

Commentary on the Book of Proverbs

By Brent Barnett

www.relevantbibleteaching.com

Proverbs 1

1The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel:

2To know wisdom and instruction,

To discern the sayings of understanding,

3To receive instruction in wise behavior,

Righteousness, justice and equity;

4To give prudence to the naive,

To the youth knowledge and discretion,

5A wise man will hear and increase in learning,

And a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel,

6To understand a proverb and a figure,

The words of the wise and their riddles.

David's son Solomon, the wisest man ever to live because of God's gift of wisdom to him, begins sharing his extensive knowledge concerning the nature of wisdom and how we should live before God. He himself struggled to live out what he taught, and his life became an illustration in many ways of what not to do. In Ecclesiastes, he shares of his many regrets for not doing what he knew was consistent with wisdom. In other words, the idea is that we should learn from his mistakes. He knew wisdom and the right path, and he wishes that he would have taken it and that those who come after him would take it. If we are wise, we will take his God-breathed advice and live according to how God wants every person to live.

A wise man is one who desires to increase in learning. He takes in wise teaching, seeks to acquire understanding, and longs for learning what wise behavior is. Wisdom will lead to righteousness, justice, and being fair and equitable with others. These qualities are particularly important for a king as Solomon was, but they are something every person should seek. One does not need to be well-known or publicly exalted in order to have exceeding wisdom. The ideal situation is one in which a youth is able to get knowledge and discretion so that he has ample time and opportunity to pass wisdom on to others. Too many throw away the most energetic part of their lives to waste, ruin, and futility, but Solomon says that even youths should seek after wisdom and walk in it. A person demonstrates his true character based upon how fervently he desires to grow in spiritual learning and how humble he is to respond to instruction in God's ways. In other words, the wise seek out wisdom, while the foolish could care less.

7The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge;

Fools despise wisdom and instruction.

This is really the theme of the entire book of Proverbs encapsulated in one verse. Either a person fears God and thus seeks to learn His ways and obey His commands, or he scoffs and mocks at Him and does his own foolish things. The wise receive instruction and learn wisdom because they fear God. They believe that He is Who He says He is and that He deserves attention, reverence, praise, affection, and respect. They acknowledge Him as God and give Him thanks, rather than the others whose foolish hearts are darkened by their own selfish lusts. Romans 1:21 says, "For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened."

Jesus told the crowds to fear God because only God could send a person to hell (Luke 12:5). We must come before God understanding that He is the final authority, that He is holy, and that He will punish sin because of His holiness. Thus, we should bow the knee before Him, seek forgiveness in His Son, and serve Him fully in this life. That is where wisdom starts, for in Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Colossians 2:3). Without Christ and without a fear of God, man's orientation and aim in life are misdirected as he is left to follow the deceptive nature of his own fallen heart (Ecclesiastes 10:2).

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom because we must know God Who is holy. From that point, we can learn more about just how much God loves us who have received Him, and we no longer have to fear His just wrath (1 John 4:17). His perfect love drives out any fear of eternal punishment (1 John 4:18) for those who belong to Him, though our awe and reverence for Him should only increase with time (Proverbs 28:14). Those who reject Christ prove themselves to be fools, deserving of wrath and destruction. They hate the truth, and they hate being reminded of it. They despise wisdom because they despise their Creator and the One Who died and rose again desiring to be their Savior.

**8Hear, my son, your father's instruction
And do not forsake your mother's teaching;
9Indeed, they are a graceful wreath to your head
And ornaments about your neck.**

What Solomon would teach his own son and what God-fearing parents should teach their children is what God has instructed us all in His Word. If our parents do not teach us wisdom according to the Scriptures, we should not listen to the foolishness which they spout because God is a higher authority always. But inasmuch as they teach us the truth because they are concerned for our welfare, we should listen and not forsake sound teaching. Sound instruction is an honor, a blessing, and a protection in this life.

**10My son, if sinners entice you,
Do not consent.
11If they say, "Come with us,
Let us lie in wait for blood,
Let us ambush the innocent without cause;**

12Let us swallow them alive like Sheol,
Even whole, as those who go down to the pit;
13We will find all kinds of precious wealth,
We will fill our houses with spoil;
14Throw in your lot with us,
We shall all have one purse,"
15My son, do not walk in the way with them
Keep your feet from their path,
16For their feet run to evil
And they hasten to shed blood.

Getting to specifics, Solomon says to beware that the world is full of sinners who seek to trap and ensnare the young person to do evil. Wisdom says to not join forces with evil people and not do evil things such as violence, murder, and harming the innocent. Their purpose is to plunder them and steal their possessions because they desire money, wealth, and spoil. Their enticements to join together for the common selfish goal of riches at the expense of harming others must be rejected immediately by the one who desires wisdom. Those who are this greedy and willing to harm innocents certainly cannot be trusted to share the spoils and not harm each other. So practically such an alliance is foolish, and before God it is an abomination, ultimate foolishness. Wise youths will keep away from these violent, murderous types. They will look to defend the innocent rather than attack them.

17Indeed, it is useless to spread the baited net
In the sight of any bird;
18But they lie in wait for their own blood;
They ambush their own lives.
19So are the ways of everyone who gains by violence;
It takes away the life of its possessors.

These evil people are actually ambushing themselves as they seek to plunder others. Their souls are storing up more of God's wrath, and thus the gains made by violence and corruption are worth nothing eternally because of the condemnation that they bring. It is a waste of one's life. They see the traps that they set, and instead of being instructed by wisdom that they are actually damning their own souls, they will soon be destroyed by their own sin, likely on earth but certainly in eternity.

20Wisdom shouts in the street,
She lifts her voice in the square;
21At the head of the noisy streets she cries out;
At the entrance of the gates in the city she utters her sayings:
22"How long, O naive ones, will you love being simple-minded?
And scoffers delight themselves in scoffing
And fools hate knowledge?"

Just as God calls all people to turn to Christ and repent of their sins, wisdom calls to all and says to fear God and learn wisdom. Wisdom is hidden in Christ, but He wants all to know it. Wisdom thus shouts to the masses at the city entrance and above the noisy streets so that all can hear. Indeed, God has revealed Himself through the creation, through the conscience of man, through the incarnation of Christ, and through His written Word. Truth shouts to mankind and begs people to stop being naïve and scoffing at God. Still most refuse to worship God and instead take pride and joy in their own mocking. They are proud of themselves for being so “astute” to have rejected truth, and they are content with their view of knowledge, which is really the lack thereof. They delight in their own mockery of knowledge, and this proves that they hate truth and despise wisdom.

**23"Turn to my reproof,
Behold, I will pour out my spirit on you;
I will make my words known to you.
24"Because I called and you refused,
I stretched out my hand and no one paid attention;
25And you neglected all my counsel
And did not want my reproof;
26I will also laugh at your calamity;
I will mock when your dread comes,
27When your dread comes like a storm
And your calamity comes like a whirlwind,
When distress and anguish come upon you.**

God in His great love issues a warning to people just as Jesus warned people to repent and believe the gospel because of the wrath to come (Mark 1:15, Luke 13:5). Wisdom reproves sinners and scoffers because it desires to reveal God’s love and truth to them. Wisdom wants to help people love God, gain understanding, and hear His words with open and receptive hearts. But wisdom cannot force salvation and understanding upon any person. Individuals must make a choice to receive understanding or not. Sadly, most reject God’s wisdom and neglect wisdom’s counsel. They don’t want their errors pointed out, and, thus, their eventual calamity, distress, and anguish is sure. There will be no hiding from the return of Christ when He comes to judge the world in righteousness. Great dread will come upon the whole of the world who loved foolishness rather than wisdom, for their eternal judgment will be at hand (Revelation 6:16). Wisdom is not shy about pointing out the consequences of sin, for the wages of sin is indeed death (Romans 6:23).

**28"Then they will call on me, but I will not answer;
They will seek me diligently but they will not find me,
29Because they hated knowledge
And did not choose the fear of the LORD.
30"They would not accept my counsel,
They spurned all my reproof.
31"So they shall eat of the fruit of their own way**

And be satiated with their own devices.
32"For the waywardness of the naive will kill them,
And the complacency of fools will destroy them.
33"But he who listens to me shall live securely
And will be at ease from the dread of evil."

It is too late to repent when Christ returns to judge the world (Hebrews 9:27). God gives people ample time and incredible grace and patience to repent and believe, but time eventually runs out. Those who hate God and who choose against fearing Him spurn His correction and refuse to receive His words. God gave Israel after Solomon many chances to repent by sending many prophets, but eventually He sent the nation away to captivity because of the hardness of their hearts. When God gives a time window to bow to Him, wisdom says to take it. But the foolish don't bother because they are made complacent and numb by their own sinful devices. Sin never satisfies, for only those who hunger and thirst for righteousness will be satisfied in Christ. But sin can satiate and make the stomach feel full when the soul is beyond empty. This false peace and fake happiness is what the entire world system is built on. It is a mirage of satisfaction that is mere satiation, a trading of the best for a hollow imitation. Taking in sinful pleasures tricks the soul into not feeling its hunger for more, for wisdom, and for Christ. But that hunger will always be there because only Christ can satisfy.

The naïve are carried about by every wind of doctrine and by the enticement of sinners, and thus they will suffer because they fail to seek out wisdom. Being naïve is a dangerous place to be, for the lack of knowledge can lead to destruction (Hosea 4:6). Each person is responsible for seeking out wisdom so that he does not remain in a state of naiveté. Those who are naïve who seek wisdom out will find it because those who ask will be given and those who seek will find (Matthew 7:7). But those who are satiated by evil desires will be destroyed on account of their lack of understanding. Complacency is an attitude that neglects the urgency of Christ's command to repent and the imminency of His coming judgment. The fool will be destroyed, but those who hear God's Word and are doers as well will have no need to fear eternal punishment. Those who truly listen to God can still expect trouble in this life (John 16:33), but they will be kept from creating loads of trouble that come from being around the wrong kinds of people and doing foolish things. Wisdom has a way of guarding us from evil and destruction.

Proverbs 2

- 1My son, if you will receive my words
And treasure my commandments within you,**
- 2Make your ear attentive to wisdom,
Incline your heart to understanding;**
- 3For if you cry for discernment,
Lift your voice for understanding;**
- 4If you seek her as silver
And search for her as for hidden treasures;**
- 5Then you will discern the fear of the LORD
And discover the knowledge of God.**

What is clear in this passage is that there is a responsibility put upon man to choose the fear of God and to seek after wisdom. God doesn't force us to do His will or to obey, but we must choose this day Whom we will serve. We must receive God's words and treasure His commandments in our hearts as our delights. We must be listening attentively to Scripture and to discerning wisdom in Christ. Our hearts must be humble enough to be inclined to truth and righteousness rather than biased toward sin and evil. Thus, Christ must indwell our hearts by faith. We should want wisdom and the right path in life so badly that we cry out to God for discernment to know right from wrong and truth from error. We should call out to God with deep urgency and desperation for understanding so that we are wise stewards of our time on earth. Those who have Christ in their hearts will find the Spirit constantly working in their hearts to move them to repentance and to further sanctification. Wisdom thus breeds further wisdom by faith.

God wants people to long for wisdom more than silver, money, and treasures. With the same eagerness that people pursue hidden treasure, we must seek after God because He is the treasure that we all should seek. Then, having this deep driving urgency for wisdom in our hearts, we will come upon the fear of God and discover the knowledge of God. As we come to know the fear of God, we will grow in understanding and wisdom. But even before the fear of God which is the beginning of wisdom, the point of salvation, there is a seeking that takes place when God calls a person to Himself. Thus, we learn that those who practice the truth come to faith proving that it was indeed a work of God in their hearts from the beginning (John 3:21). In other words, those who seek the truth will find it, and Christ will manifest Himself to them. Even after salvation, we must never cease longing to grow in truth and understanding, and our urgency and desperation for wisdom must not diminish but grow even stronger.

- 6For the LORD gives wisdom;
From His mouth come knowledge and understanding.**
- 7He stores up sound wisdom for the upright;
He is a shield to those who walk in integrity,**
- 8Guarding the paths of justice,
And He preserves the way of His godly ones.**

There is no alternative route to getting wisdom, for only the Lord gives wisdom. Only those who turn from sin to faith in Christ can access His wisdom. Only from His mouth to the pages of Scripture come knowledge and understanding. He gives wisdom to the upright who are made righteous in Christ, and He protects those who walk in integrity. Wisdom is a protecting force, keeping us from foolish things that could destroy us. It helps us love justice and be just with others, thereby offering protection to the innocent. God preserves the way of His godly ones, finishing the work He started in their hearts so that they can finish strong and be a shining testimony of knowledge and understanding. There is a protection that walking in wisdom brings as God keeps us from falling for evil and from the destructive forces that accompany it (Proverbs 2:11-12). This doesn't mean that the righteous won't have trials in this life (John 16:33), but it does mean that God will only allow into our lives what He will cause to work for our good (Romans 8:28) such that a legacy of His goodness and mercy will be clearly seen (Psalm 23:6). He is faithful to sanctify His own (Philippians 2:12-13) and to not allow them to be tempted beyond what they are able to resist by faith (1 Corinthians 10:13). The Lord is a shield to the righteous, preserving their souls, faithfully gracious in times of trial, and constantly working in them transformation of the heart and mind unto His likeness (Romans 12:1-2).

9Then you will discern righteousness and justice

And equity and every good course.

10For wisdom will enter your heart

And knowledge will be pleasant to your soul;

11Discretion will guard you,

Understanding will watch over you,

12To deliver you from the way of evil,

From the man who speaks perverse things;

13From those who leave the paths of uprightness

To walk in the ways of darkness;

14Who delight in doing evil

And rejoice in the perversity of evil;

15Whose paths are crooked,

And who are devious in their ways;

Solomon further explains just how God preserves the way of His godly ones. He enables them to know righteousness, justice, how to be fair, and how to know what to do in a given situation. Wisdom from God means that we will know what course to chart when we need to know. The heart that follows after God is filled with wisdom, and it delights in the understanding that God provides. The sinner finds pleasure in sin, while the saved find pleasure in the pleasantness of wisdom. Discretion and understanding watch over the saved to keep them from the ways of evil and darkness and those who practice such things. Many delight in darkness, perversity, and evil because the perversity of their own hearts enjoys doing perverse things. The righteous hate evil but love what is good. The evil hate what is good and love evil. Only the born again heart can love God and what is good (1 John 4:7-8, John 13:34-35). The unregenerate heart rejects righteousness, walks away from the truth revealed to it, and basks in wickedness. These are devious and

crooked in their ways, enjoying destruction and the destruction of others. It makes them happy to see evil harm people.

**16 To deliver you from the strange woman,
From the adulteress who flatters with her words;
17 That leaves the companion of her youth
And forgets the covenant of her God;
18 For her house sinks down to death
And her tracks lead to the dead;
19 None who go to her return again,
Nor do they reach the paths of life.**

One example is the adulteress. She does not seek out the welfare of her prey, but she enjoys the destruction of the life of the fool who chooses her embrace. She enjoys tearing families apart because the passing, empty thrill of sin. She offers flattering speech which is made to manipulate rather than edify. She not only desires to see another leave his companion in marriage, but she herself is unfaithful to her companion. If she even made a covenant before God, she despises it because she despises Him. She has no fear of God when it comes to the marriage bond and covenant, and thus its relevance to her decision-making is not considered. Her life is one leading to death and destruction, and those who choose to follow her path will find only pain and sorrow. Adultery is a severe wrong with devastating results. It is not to say that a Christian who commits adultery will lose his or her salvation, but it is to say that it can quickly disqualify a person from ministry by discrediting their testimony (1 Corinthians 9:27). God's grace is bigger than any sin, and forgiveness is possible for believers. But wounds go deep, and the destruction is not worth finding out.

**20 So you will walk in the way of good men
And keep to the paths of the righteous.
21 For the upright will live in the land
And the blameless will remain in it;
22 But the wicked will be cut off from the land
And the treacherous will be uprooted from it.**

The righteous recognize the danger of evil, and they avoid it at all costs. They choose not to desire the ways of the wicked, but they rather keep to the paths of the righteous, choosing good company so that bad company doesn't corrupt good morals. God had a covenant with Israel that if they obeyed Him, they would be blessed and live long in the land that God had given them (Deuteronomy 11:26-28, 30:19-20). If they worshipped other gods and lived foolishly, then they would be cut off from the land. Sadly, the story ended with them being cut off because of their wickedness. They enjoyed the ways of the wicked nations around them and adopted their practices. They forgot the ways of God and His faithfulness to them because they loved evil more than good. Eternally, the wicked will be cut off from God forever, but the righteous will dwell in the presence of God forever.

Proverbs 3

- 1My son, do not forget my teaching,
But let your heart keep my commandments;
2For length of days and years of life
And peace they will add to you.
3Do not let kindness and truth leave you;
Bind them around your neck,
Write them on the tablet of your heart.
4So you will find favor and good repute
In the sight of God and man.**

Solomon's advice to his son and to youths in general is to not forget the teaching of God and to keep His commandments. The best way to live life is to hold to truth and to be kind with others, for this is wisdom. Those who walk in wisdom should expect to avoid the calamities that evil people tend to bring upon themselves, and they can be at peace in their hearts and often even with those around them. As much as it depends upon us, we should live peaceably with others. Wisdom and kindness go hand in hand, for those who are cruel and vindictive are foolish. Truth and kindness should be etched on our hearts and near to us always. This pleases God and brings His favor, and people in general will view kindness, honesty, and justice favorably as well (Philippians 4:8). But many times people are wrong, and thus God wants us to seek His favor above all and not succumb to the passing whims of man. What is of good repute is only ultimately defined by Him and His truth.

- 5Trust in the LORD with all your heart
And do not lean on your own understanding.
6In all your ways acknowledge Him,
And He will make your paths straight.**

The two verses contain potent truths. First, we are to trust in the Lord not just somewhat or a little bit but with all of our hearts. This is why James 1:5-7 says that God will give wisdom to those who ask in faith without doubting. We cannot trust God with our whole hearts and at the same time doubt that He will provide us with His wisdom. We need wisdom as we traverse this life, and God will give it to those who believe. Second, we are told not to lean on our own understanding. We must recognize our weakness and our dependency upon God and look to Him Who alone is sufficient. Trust must be transferred from our own human abilities and intellect to the power and wisdom of God. There will be things that we just won't understand because we won't see the whole picture as God sees. We just must trust Him and believe that He understands it all. Third, in everything we should acknowledge Him and credit and praise Him for all that is good and perfect in our lives. We don't earn or merit His good and perfect gifts, but He is faithful to be gracious to us even when we don't deserve it. He always deserves praise and thanksgiving from our hearts, and we must always remember that we can do nothing on our own apart from Him (John 15:5, Psalm 127:1). The result of our holding tightly to these three wisdom principles is that God will make our paths straight. This doesn't

mean that life will be easy, but it does mean that we won't make it extra-complicated by entangling ourselves with evil. It doesn't mean that we will never suffer, but it does mean that God will be with us every step of the way sustaining us and giving us grace to do what He will ask of us. It means that He will make us spiritually effective and efficient in doing His work as He opens doors and closes doors. As we walk in His wisdom, we will see where we should go and what we should do. What was crooked and confusing can be made straight and clear as we seek the wisdom of God.

**7Do not be wise in your own eyes;
Fear the LORD and turn away from evil.
8It will be healing to your body
And refreshment to your bones.**

Being wise in one's own eyes is describing pride, haughtiness, and arrogance, things God hates. It is an attitude that searches for wisdom and strength within the flesh rather than from God. Trusting in self is the exact opposite of trusting in God, and inevitably it will lead people astray and into danger. Thus, we should instead fear the Lord and turn away from evil. The Lord will exalt the humble heart in due time, but the proud He must bring low. When believers struggle with pride and self-sufficiency in our hearts and minds, God will be faithful to bring us low so that we will see our desperate need and dependency upon Him. Then, from a place of brokenness, He can heal us, use us, and empower us for effective service by His strength despite our weakness. His power is perfected not in our strength but in our weakness, for then it is evident to all that what is accomplished is something that only God can do (2 Corinthians 12:9-10). Then He gets all the glory as He always should.

Turning away from evil and doing what is right is healing to our soul and also to our bodies which can and do often reflect the state of our spiritual and emotional well-being. Sin can make the body decay, for we are not right when we hold sin in our hearts (Psalm 32:3-4). God must allow us to break so that we do His will and confess our sin. Our spiritual restoration can make us feel better physically also. Wisdom is refreshment not just for the soul but even for the body. Doing things God's way may be hard, but it takes fear and confusion out of the stress equation. When we let Him carry the load, the burden actually becomes easy and light. Nobody said faith was easy, but when we exercise faith we can expect Christ to do all the heavy-lifting.

**9Honor the LORD from your wealth
And from the first of all your produce;
10So your barns will be filled with plenty
And your vats will overflow with new wine.**

We must acknowledge that any and all wealth that we have is from God, and everything that we have is a provision from Him. He gives us strength to work, the ability to learn, and the energy to earn money. He owns even the cattle on a thousand hills because He has made it all (Psalm 50:10). All that we have is ultimately His, and we must always be

ready, willing, and cheerful to do what God asks us to do with the resources, time, and energy He gives us. He will honor us for our faithfulness, maybe not with more prosperity on earth as some promise but certainly with eternal rewards.

God's covenant with Israel in Solomon's time involved the people faithfully giving to the work of the priesthood and then expecting God to bless the nation in return with much prosperity (Deuteronomy 11:26-31). God wanted to see if the people would trust Him enough to obey Him and then praise Him for His provision. As time went on, the people started holding back their first and best from God, and they were carried off into captivity (Malachi 1, 2:1-9). They forgot that God owns all and deserves to be honored and obeyed, trusted and acknowledged (Proverbs 3:5-6). In trying to get more for themselves, they actually missed out on the blessings of God which were far greater, better, and longer-lasting.

**11 My son, do not reject the discipline of the LORD
Or loathe His reproof,
12 For whom the LORD loves He reproves,
Even as a father corrects the son in whom he delights.**

God disciplines those sons and daughters whom He loves as Hebrews 12:7-11 explains. We should not despise His correction, but we should humbly receive it knowing that it produces in us further wisdom, holiness, and understanding. He is not cruel, mean, vindictive, or wrathful towards His own, but He trains us in righteousness so that we can learn His ways and understand that sin is harmful while good is helpful. That He disciplines us is evidence of His delight in us, and we will see evidence of spiritual growth and sanctification as a result of His gentle and effective surgery on our hearts. God must also root out the hidden sins and selfish desires of our hearts so that we can keep growing into His likeness. Discipline is not God losing His cool and lashing out at His own. It is more like a doctor working to correct what is wrong in a patient. God will be faithful to teach us, change our desires, and modify our behavior as we trust Him and desire wisdom.

When God allows consequences into our lives for irreverence to Him, it is a reminder of His love, and it is always to help His church be purified. In His love, He will hedge us in behind and before, gently lay His hands upon us, and keep us from doing something stupid. His protection and provision comes before discipline, for discipline is only necessary for those who begin to harden their hearts. We don't want to take God's discipline lightly, for the harder we press back against God, the harder He will have to work to humble us. Wisdom says to listen quickly, repent immediately, and enjoy the fellowship of Christ.

**13 How blessed is the man who finds wisdom
And the man who gains understanding.
14 For her profit is better than the profit of silver
And her gain better than fine gold.**

**15She is more precious than jewels;
And nothing you desire compares with her.**
**16Long life is in her right hand;
In her left hand are riches and honor.**
**17Her ways are pleasant ways
And all her paths are peace.**
**18She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her,
And happy are all who hold her fast.**

Solomon lauds the value of wisdom and understanding because it is a great blessing to those who possess it through Christ. It is more valuable than silver and gold and any riches that the world can offer. Wisdom is more precious to behold than priceless jewels, and nothing can compare with the value of God-fearing understanding. Those who walk in wisdom will find eternal life in Christ and can expect to avoid a lot of unnecessary pains and strife on earth. So many people suffer because of their own foolish errors and because they do not take God's Word seriously. They create a god of their own making and prefer the pleasures of sin for the moment rather than storing up treasures in heaven. There is a lot of pain on earth that can be avoided simply by doing things God's way. Those who faithfully believe in His wisdom will find that His way provides far more joy than any of the world's perverted ways. They will see that He does exceedingly, abundantly beyond all that we could ask or imagine (Ephesians 3:20). He is that good and faithful, but sadly too many refuse to take His path of wisdom. Wisdom's ways are soothing to the soul, pleasant to the spirit, and peaceful to the heart and mind. The tree of life stands for eternal life (Revelation 22:2, 14), and wisdom and salvation in Christ are one and the same because eternal life is found in wisely receiving Christ as Savior. In Christ are pleasures forever and fullness of joy (Psalm 16:11), and happy are those who hold tightly to His wisdom. Many think that God is a killjoy and that Satan is more fun. The reality is that doing things God's way is man's only hope at fullness of joy. Happiness is found through holiness, not through drowning in a cesspool of sin and disappointment.

**19The LORD by wisdom founded the earth,
By understanding He established the heavens.**
**20By His knowledge the deeps were broken up
And the skies drip with dew.**

Wisdom was present when God created the world because God defines wisdom. With great purpose, intelligence, and design, God spoke the world into existence. We are not the result of some cosmic accident or simply a bunch of evolved chemical compounds. By wisdom we have been created and by understanding the world was made. God clearly believes in Genesis chapter 1, and so should we. Wisdom begins in the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth. If we rewrite or read-in to the creation account, we will have rejected wisdom and fail to acknowledge the amazing wisdom of God according to His creative genius (Psalm 19:1-2, Romans 1:19-21). Even the water that was under the earth that was broken up likely at the time of Noah's flood and the rain that now falls from the sky were systems that were thought up by God. Thus, even the

deepest valleys and tallest mountains and the rain from the sky should move us to worship the God Who brought it all into being. It all shouts praise to His glory, and so should we. Wisdom readily sees this, acknowledges it, and praises God as Creator.

**21My son, let them not vanish from your sight;
Keep sound wisdom and discretion,
22So they will be life to your soul
And adornment to your neck.
23Then you will walk in your way securely
And your foot will not stumble.
24When you lie down, you will not be afraid;
When you lie down, your sleep will be sweet.
25Do not be afraid of sudden fear
Nor of the onslaught of the wicked when it comes;
26For the LORD will be your confidence
And will keep your foot from being caught.**

This really explains the benefits of wisdom toward those who hold tightly to it. Satan sets all kinds of traps for us, and evil people constantly try to ensnare us in their latest schemes and ploys. Discernment from God enables us to know how to spend our time, how to use our God-given resources, and how to invest our talents. We won't have to stumble into the evil one's traps and waste the time and resources God has given us if we walk in wisdom. Sure, we will always make mistakes (James 3:2), but without wisdom we would make endless mistakes. The longer we live and the more we grow in wisdom, we should stumble less and enjoy the security of doing things God's way more and more. We won't have to fear when we try to sleep because we will know that God loves us and that nothing can take us out of His hand (John 10:28). Even when temptation comes, God will always faithfully provide a way of escape (1 Corinthians 10:13). He will keep our foot from being caught by the devil's many traps. This does not mean as in the case of Job that God will never allow bad things to happen to us, but it means that we can honor and worship Him even in difficult times. Whether we have much or little, the challenge is whether we will succumb to temptation or submit to wisdom. Wisdom will always be the best policy even in unpleasant circumstances. Wisdom is not afraid of hardship, but it does everything possible to avoid the snares of sin.

**27Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due,
When it is in your power to do it.
28Do not say to your neighbor, "Go, and come back,
And tomorrow I will give it,"
When you have it with you.**

If we have the opportunity to do good today, we should do it today rather than waiting until tomorrow. This is unfair to the person who can benefit from good today, and it is simply arrogant and foolish to presume on tomorrow. When God opens doors, we need to walk through them. When we have opportunity to do good to another, we need to take

it. Wisdom does not keep good back from somebody unnecessarily, for our God doesn't ever treat us that way. If we are able, we should be quick to help meet the needs of others, and we should be even more diligent to not withhold gospel truth from those who need to hear it.

**29Do not devise harm against your neighbor,
While he lives securely beside you.**

**30Do not contend with a man without cause,
If he has done you no harm. 31Do not envy a man of violence
And do not choose any of his ways.**

Wisdom doesn't even think about harming others for no reason. Wisdom doesn't pick a fight, and it certainly doesn't do wrong to a person who hasn't done any wrong to begin with. Wisdom strives to live peaceably with all people, and it strives to be a peacemaker rather than one who likes violence for the sake of violence or for selfish gain. Violent people who like to try seize other people's possessions and allegiances by fear are not walking in God's wisdom. They are simply enjoying power for selfish gain rather than being a contributor to a secure and peaceful environment. We must never try to gain by violence or envy people who practice violence. Somebody always gets hurt when violence is given praise rather than wisdom.

