

**Woodland Baptist Church**  
**Wednesday, August 6, 2014**  
**Seeking Wisdom Together - Proverbs 20:1-15**

**1) READ PROVERBS 19:16-29**

**a) Condemnation of Vices - 20:1-4**

**b) Wine is a mocker and beer a brawler; whoever is led astray by them is not wise.**

- i) Intoxicating beverages. The effects produced in the drinker are attributed to the beverage itself. An intoxicated person behaves like “a mocker,” i.e., one who scoffs at what is holy, rejects censure, and ridicules all that is serious. “Strong drink” is any intoxicating drink not made from grapes. It was produced from the fermentation of certain fruit juices, e.g., pomegranate and date. Strong drink causes otherwise peaceful people to become boisterous brawlers, no longer masters of themselves or restrained by the laws of morality or society. To “err” in the use of these beverages is to overindulge. Such a person does not behave in a manner becoming a wise person (20:1).<sup>1</sup>

- (1) "These two aspects of wine, its use and its abuse, its benefits and its curse, its acceptance in God's sight and its abhorrence, are interwoven into the fabric of the OT so that it may gladden the heart of man (Ps. 104:15) or cause his mind to err (28:7), it can be associated with merriment (Ec. 10:19) or with anger (Is. 5:11), it can be used to uncover the shame of Noah (Gn. 9:21) [and Lot (Gen. 19:30-38)] or in the hands of Melchizedek to honor Abraham (Gn.14:18).<sup>2</sup>

**c) 2 A king's wrath strikes terror like the roar of a lion; those who anger him forfeit their lives.**

- i) An angry king (20:2) A lion roars when springing upon its prey. The roar inspires terror in the victim because he knows, at that point, no escape is

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<sup>1</sup> Smith, Wisdom Literature and Psalms

<sup>2</sup> Constable

possible. One who arouses the royal wrath has transgressed “with regard to his life,” i.e., he has placed his life in jeopardy.<sup>3</sup>

- ii) It is as dangerous to arouse the anger of a ruler as it is to disturb "a lion" (cf. 19:12). Both of them can do much damage to the one who provokes" them. King Hanun aroused the anger of David and regretted it (2 Sam. 10). Those who provoke the anger of the Greatest King by rejecting His Son will taste His wrath (cf. Rev. 6—19). "Henry VIII, fuming at the pope for blocking his plan to divorce and remarry, was neither the first nor last illustration of raging, royal anger.<sup>4</sup>

**d) 3 It is to one's honor to avoid strife, but every fool is quick to quarrel.**

- i) The prudent person who cares for his "honor" ceases striving when the strife becomes passionate, and he removes himself from it (cf. Phil. 4:5). But the person who is quick to fight shows himself or herself to be a fool (cf. 17:14). By provoking a fight with Pharaoh Neco that was unnecessary, good King Josiah lost his honor and his life prematurely (2 Chron. 35:20-24).<sup>5</sup>

(1) Should we intervene in fights?

**e) 4 Sluggards do not plow in season; so at harvest time they look but find nothing.**

- i) Laziness (20:4). “Because of winter the sluggard will not plow; therefore, in the harvest he will seek [lit., beg] and have nothing.” After the harvest in the autumn the work of plowing must be done. At this time the ground in Palestine, moistened by winter rains, is most easily and profitably worked. The lazy farmer neglects this work. He puts off tilling his fields day after day so that his land is never cultivated. Consequently he has no crop to reap when autumn comes. <sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Smith, Wisdom and Psalms

<sup>4</sup> Constable

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> Wisdom and Psalms

f) **Discerning Human Character - vs. 5-12**

g) **Difficulty of Discernment - 5 The purposes of a person's heart (counsel) are deep waters, but one who has insight draws them out.**

- i) An "understanding" person will as skillfully draw another person's "plan" from him as a pearl diver extracts pearls from the bottom of "deep water" (cf. 18:4). Because the heart of man is desperately wicked (Jer. 17:9), and because these plans are hidden deeply, the plans in view are probably plans to do evil. 422 Sick David sensed that those who came to visit him were laying plans to use against him (Ps. 41:6; cf. Ps. 64:5-6). Jesus also "knew what was in man" (John 2:25), and He often skillfully drew it out.<sup>7</sup>

(1) Where do we see this happen on a regular basis?

