM'S

- a) **MY WAY OR TRUE WISDOM - 5** A fool despises his father's instruction, but whoever heeds reproof is prudent.
- i) **1 Timothy 4:16 - 16** Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.
- (1) "Next to fear of the Lord, honor of parents may well be the sages' [who wrote Proverbs] highest value [cf. v. 20; 10:1; 17:2, 6, 21, 25; 19:13, 26; 20:20; 27:11, 28:7; 29:3].
- b) **MY WAY OR TRUE WEALTH - 6** In the house of the righteous there is much treasure, but trouble befalls the income of the wicked.
- i) Much "wealth" of many kinds, not necessarily just money, is "in the house[hold] of the righteous." For example, there will be peace, love, and joy, for starters—riches that money cannot buy, but which are more important than money that God provides. Job's family seems to have enjoyed many kinds of riches before and after his ordeal (Job 1; 42). "But trouble" will fill the house ("is in the income") of "the wicked." Achan found this to be true (Josh. 7:19-26).
- c) **MY WAY OR TRUE WORDS - 7** The lips of the wise spread knowledge; not so the hearts of fools.
- i) What types of things do you talk to other people about? Are you always seeking to enhance the knowledge of others or do you speak about fruitless and useless things.
- ii) Do you wish to build up those around you with more knowledge and wisdom or do you purposefully withhold it from them?

3) THE QUESTION OF TRANSGRESSORS

- a) **THE LORD REFUSES THEIR SACRIFICES** - 8 The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, but the prayer of the upright is acceptable to him.
- i) "The sacrifice, as a material and legally-required performance, is much more related to dead works than prayer freely completing itself in the word, the most direct expression of the personality, which although not commanded by the law, because natural to men, as such is yet the soul of all sacrifices . . ." ²
 - ii) **Amos 5:21-24** - "I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. 22 Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them; and the peace offerings of your fattened animals, I will not look upon them. 23 Take away from me the noise of your songs; to the melody of your harps I will not listen. 24 But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.
- b) **THE LORD REPUDIATES THEIR STEPS** - 9 The way of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, but he loves him who pursues righteousness.
- i) This proverb seems to expand on the previous one. Not only are the sacrifices of the wicked abominable to God, but their whole life ("way") is. Likewise, not just the prayers of the upright delight Him, but the whole course of their lives, "who pursue(s) righteousness," does. David's and Saul's lives contrast in these respects.
- c) **THE LORD REBUKES THEIR STUBBORNNESS** - 10 There is severe discipline for him who forsakes the way; whoever hates reproof will die.
- i) People who have forsaken the path of righteousness do not like to be corrected, especially with strong discipline. Not responding to discipline, such people will eventually perish ("he who hates reproof will die"). Headstrong people who want to live life their own way, rather than as God has counseled, are headed for trouble and heartache ("grievous punishment"). Many a young rebel has found this proverb true the hard way. Absalom certainly did (2 Sam. 13—18).³

² Constable

³ Constable

- d) **THE LORD REJECTS THEIR SOULS** - 11 Sheol [death] and Abaddon [destruction] lie open before the Lord; how much more the hearts of the children of man!
- i) The thought expressed is that if God can gaze into the dark mystery of the world of the dead, he can certainly see into a human heart. Hearts refers to the inner life or the secret life.⁴
- e) **THE LORD REJECTS THEIR HARD HEARTS** - 12 A scoffer does not like to be reproved; he will not go to the wise.
- i) This proverb is similar to the one in verse 10, but here the emphasis is on the scoffer's avoidance of those who rebuke him or her. In pride, he or she refuses to expose himself or herself to ("he will not go to") agents of corrective criticism. Instead of truly repenting of his folly, though he professed to repent, King Saul continued to distance himself from David (1 Sam. 29).
- ii) The mocker has been flattering himself for so long that he cannot bear to be brought down to his correct level. So he thinks that a friend who tells him the truth is his enemy.⁵

4) TEMPERAMENTS

- a) **OUR FACE TELLS THE STORY** - 13 A glad heart makes a cheerful face, but by sorrow of heart the spirit is crushed.
- i) A man's countenance is the index of his spirit.
- ii) Happiness and depression are issues of the heart. What a person is inwardly has more lasting impact on his emotional state than do his circumstances. Some people hold up under difficult circumstances better than others because of inner strength.
- b) **THE SEEKING MAN** - 14 The heart of him who has understanding seeks knowledge, but the mouths of fools feed on folly.
- i) Observe the man that seeks understanding - he is ready to learn from any quarter, even from a child.

⁴ Handbook on Proverbs

⁵ Bridges, 120

- c) **THE SINGING MAN - 15** All the days of the afflicted are evil, but the cheerful of heart has a continual feast.
- i) This connects intimately with the thirteenth verse. One who is depressed and gloomy himself sees every day full of causes for grief and dismal foreboding. It is a wretched way to live, and indicates lack of confidence in God. When the heart is cheerful, all days are bright, and the soul has a continual feast. This is not frivolity, but that holy joy which results from tracing everything that is permitted to come upon me back to God. Habakkuk entered into it in large measure (Hab. 3:17, 18).⁶

5) THE QUESTION OF TROUBLE - "BETTER THAN" comparisons

a) TROUBLE CAUSED BY AMBITION

- i) **Better to have LITTLE than to have TROUBLE - 16** Better is a little with the fear of the Lord than great treasure and trouble with it.
- (1) We can fear the Lord or our circumstances. If we choose to fear the Lord, we can be content with "little" else besides His fellowship. If we fear our circumstances, even "great treasure" will not make us happy. Paul learned to rejoice "with little or with much," because he found the source of his joy in his relationship with God (Phil. 4:11-12). Haman, on the other hand, possessed much material wealth, but he was miserable because he was the center of his world (Esth. 3:5).
- ii) **Better to have LOVE than to have TROUBLE - 17** Better is a dinner of herbs where love is than a fattened ox and hatred with it.
- (1) This proverb—another "better" saying—is similar to the preceding one, but here it is the presence of either love or hate that determines one's happiness. It is better to have only "vegetables" to eat, if one can have "love" with them, than it is to have the best meat ("fattened ox"), if one is served "hatred" as its side dish. "The spirit in which a meal is shared is far more important than the kind of food that is eaten; cf. 17:1.

⁶ Ironside, logos