**32For the devious are an abomination to the LORD;
But He is intimate with the upright.**

**33The curse of the LORD is on the house of the wicked,
But He blesses the dwelling of the righteous.**

**34Though He scoffs at the scoffers,
Yet He gives grace to the afflicted.**

**35The wise will inherit honor,
But fools display dishonor.**

Some live to devise wicked against their neighbor, but this is an abomination before God. Those who walk in wisdom and live uprightly will enjoy His closeness and fellowship. Those who are wicked are storing up the wrath of God, but the righteous will be blessed of God. Blessing means seeing the abundant mercy and extravagant wisdom of God manifested in our lives. Eternally, we will live forever with Christ if we have trusted Him by faith, and, even on earth, we will see the goodness of the Lord (Psalm 27:13, 23:6). The wise will be honored in eternity, and they may even be recognized as having wisdom now. Fools display dishonor, and societies that are wicked will praise foolishness rather than view it as the dishonor that it is. This is why what God thinks is always of absolute importance. God in heaven scoffs at the mockers and fools as they raise their voice in arrogance toward the heavens. He is not intimidated by their boasts or deceived by their devious ways. He knows that they will be punished, and He is faithful to give grace to the righteous. The wicked may afflict them, but God's grace and an eternal perspective sustains the upright. His presence is their greatest blessing because God will set all things right one day.

Proverbs 4

- ¹Hear, O sons, the instruction of a father,
And give attention that you may gain understanding,
²For I give you sound teaching;
Do not abandon my instruction.
³When I was a son to my father,
Tender and the only son in the sight of my mother,
⁴Then he taught me and said to me,
"Let your heart hold fast my words;
Keep my commandments and live;
⁵Acquire wisdom! Acquire understanding!
Do not forget nor turn away from the words of my mouth.
⁶"Do not forsake her, and she will guard you;
Love her, and she will watch over you.**

Solomon wishes that his sons and youths in general would heed the advice that his father David gave to him concerning wisdom. He implores youths to pursue wisdom and seek to acquire it with extreme urgency and fervency. Wisdom guards and protects those who pursue it and walk in it because it keeps them from the many dangers and travails associated with sin. Wisdom leads to true happiness and satisfaction, not mere vain satiation and futility of purpose. It is of massive eternal significance, and young people need to seek it out early and not wait until after they have made mistakes that they cannot recover from. Wisdom sought early can point a life in a spiritually effective and efficient direction so that one can walk circumspectly and faithfully knowing that the days are indeed evil (Ephesians 5:15-16).

- ⁷"The beginning of wisdom is: Acquire wisdom;
And with all your acquiring, get understanding.
⁸"Prize her, and she will exalt you;
She will honor you if you embrace her.
⁹"She will place on your head a garland of grace;
She will present you with a crown of beauty."**

Solomon has already emphasized that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Those who fear God and value His judgments above all else will seek wisdom because they will want to know the truth. They will find Christ by faith because wisdom is found in Him. But there must be an interest and a willingness to search out the truth, whereas fools enjoy darkness, sin, evil, and the futile delusions of their own fallen minds. Those who honestly and humbly pursue wisdom will find it by grace through faith, and they ought to always remember its value and prize it. Wisdom will lead to future exaltation before the Lord Who promises to honor those in due time who humble themselves (1 Peter 5:6). There will be no regrets for those who choose wisdom, only honor, grace, and distinguishing soul beauty.

- ¹⁰Hear, my son, and accept my sayings
And the years of your life will be many.**
- ¹¹I have directed you in the way of wisdom;
I have led you in upright paths.**
- ¹²When you walk, your steps will not be impeded;
And if you run, you will not stumble.**
- ¹³Take hold of instruction; do not let go
Guard her, for she is your life.**

Solomon has spoken over and over again about the importance of walking in wisdom for those who wish to see their lives preserved rather than wasted and destroyed by sin and wicked people. Wisdom points to uprightness and sanctification, and increased holiness will always be the result of wisdom's labors. Sin and deception slows us down, makes us waste our days, and effectively disables us from being able to bear abundant spiritual fruit. Even abundant church service and ministry works can be rendered useless and unprofitable if wisdom is not present. It is Christ alone Who teaches us and gives us wisdom to know what to say, how to say it, and when to say it. We may lack knowledge, but as we pursue wisdom in the Word of God, we will grow and be able to help others grow also. When in doubt, we must open up the roadmap of the Scriptures, and let them be our guide. This will keep us from stumbling and from mistakenly and unintentionally putting a stumbling block in front of others. Wisdom will keep us from falling into the net of deceivers and false teachers, and it will allow us to make the most of our time on earth. The Holy Spirit will point out where we lack wisdom and where sin still has a hold on our hearts if we are humble enough to pay attention. He will work those things out of our hearts even if the process is painful so that we can gain wisdom and enjoy life to the fullest. Those who lack wisdom and fail to seek to acquire it with all of their being will never be able to experience the abundant life that Christ has promised. His way always brings the most joy.

- ¹⁴Do not enter the path of the wicked
And do not proceed in the way of evil men.**
- ¹⁵Avoid it, do not pass by it;
Turn away from it and pass on.**
- ¹⁶For they cannot sleep unless they do evil;
And they are robbed of sleep unless they make someone stumble.**
- ¹⁷For they eat the bread of wickedness
And drink the wine of violence.**

In this world, there are a few good men and women (Ecclesiastes 7:27-29), and there are many who deceive and are deceived themselves. There are many who love evil so much that they cannot even sleep unless they have done evil. Even as they lie in bed, they plot their next wicked deed. It is what they live for, for they are slaves of the devil, held captive to do his will (2 Timothy 2:26). It is what they seek, and they delight in seeing others take the same paths that they have taken. They enjoy violence and harming the innocent. They rejoice when righteous people fall into sin. Thus, those who love

wisdom must not join forces with these people or make common company with them. Bad company will corrupt good morals, and, while there is a time to stand for truth and share the gospel with the wicked, there is also wisdom in avoiding what they do and the places of debauchery that they love. We must not make any provision for the lusts of the flesh (Romans 13:14). Evil people view us as prey, and it is our resistance to their beckoning to join them in wickedness that is an aroma of Christ. Those who have any interest in truth will be willing to talk about Christ, while most will gag on the righteous aroma (2 Corinthians 2:15-16). The Christian must always be the influencer rather than the one being influenced, and he must go to the sick as a doctor looking to heal rather than a fool looking to accommodate to evil.

**¹⁸But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn,
That shines brighter and brighter until the full day.**

**¹⁹The way of the wicked is like darkness;
They do not know over what they stumble.**

As the sun rises at dawn and gets brighter, fuller, and stronger, so too is the work of the Spirit sanctifying the hearts of the righteous until they are one day glorified into the likeness of Christ. Christians are works in process, but God will complete the work He has begun so that they shine brighter and brighter until the full day comes when Christ returns. The wicked are a stark contrast, full of darkness, blinding the blind and tripping over their own vices. In Christ, light has shone into darkness, but the darkness largely rejects Him (John 1:5). But those who love wisdom will love the Light and walk in it.

**²⁰My son, give attention to my words;
Incline your ear to my sayings.**

**²¹Do not let them depart from your sight;
Keep them in the midst of your heart.**

**²²For they are life to those who find them
And health to all their body.**

Some people refuse to think and listen because they have no desire to learn the truth and consider what defines ultimate reality, true purpose, and real significance. They are content to be swept up with whatever the world tells them is the latest and greatest thing. But the righteous who love wisdom will keep listening to Christ through the study of His Word, and they will keep asking God in faith for wisdom. Wisdom will always be their focus as they long to know and do the will of God and be sanctified, which is itself the will of God (1 Thessalonians 4:3). The commands of Scripture must be central in our hearts, and our hearts should be ruled by the Spirit of God Who has created them anew. He will work out any remnants of selfish desire, pride, and lust over the course of our lives, but we must be humble enough to pay attention and repent when needed. Wisdom is the path to eternal life, and it is the best way to live the optimal life on earth.

**²³Watch over your heart with all diligence,
For from it flow the springs of life.**

Christ taught much on the heart, emphasizing that what comes out of a man is what defiles him because it reflects what is in his heart (Mark 7:20). What we do, think, and say flows from the state of our hearts. If wisdom rules our hearts, holiness and effective gospel testimony pointing people to life in Christ will be what flows out. Truth and grace should pour out of our hearts like springs because we are one with Christ Who Himself is full of grace and truth (John 1:14). Because what we treasure is shown by the desires of our hearts (Matthew 6:21), it is imperative that we guard our hearts so that we delight chiefly in Christ. He will then give us His desires as the desires of our hearts (Psalm 37:4). We will experience the abundant life, finding ultimate satisfaction, total joy, and grace upon grace.

**²⁴Put away from you a deceitful mouth
And put devious speech far from you.**

**²⁵Let your eyes look directly ahead
And let your gaze be fixed straight in front of you.**

**²⁶Watch the path of your feet
And all your ways will be established.**

**²⁷Do not turn to the right nor to the left;
Turn your foot from evil.**

Christ wants us to speak truth in love, not deceit, lies, or false testimony about others. We are not to be double-tongued, saying one thing in season and another out of season. This reflects a divided heart, one which Solomon developed himself and which would lead to the eventual division of the kingdom. By Christ's power and strength, we must not let sin delude our minds and trick the desires of our hearts. God doesn't delight in shifty eyes and shady dealings. He wants people who can look others in the eye and be honest, fair, and just. If we heed the principles of wisdom, we will make sure our feet stay on the path of righteousness, and God will use us to advance His work. God wants us to walk straight because He makes our paths straight. Wisdom delineates between poor choices and good choices, and there is no need to veer off course when we have seen exactly where we should go. Rather than waste time and energy, circling about and wandering in the wilderness, by keeping away from evil we will make the most of our time on earth.

Proverbs 5

- ¹My son, give attention to my wisdom,
Incline your ear to my understanding;
²That you may observe discretion
And your lips may reserve knowledge.
³For the lips of an adulteress drip honey
And smoother than oil is her speech;
⁴But in the end she is bitter as wormwood,
Sharp as a two-edged sword.
⁵Her feet go down to death,
Her steps take hold of Sheol.
⁶She does not ponder the path of life;
Her ways are unstable, she does not know it.**

Solomon now spends a significant amount of time on one particular area where wisdom is of paramount importance, especially given that he is focusing his attention on young men. But women have much to learn also as they consider who not to be and how they should not behave. Wisdom, understanding, and discretion tell a person to avoid the adulteress at all costs. The seductress seeks to draw the unmarried into fornication and the married into adultery. Both are forbidden in God's sight because God knows how damaging both are (Matthew 15:19). There is baggage, memories, and great deception that come with sexual immorality, and it will make future healthy relationships that much more challenging. The best path is to do things God's way, being a virgin until marriage and always enjoying only the wife of your youth.

God is not against sexual pleasure, for He invented it. He just knows that maximum joy is found when two people love Him and love each other for life. Any other way is selfish and incomplete, leading to emptiness, sorrow, and always needing more, searching for something more or somebody else, and confusion.

If we want to hold to knowledge and not become numbed into fools who make ruin of their lives, we must recognize the nature of the temptation. The adulteress manipulates her prey by the movements of her lips and the words of her mouth. Through lies, flattery, rationalizations, and distractions, she convinces her prey that she will satisfy and bring happiness (Proverbs 7:13-21) when in reality bitterness will be the only result. She cannot deliver what she promises because she is going against the way God has designed. She leads a life leading to eternal destruction, she pulls others that direction, and she doesn't even consider the relevance of Christ and eternity (Proverbs 7:22-27). She is unstable because her life is dangerous and volatile without commitment, peace, and security. Yet, she is so blind in her selfish passion that she doesn't even realize how lost and empty she is. She is in danger, on earth and certainly after this life. There is just nothing positive going on here.

- ⁷Now then, my sons, listen to me**

And do not depart from the words of my mouth.
⁸**Keep your way far from her**
And do not go near the door of her house,
⁹**Or you will give your vigor to others**
And your years to the cruel one;
¹⁰**And strangers will be filled with your strength**
And your hard-earned goods will go to the house of an alien;
¹¹**And you groan at your final end,**
When your flesh and your body are consumed;
¹²**And you say, "How I have hated instruction!**
And my heart spurned reproof!
¹³**"I have not listened to the voice of my teachers,**
Nor inclined my ear to my instructors!
¹⁴**"I was almost in utter ruin**
In the midst of the assembly and congregation."

Solomon is adamant that young men stay far away from such women and that they remain sexually pure before marriage and committed to their marriage partner after marriage. Failure to do things God's way and falling into adultery is so devastating to everybody involved. Its effects endure, strength is removed, and so much is lost. Spiritually, though God is willing and faithful to forgive if we ask, we will still have many consequences to suffer as our years are given to the cruel one (Proverbs 6:32). Because of the pain, hurt, and poor testimony that sin carries with it, we must understand just how big of a mistake sexual immorality is (Proverbs 6:24-29). Yes, God can restore and still use people who have sinned as He did Solomon's father David after his sin with Bathsheba, but David's family was a disaster. His own son Absalom almost killed him, and he lost another as a divine punishment for his sin. Even his son Solomon who wrote these verses struggled with many sins, including sexual immorality to a huge extent. Sin has consequences that tend to linger, and we cannot forget that. Though consequences may be many and diverse, they could include relational, financial, emotional, physical, and just about any other realm. Disease is just one aspect that is associated with immorality, some even leading to death. Whether disease happens or not, what is sure is that there will be a lifelong regret, particularly when we reach the end of our lives as we consider what could have been and what we wish we had done differently.

Solomon's purpose is to warn people to not traverse the same road of sexual immorality that he and his father did but to rather learn ahead of time what is right, what is wise, and what will avoid so many regrets, harm, and hurt. Wisdom gives a jump start to young people so that they can accomplish so much more for Christ's sake than if they had not known the truth so early. What is sad is that some who have heard wisdom still refuse to practice it, and they will groan and loathe their decisions. Sin always brings with it ruin and destruction, and sexual immorality is certainly no exception.

¹⁵**Drink water from your own cistern**
And fresh water from your own well.
¹⁶**Should your springs be dispersed abroad,**

Streams of water in the streets?
¹⁷Let them be yours alone
 And not for strangers with you.
¹⁸Let your fountain be blessed,
 And rejoice in the wife of your youth.
¹⁹As a loving hind and a graceful doe,
 Let her breasts satisfy you at all times;
 Be exhilarated always with her love. ²⁰For why should you, my son, be
 exhilarated with an adulteress
 And embrace the bosom of a foreigner?

Solomon's message is God's message to God's people to stay away from foreign cisterns, that is, the adulteress. In addition, married persons should enjoy one another sexually and be faithful to "drink" of one another by being regularly intimate (Song of Solomon 7:8). Temptation seeps in when spouses stop enjoying one another except for a mutually agreed upon time for prayer (1 Corinthians 7:5). But special times of prayer are the rare exception and not the rule, and intimacy is the rule. The health of a marriage has a strong correlation to the degree to which spouses enjoy themselves sexually with one another. Life can make us busy, worn out, tired, and stressed out, but God has given us a spouse as our reward in this life (Ecclesiastes 9:9). The commands of God are not burdensome (1 John 5:3), for we will do well if we enjoy Him and enjoy the good gifts that He has given us, particularly our spouse. We should rejoice in God's genius in creating male and female and the opportunity to express love to one another sexually. Christians are not to be cold and distant with their marriage partner, but there ought to be passion, ecstasy, and utter exhilaration. There is no need to seek exhilaration from some other person. That is dumb, foolish, and horrifically dangerous. At all times, young men must seek satisfaction with their wives, enjoying their bodies as God has so wonderfully made them. Actually, sexual intimacy in marriage can be an act by which God is worshipped because it is an act of obedience and because God enjoys seeing His people enjoy the good gifts He has given them. We should never be able to get enough of our spouse, and we should long to be physically close. Exhilaration within marriage is what we should seek, but exhilaration with some other person is self-destructive.

²¹For the ways of a man are before the eyes of the LORD,
 And He watches all his paths.
²²His own iniquities will capture the wicked,
 And he will be held with the cords of his sin.
²³He will die for lack of instruction,
 And in the greatness of his folly he will go astray.

We should always remember that God sees all that we do, for the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom (Psalm 111:10, Ecclesiastes 12:13-14). Those who fear God then learn to love Him all the more (1 John 4:17-18) because they realize that choosing to do things such as marriage His way brings incredible enjoyment even to the extent that it is surprising and endlessly beyond our expectation. The wicked, on the other hand, store up God's wrath for themselves as God must hold all of their wickedness to their accounts.

Sin is a like a slow suffocation, and it leads to death (Romans 6:23), not to wonder upon wonder of God's grace upon grace (John 1:16). Sin always has consequences, and wisdom is our best protection from needless pain and self-inflicted suffering. Eternal life is knowing Christ (John 17:3), and those who know Christ will enjoy Him now by obeying Him and keeping His principles of wisdom.

Proverbs 6

- ¹My son, if you have become surety for your neighbor,
Have given a pledge for a stranger,**
- ²If you have been snared with the words of your mouth,
Have been caught with the words of your mouth,**
- ³Do this then, my son, and deliver yourself;
Since you have come into the hand of your neighbor,
Go, humble yourself, and importune your neighbor.**
- ⁴Give no sleep to your eyes,
Nor slumber to your eyelids;**
- ⁵Deliver yourself like a gazelle from the hunter's hand
And like a bird from the hand of the fowler.**

What Solomon is after here is to emphasize the high danger and risk of being co-responsible for another person's debts, bankruptcy, etc. It is one thing to give a person a loan because the worst that could happen is that the loan would be partially repaid or not repaid at all. But one's personal assets would not be at risk. If there is mutually shared debt obligations, then one's person's poor financial decisions could drain the resources of the person who made good financial decisions. It makes more sense to give to a person in need or to offer them a loan (the Bible speaks of interest free loans to fellow countrymen (Deuteronomy 23:19)). This mitigates the risk of a catastrophic situation. Thus, if a person finds themselves as a co-signer or somehow bearing the risk of another person's mistakes financially, they need to take immediate precautions to rid themselves of any binding contracts in which they could become responsible for the debts of others.

- ⁶Go to the ant, O sluggard,
Observe her ways and be wise,**
- ⁷Which, having no chief,
Officer or ruler,**
- ⁸Prepares her food in the summer
And gathers her provision in the harvest.**
- ⁹How long will you lie down, O sluggard?
When will you arise from your sleep?**
- ¹⁰"A little sleep, a little slumber,
A little folding of the hands to rest"--**
- ¹¹Your poverty will come in like a vagabond
And your need like an armed man.**

Solomon speaks out against laziness here, for we do not get eternal rewards by doing nothing. The ant is an example of a devoted laborer. No chief ant or authority figure forces the ant to work and gather food, but the ant has an innate instinct to labor. A lazy person needs to learn from the ant which stores up food for itself so that it will not be in want. A sluggard is content not to work, and this will lead to having no money or food to eat. Laziness leads to poverty and quickly at that.

- ¹²A worthless person, a wicked man,
Is the one who walks with a perverse mouth,
¹³Who winks with his eyes, who signals with his feet,
Who points with his fingers;
¹⁴Who with perversity in his heart continually devises evil,
Who spreads strife.
¹⁵Therefore his calamity will come suddenly;
Instantly he will be broken and there will be no healing.**

Wicked and worthless go hand in hand as far as character qualities that we do not want to possess. Examples of these qualities include shady dealings, false promises, reneged commitments, and lots of lying. Through subtle signals a person, while saying one thing, is clearly communicating another thing to others. This deceitfulness is a perversity before God, and it is indicative of a heart that is constantly devising evil plans and intentions for others for selfish gain. This leads to pain for others and to much harm. Eventually, those who lay traps for others end up being harmed by their diabolical lifestyle as they make a mistake, suffer at the hands of violent men, or receive divine punishment of some kind. Regardless of what they may get away with on earth, God sees all and will hold them accountable in eternity.

- ¹⁶There are six things which the LORD hates,
Yes, seven which are an abomination to Him:
¹⁷Haughty eyes, a lying tongue,
And hands that shed innocent blood,
¹⁸A heart that devises wicked plans,
Feet that run rapidly to evil,
¹⁹A false witness who utters lies,
And one who spreads strife among brothers.**

God hates, first, haughty eyes because pride is the opposite of humility which is what He desires. Second, He hates those who lie because Satan is the father of lies (John 8:44). He, being the truth, tells us to rejoice in the truth (1 Corinthians 13:6). It is the truth which sanctifies (John 17:17), while lying only creates harm and leads to destruction. Third, God hates violence and murder because He loves life and the dignity of His creation. Hands that are quick to do others harm are an abomination to Him. Fourth, a heart that is constantly trying to craft evil ideas and plot their next indulgence of sin is not honoring to God. This is the natural state of man's heart, and this is why all men need to repent and be changed from the inside out. Fifth, God despises a lackadaisical attitude to

Him and to His commandments such that a person doesn't even attempt to avoid evil and temptation. Those who see evil and run to it, seeking it out wherever they are and whenever they can, is wickedness before God. Sixth, God hates those who say wrong things about others, painting an incorrect picture about a person's character and integrity. We are supposed to stand up for the truth and for the innocent even if it will cost us. Seventh, God hates those who create enmity, strife, anger, envy, and bitterness among one another, whether family, friends, church associates, business associates, neighbors, etc. God's will is that we pursue peace with all men as much as is possible and insomuch as it depends upon us. We are to be peacemakers rather than those who stir up division and who provoke a fight. Evil people like seeing people hurt one another, but God wants people to get along in peace and harmony.

**²⁰My son, observe the commandment of your father
And do not forsake the teaching of your mother;**

**²¹Bind them continually on your heart;
Tie them around your neck.**

**²²When you walk about, they will guide you;
When you sleep, they will watch over you;
And when you awake, they will talk to you.**

Getting back to the recurring theme of the importance of seeking wisdom with extreme urgency and fervency, Solomon says to hold to God's commands and teachings firmly and to not let them go. Insomuch as parents teach the truth of God and His Word, we must treasure that instruction and apply it rigorously. As we meditate on God's Word, we will be able to know wisdom and make wise decisions. Even as we sleep, wisdom has a way of sorting things out in our minds so that we know what to do when we wake.

**²³For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching is light;
And reproofs for discipline are the way of life**

**²⁴To keep you from the evil woman,
From the smooth tongue of the adulteress.**

**²⁵Do not desire her beauty in your heart,
Nor let her capture you with her eyelids.**

**²⁶For on account of a harlot one is reduced to a loaf of bread,
And an adulteress hunts for the precious life.**

God's Word is for teaching, training, and correction so that we will be made complete and mature and able to know and do the will of God (2 Timothy 3:16-17). It is a lamp to our feet, and a light to our paths. One thing that Scripture is very clear about is that young men do not destroy their lives by committing adultery. And young women need to avoid becoming a woman that tries to get men to lust after her. There is nothing wrong with looking one's best and trying to be attractive, but it is another thing altogether to portray that one is easy and that one is willing to have sex outside of marriage. The attraction is to be for the spouse alone, not for others.

The adulteress is an evil woman, and she speaks flattering words of false promises of vain hope. Yet she makes it sound so good that it is difficult to resist. That is why wisdom avoids the adulteress and doesn't linger to hear her out, just as Joseph fled the advances of Potiphar's wife. A key rule of thumb for life is to not desire the beauty of another woman in one's heart. Lust is more than just seeing a pretty face and attractive form. It is lingering in thought, starting to devise evil plans, fantasizing, and being captured by envy. The adulteress bats her eyelids, beckoning the fool to speak to her and listen to her temptations. A person who falls for these guises is reduced to being her food as she seeks to devour the precious life for selfish gain. We can walk in wisdom, or we can be somebody else's breakfast. There is no love here, only selfish, fleeting lust that will leave the soul empty, dry, and with deep sorrow.

- ²⁷Can a man take fire in his bosom
And his clothes not be burned?**
**²⁸Or can a man walk on hot coals
And his feet not be scorched?**
**²⁹So is the one who goes in to his neighbor's wife;
Whoever touches her will not go unpunished.**

Solomon cannot be any clearer that those who play with the fire of lust and allow themselves to be seduced will suffer consequences. Just as it is impossible to hold a burning coal in one's hands and not get burned, adultery scars a person for life.

- ³⁰Men do not despise a thief if he steals
To satisfy himself when he is hungry;**
**³¹But when he is found, he must repay sevenfold;
He must give all the substance of his house.**
**³²The one who commits adultery with a woman is lacking sense;
He who would destroy himself does it.**
**³³Wounds and disgrace he will find,
And his reproach will not be blotted out.**
**³⁴For jealousy enrages a man,
And he will not spare in the day of vengeance.**
**³⁵He will not accept any ransom,
Nor will he be satisfied though you give many gifts.**

One of the major consequences of adultery is the wrath of the husband who has been cheated on. Jealousy enrages a man, and he will be tempted to take revenge. There is no amount of gifts or peace offerings that can undo the damage that has been done. Damage is also done to the adulteress and to the adulterer, and only a fool who lacks sense would dare do something this destructive that brings such great wounds, shame, and disgrace. People can forgive a person who steals bread because he is hungry, though even then they will likely levy a consequence. But it is not too difficult to repay that kind of a debt. Adultery, however, is not so easily undone and forgotten.

Proverbs 7

- ¹My son, keep my words
And treasure my commandments within you.
²Keep my commandments and live,
And my teaching as the apple of your eye.
³Bind them on your fingers;
Write them on the tablet of your heart.
⁴Say to wisdom, "You are my sister,"
And call understanding your intimate friend;

When the Bible keeps saying the same thing over and over, it is usually because it is extremely important. Here Solomon continues hammering the same theme home of loving wisdom and holding it dearly as the apple of one's eye. The commandments of God are what will keep young men and women from making horrible mistakes with their lives. God's commands are our protection, not a burden, and they give life, joy, and eternal blessings.

- ⁵That they may keep you from an adulteress,
From the foreigner who flatters with her words.
⁶For at the window of my house
I looked out through my lattice,
⁷And I saw among the naive,
And discerned among the youths
A young man lacking sense,
⁸Passing through the street near her corner;
And he takes the way to her house,
⁹In the twilight, in the evening,
In the middle of the night and in the darkness.
¹⁰And behold, a woman comes to meet him,
Dressed as a harlot and cunning of heart.
¹¹She is boisterous and rebellious,
Her feet do not remain at home;
¹²She is now in the streets, now in the squares,
And lurks by every corner.

Solomon recounts a story of watching a naïve young man lacking sense and not heeding the commands of God. This young man did not treasure the wisdom of Christ, and he passed into a danger zone where an adulteress was known to frequent. He passed her corner, took the way to her house, and did so as it was getting dark so as not to be seen. As expected, she came out to meet her prey for the night dressed in seductive clothing clearly signifying that she was content to play the harlot. Her heart was cunning as she laid the trap, drawing her next victim in. She was boisterous and rebellious in that she was not content to love her husband and be faithful in her responsibilities to her home. She would rather be a loud-mouth, gossip, and harlot. She did not stay at home when her

husband was away, for she went out on the prowl on the streets. Satan prowls like a lion seeking whom he might devour, and his minions do the same (1 Peter 5:8).

- 13** So she seizes him and kisses him
And with a brazen face she says to him:
14 "I was due to offer peace offerings;
Today I have paid my vows.
15 "Therefore I have come out to meet you,
To seek your presence earnestly, and I have found you.
16 "I have spread my couch with coverings,
With colored linens of Egypt.
17 "I have sprinkled my bed
With myrrh, aloes and cinnamon.
18 "Come, let us drink our fill of love until morning;
Let us delight ourselves with caresses.
19 "For my husband is not at home,
He has gone on a long journey;
20 He has taken a bag of money with him,
At the full moon he will come home."
21 With her many persuasions she entices him;
With her flattering lips she seduces him.

Recognizing a ready victim, she makes the move and draws him in by kissing him and giving him the look that says "I'm available." She couches her immoral lusts in language that self-justifies and rationalizes, and she tries to make her victim feel like she has real feelings for him such that she has actually sought after him. Making the young man feel that he is wanted and worth something to her, she baits the hook by painting a visual picture of what lustful pleasure they might have in her bed which she has purposely prepared for him. She says that they can be free to indulge sin without fear of being caught and enjoy the passing pleasures of sin all night long as they caress one another. After all, she says her husband is gone away and won't be home for a while. She has to convince her prey that there will be no consequences and that they can get away with it. She keeps persuading him and enticing him with flattery such that his selfish ego is built up and confident enough to do something stupid.

- 22** Suddenly he follows her
As an ox goes to the slaughter,
Or as one in fetters to the discipline of a fool,
23 Until an arrow pierces through his liver;
As a bird hastens to the snare,
So he does not know that it will cost him his life.
24 Now therefore, my sons, listen to me,
And pay attention to the words of my mouth.
25 Do not let your heart turn aside to her ways,
Do not stray into her paths.
26 For many are the victims she has cast down,

And numerous are all her slain.
²⁷Her house is the way to Sheol,
Descending to the chambers of death.

Foolishly, this young naïve man who does not hold tightly to wisdom sets off with this woman to make a huge and dangerous mistake. Just as a bird flies into a trap or a wild animal is shot down with an arrow, this foolish young man goes like an ox to the slaughter. Death can literally come in many ways on account of sexual immorality, with disease or the wrath of the husband being but a couple examples. Likely, the supposedly secret act will come to light. Reputations will be ruined, and much scorn will take place. This passing relationship or one-night-stand can never satisfy, and it is like allowing Satan to get his claws hooked into the soul. An unbeliever is fast on the way to eternal destruction, for adultery usually happens again and gives birth to many other sins as well. Should a believer err as David did, forgiveness is possible (1 John 1:9). However, there are still consequences as David failed to lead his family and suffered divine punishment as well. Many have fallen victim to adultery, and the seductress has many slain to her credit. The world trains young women to play the seductress and to wear their shame as a badge of honor. But it is not becoming of a woman of God, and young men must choose their company wisely. Certainly, they must not venture into dangerous territory where they know temptation lies in wait.