h) **6 Many claim to have unfailing love, but a faithful person who can find?**

- i) Note, 1. It is easy to find those that will pretend to be kind and liberal. Many a man will call himself a man of mercy, will boast what good he has done and what good he designs to do, or, at least, what an affection he has to well-doing. Most men will talk a great deal of their charity, generosity, hospitality, and piety, will sound a trumpet to themselves, as the Pharisees, and what little goodness they have will proclaim it and make a mighty matter of it. 2. But it is hard to find those that really are kind and liberal, that have done and will do more than either they speak of or care to hear spoken of, that will be true friends in a strait; such a one as one may trust to is like a black swan.<sup>8</sup>

i) **Parental Discernment - 7 The righteous lead blameless lives; blessed are their children after them.**

- i) The person who is truly just ("righteous"), by God's grace, demonstrates it by the way he lives ("his integrity"), and his immediate lineal descendants benefit from his uprightness. Abraham is a brilliant example (Gen. 17:1- 9).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Constable

<sup>8</sup> Henry

<sup>9</sup> Constable

j) **Judicial Discernment - 8 When a king sits on his throne to judge, he winnows out all evil with his eyes.**

i) "A throne of judgment" is a throne distinguished by impartial justice. Such a king sifts the true from the false in the evidence submitted to him. As anointed ruler he was believed to have been endowed with the ability to see through any lies. Those lies and pretenses which cloak evil are scattered to the winds, as the chaff flies before the winnowing fan. Nothing unrighteous can abide in his presence.<sup>10</sup>

k) **Personal Discernment - 9 Who can say, "I have kept my heart pure; I am clean and without sin"? 10 Differing weights and differing measures—the Lord detests them both.**

i) No human being is faultless (Rom 3:23; 1 John 1:8). To deceive oneself in this matter is so easy. Sins may lurk undetected, motives may be overlooked, so that no one can rightly be self-righteous or conceited, or proud of his spiritual condition (20:9).

ii) Stones were used for weighing. Dishonest traders used two sets of measures, one for buying, and one for selling (cf. Lev 19:36; Deut 25:13). God hates such fraudulent practices. The ephah was a dry measure roughly equal to a bushel. Some connect this verse in thought with the preceding, seeing it as a warning against judging a neighbor by a standard which one is unwilling to apply to himself (20:10).<sup>11</sup>

l) **The Basis of Discernment - 11 Even small children are known by their actions, so is their conduct really pure and upright?**

i) "Conduct" is such a reliable indicator of character that even a child is known as good ("pure and right") or bad by his or her behavior. Profession of goodness makes little impression when practice contradicts it. Samuel's conduct as a child demonstrated his sensitivity to God (1 Sam. 3:18-21).<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Wisdom and Psalms

<sup>11</sup> Ibid

<sup>12</sup> Constable

**m) 12 Ears that hear and eyes that see—the Lord has made them both.**

- i) In Proverbs, the "hearing ear" usually refers to teachability, and here, as often elsewhere in this book, the "seeing eye" connotes moral discernment. Together they imply application of the wisdom presented here. God has given to people the ability to receive instruction and to understand what is best, even though they are flawed by sin (v. 9). Noah proved teachable and discerning when he responded in obedience to "all that the LORD had commanded him" (Gen. 7:5), as did Moses (Exod. 40:16).<sup>13</sup>

**n) Religion in the Workplace - 13-15**

**o) 13 Do not love sleep or you will grow poor; stay awake and you will have food to spare.**

- i) Industry (20:13). "Do not love sleep lest you be dispossessed; open your eyes [to] fullness of bread." One should not be sleeping when there is work to be done (cf. 19:15). Only one who is energetic in his labors avoids poverty. The word "eyes" connects this verse to the preceding. God gave the faculty of sight, but man must make good use of it.<sup>14</sup>

**p) 14 "It's no good, it's no good!" says the buyer—then goes off and boasts about the purchase.**

- i) How common is the deceit here mentioned! It is the characteristic falsehood of the bargainer. Depreciating the article his heart desires, in order to procure favorable terms, when at last his price is acceded to, he goes his way, rejoicing in his shrewdness, and boasting of his ability to purchase at low rates. But a holier eye than that of man was looking on, noting every action, word, and thought; and the day of accounting draws rapidly nearer.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Constable

<sup>14</sup> Wisdom and psalms

<sup>15</sup> Ironside, logos

**q) 15 Gold there is, and rubies in abundance, but lips that speak knowledge are a rare jewel.**

- i) It is the divine knowledge that is preeminent here. Human wisdom may captivate the imagination and furnish it with useful information. But the words for the most part die away on the ear. They do not feed the heart. They do not comfort the afflicted, bring hope to the despondent, or teach the ignorant. So while they may be pearls, they are not the pearl of great price, that rare jewel that dims the luster of earth's most splendid vanities.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Bridges