Proverbs 8

- ¹Does not wisdom call,
And understanding lift up her voice?
²On top of the heights beside the way,
Where the paths meet, she takes her stand;
³Beside the gates, at the opening to the city,
At the entrance of the doors, she cries out:
⁴"To you, O men, I call,
And my voice is to the sons of men.
⁵"O naive ones, understand prudence;
And, O fools, understand wisdom.
⁶"Listen, for I will speak noble things;
And the opening of my lips will reveal right things.
⁷"For my mouth will utter truth;
And wickedness is an abomination to my lips.
⁸"All the utterances of my mouth are in righteousness;
There is nothing crooked or perverted in them.
⁹"They are all straightforward to him who understands,
And right to those who find knowledge.
¹⁰"Take my instruction and not silver,
And knowledge rather than choicest gold.
¹¹"For wisdom is better than jewels;
And all desirable things cannot compare with her.
¹²"I, wisdom, dwell with prudence,
And I find knowledge and discretion.

Wisdom cries out to people everywhere through the conscience, the created order, and the canon of Scripture, and yet people typically refuse to listen. God wants the naïve to gain understanding, and He wants fools to become wise. If only people will search out wisdom and heed the commands of Scripture, they can know truth, learn righteousness, and discern good from evil. God doesn't mince words or waste words, and He cannot lie. Thus, we can take His commands as life, freedom, joy, and hope, and we can have total confidence in what He tells us to do. God's way is clear and straightforward for those who desire righteousness, but those who love wickedness will find wilderness, death, and destruction. God's Word and His wisdom are worth more than gold, silver, and precious gems, and the cumulative collection of all that the world considers valuable pales in comparison to the worth of wisdom. Wisdom makes it possible to actually enjoy life to the full, whereas Satan comes to steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:10), just like the adulteress (Proverbs 5-7). In God's Word is wisdom, prudence, discernment, discretion, knowledge, understanding, insight, and all that we need to know in order to be able to make wise choices, find satisfaction, enjoy life, and be filled in our souls.

- ¹³"The fear of the LORD is to hate evil;
Pride and arrogance and the evil way

And the perverted mouth, I hate.
14" Counsel is mine and sound wisdom;
I am understanding, power is mine.
15" By me kings reign,
And rulers decree justice.
16" By me princes rule, and nobles,
All who judge rightly.

Fearing God is the beginning of wisdom, and it involves the hatred of evil. God hates evil, and so must we. Pride and perversion are abominations before Him. In Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and those who wish to make wise decisions and judge rightly will hold to that divine wisdom. A king cannot rule with fairness and justice without the wisdom of God. Wicked kings inevitably create injustice and harm for their people, but leaders that seek after wisdom create an environment of equality and justice.

17" I love those who love me;
And those who diligently seek me will find me.
18" Riches and honor are with me,
Enduring wealth and righteousness.
19" My fruit is better than gold, even pure gold,
And my yield better than choicest silver.
20" I walk in the way of righteousness,
In the midst of the paths of justice,
21" To endow those who love me with wealth,
That I may fill their treasuries.

Those who lack wisdom have only themselves to blame, for God says that those who diligently seek for wisdom will find it. James echoes this truth concerning God giving wisdom to those who ask in faith, and Jesus said that those who seek will find. We cannot blame God if we do foolish things, but we must seek out His wisdom. He will give it to us.

Those who love wisdom will find that it brings with it many benefits. Beyond the certainty of eternal life, even on earth there is practical and even financial benefit to living according to God's commands. God doesn't promise that faith leads to wealth, but wise choices and hard work is far more likely to lead to financial well-being rather than poverty. Wisdom does not guarantee riches, but it does bring with it godliness and joy. Godliness with contentment, after all, is worth more than mere money (1 Timothy 6:6).

The value of wisdom is of itself more than mere money, gold, silver, or jewels. Wisdom says that pure monetary wealth is not the endgame to be sought after, but those whom God blesses with means should take care of those who lack. God blesses some financially so that they can bless others, not so that they can hold back (Proverbs 3:27). But the point of emphasis is that wisdom gives treasure that is eternal, and righteousness and justice inform a person how to store up eternal rewards which are enduring and not

susceptible to thieves and decay on earth. Wisdom highlights what matters most and enables a person to view money not as the be-all-end-all but as a tool to be used in the advancement of the kingdom. Wisdom will always have righteousness and justice as its fruit whether a person is poor or wealthy.

**22^{''}The LORD possessed me at the beginning of His way,
Before His works of old.**
**23^{''}From everlasting I was established,
From the beginning, from the earliest times of the earth.**
**24^{''}When there were no depths I was brought forth,
When there were no springs abounding with water.**
**25^{''}Before the mountains were settled,
Before the hills I was brought forth;**
**26^{''}While He had not yet made the earth and the fields,
Nor the first dust of the world.**
**27^{''}When He established the heavens, I was there,
When He inscribed a circle on the face of the deep,**
**28^{''}When He made firm the skies above,
When the springs of the deep became fixed,**
**29^{''}When He set for the sea its boundary
So that the water would not transgress His command,
When He marked out the foundations of the earth;**
**30^{''}Then I was beside Him, as a master workman;
And I was daily His delight,
Rejoicing always before Him,**
**31^{''}Rejoicing in the world, His earth,
And having my delight in the sons of men.**

God created the world in wisdom. His wisdom was seen in His creative genius through which He made the world and called it good. Wisdom was there even before God made the heavens and the earth in Genesis 1:1 because it is part of Who God is. His wisdom is made clear in the majesty of the created order which clearly points to God's design, plan, forethought, and wisdom (Psalm 19:1-2, Romans 1:19-21). Wisdom was there through the six days of creation, and it still defines everything that God does. God delighted in what He had made, including Adam and Eve. Man is no cosmic accident or result of chance events, but He is a divine purpose and plan of God. Interestingly, Solomon references a circle to define the creation of the planet, a scientific understanding several millennia ahead of its time. Wisdom takes delight in God's genius and power, whereas a fool rejects the Creator. Wisdom values human life because it is created by God, and wisdom informs a discerning heart to worship and love the Creator.

**32^{''}Now therefore, O sons, listen to me,
For blessed are they who keep my ways.**
**33^{''}Heed instruction and be wise,
And do not neglect it.**

**³⁴"Blessed is the man who listens to me,
Watching daily at my gates,
Waiting at my doorposts.
³⁵"For he who finds me finds life
And obtains favor from the LORD.
³⁶"But he who sins against me injures himself;
All those who hate me love death."**

Wisdom adores God and is caught up with His majesty. Wisdom says to pay attention to what God does and to glory in Who He is. Wisdom says to listen to His instruction and to keep His commands. Fools neglect God's counsel and Him as well, but those who love wisdom love God. Those who desire wisdom will find it, and they will find blessing, life, and favor from God. Those who reject and hate wisdom prove that not only do they hate God but themselves. Rejecting wisdom is self-defeating and self-destructive, but doing things God's way by faith is a treasure trove of grace upon grace (John 1:16).

Proverbs 9

- ¹Wisdom has built her house,
She has hewn out her seven pillars;
²She has prepared her food, she has mixed her wine;
She has also set her table;
³She has sent out her maidens, she calls
From the tops of the heights of the city:
⁴"Whoever is naive, let him turn in here!"
To him who lacks understanding she says,
⁵"Come, eat of my food
And drink of the wine I have mixed.
⁶"Forsake your folly and live,
And proceed in the way of understanding."**

Again (Proverbs 8:1), we see that God desires all men to repent and come to the knowledge of Him (2 Peter 3:9). Wisdom is not something that can be bought or earned or that only the privileged few can have. Wisdom extends her offer to all who pass by her city, and she invites them into her home. She preaches to them concerning understanding, and beckons them to find shelter in Christ. But rather than choosing the food and drink of wisdom, many continue on and pass her by. Yet she keeps calling for sinners to repent and for fools to seek wisdom. If sinners would only forsake their folly and turn from the error of their ways, God stands ready to forgive and to pour out grace and mercy along with understanding.

- ⁷He who corrects a scoffer gets dishonor for himself,
And he who reproveth a wicked man gets insults for himself.
⁸Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you,
Reprove a wise man and he will love you.
⁹Give instruction to a wise man and he will be still wiser,
Teach a righteous man and he will increase his learning.**

When a righteous person who loves wisdom is corrected for doing something against God's commands, he learns from it and makes the necessary adjustments. He is grateful for the correction and appreciates the person who had the boldness to tell him of his error. The correction will make a wise man only wiser. But a fool despises instruction, and a scoffer will lash out and insult any who would dare correct his thinking and behavior. Those who want to keep growing will always appreciate hearing wisdom principles from God's Word, but fools will always scorn the truth.

- ¹⁰The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom,
And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.
¹¹For by me your days will be multiplied,
And years of life will be added to you.
¹²If you are wise, you are wise for yourself,
And if you scoff, you alone will bear it.**

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. In other words, one cannot have insight into what life is about and regarding what really matters without coming to know Jesus Christ. John 3:21 says that those who practice the truth will come to the Light. Those who fear God and want to know wisdom will find it in Jesus. Wisdom tends to lead to a longer life on earth as peacemaking is a better life-giving strategy than violence and murder. Wisdom also will bring eternal life as well as rewards from God for faithful living (2 Corinthians 5:10, 1 Corinthians 3:10-15). God holds us accountable for how we ourselves have lived. The righteous will inherit eternal life based upon their faith in Christ, but the wicked will enter eternal punishment on account of their evil deeds. Each will be judged according to their own accounts (Romans 2:6).

- ¹³The woman of folly is boisterous,
She is naive and knows nothing.**
- ¹⁴She sits at the doorway of her house,
On a seat by the high places of the city,**
- ¹⁵Calling to those who pass by,
Who are making their paths straight:**
- ¹⁶"Whoever is naive, let him turn in here,"
And to him who lacks understanding she says,**
- ¹⁷"Stolen water is sweet;
And bread eaten in secret is pleasant."**
- ¹⁸But he does not know that the dead are there,
That her guests are in the depths of Sheol.**

The boisterous woman is an allusion to the adulteress mentioned in previous chapters (Proverbs 5-7) who wanders the streets calling out as a sort of anti-wisdom, reaching out to the fools who desire evil instead of good. The anti-wisdom woman is full of folly, she is naïve, and she knows nothing. Sins of all types beckon the righteous, but in Christ we can stand firm and resist the snares of the devil. So on one hand there is the woman of wisdom (Proverbs 8:1, 9:1) calling for people to repent and believe in God's wisdom. On the other hand, there is the boisterous seductress of sin calling out to take shortcuts, to steal, and to do evil in secret. The anti-wisdom woman claims that her way is pleasant and sweet, but she is wrong. The wise person knows that she lies, but the naïve does not know that destruction and death are her food and drink. The fool doesn't realize that his eternal destruction fast awaits.

Proverbs 10

¹The proverbs of Solomon

**A wise son makes a father glad,
But a foolish son is a grief to his mother.**

Some parents actually think it's funny when their kids do bad things, but the reality is that parents who have any sense whatsoever pertaining to the wisdom of God will rejoice in children who walk in wisdom and sorrow in those that do not. For those who love wisdom, it should be a godly ambition to long to see one's children grow up to follow God with all of their hearts. This should bring parents great joy.

**²Ill-gotten gains do not profit,
But righteousness delivers from death.**

Making money by stealing, cheating, or taking advantage of people does create a cash pile at least as long as one doesn't get caught or brought to justice, but in light of eternity that cash is trash. There is no profit to evil because God will render to each according to his deeds (Romans 2:6). There is also no satisfaction in a dishonest living, but earning money by honest labor and doing it for God's glory is actually meaningful to the soul (Colossians 3:17, 23). Righteousness is what matters and what has value when the judgment comes. Righteousness is only found by grace through faith in Christ, and this profits abundantly in terms of eternity. Even now, the pursuit of righteousness satisfies.

**³The LORD will not allow the righteous to hunger,
But He will reject the craving of the wicked.**

The righteous will never have to hunger again because their souls will be satisfied with the Bread of Life. Their thirst will be quenched forever having drunk of the Living Water. The Lord meets the deepest desires of the soul, and He is also faithful to supply our needs according to His riches in Christ Jesus (Psalm 37:25, Matthew 6:31-32, Philippians 4:19). The church must see to it that they do all that they can to care for their own (2 Corinthians 8:14, Galatians 6:10), especially when it comes to getting enough food. But the emphasis is on spiritual food, for that is what Jesus was most concerned about, even after feeding the five thousand (John 6:28-29). The wicked crave many things such as money, fame, fortune, and all kinds of evil deeds. But their hearts will never be satisfied, and their souls will languish and eventually end up in eternal anguish. While on earth, they might have their fill and find satiation with their sin (Luke 16:25), but satisfaction will elude them. The Lord will see to it that they are also empty inside, and in eternity they will crave and never have their cravings satisfied. Like the rich man in the story of Lazarus, the thirst he felt while in the flames of hell would never be quenched (Luke 16:24). Such is the destiny of the wicked.

**⁴Poor is he who works with a negligent hand,
But the hand of the diligent makes rich.**

Those who do not do their fair share of work and labor can expect to struggle financially in life. Those who do not work tend to find it tough going to find food to eat. Getting rich quick typically requires taking advantage of people or gambling, which is not desirable. But one can gain wealth by hard work, and honest labor honors God.

**⁵He who gathers in summer is a son who acts wisely,
But he who sleeps in harvest is a son who acts shamefully.**

Harvest time is a time to work and take in the crops that the Lord has provided. But those who fail to do the labor required waste food, will lack what they need, and act shamefully. It is a dishonorable thing to waste, and it is disrespectful to God to fail to use the time, energy, and gifts that God has given us. We will be held accountable for how we invest the talents which Christ has entrusted us with. The Lord wants laborers sent out into His harvest, not those who sleep on the job (Luke 10:2).

**⁶Blessings are on the head of the righteous,
But the mouth of the wicked conceals violence.
⁷The memory of the righteous is blessed,
But the name of the wicked will rot.**

God will honor the righteous, and he will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living (Psalm 27:13) and in heaven. The righteous person lives to demonstrate the love of Christ to others, and thus it is he who brings good news of hope and healing to the world (Romans 10:15). In stark contrast is the wicked person, who might say he brings peace while concealing violence and treachery. His legacy will be one that most often brings derision, whereas the name of the righteous and the memory of a good person typically ends up being a source of blessing and joy. God knows all and will settle all accounts, and it is one's legacy according to God that ultimately matters.

**⁸The wise of heart will receive commands,
But a babbling fool will be ruined.**

The wise prove their wisdom by receiving instruction from God's Word. They are willing to listen, absorb, think critically, and apply the truths of Scripture. A fool, on the other hand, is too busy running his mouth to listen and grow in truth and wisdom. He speaks nonsense, even if he attempts to wax eloquent with the faulty wisdom of man. God's wisdom may be foolishness to fools, but it is life to the righteous, bringing blessing. The fool will be ruined by his own folly.

**⁹He who walks in integrity walks securely,
But he who perverts his ways will be found out.
¹⁰He who winks the eye causes trouble,
And a babbling fool will be ruined.
¹¹The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life,
But the mouth of the wicked conceals violence.**

Those who walk in integrity and aren't busy lying and deceiving and exploiting people don't have to live in fear that somebody will seek vengeance on them. There is peace and security that comes from living humbly, quietly, peaceably, and honestly. Those who have integrity also don't have to live in fear that one day somebody will find out about their deceit and treachery and wreck their lives and legacy. God sees all, and even if a person gets away with sin for a time, he will eventually pay. We should watch out for those who aren't straight up with others and who like to make shady underhanded deals and communicate contrasting messages with hidden signals. Those relationships lead to trouble, for these people babble nonsense and not wisdom. Ruin is the endgame in said relationships. The righteous speak truth, and their words are like a fountain that gives life. The wicked, on the other hand, have a hidden agenda, a violent motive, and a will to destroy others.

**¹²Hatred stirs up strife,
But love covers all transgressions.**

Those who hate enjoy creating division and destruction. They delight in seeing relationships go awry. Love, on the other hand, is willing to bear with others (Colossians 3:12-13), to be patient, to be compassionate, to forgive, and to seek restoration in relationships. By being willing to forgive sin and not keeping a record of wrongs, love covers all transgressions (1 Corinthians 13:5, 1 Peter 4:8). As Christ has forgiven us, so we should forgive others (Ephesians 4:32). (see also Proverbs 19:11)

**¹³On the lips of the discerning, wisdom is found,
But a rod is for the back of him who lacks understanding.**

**¹⁴Wise men store up knowledge,
But with the mouth of the foolish, ruin is at hand.**

**¹⁵The rich man's wealth is his fortress,
The ruin of the poor is their poverty.**

**¹⁶The wages of the righteous is life,
The income of the wicked, punishment.**

**¹⁷He is on the path of life who heeds instruction,
But he who ignores reproof goes astray.**

**¹⁸He who conceals hatred has lying lips,
And he who spreads slander is a fool.**

Solomon expands upon the contrast between the wise, righteous person and the wicked, foolish person. The wise speak discerning things that can edify and encourage others, whereas the fool needs discipline, instruction, and training in righteousness. Those who love wisdom continue to value truth and to grow in knowledge, but the fool does more worthless talking than humble thinking, bringing ruin upon himself. Those who operate by wisdom principles tend to store up savings that they can invest in the kingdom of God, but the fool wastes his life. Through his laziness, he can expect to suffer from lack of the necessities of life. The rich man should not boast in his riches as if his riches can save him in the day of judgment, but he should recognize and bow to the Giver and true Owner of all things. Those who heed wisdom's call and walk righteously before God by

faith will gain an inheritance of eternal life, but the wicked store up God's wrath and punishment for themselves. The wise are humble enough to admit when they are wrong and to learn from the wisdom of others, but fools ignore sound teaching and reproof and are led astray into destruction. The righteous speak truth and avoid lies, but the foolish hate in their heart, do nothing to restore relationships, lie about others, and speak ill of others, slandering them and gossiping.

¹⁹When there are many words, transgression is unavoidable,

But he who restrains his lips is wise.

²⁰The tongue of the righteous is as choice silver,

The heart of the wicked is worth little.

²¹The lips of the righteous feed many,

But fools die for lack of understanding.

There is nothing inherently wrong with being more verbal than others, and there is nothing inherently wrong with being less of a talker than others. But what does tend to happen is that those who get in the habit of running their mouths at warp speed are prone to not doing quality control on what comes out of their mouths. There is wisdom in limiting what we say or at least being exceedingly careful to evaluate what we say before we say it. The looser we are with our mouths, the more we can say something we will regret, even if by accident. Sometimes the best policy is just to keep our mouths shut and our thoughts to ourselves. The righteous speak words that encourage and edify others, and their speech is wholesome and undefiling (Ephesians 4:28). The wicked demonstrate the evil in their hearts by the words that they say, for it is what comes out of a man that defiles him (Mark 7:20). Wisdom, needed reproof, correction, and training in righteousness come from those whose minds and hearts are saturated in the Scripture and driven by the glory of God. Others will be pointed to worship God and know Him more by what the righteous say. Fools, on the other hand, have nothing of value to impart to others, their lives bear that out, and they will die with no understanding to their credit and even because of their own lack of wisdom.

²²It is the blessing of the LORD that makes rich,

And He adds no sorrow to it.

²³Doing wickedness is like sport to a fool,

And so is wisdom to a man of understanding.

²⁴What the wicked fears will come upon him,

But the desire of the righteous will be granted.

²⁵When the whirlwind passes, the wicked is no more,

But the righteous has an everlasting foundation.

Sometimes it may seem like the wicked get away with their evil, but God will settle all accounts in eternity. Thus, getting ahead in life through evil and deceit will bring with it eventual sorrow and emptiness along the way. But God's provisions, gifts, and blessings in life, financial or otherwise, are true riches to the soul (Ephesians 1:3, 3:20). There is no sorrow, grief, fear, or regret when doing things God's way. Fools find wickedness to be a sport because they scoff at God and view life as a cosmic joke. The righteous stand

in stark contrast, finding great fun, fulfillment, and excitement from following God and seeing the devil flee. The wise enjoy gaining ever more wisdom. The wicked must live in fear because violent people beget violence and because they have no hope of life after death. They don't know when calamity will strike, and eventually sin's devastating effects catch up to them. One day the wicked will die and face the judgment, and they will be cast into the lake of fire. The righteous have the hope of God's help and provision in life along with the promise of answered prayer. The righteous have great hope and confidence because their lives are built upon an eternal foundation of salvation through Christ.

**²⁶Like vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes,
So is the lazy one to those who send him.**

Vinegar by itself is repulsively bitter, and smoke in the eyes is a stinging pain. So is the one who is sent and relied upon to accomplish a particular task, but, who, because of his laziness, doesn't do it. It brings loathing and grief to the one who counted on him for help.

**²⁷The fear of the LORD prolongs life,
But the years of the wicked will be shortened.
²⁸The hope of the righteous is gladness,
But the expectation of the wicked perishes.
²⁹The way of the LORD is a stronghold to the upright,
But ruin to the workers of iniquity.**

The righteous fear God, and doing things God's way avoids a lot of needless pain and even possibly a premature death due to a dangerous, destructive lifestyle of evil. The righteous have joy in the depths of their hearts that brings them hope anew everyday thanks to the new mercies of God every morning. The wicked have no God to renew their strength and to show them compassion, for, in their vitriol against God, they incur His judgment. They love darkness and put their hope in the passing pleasures of sin, but their hope in sin as a means to satisfaction and life will fail. They will face God's wrath when they die. Doing things God's way is a protection for the righteous and a source of strength in which they draw confidence and hope. But because the wicked are at enmity with God, their iniquity will bring them eternal ruin.

**³⁰The righteous will never be shaken,
But the wicked will not dwell in the land.
³¹The mouth of the righteous flows with wisdom,
But the perverted tongue will be cut out.
³²The lips of the righteous bring forth what is acceptable,
But the mouth of the wicked what is perverted.**

Nothing can take the believer out of the hand of God because God will never forsake His own. By being strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might (Ephesians 6:10), the righteous can stand firm against whatever the devil may throw his way (1 Corinthians

10:13, James 4:7). Believers are inheritors of an eternal kingdom, but the wicked are part of the devil's failed pseudo-kingdom. They will not dwell in heaven with the righteous. The righteous speak forth wise words, for out of the heart the mouth speaks. But evil people with perverted hearts will suffer God's wrath in eternity, for God hates evil speech, a lying tongue, and especially leading the innocent astray. Righteous people will say righteous things, and evil people will say evil and deceitful things. This is expected based upon the state of each heart. We can know the righteous from the wicked based upon their fruits, including what they say or don't say (Matthew 7:20).

Proverbs 11

**1 A false balance is an abomination to the Lord,
But a just weight is His delight.**

God hates dishonest weights and measures because He hates when people steal from others and conduct business in a dishonest fashion. Honest, justice, fairness, and integrity are what pleases him. Trying to get ahead financially by cheating cannot bring God's blessing which is free from sorrow, fear, and grief. God sees all, and He will render to each according to His deeds.

**2 When pride comes, then comes dishonor,
But with the humble is wisdom.**

The Lord must bring low the proud and arrogant, but He promises to honor those who honor Him. Those who humble themselves under His mighty hand, not relying in their own strength but in His power, will be exalted in due time. God is faithful, and in eternity the scales of justice will recognize the faithfulness of those who love wisdom. The person who is humble and contrite of heart and who trembles at God's Word, God will look to bless (Isaiah 66:2).

**3 The integrity of the upright will guide them,
But the crookedness of the treacherous will destroy them.**

The Holy Spirit in the heart of the righteous works to lead the people of God in the way of integrity (Romans 8:14). The righteous are sensitive to their conscience, and they listen to God teaching them right from wrong. By faith, they turn away from evil, and they let God guide them according to His wisdom and according to what is good. The will of God is our sanctification, and those who are upright in heart pursue that route by faith and are guided by the Spirit into all truth (John 16:13). The Spirit works relentlessly and tirelessly to sanctify our hearts and minds to more fully align with the will of God. He will always keep working to lead us into all truth according to the Scripture. On the other hand, the wicked are destroyed by their own lies, deception, and trickery. Continuing to do evil defiles and desensitizes the conscience and hardens people against God. They will pay in eternity for their evil deeds.

**4 Riches do not profit in the day of wrath,
But righteousness delivers from death.**

The point is that those who pursue riches at all costs and do evil to get wealth will recognize that it accounts for nothing because it won't buy their way out of hell. It is salvation by grace through faith in Christ that brings holiness to a heart and that delivers from the second death.

**5 The righteousness of the blameless will smooth his way,
But the wicked will fall by his own wickedness.**

**⁶The righteousness of the upright will deliver them,
But the treacherous will be caught by *their own* greed.**

Wisdom is a guide for life and continuing to strive to do what is good takes a lot of needless pain and strife out of the course of life. God's commands are not burdensome, but the burden of sin is. Jesus' yoke is light and burden easy, for He wants us to cast our cares upon Him. He makes our paths straight (Proverbs 3:6), and He preserves the way of His godly ones (Proverbs 2:8). The wicked, on the other hand, will be brought down by their own evil, probably in life and certainly in death. Even getting away with evil in the short term might be a shot in the arm of pleasure to them, but it brings decay to the inner person day after day. In Christ, we can be renewed inwardly day after day (2 Corinthians 4:16). One way or the other, the wicked will be held to account, and greed always destroys.

**⁷When a wicked man dies, *his* expectation will perish,
And the hope of strong men perishes.**

The wicked have sacrificed their souls for sinful pleasure now, and all that they may have thought that they had gained will be lost at the point of death. The wicked have no hope of heaven, and, even if they erroneously have hope of something good after they die, they will be gravely disappointed. Even those who boasted in their strength, money, and accomplishments in life will have nothing real to hope in. The wicked have mortgaged their eternal future for a few sinful years now. They will pay.

**⁸The righteous is delivered from trouble,
But the wicked takes his place.**

**⁹With *his* mouth the godless man destroys his neighbor,
But through knowledge the righteous will be delivered.**

God does allow the righteous to suffer, but when He does, it is always for a purpose. What we know is that there is countless trouble that He protects us from (Psalm 28:7), but the wicked have no such divine protection. More importantly, with a focus on the afterlife, the wicked have eternal trouble awaiting them, whereas the righteous are delivered from death and hell. Even in life, despite the slander and false testimony of evil people, truth vindicates the righteous. As Jesus said in Matthew 11:19b when He was falsely accused, "Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds." Those who desire wisdom will find it and be able to sort the truth from the lies.

**¹⁰When it goes well with the righteous, the city rejoices,
And when the wicked perish, there is joyful shouting.**

**¹¹By the blessing of the upright a city is exalted,
But by the mouth of the wicked it is torn down.**

In general, people appreciate and value honest, generous, kind-hearted people. When a good person dies, people genuinely miss such a person. But when people who exploit others or rule by cruel force die, there is general rejoicing. Even those who don't recognize or love wisdom benefit by the lives of the upright because honesty doesn't steal from them and because love is always others-focused. The wicked lie, steal, and take advantage of others, and an entire city or nation can suffer at the hands of dishonest leadership.

**¹² He who despises his neighbor lacks sense,
But a man of understanding keeps silent.**

Wicked people like to pick a fight and make fun of others. This stems from a lack of love and concern for others in their hearts. The believer should stand in stark contrast because he should love his neighbor and look out for the interests of others even more than his own (Philippians 2:3-4). His love should be a defining mark that He knows Christ (John 13:34-35, 1 John 4:7-8). Thus, in demonstration of the wisdom residing in his heart, he refuses to mock, deride, lie to, or speak ill of his neighbor.

**¹³ He who goes about as a talebearer reveals secrets,
But he who is trustworthy conceals a matter.**

When others tell us something in confidence, they deserve our faithfulness to keep their secret (barring, of course, that there isn't some imminent threat to a person, for example). A talebearer is one who needs to learn to keep his mouth shut. His blabbering of others' secrets loses their trust and makes having a relationship of any depth or value impossible. Trust is a critical part of the foundation of friendship.

**¹⁴ Where there is no guidance the people fall,
But in abundance of counselors there is victory.**

It is the naïve and untaught who are prone to suffer the most because they lack wisdom and wise counselors and teachers to give them guidance. Whole churches and groups of people can be led astray by poor teaching or the lack of good teaching. But when truth is multiplied amongst God's people because of a plurality of godly counselors and teachers, the body can be strengthened and protected from deception. Even outside of the church walls, we need to be careful who we listen to as our counselors, for even if we have a lot of them, they could all be wrong if we are listening to the wrong people. Thus, an abundance of counselors who speak wisdom because they fear God and value Scripture is the goal. Rehoboam had several friends that gave him advice, but the advice was terrible (1 Kings 12:8). Moses heard wisdom but from one man, his father-in-law, Jethro, and it was helpful (Exodus 18:17). The Scripture is sufficient, and it is enough to equip the man of God for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17) and to know wisdom and understanding. Counsel must always be weighed against the truth of God's Word. "I have more insight than all my teachers, For Your testimonies are my meditation." (Psalm 119:99)

**¹⁵ He who is guarantor for a stranger will surely suffer for it,
But he who hates being a guarantor is secure.**

Solomon reiterates a point he made in Proverbs 6:1-5 concerning ridding oneself of being a financial guarantor for a stranger or neighbor. There is security in not allowing the whims or misfortunes of another to rid an honest, hard-working person of all of his hard-earned wealth due to mutualized debt accountability. There is a place for giving another a gift or a loan, but putting all of one's assets on the line for another is a risk not worth taking.

**¹⁶ A gracious woman attains honor,
And ruthless men attain riches.
¹⁷ The merciful man does himself good,
But the cruel man does himself harm.**

Gracious women tend to be well-respected in the world, and it is good to be gracious. Among men, it is the cruel, cutthroat, and ruthless ones who seem to make it to the top. They even tend to garner respect, if even through fear. This is a warped reality, but it is nonetheless a true observation. Solomon is quick to point out that men should be merciful just as women should be, and cruelty does both others and oneself harm. Cruelty is the opposite of love, and it is indicative of a soul that needs redemption.

**¹⁸ The wicked earns deceptive wages,
But he who sows righteousness gets a true reward.
¹⁹ He who is steadfast in righteousness will attain to life,
And he who pursues evil will bring about his own death.**

It might seem like the wicked are prospering as cruelty and violence can be used to get ahead on earth. However, these are "deceptive wages", for the wages of sin is death. And death and wrath awaits the wicked. The righteous, even if they are poor on earth, will have a great reward in the coming life. The fact remains that those who are righteous by faith will inherit eternal life, and the wicked will be sentenced to eternal pain and destruction in hell.

**²⁰ The perverse in heart are an abomination to the Lord,
But the blameless in their walk are His delight.
²¹ Assuredly, the evil man will not go unpunished,
But the descendants of the righteous will be delivered.**

God delights in the righteous, and He is honored by our obedience before Him. This is our praise to Him, and it brings Him glory. The evil are a stinky aroma to His nostrils, and they store up His wrath and punishment. God doesn't view evil as innocent mistakes but as an abomination that will not go unpunished. The righteous and those who believe in God through their testimony will be delivered from death into eternal life.

²² As a ring of gold in a swine's snout

So is a beautiful woman who lacks discretion.

There is nothing wrong with being externally beautiful. Sarah, Rebekah, and Rachel in the Old Testament were described as being physically beautiful, for example. Gold is also beautiful, but, when fashioned into a ring and put in the snout of a pig, it's beauty becomes discounted, perverted, and covered in filth. There is something just wrong and repulsive about putting a valuable and beautiful gold ring in pig snot, mud, and grime. A beautiful woman who takes the beauty that God has fashioned her with and acts promiscuously and without discretion is doing to herself what the pig does to that ring. It is taking something that could be so astounding and a great treasure for a husband and making it undesirable and used. Of course, God is able to cleanse the soul with mercy and forgiveness, but why play around with fire? Taking the principle of Proverbs 6:27 and applying it in reverse for the seductress/adulteress, "Can a [woman] take fire in [her] bosom And [her] clothes not be burned?" The goal of a young man who desires to be married should be to find a woman who is beautiful in his eyes and who praises the Lord with her life. As Proverbs 31:30 says, "Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, But a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised."

**²³ The desire of the righteous is only good,
But the expectation of the wicked is wrath.**

When we are saved by Christ, we are given new hearts, indwelt by the Spirit, and regenerated into a new creation in Christ. We are controlled by His love (2 Corinthians 5:14). We still stumble and we battle the flesh daily, but the Lord changes our desires toward only what is good (Psalm 37:4). We just have to learn to trust Him as He sets us free from what we thought were our desires. He will free us from our deception and give us His desires as the desires of our hearts. The more we delight in Him, the more our desires will align with His. But the key is that our new heart is capable of this. It doesn't have to be forever bound to the depraved nature it was once characterized by. A depraved heart wouldn't even be able to look forward to heaven, but in Christ it can now desire what is good. A righteous heart doesn't rejoice in evil but rejoices in the truth (1 Corinthians 13:6). It abhors evil and clings to what is good (Romans 12:9). It loves others, thinks on what is good, right, and pure (Philippians 4:8), and wants what is best for others. It stands in stark contrast to the heart of the wicked which always desires evil and is constantly incurring more divine wrath (Jeremiah 17:9). Given the promise of heaven which we are to set our hope completely upon, we have a very good desire to look forward to. The wicked have no such hope.

**²⁴ There is one who scatters, and yet increases all the more,
And there is one who withholds what is justly due, and yet it results only in want.**

**²⁵ The generous man will be prosperous,
And he who waters will himself be watered.**

**²⁶ He who withholds grain, the people will curse him,
But blessing will be on the head of him who sells it.**

2 Corinthians 9:6, 11 says, “Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness.” The idea is that as God gives ability, we should be generous in terms of giving to the kingdom, both financially and with our time and energy. The more seeds we plant, by God’s grace, the more we will see a harvest of souls. God loves a cheerful giver. We are not supposed to be foolish and impoverish ourselves, but we are to be generous where we can be generous. There is no point in dying with a bank vault full of cash or with a gospel that we never shared. God will honor us and remember us for our generosity. Some people try to steal and skim from what should belong to others. This does not earn them the favor of others, and it definitely does not please God. But there is blessing on those who don’t keep back what they don’t need and who make sure that others can benefit from it. Those who are kind and generous toward others will find that others will be more likely to be generous with them than if they were stingy and greedy in their time of need.

**²⁷ He who diligently seeks good seeks favor,
But he who seeks evil, evil will come to him.**

A person who diligently seeks good is one who desires God’s blessing. But those who seek after evil will find it and be destroyed by it.

**²⁸ He who trusts in his riches will fall,
But the righteous will flourish like the *green* leaf.**

There is nothing wrong with having riches, but there is wrong in holding back from those in need when a person is in a position to help. There is also wrong in trusting in money for protection or happiness when God alone is to be trusted for life, joy, and peace. Money doesn’t go to heaven, and it can’t buy a person’s way out of hell. But it can be used for a lot of good while on earth. The righteous, whether they have a lot of the world’s means or not, will have all that they need and more given the spiritual riches that they have in Christ (Ephesians 1:3). Godliness with contentment is not just a net neutral, but it is great gain. Like a tree that is healthy, mature, growing, and green thanks to ample sun and water, so too will the righteous be (Psalm 1:3).

**²⁹ He who troubles his own house will inherit wind,
And the foolish will be servant to the wisehearted.**

It is not God-honoring or indicative of a redeemed heart for a person to cause trouble to those in his own house, especially his wife and children. A person should look after his family like a shepherd, seeking to meet needs and demonstrating the grace and generosity of God. God does not hold back with us, nor is He stingy, cruel or unjust. An earthly father should imitate that attitude of our heavenly Father. Inheriting heaven, which the righteous will, is much better than inheriting nothing, which the cruel, selfish, and corrupt will. A Biblical theme in the gospels is that the last will be first, and the first will be last (Mark 10:31). The idea is that those who wisely made themselves the servant of all will

be great in heaven (Mark 9:35), and those who sought to get power and control no matter the method on earth will pay their dues in eternity.

**³⁰ The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life,
And he who is wise wins souls.**

The tree of life is the Biblical symbol of eternal life in Genesis 3 and in Revelation 22. The lives of the righteous should be a tree of life to others as they live out and preach the gospel to others. Thus, they bear fruit leading to eternal life for those who receive Christ as a result of their testimony. They reason with people concerning Christ and eternity so that souls can be won to Christ.

**³¹ If the righteous will be rewarded in the earth,
How much more the wicked and the sinner!**

Righteousness doesn't always go recognized and rewarded on the earth. Sometimes it brings ridicule and persecution, and wickedness is exalted. But inasmuch as righteousness is valued on earth (and it will certainly be rewarded in heaven), how much more will evil people pay for their evil! Even on earth, people long to see murderers, oppressors, and tyrants executed, but how much more to be feared is the eternal lake of fire and the second death! The wicked may gain fame and fortune while on earth, but that will be the extent of their reward. Eternal punishment is a far more significant "reward" than all of the vain glories of the world combined.

Proverbs 12

**1 Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge,
But he who hates reproof is stupid.**

God disciplines those sons Whom He loves not because He is cruel or vindictive but because He desires to teach us and train us in righteousness (Hebrews 12:9-10). Those who appreciate God's discipline love knowledge. Children should appreciate the discipline of their parents because it teaches them right from wrong and how to have life to the full. It would be stupid to hate kind and faithful correction and those who lovingly do the correcting and teaching. Reproof is a protection, and it reaps a future blessing. To spurn, reject, or hate it is just plain stupid.

**2 A good man will obtain favor from the Lord,
But He will condemn a man who devises evil.**

**3 A man will not be established by wickedness,
But the root of the righteous will not be moved.**

The Lord loves His own, and God's favor rests with the righteous. He delights in their obedience, and they will be rewarded for it. Those who do evil stand condemned before God because He is holy and must punish sin. Man needs to be connected to His Creator, but sin separates man from God. The righteous have Christ in their hearts, and their lives are built upon the foundation of His salvation. The wicked have no such foundation, for their lives have been foolishly built upon the sand rather than upon the Rock of Christ (Matthew 7:26). Thus, their destruction will come, but the righteous will be saved.

**4 An excellent wife is the crown of her husband,
But she who shames *him* is like rotteness in his bones.**

The character qualities of the excellent wife are described at length in Proverbs 31, and such a woman is a priceless and rare find. She is like a crown to her husband because the fact that she loves him and is committed to him is such a glory, a prize, an honor, and a blessing. But a wife who shames her husband by disrespecting him, mocking him, cheating on him, and just plain simply failing to love him brings deep pain and agony to his soul. A good and godly wife can do so much good for her husband, but it is equally true that a shameful wife can do great harm and pain to him.

**5 The thoughts of the righteous are just,
But the counsels of the wicked are deceitful.**

The righteous think about what is good, right, pure, noble, and of good repute, and this will lead them to speak according to what is in their hearts and minds. The wicked can't even speak honestly and helpfully when they get together, because the summation of foolishness is just more foolishness. As they deceive their hearers and deceive one another, how can anything truly productive get accomplished?

**⁶ The words of the wicked lie in wait for blood,
But the mouth of the upright will deliver them.**

**⁷ The wicked are overthrown and are no more,
But the house of the righteous will stand.**

The wicked are interested not in the well-being of others and definitely not in caring about others' interests ahead of their own. They lie in wait for blood to ambush the unwitting person physically and/or verbally. They love violence, and their words and evil deeds will come back to judge them. The righteous prove that they are new in Christ by words that are edifying and indicative of new life in Christ. They will be delivered in the day of judgment because Christ lives in their hearts.

**⁸ A man will be praised according to his insight,
But one of perverse mind will be despised.**

Insomuch as people have eyes to see and ears to hear, people appreciate someone with insight to help them, but they hate people who are out to get them and take advantage of them.

**⁹ Better is he who is lightly esteemed and has a servant
Than he who honors himself and lacks bread.**

It is okay to be ridiculed when one knows that he is doing the right thing before God, for it is actually a blessing of God to be persecuted for the sake of Christ. It doesn't matter what people say or think if we know that we are successful according to the standards of God. It is foolish, however, to brag about who one is and what one has when one is living a lie and accomplishing nothing of eternal value. Giving oneself approval is meaningless, and the approval of man is deceitful and passing. But the approval of God is what matters, what lasts, and what we should seek.

**¹⁰ A righteous man has regard for the life of his animal,
But *even* the compassion of the wicked is cruel.**

In Genesis 1:28, the Lord put man in charge over the created order to care for it and be responsible. We are to be wise stewards of the created world, doing our part to look after what God has made. Wicked people have no compassion for animals or other parts of creation, and they treat them abusively and with cruelty, delighting in their violence and the suffering of the creatures. But a righteous man cares for the life of his animal and does his part to give it what it needs to be well. But the wicked doesn't know such compassion, only cruelty. They couldn't even be truly compassionate if they tried.

**¹¹ He who tills his land will have plenty of bread,
But he who pursues worthless *things* lacks sense.**

Those who labor to grow crops will have food to eat when harvest comes, but those who waste their lives on worthless things will struggle to make ends meet. Beyond just the physical aspect of these principles is a spiritual one as well. Those who sow spiritually will also reap spiritually, for we will store up eternal rewards as a result of our faithful labor. Those who care not for eternity and who spurn the weight of glory will not bother to fear God and keep His commandments, and they will suffer for it (Galatians 6:7-8).

**¹² The wicked man desires the booty of evil men,
But the root of the righteous yields *fruit*.**

Wicked people enjoy what wicked people value, and they are not bothered if their goods were gained through theft or other evil means. The righteous, on the other hand, refuse to take part in sharing in possessions gained by evil means and violence. They don't need such things, for they have God's provisions in their lives as a result of His faithfulness. As they obey Him by faith, they will have much spiritual fruit that will amount to great spiritual rewards. The righteous view these eternal prizes as far greater and more valuable than the short-lived and ill-gotten booty of evil men.

**¹³ An evil man is ensnared by the transgression of his lips,
But the righteous will escape from trouble.**

Evil people don't guard their speech, and they will be ensnared by their words. Some get caught in lies, others condemn themselves, and others mistakenly reveal hidden and deceptive motives. Their souls will be condemned, and their words will be just one reason why. The righteous, on the other hand, will avoid the entrapments of sin by speaking truth, speaking graciously, and speaking of what is good and pure. God will save the soul of the righteous from the trouble of eternal fire because of his faith in Christ leading to obedience, part of which is speech that is honorable to God and edifying to others.

**¹⁴ A man will be satisfied with good by the fruit of his words,
And the deeds of a man's hands will return to him.**

It is a joy to be able to speak the wisdom of God and actually see somebody benefit from hearing what we have said by the grace of God. There is great satisfaction in propagating wisdom and the gospel and seeing people edified and encouraged. We can only reap according to how we sow and how we water. God will give the growth, but our faithfulness and our rewards require that we participate and do some planting and watering. That way, when some seeds grow and some plants begin to produce fruit of their own, we can rejoice that God was faithful to be able to use us in His service. Bringing God joy and glory and seeing others glory and have joy in Him is a great measure of satisfaction to the righteous person.

**¹⁵ The way of a fool is right in his own eyes,
But a wise man is he who listens to counsel.**

It is easy to think we are right if we don't compare our beliefs to the authority of Scripture. A fool just goes along in his own folly not bothering to think through what he thinks and believes in light of what Scripture has already said. Even fools can think they are wise if they don't value the wisdom contained in the Scripture. The wisdom of God is viewed as foolishness by the world (1 Corinthians 3:19). When confronted with the truth of Scripture, a fool will disregard it and put more confidence in his own faulty conclusions. A wise man, when confronted with counsel consistent with God's Word, will listen and humbly submit to the truth.

**¹⁶ A fool's anger is known at once,
But a prudent man conceals dishonor.**

A fool lashes out when facing apparent dishonor, and he is ready to fight at the smallest provocation. A wise man is able to swallow his pride and recognize that a gentle answer turns away wrath. There is a time to stand up to defend himself or his own, but most of the time all that is required is to just forgive in his heart and effectively forget the wrong he has just suffered.

**¹⁷ He who speaks truth tells what is right,
But a false witness, deceit.**

Those who speak the truth do right before God, portraying things as they are and in a manner consistent with the truth of God's Word. Those who bear false witness are liars, distorting reality and leading people astray. This is clearly wrong and can put the innocent in harm's way.

**¹⁸ There is one who speaks rashly like the thrusts of a sword,
But the tongue of the wise brings healing.**

Some use their speech to tear people down as with thrusts of a sword, but our speech should be wholesome and for the edification of others (Ephesians 4:29). The sword of the Spirit, that is, the Word of God, cuts to teach and build up (Hebrews 4:12), but evil speech delights in provoking anger and discouraging others. Those who speak from wisdom do so in a way that is seasoned with salt so as to bring grace to the hearers (Colossians 4:6), accomplishing restoration, renewal, revival, and regeneration.

**¹⁹ Truthful lips will be established forever,
But a lying tongue is only for a moment.**

Those who practice the truth find the Light of Christ, and those who speak truth and love truth as a way of life demonstrate the reality of their faith. Those who lie and never seek God's forgiveness will suffer the wrath of God. Life is but a vapor, here and then gone, and spending it lying is an absolute waste.

**²⁰ Deceit is in the heart of those who devise evil,
But counselors of peace have joy.**

Those who devise evil plans do so from hearts that love to deceive others for their own person gain or to see others suffer. Their hearts enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, and thus they sin by deceiving others. A godly counselor has joy in his heart in that he knows that what he says will bring healing, life, and blessing to those who heed sound wisdom.

**²¹ No harm befalls the righteous,
But the wicked are filled with trouble.**

In this life we will have trouble (John 16:33), for Satan tempts, God allows trials (James 1:2-4), evil people are everywhere, and the earth is cursed and fallen. Even those who love God and have been redeemed by Christ will suffer and be persecuted for their faith (2 Timothy 3:12). But there is a difference between the trials of life, which we should take joy in because of how they produce in us godly character, and creating unneeded difficulty for ourselves. A lot of trouble and harm on this earth can be avoided by making wise decisions, not associating with the wrong people, and by living a quiet, peaceable life. The wicked may prosper for a time on earth, but their eternal destruction is sure. Even on earth, they must constantly look over their shoulder to see if they are about to get backstabbed, caught, or suffer harm. Wisdom protects those who love it by avoiding a lot of unnecessary snares and needless suffering. The foolish and the wicked, on the other hand, run to trouble.

**²² Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord,
But those who deal faithfully are His delight.**

One of the ten commandments is that we ought not to bear false witness because God hates lies, for lies stem from the father of lies, Satan himself. He hates deceit and seeing people taken advantage of or betrayed. Those who honor friendships and agreements by dealing faithfully and truthfully honor God. Our world is full of those who are professional liars and who have great skill at skirting the whole truth. They pick their words carefully to sound honest while covering the truth up. This is not right, and it angers God.

**²³ A prudent man conceals knowledge,
But the heart of fools proclaims folly.**

The heart of a wise man is filled with knowledge and understanding. He knows when to share that understanding with others, and he knows when not to because he would be throwing pearls before swine who would only turn and try to tear him to pieces (Matthew 7:6). Jesus kept silent before Pilate because there wasn't anything else worth saying that would make any difference (Matthew 27:14). There is a time to preach to a person, and there is a time to focus our efforts elsewhere. Foolishness is in the heart of a fool, and he blabbers it so that others who know wisdom will know he is foolish. Other foolish people may think he is wise, for fools do delight in their folly and the erroneous wisdom of man. Even the choices that a foolish person makes reveals his lack of wisdom even if

he tries to keep his mouth shut. What is in the heart ultimate comes out and reveals the true state of a person.

**²⁴ The hand of the diligent will rule,
But the slack *hand* will be put to forced labor.**

It is unusual for lazy people to end up in positions of great responsibility. Typically, those who work really hard and devote themselves to a cause rise up the ranks. Those who don't apply themselves and don't reward those who employ them will end up doing the jobs nobody else really wants to do. Diligence is a value even the world recognizes. Sadly, too often they like those who are diligent and deceitful, a dangerous combination.

**²⁵ Anxiety in a man's heart weighs it down,
But a good word makes it glad.**

The Lord tells us that worrying and being anxious is worthless and accomplishes nothing (Luke 12:25, Philippians 4:6). He wants us to just focus on seeking the priorities of the kingdom (Matthew 6:33), and He says that He will take care of the rest. In life, there is so much to worry about, but ultimately our freedom comes in remembering and acknowledging that we are not in control and that God is. He is good and faithful, and being reminded of that is a very good word indeed. As we recall to mind the truths of God's Word, the mercies of God, and the wisdom of God, we can be set free from anxiety and have joy in our hearts. There is great peace and joy in believing the promises of God and acting upon them in faith.

**²⁶ The righteous is a guide to his neighbor,
But the way of the wicked leads them astray.**

A godly testimony is the result of a righteous heart and life. Even believers are imperfect, but there should be clear evidence of ongoing sanctification and love. Our good works shine the Light of Christ to those around us (Matthew 5:16) because a godly life points to Christ because of the inherent miracle that it is (Hebrews 12:14). Wicked people draw on the wickedness of others and lead them astray. Whether our neighbors like the light we shine or not, we need to shine it so that the darkness can be exposed by the Light. The darkness may not comprehend what the Light reveals, but the gospel is powerful to change lives and open people's hearts to the truth (Romans 1:16).

**²⁷ A lazy man does not roast his prey,
But the precious possession of a man *is* diligence.**

A person who is lazy doesn't have food because he hasn't caught it or had the wherewithal to cook it if he did catch it. He can expect to go hungry. The opposite of laziness is diligence. Diligence is a valued character trait because God values faithful, honest labor in matters of everyday life and in matters of the kingdom. Diligence is a stark contrast to the lazy heart, for it demonstrates a valuing of eternity, the weight of glory, and the reality that God will hold us accountable for how we use the time and

opportunities He gives us. Diligence itself doesn't save or sanctify anybody, but when it is combined with wisdom, it is something we all should seek.

**²⁸ In the way of righteousness is life,
And in *its* pathway there is no death.**

Those who have the fruit of righteousness in their lives reveal themselves as having been transformed by the gospel of Christ. These have the promise of eternal life, for they know Christ. Their physical bodies will one day die, but Christ will raise their souls alive to be with Him forever. In Christ, death has no victory or sting (1 Corinthians 15:55), but it is merely the time when the perishable is traded for the imperishable new resurrection body that has as its inheritance heaven (1 Corinthians 15:42).

Proverbs 13

**1 A wise son *accepts his father's discipline,*
But a scoffer does not listen to rebuke.**

Discipline done by a loving father is always for the well-being of a child to teach him the danger of sin and the joy of obeying God. A wise son will respond humbly to the instruction and training, and he will love his father for being willing to discipline him when he does wrong and when he defies the instruction of the Lord. Our heavenly Father disciplines us as sons whom He loves, and wise parents will discipline their children also. Those who hate wisdom and love foolishness scoff when they are confronted with truth or correction. They despise righteousness and live only for themselves, and this will end badly for them.

**2 From the fruit of a man's mouth he enjoys good,
But the desire of the treacherous is violence.**

Those who speak kind, encouraging words of wisdom and edification will see good accomplished as they bear fruit for the kingdom. It will bring joy to their hearts. They will be peacemakers, giving gentle answers even when being provoked by violence, treacherous people who like to see others harmed.

**3 The one who guards his mouth preserves his life;
The one who opens wide his lips comes to ruin.**

Wisdom is demonstrated by an ability to control what one says and when and to be able to be discrete when necessary. Not lashing out verbally or provoking others is smart because it will avoid putting ourselves in a position where people would want to harm us out of anger. Those who can't keep secrets betray friends and maybe lose friends, and those who like to cast insults make many enemies. The wise person uses his mouth to encourage, heal, and promote peace.

**4 The soul of the sluggard craves and *gets nothing,*
But the soul of the diligent is made fat.**

Laziness keeps people from having food to feed their physical bodies, but it also leaves the soul empty. This is because there is joy in doing the work of God and in bringing joy to His heart by fruitful labor. There is a reward for those who bother to seek out the truth, for they will find eternal life in Christ (Hebrews 11:6). The spiritually lazy person doesn't care about the truth, and he will suffer loss (Romans 6:23). Those who eagerly seek to know God will be blessed with every spiritual blessing and the promise of eternal life (Ephesians 1:3). Their souls will be satisfied, for they will have hungered and thirsted for righteousness. In Christ's presence, they will find fullness of joy (Psalm 16:11).

5 A righteous man hates falsehood,

But a wicked man acts disgustingly and shamefully.

There is a clear dichotomy between the righteous and the wicked. There is a clear dividing line between what is good and what is evil. Wise people choose righteousness, and they tell the truth because they hate lies. Wicked people act foolishly, shamefully, and disgustingly because such is the nature of sin. Evil harms people and destroys the soul, the ultimate disgusting habit, especially in light of the holiness of God.

**⁶ Righteousness guards the one whose way is blameless,
But wickedness subverts the sinner.**

Following the commands of God doesn't mean no trials or travails will befall a believer, but it does mean that he will avoid a lot of the needless suffering and traps that those who love sin and violence create for themselves. Wickedness is not something that the wicked control, but their wickedness controls them. They are captives of the devil, and it will destroy them one way or the other eventually. The wages of sin is death.

**⁷ There is one who pretends to be rich, but has nothing;
Another pretends to be poor, but has great wealth.**

Some people like to act like they are rich because they think that they need to do so in order to make people like them or to find satisfaction. The reality is that they have nothing. The sad reality is that even if they were poor, they could be rich spiritually through godliness and contentment which is great profit. Other people who have a lot of money prefer to act poor because they are afraid that people will only like them for their money, try to steal their money, or try to leech off of them, among other things. By giving in secret to the Lord and to those in need and living a quiet life (1 Timothy 2:2) without being overly lavish and materialistically indulgent, a person who has a lot of material wealth can avoid some of the deceitfulness of wealth (Matthew 13:22, Proverbs 30:7-9).

**⁸ The ransom of a man's life is his wealth,
But the poor hears no rebuke.**

Building on verse 7, the poor don't have to concern themselves with being taken for a ransom because they have no money to pay a ransom. There is nothing for someone else to steal or envy. The poor person has his own things that he can worry about, but ransom and threats from people concerning money is probably not going to be one of them.

**⁹ The light of the righteous rejoices,
But the lamp of the wicked goes out.**

The lamp of the wicked is short-lived because eternal punishment in hell will put out their arrogance and boasting with permanence. The righteous can rejoice, however, because the light that they have is the Light of Christ in their hearts, and He guarantees their future eternity in heaven. Thus, even if they suffer loss on earth, they can still

rejoice because they can never lose their Savior or their promise of heaven. The wicked may prosper on earth, but God will settle all accounts so that justice will be served. The righteous will be rewarded.

**¹⁰ Through insolence comes nothing but strife,
But wisdom is with those who receive counsel.**

Stubbornness to receive wise counsel from the Scripture is foolishness, and, since God's commands are given for our good and for our protection, those who reject them can expect to miss out on many of God's blessings. Sin creates division, partiality, death, and destruction, but those who listen to God's Word and receive it in humility will enjoy the fruits of wisdom, peace, joy, and avoiding so much needless pain.

**¹¹ Wealth *obtained* by fraud dwindles,
But the one who gathers by labor increases *it*.**

Some people commit fraud and make a lot of money dishonestly. This is, of course, wrong and against God's command not to steal. None of this will benefit a person in eternity, and the wealth gained by dishonest means will rot the soul. Its benefits will dwindle until eternity swallows it whole. Those who earn a living by honest labor will find joy in their work, and they will please God as they do their work for Him, rather than for the approval of people (Colossians 3:23). Honest labor is the only way for wealth to increase simultaneously with joy and spiritual reward. Even on earth, where fraud sometimes goes without prosecution, fraudsters constantly have to look over their shoulders to make sure nobody has found them out or if their associates are going to backstab them. It makes the bounty gained by fraud of less and less actual value because of the fear and strife that it brings with it.

**¹² Hope deferred makes the heart sick,
But desire fulfilled is a tree of life.**

It is difficult to wait for something good, but, when it finally arrives, it is well worth the wait (see also verse 19). For example, many young people don't want to wait until marriage to consummate the marriage even though God says to do so. The waiting can feel agonizing to the heart, but, once the wait is ended, it makes the reward that much more wonderful. The same is true of heaven. It is difficult to long for the day when all pain and suffering will end when it means waiting, but we must continue to hope in heaven and labor faithfully. Then, when that day finally arrives, it will be so much better for we will have prepared our hearts for it.

**¹³ The one who despises the word will be in debt to it,
But the one who fears the commandment will be rewarded.**

The debt of our sin was nailed to the cross, and those who put their faith in Christ can be forgiven of their sin. God will hold man to account for his evil deeds, and only the shed

blood of Christ can wipe out the penalty for sin. Those who believe in Christ and who follow Him in obedience and faith will be rewarded for their faithfulness.

**¹⁴ The teaching of the wise is a fountain of life,
To turn aside from the snares of death.**

Those who know wisdom seek to share it with others so that they can be turned from their sin to life in Christ. Even believers need to keep hearing the truth of God's Word, for they, too, can make sinful decisions which can cause them great harm. Wisdom always points to truth, to life, and to what is good and what pleases God. The greatest blessing will always come from obedience to God and wisdom.

**¹⁵ Good understanding produces favor,
But the way of the treacherous is hard.**

Jesus said that following Him is easy in that His burden is light (Matthew 11:30). That doesn't mean that it is easy to keep from sinning, but what it means is that His commands are not burdensome (1 John 5:3). Sin is what saps a person's hope, joy, and vitality (Psalm 32:3-4), but doing the commands of God from faith brings new strength and renewed joy (Nehemiah 8:10). Continuing to sin and to self-justify, rationalize, and cover up evil is highly stressful and dangerous. That is a hard way to live. But doing things God's way brings life and healing to relationships, hope in eternity, and a purpose for this life. It leads to others being blessed by our lives as well, but the favor of God is the blessing we should seek above all else. In His favor is great blessing and life to the full (John 10:10).

**¹⁶ Every prudent man acts with knowledge,
But a fool displays folly.**

The wisdom of the wise will be evident by how they act and by what they speak. It will be evident that they have understanding and insight that most lack because they know the Word. The world may reject that wisdom, preferring their own wisdom which is actually foolishness. In so doing, they prove themselves to be fools before those who have eyes to see. The world has many things that they hold to as being truth and wisdom, but they are false and without knowledge. God's wisdom is for His people, for in Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Colossians 2:3). By our fruits, whether those of wisdom or of folly, we will be known (Matthew 7:20).

**¹⁷ A wicked messenger falls into adversity,
But a faithful envoy *brings* healing.**

A messenger is somebody that others have to put their trust in. If he is wicked and doesn't give the message that he was supposed to give, many will be harmed. Those whom he betrayed will seek to destroy him, and those who benefitted from his treachery and betrayal won't have any reason to trust him either. Either way, an untrustworthy messenger is a person who is in great danger. Those who prove themselves faithful to do

what they were asked to do and to say what they were asked to say are a great blessing to those who depend upon them. Their lives are a benefit and encouragement to those who trusted them.

**¹⁸ Poverty and shame will come to him who neglects discipline,
But he who regards reproof will be honored.**

Those who are lazy and who lack diligence because they have no reverence for God and thus no self-control will suffer loss, whether financial, relational, or a wide variety of ways. These refuse to be trained by the wisdom of others because they love their evil ways more. But those who listen to the training of God and the reproof of His Word will be blessed. God will honor those who honor Him.

**¹⁹ Desire realized is sweet to the soul,
But it is an abomination to fools to turn away from evil.**

Fools cannot handle turning away from evil and waiting upon God for provision, protection, and blessing. They would rather take shortcuts, lie, and deceive than do things God's way. They have no patience for the plan of God, and thus they are willing to settle for less than His best. But those who are willing to wait upon God and do things His way will find in Him what they really wanted (Psalm 37:4, Ephesians 3:20), and He will give them the desires of their hearts. He will do beyond what they could ask or imagine because He is faithful, and He leaves a legacy of goodness and mercy in the lives of His children (Psalm 23:6). When we realize that God is our chief desire and delight, we will find sweetness in our souls. When we trust God for His good and perfect gifts (James 1:17) rather than take sinful shortcuts or half-measures, we will find that our cup overflows with joy.

**²⁰ He who walks with wise men will be wise,
But the companion of fools will suffer harm.**

Bad company corrupts good morals (1 Corinthians 15:33), for being around fools leads to foolishness multiplying, which never ends well. But being around those who love God and His wisdom will find that to be contagious if they are humble enough to be taught by it.

**²¹ Adversity pursues sinners,
But the righteous will be rewarded with prosperity.**

Those who make dumb and foolish choices will find that they create needless strife and adversity for themselves. Those who love righteousness and walk in it will find spiritual prosperity, and, by avoiding needless pitfalls, God will supply their needs as they seek first the kingdom of God (Matthew 6:33, Philippians 4:19). (see also Proverbs 22:5)

**²² A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children,
And the wealth of the sinner is stored up for the righteous.**

Not everybody will have the world's goods to be able to pass on to their children, but those who are able demonstrate wisdom and kindness to pass that wealth on to their children and grandchildren. But what is more important than financial resources is passing on the wisdom of God. The joy in giving children financial resources will be hard to come by if money is going to fools. Thus, wisdom is more valuable of an inheritance to pass on because its worth is far more than gold, silver, or precious jewels. Passing on some resources to offspring who love wisdom is simply a means of putting an opportunity for good and generosity into the hands of those who will steward it wisely. It is a chance to propagate wisdom and generosity. The most important reward is not money but eternal, and those who invest their talents wisely will receive honor from Christ in heaven. The wicked who do not bear fruit and earn a return on the Master's investment will give what they had been entrusted with to those with many rewards already (Matthew 25:28). Even on earth, God delights in giving more opportunities to those who have been faithful with what they have been given already so that they can be faithful with more. Their opportunity for more spiritual gain may come at the expense or loss of one who loves evil and sin.

²³ **Abundant food is in the fallow ground of the poor,
But it is swept away by injustice.**

A just thing to do would be to give the poor a chance to work the fields that are lying fallow for no good reason. Then, they can provide an income for their families, and they can provide a return on the investment of those who in justice have provided the funds to begin farming. But injustice scorns the poor and lets opportunities for mutual benefit go wasting. In evil people's love for selfish gain and lack of love for those in need, they can often be blinded by the benefits of helping others.

²⁴ **He who withholds his rod hates his son,
But he who loves him disciplines him diligently.**

Just as God disciplines those sons whom He loves, so, too, an earthly father disciplines his children when they do wrong and rebel against the commands of God. They must learn that His commands are not burdensome, but they are for their good and well-being. Thus, discipline demonstrates love, and it needs to be done fairly, without wrath, consistently, and diligently. It is the parent and child fighting sin together with understanding, gentleness, and explanation, not a parent lashing out at a child. That is not discipline but abusive anger.

²⁵ **The righteous has enough to satisfy his appetite,
But the stomach of the wicked is in need.**

God provides for His children physically (Matthew 6:33, Philippians 4:19, 2 Corinthians 8:14), but He is most concerned that we are satisfied with righteousness. The wicked hunger for increasing evil and the latest fix or temporary satiation. Their appetite is never satisfied because feasting on evil never can satisfy. Hungering and thirsting for

righteousness, which is characteristic of the righteous, does provide satisfaction rather than passing satiation. Wickedness can lead to poverty and hunger, but righteousness is a blessing to all.

Proverbs 14

**The wise woman builds her house,
But the foolish tears it down with her own hands.**

A woman who fears the Lord is to be praised (Proverbs 31:30), and she is one, whether married with children or not, who advances the kingdom and orders her life according to what pleases God. Christ is the only foundation worth building on. The foolish not only attempt to build their lives on sand, but they also by their sin and poor decisions destroy themselves. In regard to those women who are married with children, a woman who fears God will respect her husband, work hard, do her best to not let career overtake her responsibility to love and care for her children, and be a spiritual glue that holds a home together in reverence for Christ. She will pass on truths of righteousness, gems of wisdom, and be an example of love and devotion. A foolish woman spurns her husband, invites immorality, and regards her children as a burden and a nuisance rather than as a gift of God.

**² He who walks in his uprightness fears the Lord,
But he who is devious in his ways despises Him.**

The fear of God leads to wise choices and following the commands of God. Those who do not fear God won't be motivated to turn from sin by faith and obey God. Obedience before God is evidence of true heart change and indicative of the presence of wisdom. Those who trick people, lie, and find any way possible to sin prove that they lack wisdom in their hearts because their hearts are full of hate toward God. Wise people love God, and foolish people hate Him.

**³ In the mouth of the foolish is a rod for *his* back,
But the lips of the wise will protect them.**

Foolish people say dumb things, and it gets them into trouble. Wise people control the words of their mouths so that they don't say things that they will regret.

**⁴ Where no oxen are, the manger is clean,
But much revenue *comes* by the strength of the ox.**

There is no honor before the Lord in being a servant who goes and buries the talents God has entrusted him with. God doesn't merely want His initial investment back, for that takes no faith. Since faith is what pleases God, we must bear fruit and give Him a return on His investment. This is difficult, it is not always neat and pretty, and there will be struggles and trouble along the way. A barn might stay nice and clean if there aren't any oxen in it, but oxen are needed despite their messes to generate profit and plow fields. There is no profit in an empty barn, even if it is spotless and sparkly clean. We must understand that we are to be workers, we must be willing to spiritually sweat, and we need to bear fruit by faith.

**⁵ A trustworthy witness will not lie,
But a false witness utters lies.**

Those who are trustworthy do not change their story as a witness or cover up the truth. They will speak the truth and protect the innocent life so that justice can be served.

**⁶ A scoffer seeks wisdom and *finds* none,
But knowledge is easy to one who has understanding.**

A person who lacks faith and the humility to actually want to know the truth can read and study all they want and yet never come to the truth. But those who humble themselves before God and seek His wisdom will find it. Those who practice the truth will come to the Light (John 3:21). They will find the knowledge that they seek in Him. Scoffers rarely seek wisdom out, but those who actually ask some questions will be too blinded in their pride and arrogance to identify wisdom when it hits them squarely in the face.

**⁷ Leave the presence of a fool,
Or you will not discern words of knowledge.**

Going to a fool to get knowledge is a great way to gain foolishness and be corrupted. We must be aware that those who love evil and rejoice in error are contagious in terms of spreading foolishness, and we must avoid their negative influence. We may go to them with the gospel, but we may not look to them for insight or influence.

**⁸ The wisdom of the sensible is to understand his way,
But the foolishness of fools is deceit.**

God is not a God of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33), for He wants us to know wisdom. He will give it to those who ask in faith (James 1:5-7). He wants us to understand how we can best invest our lives and what meaning and purpose is all about. Those who are wise know what life is about, and they actively seek to do God's will. Fools wander in their own deceit, deceiving others along the way, not knowing what they are here for and not really bothering to care. They are fools to despise the wrath of God and His judgment, and they do not adjust their lives according to the fear of God. Thus, they have no wisdom as they reject the revelation of God to them through the creation, through Christ, through their consciences, and through the canon of Scripture. The Word of God is a light to the path of the righteous, and His wisdom is a beacon for direction.

**⁹ Fools mock at sin,
But among the upright there is good will.**

Fools don't take sin seriously because they don't fear God. They think evil and danger are almost humorous because they do not care about the goodwill of their fellow man. The righteous are not consumed by selfishness, but they actually care about the welfare of others, even ahead of their own (Philippians 2:3-4). Thus, they want others to avoid

the perils of sin and fear God. It is the only way to life, and His love is the only reliable motivator for people to care about their fellow man (1 John 4:7-8).

**¹⁰ The heart knows its own bitterness,
And a stranger does not share its joy.**

In the heart is what we really think, feel, and desire. It is the core of who we are and what drives us. A close friend might be able to be allowed in to know who we really are and what we are all about. Then he or she can rejoice with us when we rejoice and mourn with us when we are sad. But the true heart is kept from a mere stranger because trust is a needed foundation for opening up the insides of our hearts. God knows our hearts already, and He is trustworthy. Thus, we should always be open, honest, and vulnerable before Him. Our hearts are safe with Him, and as we delight in Him, He will give us the desires of our heart.

**¹¹ The house of the wicked will be destroyed,
But the tent of the upright will flourish.**

Eventually, the wicked will pay for their evil deeds. They may walk into their own traps and suffer affliction as a result of their evil deeds on earth, though many get away with evil at least for a time in this life. What is certain is that in eternity God will settle all accounts, and the boasting of the wicked will be destroyed. The upright may have trouble in this life, but they will avoid a lot of needless adversity that doing evil and foolish things creates. The ultimate expression of the blessing and favor of God will come for the righteous in eternity, when they will inherit their promised eternal life. That is a house with a foundation built on Christ that will last, and even death and Satan cannot interfere to destroy that house.

**¹² There is a way *which seems right* to a man,
But its end is the way of death.**

Man needs to understand that in his natural state as a captive of the devil and as one born with a sin nature (Romans 3:23) and deceitful heart (Genesis 6:5, Jeremiah 17:9) that he is prone to do wrong and to love evil more than good. Original sin is a reality ever since the fall, and those who have a nature bent toward sin go ahead and commit sin. The wages of that sin is death and eternal condemnation in hell. Man laughs at God, the Bible, and Jesus even though the evidence is everywhere to validate what is true in creation, the conscience, the canon of Scripture, and the cross. Thinking he is wise, he is in fact foolish, for his wicked and fallen heart has led him astray. (see also Proverbs 16:25, 21:2)

**¹³ Even in laughter the heart may be in pain,
And the end of joy may be grief.**

It is possible to laugh even when the heart is struggling with great sorrow, pain, and grief. That doesn't mean that a person is actually joyful inside just because he is drowning his sorrows with some distraction or coping mechanism. True joy means dealing with the

sorrow in the heart and finding joy in Christ. The ironic thing, though, is that there is a cost to finding true joy and satisfaction in Christ, and it is that the gospel brings a sword of division between those who follow Christ and those who do not. Thus, there is grief that follows finding the joy of Christ as Christians may suffer, lose friendships, suffer persecution, or even be disowned by family on account of their faith. But, as Paul said, the joy of knowing Christ is of such a greater value than all that we might otherwise consider gain (Philippians 3:8). The joy of knowing Christ ultimately outweighs the cost of following Him.

**¹⁴The backslider in heart will have his fill of his own ways,
But a good man will *be satisfied* with his.**

True Christians will have fruit to validate the reality of their faith (Matthew 7:20). They will stumble in many ways (James 3:2), and they may even seem to go backward in their faith for a while. But true believers will endure to the end because Christ will finish the work He began in their hearts (Philippians 1:6). This is not to say that they cannot make shipwreck of their faith (1 Timothy 1:19) or become disqualified in terms of their Christian testimony (1 Corinthians 9:27). But it is to say that true believers by the grace of God will persevere to the end because God will perfect what He started (Hebrews 12:1-2). Not even Satan can take a believer out of God's hand (John 10:28), and even those believers who finish life with a whimper spiritually will still be glorified with God in Christ. But they will persevere in that Christ will keep them and constantly work through His Spirit to convict their hearts of sin. Those who harden themselves against the truth because of a chosen rebellion to sin must be, after confrontation by other believers, put out of fellowship and turned over to Satan for the destruction of their flesh with the hope that it will preserve their soul (1 Corinthians 5:5). That is, if a person is truly saved, the junkfood of Satan just will not be enough, and people who truly know God and the choice delicacies of His Word will return to fellowship and repent.

However, there are others who go away from the family of God because they never were of the family of God (1 John 2:19). They were faking it, initially getting excited about Jesus but never really surrendering to Him. These backslide because they go back to being who they really are in their hearts. Allowing them to continue in fellowship is the worst thing possible because they don't have any fellowship and could be deceived into thinking that they are eternally safe when they are not. Sin must be confronted and pointed out.

In Christ, we are new creations with new hearts that are controlled by love (2 Corinthians 5:14) and which possess the desires of the heart of God. Thus, a good man is a man with a changed heart and who is indwelt by Christ and controlled by His love to do the good works that He has prepared for him to do. His desires align with God's increasingly as he delights in Him, and he is satisfied with doing the work of God and enjoying Him. He recognizes the futility and stupidity of sin and its inability to satisfy, and he increasingly sees the abundant wisdom of God and the benefits of doing His will.

¹⁵The naive believes everything,

But the sensible man considers his steps.

A naïve person is overly trusting of people because he underestimates the nature of the heart of sinful man. He is easily taken by deception because he isn't looking out for his steps. He is not expecting to be tricked, trapped, or devoured. He thinks that people are generally good, and his view of sin, Satan, and evil is warped. The naïve are prone to destruction because of their lack of knowledge (Hosea 4:6), and this is why learning the Scripture is so important (2 Timothy 2:15, 3:16-17). It is also wise to prepare children and those we are responsible to teach of the reality of living in a fallen world. They need to be taught to think through what they are doing and why and what they believe and why. Otherwise, they will likely fall into deceit, get taken advantage of, and suffer great harm. We can get into trouble by rebelling against God or by being deceived on account of being naïve. Both are dangerous, and the cure for being naïve is wisdom and Scriptural understanding. We should be innocent of evil but experts in righteousness (Romans 16:19). We should be shrewd as serpents (Matthew 10:16) when it comes to dealing with the serpent, Satan, and his followers as well as his captives, fallen man.

**¹⁶ A wise man is cautious and turns away from evil,
But a fool is arrogant and careless.**

Scripture commands us to consider the days as being evil so that we can walk circumspectly as one who is wise (Ephesians 5:15-16). This means that we are to be aware of the reality of the spiritual battle going on around us, we ought to possess an urgency to advance truth and the gospel, and we must carefully consider how we spend our time and invest our talents. A wise person turns away from evil because he realizes that God sees all, and he wants to bring the heart of God joy and gain eternal rewards. He is concerned about his testimony because he doesn't want to interfere with being able to shine the light of Christ. Fools take dumb risks and do dumb things because they overestimate their strength and ability, and they don't think through things, particularly in light of what God would think or what would matter in view of eternity. Fools have a very shallow, selfish, and short-sighted perspective, but the wise live in light of the life to come.

**¹⁷ A quick-tempered man acts foolishly,
And a man of evil devices is hated.**

A foolish person is easily provoked to anger and to acting out rashly in wrath and revenge. Those who harm others and make them live in fear and oppression because of their many evil devices are hated by those whom they harm and by those who wish to see them come to justice.

**¹⁸ The naïve inherit foolishness,
But the sensible are crowned with knowledge.**

The consequence of being naïve is more foolishness, and the results of foolishness are destruction, shame, and dishonor. Those who act in good sense, meaning that they value

the Scripture and live according to the fear of God, will inherit the crown of life (James 1:12) and increasing knowledge and understanding.

**¹⁹ The evil will bow down before the good,
And the wicked at the gates of the righteous.**

In life, sometimes evil people rule over the good, but ultimately all people must bow before the Savior (Philippians 2:10). The righteous will be honored on the day of judgment, while the evil will be cast into the fire of hell. Finally, the good in Christ will be honored and exalted as fairness and justice are executed by the Savior. The wicked will not enter the gates of heaven, but the righteous will be granted entrance and eternal honor.

**²⁰ The poor is hated even by his neighbor,
But those who love the rich are many.**

People in their natural state are selfish to the core because of their wicked hearts. They like the world's goods, and they hate those who are needy, poor, and who can offer them nothing to make them feel better about themselves. But wealth is deceptive because many people associate with rich people because of their money. It makes wicked people feel better about themselves to have friends in high places, and they hope they might share in the bounty. Rich people get much attention, fame, and worship in this life, but the poor are often neglected and forgotten. This is why part of being a Christian is to value those whom the world doesn't value and to love those whom the world scorns (Proverbs 14:21, 31; 31:20). This doesn't mean that the rich don't need the love of Christ also, for they do. However, it means that Christianity is distinct in that it doesn't promote partiality and favoritism toward the rich, the famous, and the noble of the earth (James 2:9).

**²¹ He who despises his neighbor sins,
But happy is he who is gracious to the poor.**

Love for all people is characteristic of true believers (John 13:34-35), and loving our neighbor as ourselves is one of Christ's two greatest commandments, the first being to love God with our entire being (Matthew 22:39). Those who love God by necessity are transformed by that love such that they are moved to love others (2 Corinthians 5:14). Those who do not do so act sinfully and in contradiction with the nature and will of God. Those who love God and act on that love by giving to those in need and showing them that they care for them will find great joy in their selfless act of worship in being gracious to the poor. The ultimate gift is seeing a person's heart open and glorify God on account of the Christian's faithful and good works (Matthew 5:16).

**²² Will they not go astray who devise evil?
But kindness and truth *will be to* those who devise good.**

Those who devise evil may get away with it for a while, and some may not suffer duly throughout the course of their entire lives. Typically, evil leads to needless pain and suffering, but even if it does not on earth, it will earn them an eternity in hell. But those who seek to come up with good things to do as God leads them will find that promoting kindness and truth is a very fulfilling and worthwhile objective. It will be accompanied by many eternal rewards as well.

**²³ In all labor there is profit,
But mere talk *leads* only to poverty.**

Those who work faithfully, quietly, and honestly will find benefit, financial and spiritual, in their labor if they do what they do to the honor and glory of Christ. In work, it is tempting to focus on making others happy when the ultimate focus needs to be on making God happy through what we do (Colossians 3:17, 23). He is honored by a good heart attitude and a testimony that reflects the fruit of the Spirit. Those who don't work and value laziness instead will find that just merely running their mouths will not make money or feed their stomachs. Some people talk big of themselves and what they are going to do in their lives, while others get to work and actually do the will of God.

**²⁴ The crown of the wise is their riches,
But the folly of fools is foolishness.**

Wisdom may lead to earthly prosperity, but following Christ is no guarantee of health, wealth, and prosperity. A large bank account does not validate whether or not one has wisdom. Wisdom is vindicated by her deeds (Matthew 11:19), meaning that a life lived for Christ and in light of the many spiritual riches that we have in Christ is what counts. The riches of eternity are far more valuable than any dollars we might accrue on earth. Storing up treasures in heaven as a result of wise living is a crown of honor and true wealth. Fools, on the other hand, commit folly because they love foolishness. It is who they are, it is what they do, and it is what they love. It will end badly for them.

**²⁵ A truthful witness saves lives,
But he who utters lies is treacherous.**

Those who tell the truth allow justice to function properly, but bearing false witness is a treacherous act and a betrayal against the innocent, the justice system, people in general, and certainly against God. The truth might hurt, but it also protects, preserves, sets free the innocent, and saves.

**²⁶ In the fear of the Lord there is strong confidence,
And his children will have refuge.**

There is great confidence in knowing that we are the Lord's and that we will go to be with Him forever in eternity. In life, we will always be able to find comfort in His presence, confidence in His promise, and certainty in His Word. There is great refuge in

knowing that we belong to the Sovereign of the Universe. Not even Satan himself can pluck us out of His hand.

**²⁷ The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life,
That one may avoid the snares of death.**

The fear of the Lord leads to eternal life and eternal rewards, and it avoids a lot of needless trouble on earth that being a fool necessarily involves. Those who live according to God's commandments because they want to please Him above all else knowing they will be held to account for how they live their lives are wise. As their lives demonstrate the power of the cross and as they speak boldly the truth of Christ, life can come to others as well.

**²⁸ In a multitude of people is a king's glory,
But in the dearth of people is a prince's ruin.**

A king that doesn't have the backing, support, and devotion of his people is in trouble, but those who have the affection of their people will see that their rule can be established. As more people come to the kingdom to enjoy prosperity, justice, and opportunity, a king's glory advances because his country advances.

**²⁹ He who is slow to anger has great understanding,
But he who is quick-tempered exalts folly.**

It is wise to not be easily provoked to anger. Some people like a good fight to prove how tough they are. But those who give a gentle answer turn away wrath and show people that the peace of God is more important than promoting selfish gain. It is evidence of foolishness to have a short fuse and quick temper.

**³⁰ A tranquil heart is life to the body,
But passion is rotteness to the bones.**

A heart filled with God's peace that surpasses understanding is a healthy place to be. God's peace guards our hearts and minds in Christ. It protects us from being consumed by evil passions and desires which eat us away spiritually, emotionally, and physically. It is good to be zealous for God and for good works, but the fire of hate, wrath, and vengeance destroys. Christians should be those who have forgiven others because they have been forgiven in Christ, they should not hold grudges, they should not be driven or consumed by unrighteous anger, and they should be quiet in spirit, tranquil of heart, and peaceable by nature.

**³¹ He who oppresses the poor taunts his Maker,
But he who is gracious to the needy honors Him.**

Taunting God is never a wise decision, for vengeance is the Lord's. He will pour out the wrath which He stores up on account of the wicked deeds of evil people. One sure way

to mock God is to exploit and extort those in need. When the rich take advantage of the poor and cause them to suffer unjustly, it angers God. God cares about the poor just as He cares about all people. Since He is love, He longs to see people get enough food, drink, clothing, shelter, etc. Kindly helping the poor is a way to love Jesus Himself if done with a heart that worships Him (Matthew 25:31-46). Good societal works is not the gospel, but it is evidence of the gospel and a way to see God open doors for the gospel (Matthew 5:16, John 13:34-35). Those who are gracious to the poor honor God. As a church, we should be sure to care for those in the household of faith (Galatians 6:10), but we should also be focused on those who are rejected and neglected by our society. God is a gracious God, and true religion is meeting the needs of orphans and widows in their distress (James 1:27). Christianity that has no compassion or desire to help the hurting is a sorry picture of the love and grace of God.

**³² The wicked is thrust down by his wrongdoing,
But the righteous has a refuge when he dies.**

The wicked may prosper in life, and this can be very frustrating for a good person (Psalm 73). Furthermore, the righteous may suffer disproportionately in this life. But ultimately the righteous person has a refuge in Christ when he dies, but the wicked will be cast down to hell on account of his wrongdoing. God will render to each according to his deeds. He will pour out His just wrath and take vengeance on evil people. He will see to it that the righteous are rewarded.

**³³ Wisdom rests in the heart of one who has understanding,
But in the hearts of fools it is made known.**

Fools reveal that they are fools by their deeds and by what they speak. Eventually what is inside a person's heart overflows into their actions. A person can pretend for a time in regard to who they are and what they love, but eventually the heart will win out. Those who have wisdom in their hearts will see fruit in their lives that bear that out. The wise treasure understanding in their hearts, but the fool mocks, laughs, and is provoked to anger when wisdom knocks on the door of his heart.

**³⁴ Righteousness exalts a nation,
But sin is a disgrace to *any* people.**

The funny thing about people who are born with a sin nature and are bent toward sinful behavior is that, because they do have a conscience and because sin is destructive, they do see righteousness in general as a good thing. They just don't adhere to it very well. However, it is also true that they confuse what is wise and what is right, but it is a rare person who will actually say that honesty, justice, fairness, etc. are bad things. It is rare that even an unsaved person would prefer to live in a nation that ignores liberty and individual rights, for example. Righteousness does exalt a nation, for godly values create a better living environment. Nations ruled by wicked people and who have no rule of law are viewed by those who have any sense as unjust, undesirable, and even backward. Sin is a disgrace to a country certainly by God's standards but often even by those of fallen

man. As a nation moves away from God and His righteousness, it can expect more turmoil, more division, more trouble, more destruction, more uprisings, and more difficulty. Righteousness brings stability, peace, fairness, justice and better conditions for living and prosperity overall. “When the righteous increase, the people rejoice, But when a wicked man rules, people groan” (Proverbs 29:2).

**³⁵ The king’s favor is toward a servant who acts wisely,
But his anger is toward him who acts shamefully.**

A servant who does good for the kingdom and adds benefit to the welfare of all is a value to a king with any sense at all. His favor should be upon such a person. A servant who is lazy, corrupt, or dishonest should anger a king who has any value for righteousness. Regardless of how people respond, it is always the right thing to do what we do for God according to what honors Him. Daniel did this, and it cost him a night in the lion’s den because of the foolishness of King Darius. But the king also was fond of him because he knew that he was a man of wisdom who had never done the king any wrong. Daniel had the king’s favor because he acted wisely and did the king no harm but only good, though He always served God above all.

Proverbs 15

1 A gentle answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger.

When somebody is trying to get a rise out of us, we fall right into their trap if we react with a quick temper, with violence, or with an angry outburst. A harsh word in response to a person who likes to pick fights only stirs up anger by adding fuel to the fire. We are better off giving a gentle answer to show that a person is better off picking a fight with somebody else who will make a better sparring partner. Other times, we are best to just walk away or say nothing.

²The tongue of the wise makes knowledge acceptable, But the mouth of fools spouts folly.

Part of wisdom is trying to convince and reason with others to show them what is good and right. Sinful people are blinded toward the truth of Scripture, and there is a time to reason with them according to wisdom so that they can discern knowledge by the grace of God. They need to see that what they are saying against God and His Word is plain folly and that it indicts them as being foolish. The commandments of God are given to show the fool the exceeding sinfulness of his sin and the error of his ways (Romans 7:13). Wisdom comes as people come to see the truth, fear God, and seek His forgiveness.

³The eyes of the Lord are in every place, Watching the evil and the good.

God sees all and will render to each according to his deeds at judgment time. He will also support in this life those whose hearts are wholly His. He will enable them to bear abundant fruit to His glory. God keeps account of all the evil that evil people commit, and they will face His wrath one day. The righteous will not face God's wrathful judgment for their sin because Christ paid the penalty for it (1 Thessalonians 1:10, 2 Thessalonians 1:9-10). Christians will be judged at the judgment seat of Christ on the basis of their faithfulness and stewardship (2 Corinthians 5:10, 1 Corinthians 3:10-15), while unbelievers will be cast into the lake of fire upon facing sentencing at the Great White Throne judgment (Revelation 20:11-15). There is wrath to come for the unsaved.

⁴A soothing tongue is a tree of life, But perversion in it crushes the spirit.

Those who speak the truth encourage, equip, correct when necessary, and empower with words of life (Hebrews 3:13, 1 Thessalonians 5:11, Ephesians 4:29, Colossians 4:6). Truth and the promises of God are like soothing ointment to a confused mind or wounded heart. Those who speak lies and deceit, who are devoid of wisdom, or who just have nothing of value to say discourage those who could use a good word (Proverbs 12:25).

**⁵ A fool rejects his father's discipline,
But he who regards reproof is sensible.**

Wisdom is proven by one's ability to respond humbly and obediently to training in righteousness and to the truth of God's Word. Loving fathers who fear God will teach and train their children according to the commands and ways of God (Deuteronomy 6:7, 11:19). A foolish child will spurn that teaching, but a wise young person heeds sound doctrine (Ephesians 6:1).

**⁶ Great wealth is *in* the house of the righteous,
But trouble is in the income of the wicked.**

The righteous will store up treasures in heaven and eternal rewards, but the wicked will suffer great loss and spend eternity in hell. No amount of wealth can outweigh the trouble that evil brings, particularly in light of incurring God's wrath. Believers, even if they are poor in this life, have great eternal riches in Christ and every spiritual blessing (Psalm 16:11, Ephesians 1:3).

**⁷ The lips of the wise spread knowledge,
But the hearts of fools are not so.**

Wise people want others to understand wisdom because they recognize that its value is far beyond anything this world has to offer. They want others to have the joy and hope that they have. They want to teach others the ways of God and how to follow Him. Fools could care less about following God and about wisdom. Full of selfishness and delight in their sin, they could care less about the welfare of others. Fools are unable to offer others the help of valuable knowledge and insight even if they wanted to because they do not know wisdom in Christ.

**⁸ The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord,
But the prayer of the upright is His delight.**

God delights in obedience more than sacrifice because to Him it is the heart that matters (1 Samuel 15:22). Any person can perform some religious ritual to attempt to externally cleanse himself or to impress God, but God wants to clean up the inside of a person by regenerating his heart. Thus, those who perform empty religious acts by maintaining a form of godliness while still denying the power of God (2 Timothy 3:5) to change their hearts make God very angry. What people think is a checkmark in the column of goodness in their file of hoping to earn enough points to get into heaven is actually an abominable act before God. Even the righteous sacrifices of a fallen heart are displeasing to God and like filthy rags before Him (Isaiah 64:6, Romans 3:23). Only the cleansing of the blood of Christ can please a holy and perfect God. He desires to give grace to the humble, but the proud who are confident in their self-generated and self-aggrandizing deeds must be brought low. God delights in the prayer of those who are upright in heart because Christ intercedes for them and allows them to bring their requests before God (Hebrews 4:15-16). God looks forward to hearing them cast their cares upon Him, for He

cares for them (1 Peter 5:7, Philippians 4:6-7). In their humility, they seek God's help, while the arrogant choose not to depend on God for anything. Even prayer from a wicked person is a repulsive thing to God. If an entire country started going to church, praying, and doing some good deeds, it wouldn't please God if their hearts did not belong to Him. A true gospel is everything because only the gospel can change a people from the inside out and make their good works pleasing to God because they will be generated by the Spirit and not by some selfish, pride-filled motive. Only the heart that has freely received of God's freely given grace can freely give such grace and love to others (1 John 4:7-8). Obedience to the gospel is what counts, not vain religion.

**⁹ The way of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord,
But He loves one who pursues righteousness.**

There are two distinctions throughout Proverbs and throughout the Bible. On one side is the righteous, wise person who is loved and accepted by God on account of his faith in Christ. On the other hand is the foolish, wicked person who continues to store up God's wrath for himself. One lives a life of abomination, and the other pursues righteousness by the grace of God which is at work in his heart. There is no in between category of a person that is basically or mostly good, for these people still fall into the category of being abominable. When man comes to see that he is so far short of God's standards and grace and that his very life is an affront to God, then maybe he will be motivated to value the cross and respond in faith. The proud must see the sinfulness of their sin so that they fall upon the grace of God (Romans 7:13).

**¹⁰ Grievous punishment is for him who forsakes the way;
He who hates reproof will die.**

Those who hear the truth of the gospel and yet reject it will find an eternity in hell. The only unforgiveable sin is to reject the call of the Holy Spirit by blaspheming Him with hard hearts that love sin and spurn the grace of God (Luke 12:10). Those who do not respond in faith and humility to the revelation of God to man (God has revealed Himself through the conscience (Romans 1:32), through Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16-17), through Christ (Hebrews 1:1-2), and through the creation (Psalm 19:1-2, Romans 1:18-21)) will pay, for they have made a mockery of the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Those who are unwilling to respond to the truth when it hits them squarely in the face will suffer and pay the penalty. On the other hand, those who seek the truth and practice it will find the Light in Christ (John 3:21).

**¹¹ Sheol and Abaddon lie open before the Lord,
How much more the hearts of men!**

God has the power to cast into hell, and thus the wicked need to learn to fear Him and turn from their sins (Luke 12:5). He alone has the power over death, yet man thinks very little about life after death. He sees the real state of all people's hearts, for they lie open before Him. It is foolishness to believe that God cannot see or that God is irrelevant or absent. Nothing escapes His notice, and those who are sensitive to His Word will

respond humbly and obediently to seek His forgiveness. People must understand that Satan doesn't rule over hell like some sort of crime boss, but he will be sentenced to suffer in it along with those whom he has deceived (Revelation 20:10). It is God Who has the power to cast into hell, for hell is the way He will pour out His wrath on unbelievers.

**¹² A scoffer does not love one who reproves him,
He will not go to the wise.**

The fool scoffs at truth and hates to be confronted with correction. He is not going to seek out wisdom from the Bible or from people who could share with him wisdom from the Bible. He enjoys his folly and error and the company of other scoffers and mockers of truth.

**¹³ A joyful heart makes a cheerful face,
But when the heart is sad, the spirit is broken.**

It is possible to force a smile even when the heart is sorrowful, but a joyful heart leads to a true, full, and genuinely happy and uplifted countenance (Genesis 4:7). A sad heart breaks the spirit by sapping energy, hope, and passion. There is a time to mourn with those who mourn and weep with those who weep so that they can be comforted and encouraged to press on. It is not wrong to be sad as a Christian or to feel discouraged at times. It is how we respond when we are in the valleys of life that counts. We need to remember that Jesus traverses the valleys of death with us and comforts us with His presence (Psalm 23:4-6). It is by His strength that we can endure, His mercies are new every morning, His faithfulness is great (Lamentations 3:22-25), He does exceedingly beyond all that we could ask or imagine (Ephesians 3:20), and He is an expert at turning sorrow into gladness and weeping into joy (Esther 9:22).

**¹⁴ The mind of the intelligent seeks knowledge,
But the mouth of fools feeds on folly.**

A high intelligence doesn't equate to having true knowledge, just as a fast processor on a computer doesn't equate to having lots of data stored on the hard drive. Real knowledge comes by those who study the world with Scripture as a foundation and faith as a magnifying glass. Many very smart people end up saying very dumb things and creating foolish theories because they lack wisdom. They hate God enough that they try to reason Him away, and they ignore the Bible enough that they come up with some ideas that are actually useless and even sometimes harmful. Their foolish hearts cause them to want to feed on error, so they study other people's error and further advance error. Thinking they are wise, they have become fools (Romans 1:22), for they loved the wisdom of the world which is foolishness before God (1 Corinthians 1:20). They preferred the approval of man rather than the approval of God.

**¹⁵ All the days of the afflicted are bad,
But a cheerful heart *has* a continual feast.**

Jesus said that we will have trouble in this world. Some Christians spend much of their life in pain, in prison, or with some form of suffering. Much that is bad characterizes their lives. Yet, even so, their hearts can have a continual feast and celebration that this life is not all that there is, that they have been counted worthy to suffer shame for the sake of His name, and that hope fast approaches with heaven promised to them. The believer has Jesus Himself in his heart in Whom there is fullness of joy and eternal pleasures and treasures. What is earthly affliction compared to that? In the heat of the battle and in the depth of affliction, that may be tough to remember, but we must recall it to mind so that we can endure and worship God until our final breath.

**¹⁶ Better is a little with the fear of the Lord
Than great treasure and turmoil with it.**

Great treasure is eternal treasure, and it is better to lack the resources of the world and to still have that treasure than to have all the resources of the world but have nothing after death. Eternal treasure far outweighs and outranks the treasures of this world. The stuff wicked people put their hope and confidence in will one day burn when God creates a new heaven and earth, but eternal treasure will exist forever. Even on earth, one can find greater joy with fewer possessions but with the abundant life of Christ than with all that the world has to offer but without He Who alone satisfies the soul.

**¹⁷ Better is a dish of vegetables where love is
Than a fattened ox *served* with hatred.**

It is better to lack the luxuries of life and have loving friends and family than to sit at the table of rich fools who hate each other, you included, and the poor.

**¹⁸ A hot-tempered man stirs up strife,
But the slow to anger calms a dispute.**

This verse corresponds to verse 1 by emphasizing that those who are quick to anger add fuel to the fiery rampage of violent men. Those who don't get worked up quickly and easily because they don't like fighting and prefer to be peacemakers tend to calm disputes and help leveler heads prevail. Christians are to do whatever they can to live peaceably with others, not to stir up strife (Romans 12:18).

**¹⁹ The way of the lazy is as a hedge of thorns,
But the path of the upright is a highway.**

Walking into a hedge of thorns hurts, but being able to journey down a cleared highway is much smoother. A lazy person's life is unproductive and held back by sin from bearing fruit for the kingdom. Sadly, too many like this are content with thorns because they view a highway as too hard, too much work not worth their while, and not valuable enough. The righteous are filled with the Spirit and operating by the strength and power of God to advance the church. God has cleared a way for His gospel such that the gates

of hell will not prevail against it (Matthew 16:18), and He opens doors for the effective furtherance of the gospel (1 Corinthians 16:9). He will not be thwarted, and those who are wise travel His highway with the pedal to the metal (1 Corinthians 9:24). (see also Proverbs 16:17)

**²⁰ A wise son makes a father glad,
But a foolish man despises his mother.**

For parents that have any sense, having a child that grows up to love the Lord is a great joy, and there would be little to compare to the sorrow that would accompany seeing one's child reject the gospel.

**²¹ Folly is joy to him who lacks sense,
But a man of understanding walks straight.**

Fools like their sin and doing dumb things. They like to try to get others to approve and validate their spiritual idiocy. Their passion and desire are for dysfunction, sinful pleasure, and destruction. Those who have understanding hate sin, error, and the devastating effects of sin because they know it grieves God's heart and saps their joy. They long to see others fear God also and begin to take His Word seriously. But fools enjoy the error of their ways, and it is very difficult to make a person who is happy being stupid see joy in being wise.

**²² Without consultation, plans are frustrated,
But with many counselors they succeed.**

The number of counselors is futile unless wisdom is present in their hearts. As many who know and love God get together, pray together, and dissect His Word together, wise decisions can be made that benefit all and honor God. When planning, it helps to have those who can offer wisdom and insight so that plans, choices, and actions can be most reflective of what God would want. That defines true success (2 Timothy 4:6-8).

**²³ A man has joy in an apt answer,
And how delightful is a timely word!**

Wisdom enables a person to give sound advice and encouragement when it is needed, and it is life and joy to those who are humble enough to receive it (Ephesians 4:29, Colossians 4:6, Proverbs 12:25).

**²⁴ The path of life *leads* upward for the wise
That he may keep away from Sheol below.**

Those who are wise believe the gospel and seek to bear abundant fruit for the kingdom. They keep persevering in righteousness and growing up to maturity in the truth. The fear of God motivates them to love Him, and the love of God for them motivates them to rest in His embrace all the more (2 Corinthians 5:14). God's kindness leads them to keep

repenting and growing (Romans 2:4), and they are thankful that God has saved them from the fire of hell. The fear of God is the beginning point for wisdom, and it starts when fools fear the God Who has the authority to cast their souls into hell. The gospel takes a life that is in a downward trajectory in regard to eternity, and it redirects its vector in an upward direction through faith in Christ. Paul said that it was his goal to keep pressing on according to the upward call in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:14). We should want to keep growing in how we mirror His likeness and bring Him glory.

**²⁵ The Lord will tear down the house of the proud,
But He will establish the boundary of the widow.**

Widows, like orphans, tend to get neglected and forgotten. Women's property rights like many of their rights were easily violated if they even existed at all. Proud, wicked people could and would try to take their possessions and even their land. But God will one day make the proud, violent, and oppressive people pay, and a widow that fears God will be highly exalted in heaven even if considered low on the food chain on earth.

**²⁶ Evil plans are an abomination to the Lord,
But pleasant words are pure.**

It is an offense against God to ponder wrong thoughts and start plotting evil deeds. Rather, we should meditate and reflect upon the pleasant words of Scripture, for they will help us to purify our hearts and not be double-minded (James 4:8). Christians are to think on what is good, noble, right, and pure, not on what will defile our minds and consciences (Philippians 4:8). From a pure heart come good and edifying words that please God.

**²⁷ He who profits illicitly troubles his own house,
But he who hates bribes will live.**

Those who gain by illicit means will often suffer as a result. Obviously, there are eternal consequences, but when committing crimes and cheating people out of money, one should not underestimate the wrath of other evil people. Even family and loved ones can be harmed on account of taking shortcuts and stealing. Taking a bribe means entering a world of deception, lying, and looking the other way when evil is committed. If somebody thinks that the bond of secrecy is broken, it might cost a person his life. Wickedness doesn't pay, even if people get away with it in the short run. It is not a peaceful way to live, but it is a life of fear, bondage, and looking over one's shoulder.

**²⁸ The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer,
But the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things.**

Being a wise person doesn't mean that we always have the answer right away. It may mean that we need to slow down, meditate on God's Word, and think through what God has to say on a matter. A fool is quick to open his mouth and give dumb advice that will in all likelihood have some rather adverse consequences. Sometimes we need to keep

searching things out according to the Scripture until we know for sure what we must do. God promises to give wisdom to His children who ask Him in faith without doubting. God will never hold back wisdom from those who need it and ask Him for it (James 1:5-7). He wants us to know what we should do, but sometimes we must be patient.

**²⁹ The Lord is far from the wicked,
But He hears the prayer of the righteous.**

Those who are not washed in the blood of Christ cannot approach the presence of God because of His holiness. But those who have been redeemed can boldly approach the throne of grace to offer their requests in time of need (Hebrews 4:16). God hears the prayers of His children because He sees them in the righteousness of Christ. The wicked cannot ask anything of God until they ask for His forgiveness. Until then, they are enemies with God and separated from Him on account of their sin.

**³⁰ Bright eyes gladden the heart;
Good news puts fat on the bones.**

True joy is contagious, and people who are encouraged in the Lord are the best encouragers of others. Being a Christian is not about the power of positive thinking and just trying to always put a rosy spin on life. Joy is sourced in truth and the promises of God, and it is the gospel, the Scripture, and the testimony of believers as they have seen God deliver on His promises that provides the best encouragement (Psalm 32:11, 35:9, Philippians 4:4).

**³¹ He whose ear listens to the life-giving reproof
Will dwell among the wise.**

Those who are humble enough to have ears to hear the wisdom from God will turn from their sins, love Jesus, and seek to grow in wisdom according to His Word (John 10:10).

**³² He who neglects discipline despises himself,
But he who listens to reproof acquires understanding.**

Wise people respond to the teaching of Scripture and to the godly discipline of godly parents and teachers. To refuse to humble oneself before God's Word and His authority is not just to hate God but to hate oneself because sin always destroys. The result of heeding sound teaching and reproof is growth, joy, wisdom, and understanding so that a person can be ready for every good work that God has for him to do (2 Timothy 3:16-17, Ephesians 2:10).

**³³ The fear of the Lord is the instruction for wisdom,
And before honor *comes* humility.**

The fear of the Lord motivates a person to get his soul right before God by receiving the gospel, and it encourages the believer to live a life pleasing to God so as not to be

ashamed at Christ's coming (1 John 2:28). The Christian doesn't have to fear the fire of hell, but he will suffer regret and sorrow if at the judgment seat of Christ he has little that endure the fiery test (1 Corinthians 3:10-15, 2 Corinthians 5:10). God will honor those who honor Him (1 Samuel 2:30) with their lives by faith and because of their transformation through Jesus Christ. Seeking to order one's life in a way to honor God is evidence of a humble heart. This stands in contrast to the wicked heart that hates correction, truth, and the commands of God. In pride it stands in scoffing defiance against God, and destruction will be its end.

Proverbs 16

1 The plans of the heart belong to man, But the answer of the tongue is from the Lord.

Man can think what he is going to think, but it requires the grace of God to be able to speak something honoring to God. He ultimately deserves all the credit for how He works in and through His servants to do good. A man in his natural state will find that his wicked heart overtakes even the best laid plans and his most noble intentions. As God's grace works in a humble heart that wants to practice the truth, God will reveal Himself through Christ to that heart (John 3:21). A man plans his way, but the Lord directs His steps (Proverbs 16:9). Ultimately, we are all needy creatures who are dependent upon our Creator for life, breath, strength, and doing good (John 15:5). By grace through faith in the finished work of Christ is how any enduring good happens.

² All the ways of a man are clean in his own sight, But the Lord weighs the motives.

Man in his natural state doesn't realize how evil he is. He is prone to rationalize and self-justify, not realizing that he has broken, for example, all ten commandments when it comes to the thoughts and intentions of his heart. The Lord sees all including the motives of the heart. None of us will pass God's test for holiness, for we have all sinned and fallen short (Romans 3:23). We all need the grace of God manifested through the gift of salvation through Jesus Christ (Romans 6:23).

³ Commit your works to the Lord And your plans will be established.

We can plan all we want, but unless we are doing what God wants, we cannot expect His support and power behind what we are doing. Psalm 127:1 says that those who build labor in vain unless God is building the house. The idea is that we must submit to God's will for our lives, acknowledge our insufficiency while casting ourselves on His sufficiency, and trust Him in all our ways. As we desire what He desires, we will do what He wants us to do (Psalm 37:4). We must always be willing to adjust our plans as God leads. But if he has made it clear that we need to do something, it will be sin for us if we do not do it (James 4:17). When we know we are doing God's will, we must not let ourselves be swayed. Satan will definitely try to sway us, distract us, discourage us, deceive us, or throw us off course, but we must take advantage of the opportunities that God gives us.

⁴ The Lord has made everything for its own purpose, Even the wicked for the day of evil.

God desires that none should perish and that all would come to receive His Son (2 Peter 3:9), but the reality is that a majority will not because they love darkness more than light (John 3:19). Still Jesus was willing to die and rise again so that those who would believe

could be saved (Romans 11:32). The wicked will suffer in the day of the Lord's wrath, but that is not God's fault but their own. He will not force anyone to believe in Him. Neither will he force them not to believe. God does harden hearts, but it will be deservedly so. No man goes to hell for crimes he didn't commit.

The Lord has a purpose and plan in all that He does, and given how much smarter He is than we are, our best strategy is not to make plans independent of Him but fully in consultation with His Word. Life is not random, and the world is not a product of chance and chaotic accidents. God is sovereign over all, and nothing happens without His oversight. God's sovereignty is really more than our minds can fathom, but it should be our comfort because it means that Satan is not calling the shots and that God is always on the throne. We can rest in the fact that He causes all things to work for our good. That God is sovereign should be a fear factor for the unbeliever but a source of comfort for those who have submitted to His plans. Even each and every believer has specific good works that God prepared beforehand for them to do (Ephesians 2:10).

⁵ Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord; Assuredly, he will not be unpunished.

Punishment is what happens to those who have stored up God's wrath for themselves on account of their pride and arrogance. They will be brought low because one day all knees will bow before Jesus. Their pride will blind them from turning to Christ for salvation, and they will suffer the wrath of God in the day of judgment. As believers, we need to be mindful of the work of Christ so that we don't start to put confidence in the flesh, a form of pride, thereby inviting the loving discipline of God. We need to be cognizant of our dependency on the sufficiency of Christ and of His strength despite our weakness. He is sovereign, He has planned everything with a purpose (v. 4), and He directs our steps (v. 9).

⁶ By lovingkindness and truth iniquity is atoned for, And by the fear of the Lord one keeps away from evil.

This verse is critical to understanding the gospel. Lovingkindness encapsulates God's unchanging merciful and gracious nature and just how much He loves the world and desires them to repent. But because of His justice and holiness, He can't just give people a free pass and let them into heaven. Then He wouldn't be just any longer, and God Himself would have fallen, something that obviously never will happen. Thus, God must punish sinners. However, God did make a way for sinners to be saved through the sacrifice of His Son Jesus Christ. Though He never sinned, all of our sin was placed upon Him so that our sin debt could be repaid. So God demonstrated His mercy in sending Jesus to atone for our iniquity, and in so doing He also upheld truth, justice, and holiness. Furthermore, those who come to God for salvation have only one road through which they can enter, that of the shed blood of Christ. He is the truth, singular, and there is no other way for salvation. If people desire to have their sins wiped away, they must come believing in God's merciful forgiveness through the truth of the necessary sacrifice of Christ which alone can appease God's justice. Those who fear God and His power to

justly cast into hell will turn from evil and seek out salvation through His Son. Those who do not fear God demonstrate that they hate truth, are not afraid of His holiness, and could care less for His mercy, even the very fact that He gave up His Son to die for sin. This pride and selfishness will not go unpunished.

**⁷ When a man's ways are pleasing to the Lord,
He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.**

The fullness of this truth applied to Israel in the Old Testament based upon the covenant of blessing or cursing in Deuteronomy 11:23, 26-27. God would drive out their enemies before them if they were obedient to His commands. But it is also true that God is a protector of His children. He is our Good Shepherd (Psalm 23:1), warding off threats and guarding the sheep. He hedges us in behind and before, and lays His hand on us (Psalm 139:5). Nothing can take us out of His hand, and we are told not to fear because He upholds us with His righteous right hand (Isaiah 41:10). The wicked have no offer or hope of divine protection, but God protects us in ways that we are not even aware of. He does give us favor with our enemies at times, just as He did with Joseph in a foreign country, and He does watch over His own. The best way to get along with people who would be our enemies is to be kind to them. Proverbs 25:21-22 says, "If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; And if he is thirsty, give him water to drink; For you will heap burning coals on his head, And the LORD will reward you." People are much more likely to show kindness in return to a person who they genuinely believe is not a threat to them but a help. A wicked man will betray a trust and give reason for enemies to seek out ways to attack.

**⁸ Better is a little with righteousness
Than great income with injustice.**

Since wealth is temporary and subject to decay and since eternal rewards last forever and thus have far greater worth, we are wiser to pursue righteousness even if it will cost us the chance to get rich than to seek out lots of money by ways of corruption and injustice. (see also Proverbs 15:17)

**⁹ The mind of man plans his way,
But the Lord directs his steps.**

Ultimately, God is sovereign and in total control, and His plans cannot be thwarted. Some rebel and go against His desires, but others seek out what He wants and submit to His desires. Being directed by God is a privilege and a protection (Romans 8:14), a chance for bearing spiritual fruit. To only have the hope of being smart and using human wisdom to make plans is a weak foundation, but to know that God is at work and to align ourselves with Him brings great comfort. (see also Proverbs 20:24)

**¹⁰ A divine decision is in the lips of the king;
His mouth should not err in judgment.**

The Bible does not teach that kings have divine right or the ability to speak for God or to be unaccountable for their decisions. Proverbs 21:1 says, “The king’s heart is like channels of water in the hand of the LORD; He turns it wherever He wishes.” Kings of the world might think that they are all powerful, but they are ultimately subject to the sovereign will of God. They are very much accountable for the position which God has allowed them to have, and wisdom would acknowledge that reality and seek God for wisdom in rendering judgments and decisions. Governmental authorities should not err in their decision-making, for the consequences are far reaching. The kings of the earth are not the ultimate sovereign, but God does intervene and hold kings to account. Some intervention happens on earth (e.g. Daniel 4), while other consequences are left for eternity. Christians are called to pray for those in authority, including earthly political leaders, so that they will lead rightly and let people live in peace and according to godliness (1 Timothy 2:1-2, Proverbs 16:12).

**¹¹ A just balance and scales belong to the Lord;
All the weights of the bag are His concern.**

God hates stealing, and He desires that business dealings are done in honesty and integrity. Just as He is just, we are to imitate Him by being equitable and fair in all aspects of life, including money.

**¹² It is an abomination for kings to commit wicked acts,
For a throne is established on righteousness.**

Kings that act wickedly betray their throne and their people. A king that wishes to rule well and be loved by His people must act according to righteousness. Those who rule with an oppressive hand and who enjoy being cruel tyrants will not bring joy and blessing to their servants and to their people (Proverbs 29:2).

**¹³ Righteous lips are the delight of kings,
And he who speaks right is loved.**

Kings need people who are willing to be open and honest with them, and they will be more prone to get that if they are trustworthy, fair, and just in all of their dealings. People who subvert their rule and go behind their backs undermine a king’s rule, but those who are honest with him even if they disagree with him are a source of pleasantness for a king. People will not agree on everything, but if there is freedom to disagree and for there to be an open marketplace of ideas, peace can happen.

**¹⁴ The fury of a king is *like* messengers of death,
But a wise man will appease it.**

When a king gets angry, he has the power to deal with the person who angered him quickly and powerfully. A wise person will appease the king by admitting his error and showing good will of some kind if he has indeed done wrong. He will use his

understanding to convince the king to take a different course of action. A fool will keep mocking the king, and he will encourage his own destruction.

**¹⁵ In the light of a king's face is life,
And his favor is like a cloud with the spring rain.**

No one should seek to be on a king's bad side unless he has been forced to anger the king on account of defying an unrighteous decree. It is good and a blessing to have the favor of the king on account of doing good and being a benefit and helper to the kingdom and to his rule. A king that loves justice and good will appreciate others who also love righteousness.

**¹⁶ How much better it is to get wisdom than gold!
And to get understanding is to be chosen above silver.**

Gold and silver were commonly recognized as money and as having significant value, but wisdom and understanding make any of the world's wealth pale in comparison. Wisdom leads to blessings that money cannot buy and to eternal blessings and benefits that only Christ can offer (Psalm 16:11, Ephesians 1:3).

**¹⁷ The highway of the upright is to depart from evil;
He who watches his way preserves his life.**

The righteous flee from evil and resist the devil so that he will flee. Rather than stumble and bumble along on the thorn-filled path of iniquity (Proverbs 15:19), they choose the highway of Christ and the freedom from enslavement to sin. They trust in the sufficiency of Christ and the Scripture to make their way straight (Proverbs 3:5-6) and to discern truth from Satan's lies. Wisdom compels people to think through what they hear and what they are being told, for lies are everywhere. Wise people realize that Satan masquerades as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14) and that sometimes wolves come dressed in sheep's clothing (Matthew 7:15). Wise people walk circumspectly (Ephesians 5:15), navigating the pitfalls of life according to the commands of Scripture.

**¹⁸ Pride goes before destruction,
And a haughty spirit before stumbling.**

The arrogant and proud will be brought low because all people must bow before Christ when judgment time comes. They will pay for their evil deeds. Arrogance and self-sufficiency makes a person not depend on Jesus or bother to trust in Him because they think that they are strong, powerful, and able to sin without getting hurt. They think that they can be complete without Christ. They are wrong, and when they stumble, there will be no Savior to pick them up, strengthen them, and help them persevere. Only the righteous have the benefit of the God of the universe working on their behalf. They recognize their weakness and that He is their strength (2 Corinthians 12:9-10), and they make Him their boast. They humble themselves before Him, bow before Him, and

tremble before His Word (Isaiah 66:2) knowing that in Him alone is life and life to the full.

**¹⁹ It is better to be humble in spirit with the lowly
Than to divide the spoil with the proud.**

It profits a man nothing to gain the whole world and yet lose his soul (Matthew 16:26). To have much but to be proud and foolish is useless in terms of eternity. Being humble leads to wisdom and honor even if it involves a life spent with those whom the world neglects, rejects, and despises. Paul knew that he was viewed by most of the world's elite as the scum of the earth (1 Corinthians 4:13), but that didn't bother him because he knew he was rich in Christ.

**²⁰ He who gives attention to the word will find good,
And blessed is he who trusts in the Lord.**

This is such a simple statement, but it is so powerful and profound. Those who pay attention to, listen to, and study God's Word will find that good results from it. Their lives will still have difficulties (John 16:33), but they can rest assured that they will see God's kindness, goodness, and mercy follow them all the days of their lives (Psalm 23:6), protecting them from doing dumb things, guarding their hearts from evil, sanctifying them (Romans 8:28-29), giving them good and perfect gifts (James 1:17), and looking out for their best interests. There is great blessing in trusting in the Lord, for He will honor those who honor Him, even though the fullest portion of that honor might have to wait until eternity.

**²¹ The wise in heart will be called understanding,
And sweetness of speech increases persuasiveness.**

Though the world in its foolishness does not recognize the wisdom of God, wisdom is still the best way to live life and to interact with people, whether they realize and acknowledge it or not. Living with others in an understanding way (1 Peter 3:7) is simply love in action. It is meeting them where they are at, or, as Paul said, being all things to all people in order to win some to Christ (1 Corinthians 9:19-23). That does not mean adopting sinful behavior, false doctrine, lying, or creating false pretenses. Rather, it means that wisdom is discernment and knowledge applied, being able to be gracious and truthful with people and to speak words of wisdom according to the needs of the hearer (Colossians 4:6). Wisdom is thus sympathetic (Hebrews 4:15), compassionate, understanding, and relevant. This is what makes speech sweet. It is actually the opposite of the salesman mentality of telling people whatever will close a deal or make a sale. That is not sweetness of speech but bitterness and ugliness (James 3:10-11). Paul said that believers should not rely upon persuasive words of human wisdom (1 Corinthians 2:4), but they are rather to speak words of God's wisdom and trust that any good that is accomplished will be accomplished by God. This allows faith to be built on a foundation of confidence in God, not some human sales pitch or methodology. We should reason with people and try to convince them of the truth (Acts 17:2, 18:19), and we should

contend for the faith (Jude 1:3). This should be done with wisdom, understanding, and sweetness of speech, relying on God to open hearts, knowing that He is the ultimate best persuader. (see also v. 23)

**²² Understanding is a fountain of life to one who has it,
But the discipline of fools is folly.**

Understanding is a fountain of life because those who possess it are indwelt by the Spirit of God Who keeps teaching them according to the Scripture, Who keeps empowering them to live wisely by guiding them into all truth, and Who uses them to win souls. New life in Christ continues to transform the believer, and it overflows into their interactions with others with gospel testimony and proclamation. This love for others actually controls the believer by the power of Christ in him, and it is more effective against sinful lusts than the discipline of fools. Fools don't even like discipline, and any hope of mere behavior modification changing a life that is ruled by a fallen heart is futile. Fools are instead guided by error, folly, and stupidity rather than the wisdom and instruction of God. Believers are led by the Spirit in them, and He keeps working to transform their lives according to His glory and likeness.

**²³ The heart of the wise instructs his mouth
And adds persuasiveness to his lips.**

A wise person instructs his mouth by controlling what he says and when. He thinks through what he is going to say before he spews out something that would be foolish. He studies God's Word so that when the opportunity arises to speak a good word, he is able to encourage others. He is able to learn not how to sell somebody something or trick them into believing something but how to persuade them that they should seek wisdom from God. There is persuasion that is the manipulation of man, and then there is reasoning with somebody according to the wisdom of God. The latter is what a righteous person should seek. (see also v. 21)

**²⁴ Pleasant words are a honeycomb,
Sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.**

In order for speech to truly be healing, restoring, and edifying, it must be consistent with the truth of Scripture. There is no ultimate soul healing to be found in the power of positive thinking, contemplative prayer, or other forms of eastern meditation, for example. Meditation on God's Word and hearing other people open up God's truth to us is what is needed to encourage the soul. Believers can also encourage one another with a good word, reminding them of the promises of God and stimulating them toward good deeds with a godly example and consistent love.

**²⁵ There is a way *which seems* right to a man,
But its end is the way of death.**

Man's natural instincts because of his innate sin nature are flawed and wrong (Romans 3:23). Man's heart is wicked and deceitful (Jeremiah 17:9), and he is prone to error and unable to change his own heart apart from trusting in the salvation provided through Christ (Ephesians 2:8-9). Jesus changes hearts and desires, and He opens eyes to the truth and the way which is actually right. Sadly, many continue to be deceived by their sin and fallen hearts, and the consequences of sin is death and hell (Romans 6:23). Man must put his hope in the gift of God which is eternal life through Jesus Christ by surrendering to Him in humble faith and repentance. (see also Proverbs 14:12, 21:2)

**²⁶ A worker's appetite works for him,
For his hunger urges him on.**

The grumbles of an empty stomach have a way of motivating a person to earn money by working so that he can afford to buy food. This verse is not an excuse to create a sweat-shop or slave-driven type of work environment where people are going hungry and are abused. Rather, it means that God has given people an incentive to work, and that is to eat. 2 Thessalonians 3:10 says, "For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either." Obviously, there are exceptions for those who are unable to work, but even these should be encouraged to be as productive as they can within reason.

**²⁷ A worthless man digs up evil,
While his words are like scorching fire.**

A worthless person is a foolish person who rejects God's wisdom and enjoys bringing division, destruction, and harm to others. His life adds no blessing or value to others because he only tries to promote evil, error, lies, and wickedness. His words bring only pain, shame, hurt, and an attitude that likes to stir up trouble. His life bears no spiritual fruit that would have eternal value, and he is like the fig tree that Christ cursed and made to wither up and die on account of its lack of fruit (Mark 11:21). He is kindling that deserves to be taken up and burned because nothing good is coming from his life, only evil (John 15:6).

**²⁸ A perverse man spreads strife,
And a slanderer separates intimate friends.**

Those who delight in evil and destruction pursue not peace but strife. They seek division often by slandering and speaking ill of a person. Their desire is to separate close friends by coming up with something that will make them doubt one another or hate one another. Christians shouldn't slander or gossip, but, if they have an issue with somebody, they need to go to that person and work it out (Matthew 18:15-18). The goal of the believer is peace and reconciliation, not speaking ill of others and spreading malicious lies. Christians should identify false teachers, and they should be willing to confront sin in a spirit of grace and humility. That should always be done in compassion and love rather than in jealousy or anger which would only create tension and aggravate any relational issues.

**²⁹ A man of violence entices his neighbor
And leads him in a way that is not good.**

Those who love violence seek people whom they can be violent towards, and they seek out people who like violence also. Violent people set traps for their neighbors and drag them into places and situations that are not for their good. They try to convince others that violence is fun and desirable, and these people must be avoided. God delights in peacemakers, not those who use, abuse, and harm. If we truly love others, we will always have their best interests in mind, even valuing their welfare above our own (Philippians 2:3-4).

**³⁰ He who winks his eyes *does so* to devise perverse things;
He who compresses his lips brings evil to pass.**

Solomon speaks of people who deal in deceit and dishonesty, winking or using other hidden signals to plot someone's exploitation or demise. God is honored when we are forthright and honest, but evil people lie as a way of life. It is who they are. Their inner perversity and the hidden machinations of their thinking lead to violence, hatred, and all sorts of evil. They are driven by rage, revenge, and the lust for violence, and even the subtleties of their countenance reveal their evil intent.

**³¹ A gray head is a crown of glory;
It is found in the way of righteousness.**

Gray hair should be a sign of wisdom gained over the course of life, but some who live to old age continue to live for themselves and to reject God. As Ecclesiastes 7:5 says, "I have seen everything during my lifetime of futility; there is a righteous man who perishes in his righteousness and there is a wicked man who prolongs *his life* in his wickedness." However, those who follow God's commands will avoid the needless traps and travails that come from the consequences of sin. Thus, in that sense, they are more likely to make it to old age. For gray hair to truly be a crown of glory, one has to have grown in wisdom. There is nothing inherently noble in getting old or having gray hair unless it is accompanied by a growing and deepening relationship with God.

**³² He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty,
And he who rules his spirit, than he who captures a city.**

It takes a lot of military might and prowess to win battles or take over a city. But it is a sign of greater accomplishment in terms of eternal value to be able to have self-control, a fruit of the Spirit. Many have fought well in earthly battles, but they have not been able to keep their thoughts and intentions of the heart in line with God's standards. This is because apart from Christ it is impossible. Only by faith in Him to save and change a heart can righteousness and self-control come into the life of any person. This is something of great and eternal value, and it is something worth seeking out. Victory over sin and death belongs to the believer in Christ Who leads His own in His victory

procession as more than conquerors (Romans 8:37). Being strong in His might spiritually is what counts most of all (Ephesians 6:10). The battle for souls and for the righteousness which can only be found in Christ (Romans 1:16, 10:17) is more important than the battle for cities.

³³ **The lot is cast into the lap,
But its every decision is from the Lord.**

Christians should not cast lots or pick straws to determine the will of God, for we have the Holy Spirit to lead us (Romans 8:14) and the Word of God to teach us (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Casting lots was practiced in the Old Testament (Joshua 18:10, 1 Chronicles 25:8, Nehemiah 10:34) and even as the disciples were used to establish the church (Acts 1:26) as one of the “diverse ways” that God spoke to His people (Hebrews 1:1-2). Now that He has spoken to us in His Son and through His written Word, we do not need to cast lots. Those who did that in times past in faith recognized that God was in charge of the way the lots were cast and the results of the process. They submitted their will and way to the instruction and guidance of the Lord. We should have an attitude of humility to approach God’s Word in trembling and ultimate reverence, and we should submit ourselves to it (Isaiah 66:2). If we want our decisions to be from God and of God, we have no other choice than to align ourselves with the teaching of Scripture. That is where wisdom and direction are found.

Proverbs 17

**1 Better is a dry morsel and quietness with it
Than a house full of feasting with strife.**

Peace and healthy relationships are more valuable than having a lot of the world's goods. Even being near poverty but with many godly friends and loved ones is better than having great feasts but enmity, hatred, division, and spite. (see also Proverbs 15:17)

**2 A servant who acts wisely will rule over a son who acts shamefully,
And will share in the inheritance among brothers.**

Some masters will be cruel to their servants simply because they are cruel people, but there may be cases where a servant becomes a great friend to a master, even like a son due to his faithfulness, kindness, honesty, and genuine service. He might even end up sharing in the family inheritance, effectively being adopted as a son.

**3 The refining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold,
But the Lord tests hearts.**

Just as a refiner's fire removes the impurities in order to separate gold and silver from the dross, the Lord knows the hearts that are His and those that are wicked. He knows the difference between worthless deeds and God-honoring deeds of faith (1 Corinthians 3:10-15). He will have no trouble separating the sheep from the goats on the last day, for He sees all. It is also true that God works to sanctify believers by continuing to refine, transform, renew, and purify the desires of their hearts. He will allow believers to be tested so that they can see how they need to grow and change and to be able to rejoice when they see victory emerge and spiritual fruit result (Judges 3:4, James 1:2-4, 1 Peter 4:12).

**4 An evildoer listens to wicked lips;
A liar pays attention to a destructive tongue.**

Those who want to do evil and speak evil and lies use other people's destructive methods and words as justification and reason for their evil speech and actions. Those who have corrupt desires in their hearts are more susceptible to being led away by the false and misleading teaching of others. Wise people don't believe folly spewed forth because they pay attention to God's Word, and they advocate for what is true, right, and good.

**5 He who mocks the poor taunts his Maker;
He who rejoices at calamity will not go unpunished.**

God cares about all people, and He despises when the downcast and downtrodden are taken advantage of, mocked, insulted, and persecuted. It is evidence of God's love to care for the needy, the poor, and for orphans and widows in their distress (James 1:27). This does not mean that looking after the needy is more important than the gospel, but it

is a way to demonstrate the love of the gospel and have open doors to share it (Matthew 5:16). It is also not loving to laugh at other people's misfortunes. No one should be happy that wicked people will go to hell. That is a just proposition, but it is not a source of joy for those who have compassion for the masses as Christ did (Matthew 9:36). It is fine to be happy with seeing justice meted out on account of the fact that justice is good, but that is different from delighting in a person's adversity.

**⁶ Grandchildren are the crown of old men,
And the glory of sons is their fathers.**

Old men should be thrilled if their children and grandchildren walk after the Lord, for it is a testimony to God's faithfulness to honor those who honor Him by being able to see children grow up and walk in the ways of the Lord. It is also true that a godly parent is an honor to a son because it is such a wonderful blessing and resource to have a God-fearing parent to go to for wisdom and understanding. It is a privilege to enjoy God together across generations.

**⁷ Excellent speech is not fitting for a fool,
Much less are lying lips to a prince.**

Those who are in positions of authority need to devote themselves to the truth and to speaking honestly, for their example carries a lot of influence and because God holds them responsible for their stewardship of the positions that He entrusts them with (Proverbs 16:10, 12). We should not expect a fool to speak words of wisdom, and even the most eloquent speech if founded upon foolishness is still worthless babble.

**⁸ A bribe is a charm in the sight of its owner;
Wherever he turns, he prospers.**

The fool who takes a bribe thinks that he has a charmed life with easy money and prosperity around every corner. In his mind, he has struck it rich because all he has to do is lie about something in order to keep getting money or privilege. He does not realize that his "charm" is a curse that is leading his heart astray. Those who put their hope and confidence in riches do so only in their imagination (Proverbs 18:11), for only God is an anchor and only for the righteous.

**⁹ He who conceals a transgression seeks love,
But he who repeats a matter separates intimate friends.**

There is a time to be discreet and to keep a confidence out of love and concern for another person. If there is an imminent threat or somebody is going to be in danger because of secret information, then it doesn't make sense to keep that information hidden even if it costs a friendship. But other things are meant to be kept private, and they are only shared in the first place with that understanding. Those who violate that bond of trust and intimacy are likely to lose that friendship. Love is able to cover a multitude of sins (1 Peter 4:8) by not keeping records of wrongs (1 Corinthians 13:5), broadcasting the

mistakes of those they care about, and being willing to forgive and through kindness help those they care about to repent and change (Romans 2:4).

**¹⁰ A rebuke goes deeper into one who has understanding
Than a hundred blows into a fool.**

Fools are so hardened by their love for sin and evil that they can hear the truth a hundred times and not respond to it in the slightest bit. A wise man hears the truth and eagerly applies it the first time.

**¹¹ A rebellious man seeks only evil,
So a cruel messenger will be sent against him.**

Violence begets more violence, and those who like to flaunt their rebellion and harm others as a result of their evil ways will likely become victims of revenge or the wrath of others. Christians should seek to be peacemakers and those who bring good news, but the wicked stir up strife. There is a strong likelihood that their cruelty will eventually cause them harm in return.

**¹² Let a man meet a bear robbed of her cubs,
Rather than a fool in his folly.**

Fools don't receive instruction or rebuke well at all, and a person who seeks to offer truth and correction to a fool is better off facing the wrath of a mother bear after her young have been stolen. One must not cast their pearls before swine lest the swine turn and tear them to pieces (Matthew 7:6).

**¹³ He who returns evil for good,
Evil will not depart from his house.**

Never is it right to do others evil, especially if they have done us good. This stores up God's wrath, and it makes a person gain a lot of enemies on earth.

**¹⁴ The beginning of strife is *like* letting out water,
So abandon the quarrel before it breaks out.**

Just as a dam has first a small trickle of a leak before the whole thing comes crashing down, so too does strife begin as a few small words that can lead to fighting, war, death, and disaster. Thus, it is better off to make peace quickly before things get out of hand.

**¹⁵ He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous,
Both of them alike are an abomination to the Lord.**

God hates injustice, whether it be justifying the wicked on account of their wickedness or condemning the righteous on account of their righteousness.

**¹⁶ Why is there a price in the hand of a fool to buy wisdom,
When he has no sense?**

Wisdom cannot be bought with the things of this earth, but it is given by God to those who fear Him and seek to know and obey Him (Colossians 2:3, James 1:5-7). Fools prove their foolishness by trying other roads to wisdom besides the only true way in Christ.

**¹⁷ A friend loves at all times,
And a brother is born for adversity.**

A true friend is there not just because good fortune has come to a person, but he is there even during adversity. He is there not to judge as Job's friends did but to listen and show compassion. A good friend is like a devoted brother, mourning with us when we are sad and rejoicing with us when there is reason for joy.

**¹⁸ A man lacking in sense pledges
And becomes guarantor in the presence of his neighbor.**

Solomon several times in Proverbs makes the point strongly that it is dangerous and foolish to be a co-debtor with another person (Proverbs 6:1-5). If calamity befalls them, then the co-signer is on the hook for all the damages and could lose everything. It is not a wise financial move, and there are other better ways to help a neighbor financially such as by offering a loan or a gift.

**¹⁹ He who loves transgression loves strife;
He who raises his door seeks destruction.**

Those who love sin should expect the strife, pain, and consequences that harming others and acting selfishly entails. Those who associate with evil people and lower down the walls of resistance against the enemies of God can expect to suffer harm. Christians should resist the devil so that he will flee (James 4:7), and we should abhor evil and cling to what is good (Romans 12:9).

**²⁰ He who has a crooked mind finds no good,
And he who is perverted in his language falls into evil.**

Those who love sin also corrupt their consciences and their thinking. They seek only what is evil, and they have no appetite for what is good. They crave immorality and evil speaking. Their corrupt language reveals the true state of their hearts. They fall into evil because they love it.

**²¹ He who sires a fool *does so* to his sorrow,
And the father of a fool has no joy.**

It brings no joy to a parent who has any sense whatsoever to raise a child who spurns wisdom and loves to be a fool. There is great joy, however, in seeing one's children grow up to fear God and keep His commandments.

**²² A joyful heart is good medicine,
But a broken spirit dries up the bones.**

Our spiritual health can and does affect our physical health. If we are broken in spirit from sin or discouragement, it can take a toll on our physical energy, strength, and stamina (Psalm 32:3-4). If we are filled with the joy of the Lord and not living in sin and rebellion against God, then it is like medicine to our bodies (James 5:16).

**²³ A wicked man receives a bribe from the bosom
To pervert the ways of justice.**

A wicked person takes a bribe while trying to keep the act of receiving it a secret. Bribes mean cover-ups and perverting justice.

**²⁴ Wisdom is in the presence of the one who has understanding,
But the eyes of a fool are on the ends of the earth.**

Fools can search the entire world for wisdom if they wanted to and not find it because they are looking for the wrong thing and in the wrong places. They are blind to the truth, and they might as well stare at the horizon all day. Those who fear God will find wisdom and understanding, for they will see God's truth revealed everywhere, from the creation, to the conscience, to the Scripture, and to the cross.

**²⁵ A foolish son is a grief to his father
And bitterness to her who bore him.**

Raising a child takes a lot of work, and even the pregnancy and delivery is an investment and sacrifice. But a child that turns out rotten in heart brings only grief and bitterness, for what pain there must be for a mother and father knowing that their child will spend an eternity in hell. This is why parents must focus on teaching their children wisdom from early on, being careful not to underestimate what they are capable of learning according to the Scriptures.

**²⁶ It is also not good to fine the righteous,
Nor to strike the noble for *their* uprightness.**

It is unjust to penalize somebody for doing something good. Laws that promote evil are thus wrong, and leaders who look the other way at evil are doing evil. A wicked person seeks to levy an unjust charge or to slander a righteous person for no reason, and this is not good.

²⁷ He who restrains his words has knowledge,

And he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding.

A wise person evaluates what he is going to say before he says it, and he knows when to keep quiet. He is not easily riled to wrath or anger, and he knows how to keep a cool head in a heated moment. This can lead to problem-solving and peacemaking.

**²⁸ Even a fool, when he keeps silent, is considered wise;
When he closes his lips, he is *considered* prudent.**

A foolish person who doesn't say anything may be able to fool people for a while that he actually is thinking valuable thoughts or that he has something of wisdom to add to the discussion. Eventually, his heart will root him out, but he may be able to get people to think that he is prudent for a time.

Proverbs 18

**He who separates himself seeks *his own* desire,
He quarrels against all sound wisdom.**

There is wisdom in separating from the evil patterns of the world so as not to make provision for the lusts of the flesh (Romans 13:14). There is wisdom in pursuing truth and taking the narrow road even when the majority are taking the highway to hell (Matthew 7:13). However, there is not wisdom in rejecting good counsel and the wise advice of others and going off and doing something against God's will. This is quarrelling against sound wisdom. It is wise to seek out others who love God and keep His commandments, and that association is an encouragement to help us continue to persevere in good works (Hebrews 10:24-25).

**² A fool does not delight in understanding,
But only in revealing his own mind.**

Those who are wise listen to the Scripture and to those who speak according to it. Fools do not delight in understanding and being transformed according to the Bible. They are interested only in what their own mind tells them even if it is contrary to God's Word. They follow the natural sinful bent of their fallen heart, and they boast in their own pseudo-wisdom. Their opinions are unchangeable because of their stubbornness and callousness to the truth. They are eager and ready to share their opinions with no regard for whether they are true or not. If they cared about truth, they would be more interested in seeking understanding, which they are not.

**³ When a wicked man comes, contempt also comes,
And with dishonor *comes* scorn.**

People may align themselves with wicked people out of fear or greed, but wickedness does not bring with it any honor but only contempt, dishonor, and scorn. Wickedness is typically recognized as the cheap, shallow, shortcutting method, and it does not carry the respect that those who work hard, maintain honest character, and care for others typically receive even from the world. Ultimately, however, we should be more concerned with what God thinks, for He will judge the living and the dead.

**⁴ The words of a man's mouth are deep waters;
The fountain of wisdom is a bubbling brook.**

What we say is important and powerful. James compares the tongue to a small spark that can start an entire forest on fire or to a small rudder that can steer an entire ship (James 3:4-6). The tongue can do great damage and lead others astray, or it can help others navigate safely through life and into eternity in heaven. Like water continuously and faithfully bubbling through a stream, there is always wisdom to be found from the Lord for those who are humble enough to seek it and receive it. (see also v. 21)

**⁵ To show partiality to the wicked is not good,
Nor to thrust aside the righteous in judgment.**

Partiality in judgment is the sign of an unjust judge. The God of the universe is completely impartial, and Christians should reflect His nature by not showing personal favoritism (James 2:1). It is wrong to unjustly accuse the righteous, and it is wrong to fail to impart justice to the wicked.

**⁶ A fool's lips bring strife,
And his mouth calls for blows.**

**⁷ A fool's mouth is his ruin,
And his lips are the snare of his soul.**

**⁸ The words of a whisperer are like dainty morsels,
And they go down into the innermost parts of the body.**

The fruit of the lips can either be praise to God and the edification of others, or it can be destructive, insulting, and without thanks toward the Lord. A fool's speech always brings strife because he enjoys division, destruction, fighting, and taunting God and His people. His speech will prove to be his ruin because it is evidence of a person who has not given control of his heart to the Lord. It proves that his soul is snared by the devil. Some try to stir up strife by slander, gossip, and spreading rumors. It can make one feel really important to be privy to something that is none of his business. Gossiping is not viewed highly in the Bible (Proverbs 20:19, 1 Timothy 5:13, Titus 2:3), for it is a sign of wasted time and effort, it is evidence of a lack of discretion, it is indicative of a condescending attitude, and it is indicative of hearts that would rather analyze others than deal with their own hearts. But it can make a person feel a lot better about himself just by contrasting himself to others who are more dysfunctional. We should not try to evaluate the state of our hearts in light of another person's failure as if we are rejoicing in their errors, but we should look into the mirror of God's Word and come away changed ourselves. We need the food of God's Word, not the morsels of self-deceit.

**⁹ He also who is slack in his work
Is brother to him who destroys.**

Some people out of selfishness just enjoy wrecking things, while other people enjoy doing nothing and being lazy. One breaks things, while the other does nothing while they rot and decay. Neither are doing God's work or laboring honestly, and both are dishonoring God by the course of their lives.

**¹⁰ The name of the Lord is a strong tower;
The righteous runs into it and is safe.**

**¹¹ A rich man's wealth is his strong city,
And like a high wall in his own imagination.**

**¹² Before destruction the heart of man is haughty,
But humility goes before honor.**

The righteous puts his boast and confidence in the Lord Who is his strong tower. He rests in God's protection, while a self-confident man puts his boast in his money. He thinks it will keep him safe, and he is fully confident in his own ability to protect himself, in this life and in the next. But his wealth is no protector, for it can be here one day and gone the next. It is like a high wall only in his imagination. Wealth offers no protection against the wrath of God, and on earth it is prone to being stolen and to rot and decay (Matthew 6:20). But the proud keep boasting in their own strength, possessions, and accomplishments, and they will be brought low by their own eventual destruction. Those who humble themselves now under God's mighty hand, resting in Him for protection, wisdom, and strength, will be exalted at the proper time (1 Peter 5:6, Galatians 6:9).

**¹³ He who gives an answer before he hears,
It is folly and shame to him.**

Cutting a person off when they are sharing something with us is rude, shameful, and lacking wisdom. It communicates that we are not interested in what they have to say and that we don't care. It says that we like what we have to say more than we like being sure that we understand their needs and predicament. It says that we are too ready to fix them by hammering them with Scripture before mourning with them and being compassionate. It also speaks of an attitude that is not interested in learning and which thinks it knows it all already.

**¹⁴ The spirit of a man can endure his sickness,
But *as for* a broken spirit who can bear it?**

Physical sickness and pain is difficult, but it can be endured, especially if one has a proper faith in God and an eternal perspective (2 Corinthians 4:17). It is possible to maintain a good attitude and a thankful heart even despite health conditions, albeit very difficult. This verse is not minimizing the challenges of enduring health complications, but it is pointing out that a broken spirit and downcast heart is more damaging. It can take a toll on a person's physical well-being, and it can make a person shut down and fall apart more quickly and more powerfully than a sickness, disability, or disease. Dealing with physical ailments is one thing, but dealing with the heart attitude and the proper mindset is another altogether. Christians must focus on guarding their hearts and encouraging the hearts of others, particularly in times of distress. Persevering well also means holding tightly to the hope that God cares, that God rewards, and that God is faithful. Hope is the antithesis of despair, even in times of physical sickness. We may not get better, and we may even get worse physically. Our bodies decay day after day, but God renews the inner person each day with mercies anew (2 Corinthians 4:16). With Him as our confidence and strength, we can honor Him in sickness and in health. The joy of the Lord is our strength (Nehemiah 8:10).

**¹⁵ The mind of the prudent acquires knowledge,
And the ear of the wise seeks knowledge.**

Wisdom is vindicated by her deeds, meaning that those who seek out understanding and knowledge prove that they have wisdom already driving that pursuit. Fools don't bother to seek out ultimate answers, but the wise keep seeking, asking, and knocking as they study the Word and look to the Lord for wisdom. Wise people recognize when they lack wisdom and ask God for it, knowing and believing that He will supply it to them. Fools bask in their folly because they prefer being in perpetual error and sin.

**¹⁶ A man's gift makes room for him
And brings him before great men.**

People can buy their way into influence and prominence, for people like bribes and gifts. This doesn't mean that it is always wrong to offer a gift or expression of good will, but it does point out that human nature enjoys receiving things before giving something out in return. It is often money that gets a person a seat at the table of other influencers and people in positions of power. Gifts do hold power in terms of the way the world works.

**¹⁷ The first to plead his case *seems* right,
Until another comes and examines him.**

A person can seem innocent based upon telling very convincing stories and lies, but upon further examination and some tough questioning, the truth can come out.

**¹⁸ The cast lot puts an end to strife
And decides between the mighty ones.**

One way the Lord spoke in the Old Testament was through the casting of lots through which God's will would be clearly defined (see also notes on Proverbs 16:33). Now, we have the whole Bible to use for making decisions (Hebrews 1:1-2), and by harmonizing ourselves with what the Bible says, peace can be achieved. The Bible stands in authority over all men, even the mighty ones. God cannot be bought off, and we don't need to bring a gift to sit at His table. His Word stands in judgment over us all, and Christians must make their decisions and establish their theology based upon the whole counsel of God. We are sanctified in the truth which is the Word of God (John 17:17). It must always have the final say.

**¹⁹ A brother offended *is harder to be won* than a strong city,
And contentions are like the bars of a citadel.**

We need to be very careful with the relationships that God has given us in life. We are stewards of these family bonds, friendships, and other connections. We need to recognize that each life impacts the next, and we need to avoid sinning against our brother, our neighbor, and our fellow man. When we do err, we need to go to the one we have sinned against and, in true repentance, seek their forgiveness by explaining how sorry we are and that we see that what we did was wrong. We should do whatever we can to restore the relationship and fix what was lost. By God's grace, relationships can be restored, wounds can be healed, and contentions can be resolved. God's grace is

needed because sometimes the invisible bars of rejection can be far stronger than the walls of a strong city.

**²⁰ With the fruit of a man's mouth his stomach will be satisfied;
He will be satisfied *with* the product of his lips.**

A wicked person who enjoys creating strife through his words will be pleased with the results of his sinful efforts. A righteous person will rejoice when truth that is spoken leads to encouragement and to life for the hearers. He will find that his hunger for righteousness (Matthew 5:6) results in deep soul satisfaction as he reaps according to what he has sown.

**²¹ Death and life are in the power of the tongue,
And those who love it will eat its fruit.**

A small rumor can divide a church, destroy a relationship, or set the world to war. It can also bring the world to peace, restore a relationship, and unite the body of Christ. The words we choose are powerful, and we are responsible for everything we say. We will reap according to how we sow, so we need to make sure our speech sows seeds that point to eternal life and godliness. (see also v. 4)

**²² He who finds a wife finds a good thing
And obtains favor from the Lord.**

A godly wife is a gift from God in this life (James 1:17), and no amount of money or influence can buy or merit such a gift. It is the grace of God that provides a godly woman for a godly man. The Bible does not tell people that they must get married, but those who do marry a godly spouse have done well. This doesn't mean that a single person cannot have the favor of God, but it means that marriage is something that pleases God and that He desires to bless. He is pleased when marriage reveals His selfless love, and when children are raised up according to Biblical principles.

**²³ The poor man utters supplications,
But the rich man answers roughly.**

Not every person who is rich is cruel to the poor, but it is not in the nature of fallen man to be generous to the poor. Sure, some people enjoy charitable giving for causes that they care about, for garnering the favor of a deity or their church, or for the honor it brings them. But actually loving the needy with the love of Christ is dependent on first knowing the love of Christ (1 John 4:7-8). This is rare and specific to the Christian (John 13:34-35), and it is a great testimony that opens doors for the gospel (Matthew 5:16). The church should not forget the poor because they need the gospel just as the rich man does. Favoritism is not becoming of the Christian.

**²⁴ A man of *too many* friends *comes* to ruin,
But there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.**

That which is popular is not necessarily right, and those who do whatever they can to get people to like them will find that they have to compromise their heart and soul. Wealth can buy a lot of friends (Proverbs 19:4), but they will be gone as soon as the money dries up. A true friend is a valued relationship because it is not dependent on circumstances but upon real love, care, and concern. A person is rich in terms of friends even to have one such friend who is trustworthy and loyal like a brother (Proverbs 17:17).

Proverbs 19

**Better is a poor man who walks in his integrity
Than he who is perverse in speech and is a fool.**

Because the scales of eternal justice will balance, what is of most value in this life is the state of our hearts before God. A poor man who loves God is far wealthier than a fool because of the weight of glory and the devastation of hell.

**² Also it is not good for a person to be without knowledge,
And he who hurries his footsteps errs.**

Being naïve makes a person vulnerable, and those who make hurried decisions without thinking through them and without considering the wisdom of God's Word will likely make mistakes.

**³ The foolishness of man ruins his way,
And his heart rages against the Lord.**

Man chooses to do things foolishly according to his own desires and the way that seems right to his fallen heart. Sin disappoints and leads to destruction, and yet the fool has the nerve to blame God for his own bad decisions. In eternity, he will be forced to kneel before Christ and acknowledge Him as Lord, but that will be too late to keep him from the fire of hell (Philippians 2:10). It is one thing to be forced to bow the knee, and it is another to like it. The rage of man against God can endure forever.

**⁴ Wealth adds many friends,
But a poor man is separated from his friend.**

Some friendships are shallow enough to be based upon whether a person has money and lots of toys or not. People tend not to be friends with poor people because they are afraid that they will catch whatever financial disease they might have. They don't like being around people who need things, and they don't like being asked to be generous. Thus, it is a test of our hearts whether or not we value and love the poor, the orphan, and the widow. Love compels a person to give as he is able and to share the gospel whenever possible, whether a person is poor or rich. (see also v. 7 and Proverbs 18:24)

**⁵ A false witness will not go unpunished,
And he who tells lies will not escape.**

Those who bear false witness may not get caught on earth. If they do, they will probably suffer on account of it. What is certain is that God will punish liars one day by sending them to hell unless they have been forgiven by the shed blood of His Son.

**⁶ Many will seek the favor of a generous man,
And every man is a friend to him who gives gifts.**

People like associating with a generous, gift-giving person because they think that they might get something out of the friendship. There is nothing wrong with a person being generous, but he who is generous must not be swayed by the approval of man (Matthew 6:1). He should not give to be given to or to get something selfish out of his giving. In fact, the Bible says that gift-giving is best done secretly so that God gets the glory (Matthew 6:3-4). The applause of man actually voids eternal rewards (Matthew 6:2).

**⁷ All the brothers of a poor man hate him;
How much more do his friends abandon him!
He pursues *them with words, but they are gone.***

Even family members tend to respect more and associate more often with the ones who have done well for themselves financially. The poor among them tends to get scorned rather than loved and helped. The world is an “every man for himself” kind of place, and people give out their love and friendship based upon success. But the poor should be treated as equally valuable, especially among family. It is one thing to deal with sin issues that make a person poor, and it is another just to not like a person anymore because they have found calamity not of their own making. Some just don’t possess the talents or skills that will make them wealthy in this life, and this doesn’t make them worth any less. After all, some of the most important jobs don’t make people rich. The poor and less regarded desire friends and family, but too often they vanish.

**⁸ He who gets wisdom loves his own soul;
He who keeps understanding will find good.**

Those who care about the state of their own hearts and who realize that God loves them will seek after wisdom. The kindness of God leads people to repent as they realize that God loved them so much that He gave up His Son to die for them and to give them eternal life. The love of God changes everything, and those who follow Christ by faith and continue to pursue the wisdom that only He can give will find that God leaves a legacy of goodness and mercy in their lives. Those who love foolishness hate their own soul enough to condemn it.

**⁹ A false witness will not go unpunished,
And he who tells lies will perish.**

Those who lie as a lifestyle do so because Satan is their master, and he is the father of lies. God hates lying and false testimony, and He will punish those who refuse to repent and turn to Jesus for forgiveness.

**¹⁰ Luxury is not fitting for a fool;
Much less for a slave to rule over princes.**

A fool will only destroy what is good, exploit power, misuse influence, and waste wealth. He cannot properly steward the opportunity to have the world’s goods. A slave who has

wisdom and the fear of God would do a better job ruling than many of the world's princes. However, the idea is that the thought of such a scenario happening is so repulsive and unfitting to the general person who is partial and who ranks people by job status, nation, social tier, etc. The repulsion that people feel naturally to the social order being turned on its head is the repulsion that they should feel for a fool being given luxury, power, or the title of prince.

**¹¹ A man's discretion makes him slow to anger,
And it is his glory to overlook a transgression.**

It shouldn't be a surprise that a Christian is willing to forgive and even delight in the fact that he has the opportunity to show the grace of God by overlooking a person's personal offense toward him. This doesn't mean taking an attitude that minimizes sin, for this would also minimize the glory and value of forgiveness. By being slow to anger, it demonstrates wisdom and discretion, the ability to have self-control and to value the needs of the other person even while one is being poorly-treated by them. It is always viewing life as a chance to bring forth the aroma of life. (see also Proverbs 17:9)

**¹² The king's wrath is like the roaring of a lion,
But his favor is like dew on the grass.**

The idea is that it is not pleasant to be at strife with the most powerful person in the land, but to have his favor, support, and backing is like wind in the sails. One way is fearful, and the other is joyful. Of course, it is always more important what God thinks of us than what a man thinks, even if it is a very powerful man. God's favor is more valuable, and the life of Joseph can testify to that fact (Genesis 39:21).

**¹³ A foolish son is destruction to his father,
And the contentions of a wife are a constant dripping.**

A foolish son brings pain, strife, and destruction to his father, and a wife who constantly bickers, complains, and who shows no respect for her husband is like the drip, drip, drip of a faucet (see also Proverbs 21:9, 19; 25:24; 27:15). God's will is for a husband and wife to be on the same page together spiritually and to be unified. As he is respected by his wife and as she is loved by her husband, balance and harmony will take place (Ephesians 5:33).

**¹⁴ House and wealth are an inheritance from fathers,
But a prudent wife is from the Lord.**

Some things money can buy, but a godly wife (and a godly husband for that matter) is such a precious and rare find (Ecclesiastes 7:28) that it points to the miraculous intervention of God doing the impossible and acting in ways beyond what we could ask or imagine (Ephesians 3:20). One can inherit a house, a business, or a bank account, but nobody can merit the gifts of God. They are His treasures to give because of His love

and grace, and those who receive His good and perfect gifts ought to always praise and thank God for them and not take them for granted (James 1:17).

**¹⁵ Laziness casts into a deep sleep,
And an idle man will suffer hunger.**

Laziness is not indicative of the fear of God because a proper view of God's holiness motivates a person to order his life rightly in light of eternity and to walk circumspectly and bring God a return on His investment (Matthew 25:16, Ephesians 2:10; 5:15-16). Laziness is indicative of a deep spiritual sleep that is desensitized to the things of God (Ephesians 5:14). There is no urgency or fervency for the kingdom in such a heart (Revelation 3:19). Practically, this might mean poverty and starvation, but more importantly, eternal death and alienation from God.

**¹⁶ He who keeps the commandment keeps his soul,
But he who is careless of conduct will die.**

Romans 2:6 says that God will render to each person according to his deeds, and Galatians 6:7-8 says that we will reap according to how we sow. No man can keep the commands of God entirely, for only Jesus fulfilled the Law completely. Thus, to be saved, one must find salvation through Him on account of His perfection and holiness. In salvation, the sinner is forgiven and seen in the righteousness of Christ. Those who do not repent and put their faith in Christ have no such hope and remain dead in sin and guilty before God. They will find that the consequence of sin is eternal death in hell. A careless attitude toward sin, righteousness, and judgment spurns the conviction of the Spirit (John 16:8), and it is the only unforgiveable sin (Matthew 12:31). Wisdom trusts in Christ to forgive sin because of a recognition of falling short of God's standards (Romans 3:23), and therein is eternal life. Even after salvation, wisdom guides the believer away from sin and into all truth so that he avoids needless harmful pitfalls that sinners regularly fall into. A careless attitude will be punished, but those who take God and His Word seriously will be rewarded.

**¹⁷ One who is gracious to a poor man lends to the Lord,
And He will repay him for his good deed.**

Those who give to the poor without seeking the approval of man do so as though they are giving to Christ Himself (Matthew 25:45). God will be faithful to reward them for their faithfulness in eternity. It doesn't mean that faithful giving guarantees earthly health, wealth, and prosperity, but it does guarantee eternally valuable and indestructible rewards in heaven, something far more desirable anyway.

**¹⁸ Discipline your son while there is hope,
And do not desire his death.**

Foolish behavior leads to destruction and sometimes even death. Certainly, a person who rejects wisdom will find eternal death and destruction. Godly parents will do everything

possible to teach their children the fear of God. They will lovingly discipline them when they are stubborn toward righteousness, and they will teach them about God and His ways from early on. Unless they learn to fear God as the ultimate sovereign, they will never learn wisdom and never come to know His perfect love. Parents that discipline in love and are diligent to teach their children the commands of God prove their love for their children, while those who allow their sin natures to guide them act as though they are not concerned of the consequences of sin which is death.

**¹⁹ A man of great anger will bear the penalty,
For if you rescue *him*, you will only have to do it again.**

A person who likes to give into anger will keep doing it and need continual rescuing. He gets angry because he likes it and because he has no interest in self-control. He does not fear God and think about the needs of others. His brash life is full of selfish acts and sinful desires for harming others. A person of great anger has a great ego, and he will bear the penalty. Many who have this problem will find their way into the justice system on earth, and they won't like the judgments of the Master on judgment day either.

**²⁰ Listen to counsel and accept discipline,
That you may be wise the rest of your days.**

Children that are receptive to loving discipline do well, and those who listen to teaching and counsel that is consistent with the Bible do well. Children need teaching from the Bible and godly training from early on so that they can see that they are not in charge and that God is. They need to see that He will hold them accountable for how they live, and they need to understand how and why they should trust in Jesus to save them. As they are trained in righteousness from early on, they will have the rest of their lives to live out wisdom. It is a great privilege to give a child wisdom from his youth, for much needless pain can be avoided that way. Adults can change as well, but change starts with a heart that is humble enough to submit to and be corrected by the Word of God. There can be no wisdom without first submitting to God as the ultimate sovereign.

**²¹ Many plans are in a man's heart,
But the counsel of the Lord will stand.**

God's sovereign purposes cannot be thwarted, and He will always be on the throne. His Word will endure forever, for it is true, right, and good. People may assail Him and His Word, but it will stand. God may frustrate plans, and He may advance plans. What He wants done will be done, and He will always do only good for those whom He loves. Man naturally thinks that he is in control and that he can do whatever he wants. But God alone is in total control, and even the air that man breathes is dependent upon God giving strength to his lungs (Colossians 1:17). He is the Master and Lord of all.

**²² What is desirable in a man is his kindness,
And *it is* better to be a poor man than a liar.**

Only those who know Christ can truly love with a selfless, unconditional, and sacrificial love. Those who possess this kindness toward others have something of eternal value. Thus, a kind, poor person is better off than a rich, unkind liar.

**²³ The fear of the Lord *leads* to life,
So that one may sleep satisfied, untouched by evil.**

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and it leads to eternal life. Even in this life, the confidence of one's eternity leads to peaceful sleep and not having to be afraid of anything Satan might conjure up. All believers have to do is resist him by faith, and he will flee. Jesus is the bread of life that satisfies the soul, and He is the living water that makes His own never have to thirst again. Christians are complete in Him, and death has no sting or victory over them. Their eternity is secure.

**²⁴ The sluggard buries his hand in the dish,
But will not even bring it back to his mouth.**

A lazy person doesn't even have it in him to lift the spoon to his mouth to feed himself. The spiritual parallel is a person who has a Bible but doesn't even open the cover. This will lead to spiritual starvation and eternal destruction.

**²⁵ Strike a scoffer and the naive may become shrewd,
But reprove one who has understanding and he will gain knowledge.**

Reproving a fool leads only to him being better at committing evil in secret and avoiding getting caught. He will become more crafty in his deception, rebellion, and manipulation. Reproving a wise person leads to him growing in knowledge and continuing to be honest and humble before the Lord.

**²⁶ He who assaults *his* father *and* drives *his* mother away
Is a shameful and disgraceful son.**

A son who roughs up his father or is not emotionally kind to his mother is shameful and disgraceful to God and to his parents. Even parents who are not God-fearing still deserve to be treated with respect and dignity.

**²⁷ Cease listening, my son, to discipline,
And you will stray from the words of knowledge.**

Godly discipline is for our good, and it will train us and keep us on the way of righteousness. This is why discipline is different from wrathful punishment. Punishment is the belief that simply imposing consequences or pain can make a person modify his behavior without paying attention to the heart. Discipline is imposing pain or consequences but with an explanation of what God wants and why to accompany it. It entails explaining the dangers of evil and the blessings of righteousness. Discipline is not about getting a Pavlovian response, but it is about shepherding a child's heart to know

and love God. They must always see and know that the one doing the disciplining is loving and seeking their good. Abuse is not discipline, but godly discipline brings comfort and safety. Children actually like to know their boundaries, for it helps them know that they can keep exploring the world while their parents will keep them safe and teach them about the world.

**²⁸ A rascally witness makes a mockery of justice,
And the mouth of the wicked spreads iniquity.**

A fool mocks justice and can't be relied upon to say what the innocent needs him to say or what the guilty doesn't want to be said. He enables evil to propagate, and he doesn't care about justice, the protection of the innocent, the maltreatment of the righteous, or the prosecution of the wicked.

**²⁹ Judgments are prepared for scoffers,
And blows for the back of fools.**

Being a fool and a scoffer brings with it the inevitability of destruction, judgments, and penalties. Earthly penalties might be severe, but even these won't compare to the fire of hell that awaits those who love their sin.

Proverbs 20

**Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler,
And whoever is intoxicated by it is not wise.**

Those who get drunk will do rash and foolish things because of impaired judgment. Likely, harm will result, both to them and to others. Drunkenness is forbidden according to the Scripture (Ephesians 5:18), for we should rather be filled with the Spirit and totally under His control rather than under the control of alcohol.

**² The terror of a king is like the growling of a lion;
He who provokes him to anger forfeits his own life.**

It is unwise to provoke a person in authority to anger with you. It is a different matter altogether if the powers that be are angry over a humble but bold testimony for Christ. That is a predicament that is actually a blessing because of the honor of suffering for Christ. But to just do foolish things to get those in authority angry or irritated with you is dangerous and stupid.

**³ Keeping away from strife is an honor for a man,
But any fool will quarrel.**

Being a peacemaker is to be the goal of the believer. We are to do all that we can to live peaceably with all people, and we are to pursue peace and sanctification, without which no one will see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14). Peace is a fruit of the Spirit, but those who are ruled by a different spirit, that of the devil himself, will desire fighting, war, destruction, hatred, and strife. Fools like to quarrel, but wise men like to be at peace.

**⁴ The sluggard does not plow after the autumn,
So he begs during the harvest and has nothing.**

There is no harvest without first plowing the fields, sowing seeds, and ensuring adequate fertilization and water. A sluggard doesn't do the work required to reap a harvest, but the wise person will enjoy the fruit of his labor. Spiritually, we will reap according to what we sow (Galatians 6:9), and we need to always be mindful of that reality. Laziness is not becoming of a believer in Christ who fears God and values the eternal weight of glory.

**⁵ A plan in the heart of a man is *like* deep water,
But a man of understanding draws it out.**

It is easy for people to become professionals at hiding their true thoughts, feelings, and desires. A person of understanding because of his love and care for another person will seek to get to know the real them, the person that they keep hidden back from most others. A person who loves allows others to feel accepted for who they are and to be free to share what they are passionate about. Wisdom, though, also goes one step further, to encourage others to be sure that their plans and desires align with the Scripture. To fail to

do this is to reject truth and thus dishonor Christ, which is not loving in the least. True love is full of grace and truth (John 1:14), just as Christ Himself was.

**⁶ Many a man proclaims his own loyalty,
But who can find a trustworthy man?**

Many people consider themselves to be loyal and trustworthy, but the reality is that people of integrity are rare and hard to find. Many will destroy a friendship or relationship for money or for some selfish gain. A wise person values honesty and truthfulness, and he sees that lies will only destroy him and harm those he loves. In a world where not much is really what it seems because of the abundance of lies and trickery, it is a great privilege to find others who value honesty and humility and who tremble before the Word.

**⁷ A righteous man who walks in his integrity—
How blessed are his sons after him.**

Being a godly parent is more than just teaching the truths of the Lord to one's children. That is a critically important element of parenting, but it is also vitally important that truth is lived out in godly testimony. Paul said to imitate him as he imitated Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1). A godly parent teaches the truth and then models it before his children. This is a great blessing to children, to have a parent with integrity and a godly model to follow after. Giving children wisdom from early on, the protection of walking in obedience, and the opportunity to see Christianity modeled in integrity has incredible value in this life and in eternity.

**⁸ A king who sits on the throne of justice
Disperses all evil with his eyes.**

A king who rules justly and with authority and who is faithful to punish evil curtails the spread and propagation of evil just with the look of his eyes. Criminals enjoy having a justice system that can be bought or that is afraid of punishing them, but when justice is sure to be meted out, crime is less prevalent.

**⁹ Who can say, "I have cleansed my heart,
I am pure from my sin"?**

All people have broken the commands of God, and all people have fallen short of His holy standards (Romans 3:23). All people need a Savior in Jesus Christ, for He alone can cleanse their hearts and make them pure from their sin. His forgiveness is the only hope man has. Even believers need continuous and ongoing sanctification as God continues to teach them more about Himself and His ways. As God reveals sin to believers, some that they didn't even realize they were holding on to, they must confess it before Him and know that He is faithful and just to forgive it (1 John 1:9). "Who can discern his errors? Acquit me of hidden faults" (Psalm 19:12).

**¹⁰ Differing weights and differing measures,
Both of them are abominable to the Lord.**

God knows that stealing and lying come in various forms, and using misleading measures of payment is one of them. Not giving people what they paid for and stealing money from them with false weights and measures is a great wickedness before God. (see also v. 23)

**¹¹ It is by his deeds that a lad distinguishes himself
If his conduct is pure and right.**

Many people boast in their righteousness, and many people even profess to love Jesus. But what truly distinguishes a person is their fruit (James 2:26), for we can know the difference between a good tree and a bad tree by the nature of the fruit (Matthew 7:20). Words and deeds that are pure and right and which come to define a person's life and testimony is a strong reason to believe that their profession in Christ is genuine. Even young people can have a powerful testimony if they choose by faith to live obediently before Christ.

**¹² The hearing ear and the seeing eye,
The Lord has made both of them.**

It is wise to remember that the instruments of our bodies such as the eyes we see with and the ears we hear with are made by God and given to us by God. Thus, we should present our bodies as instruments of righteousness (Romans 6:13) for God's use to His glory rather than for sinful pleasures. He wants us to use the abilities and talents that He has given us for good works rather than for unjust gain. Our very bodies ought to remind us every day that we are fearfully and wonderfully made by God (Psalm 139:14), for even our eyes and ears testify to His glory and creative genius.

**¹³ Do not love sleep, or you will become poor;
Open your eyes, *and* you will be satisfied with food.**

Getting a good night of sleep is a healthy thing, but those who prefer to stay in bed all day and not work can expect to suffer poverty, need, and hunger. Work makes a person hungry, and it makes food more satisfying when eaten.

**¹⁴ "Bad, bad," says the buyer,
But when he goes his way, then he boasts.**

A buyer tries to negotiate the best price on a good or service by pretending that he is not that interested or that he is not that impressed with what he is thinking of buying. But once he gets the price that he seeks, he goes on his way proud of himself and boasting for the deal that he worked for himself. There is an aspect of shrewdness that is acceptable to have in business dealings, but Christians need to be careful that they don't cross the line into telling lies.

**¹⁵ There is gold, and an abundance of jewels;
But the lips of knowledge are a more precious thing.**

Possessing wisdom in Jesus Christ and being transformed by that wisdom and sharing that wisdom with others is more prized, precious, and valuable than all the world's gold and jewels. It has great eternal value, whereas money is not eternal.

**¹⁶ Take his garment when he becomes surety for a stranger;
And for foreigners, hold him in pledge.**

Being a co-signer or mutually responsible for a person's financial well-being is a dangerous undertaking, and several times Solomon advises people to get out from that kind of legal and contractual obligation. A person who becomes entirely liable for another person's debts and misfortunes puts his entire life, prosperity, and even perhaps his freedom in jeopardy. (see also Proverbs 6:1-5, 11:15, 17:18, 22:26-27)

**¹⁷ Bread obtained by falsehood is sweet to a man,
But afterward his mouth will be filled with gravel.**

Some people make a living by tricking people into getting things that they don't need, by lying, and by a wide range of deceptive business practices. They might enjoy their easy money now, but they will destroy their reputation and cause great harm to come to others and possibly even to themselves. Certainly, in eternity, they will see that their shortcuts in life were not worth it.

**¹⁸ Prepare plans by consultation,
And make war by wise guidance.**

It is not wise to hurry into actions without strategizing, planning, thinking, and problem-solving (Isaiah 32:8, Proverbs 19:2). It is wise to analyze things from every angle before making a quick decision that could cause grave danger and great damage to come. A general that goes to war without a battle plan is putting his soldiers and his country at great risk. Similarly, as believers seek to advance the kingdom of God through the proclamation of the gospel, it is wise to become familiar with it and to be prepared ahead of time so that one is able to speak clearly and boldly.

**¹⁹ He who goes about as a slanderer reveals secrets,
Therefore do not associate with a gossip.**

Gossips are not good people to associate with because they are not trustworthy. A deep meaningful relationship cannot happen with a gossip because things said in confidence will be spread to others. It is not an enjoyable, encouraging, or edifying experience to constantly have to filter and guard one's words because the person we are speaking with is not safe to talk to.

**²⁰ He who curses his father or his mother,
His lamp will go out in time of darkness.**

Those who hate their parents even if they are despicable people do not follow the example of Christ. He loved even those who sentenced Him to the cross and even those who drove the nails in. We should always hate sin but not the sinner, and people who are driven by hate and bitterness are not wise. The end of those who do not love, since love is a mark of true believers (John 13:34-35), is weeping and gnashing of teeth in hell.

**²¹ An inheritance gained hurriedly at the beginning
Will not be blessed in the end.**

Those who seek their inheritance in advance as the prodigal son did typically do so because they have spite toward their parents and because they want money to spend on their sinful lusts. This is obviously not honoring to God. Neither is it honoring to God to become consumed with making money and being constantly preoccupied with wealth. Those who hurry after wealth will end up sacrificing their relationship with God and others. There is nothing wrong with hard work and honest labor, but there is a balance that should be sought. The love of money is the root of all sorts of evil (1 Timothy 6:10), but keeping God first and foremost in the heart will always lead to eternal blessing and a fruitful life. “He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves abundance with its income. This too is vanity.” (Ecclesiastes 5:10)

**²² Do not say, “I will repay evil”;
Wait for the Lord, and He will save you.**

Vengeance is to be left in the hands of the Lord because He will repay (Deuteronomy 32:35, Romans 12:19, Hebrews 10:30). The justice system should be used to punish evil, of course, but sometimes the justice system gets it wrong or does not have enough evidence to convict. Fortunately, God sees all, and He will be sure that sin is punished. Thus, rather than becoming consumed by hate and a desire for revenge, a person can forgive and move on with his life, trusting God to deal with the sin of others. There is great freedom in this approach, for revenge does not free the soul. Rather, it enslaves it, even after one’s personal vendetta is carried out. Forgiveness and turning things over to God is the only path to life, hope, and joy.

**²³ Differing weights are an abomination to the Lord,
And a false scale is not good.**

Solomon again hits on the theme of dishonest business dealing and theft (see also v. 10). Obviously, the love of money leads to all sorts of evil, and Solomon wants people to be aware of that fact before it is too late to do anything about their eternal destiny.

**²⁴ Man’s steps are *ordained* by the Lord,
How then can man understand his way?**

Walking by faith rather than by sight means trusting God that He is indeed good, faithful, and in charge of all that He allows to happen in our lives. We must surrender to His will, seek His guidance, and conform our lives to His Word, trusting that He will cause all things to work for our good. Faith is what brings peace, not seeking to understand every move that God makes (Philippians 4:7). God is on the throne, and we are not. But He cares about us, and that should give us reason to hope that the most powerful Being in the universe is on our side, fighting for us and empowering our hearts to obey. Some things in life won't make much sense as they unfold, but as we look back on our lives, we will see the legacy of goodness and mercy that God has left in our lives (Psalm 23:6). His way is always kindest, wisest, and best. When we lack wisdom, He does not, and He will give us the insight that we need to have to take the steps of faith that we need to take. However, total understanding belongs to God alone (Deuteronomy 29:29). (see also Proverbs 16:9)

**²⁵ It is a trap for a man to say rashly, "It is holy!"
And after the vows to make inquiry.**

In the Old Testament, there was a practice of declaring something sacred as a gift to God. The idea in this verse is that people needed to understand what they were doing and why and not make a promise to God rashly. After making the vow, it was too late to go back on the commitment, unless one wanted to break his word before God. Thus, Solomon's admonition is to think through what one was dedicating to God before doing it so as to have understanding of the process, to be able to worship God in the giving, and to not have to be concerned about breaking a promise to God. It would be better to not promise anything at all than to promise and go back on the promise. Ecclesiastes 5:4-6 says, "When you make a vow to God, do not be late in paying it; for He takes no delight in fools. Pay what you vow! It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay. Do not let your speech cause you to sin and do not say in the presence of the messenger of God that it was a mistake. Why should God be angry on account of your voice and destroy the work of your hands?" (see also Numbers 30:2, Deuteronomy 23:21-23, Psalm 50:14). Obedience is always more pleasing to God than sacrifice and empty religious acts with no understanding. Proverbs 21:3 says, "To do righteousness and justice Is desired by the LORD more than sacrifice."

**²⁶ A wise king winnows the wicked,
And drives the *threshing* wheel over them.**

A wise king discerns good from evil, and he punishes the wicked justly so that they cannot oppress the righteous. Criminals are not allowed to bribe the system or pervert justice when a righteous king is in charge. The innocent and good rejoice in a fair king that loves justice and honor.

**²⁷ The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord,
Searching all the innermost parts of his being.**

The Lord has set eternity in the hearts of men by putting something in their inner being that knows that they are more than just a cosmic accident or mixed batch of chemical compounds (Ecclesiastes 3:11). Man has an innate realization of God, His ordinances, and His judgment (Romans 1:19-21, 32). As man's mind encounters the Scripture, his heart is cut to the core to expose the lies (Hebrews 4:12). His conscience either condemns him or confirms to him that he should have confidence in the day of judgment (1 John 3:19-21). Man is hard-wired to have to work through spiritual matters, and thus he is accountable to do so even if he has so defiled his conscience that he no longer believes it even exists.

**²⁸ Loyalty and truth preserve the king,
And he upholds his throne by righteousness.**

A king that wants to rule long and well is best served by being fair and loyal and upholding truth and righteousness. Those who have a biased or selfish agenda or who have been bought and paid for will not be able to rule with impartiality. Those who are more interested in their position than in doing right will do anything to keep their position of power, even if it means hurting people or giving an advantage to the well-connected at the expense of those who are not. A king's credibility is wasted if he does not have principles, and people who have any sense do not respect a person who has no values but who changes his view based on popular trends or convenient "truths."

**²⁹ The glory of young men is their strength,
And the honor of old men is their gray hair.**

In youth is when people typically have the most energy, and thus it really helps to have wisdom while still being young since much can be accomplished for the kingdom. Old men can encourage and edify others with their wisdom and the things that God has taught them over the years. Both are responsible before God to use their opportunities and what God has given them to advance the kingdom.

**³⁰ Stripes that wound scour away evil,
And strokes *reach* the innermost parts.**

Sometimes the devastation of sin can help wake a person up to start seeking out something more in Christ (Luke 15:15-17). The discipline of Christ for His children teaches them how to walk in truth, and it keeps them from harming themselves (Hebrews 12:9-11). When believers who continue in sin and harden themselves are turned over to Satan for the destruction of their flesh, they may come to see the error of their ways (1 Corinthians 5:5). Hardship and divine discipline can help mold the heart and soul to seek out what is true and what really matters (Lamentations 3:27-33). Wise people are teachable, and they listen to instruction and respond humbly to discipline (James 1:2-4, Romans 5:3-5). They allow the Potter to mold the clay of their hearts (Jeremiah 18:6).

Proverbs 21

**The king's heart is *like* channels of water in the hand of the Lord;
He turns it wherever He wishes.**

Kings and other earthly authorities can be prone to pride as a result of their power. But they are not the sovereign of the world, and they must recognize that they only have the position because God has allowed it to happen (Romans 13:1). Nebuchadnezzar exalted himself on account of his kingdom, and God had to humble him severely (Daniel 4). God allows certain people to come to power, and He brings others low. He changes hearts of kings, and He hardens hearts of kings. The bottom line is that God is the ultimate King, and no power on earth can thwart that reality.

**² Every man's way is right in his own eyes,
But the Lord weighs the hearts.**

People are prone to rationalize sin, to self-justify, and to fail to see the reality of their sin before God. There is a way that seems right to a man, but, because it is sinful, it leads to death. The deceptive heart that man is born with needs to be reborn in Christ. God sees the true state of all hearts, and only those which are cleansed with Christ's blood will be clean and pure and able to enter heaven. (see also Proverbs 14:12, 16:25)

**³ To do righteousness and justice
Is desired by the Lord more than sacrifice.**

Anybody can perform empty religious rituals and ceremonies, but God is interested in the state of the heart. He wants those who obey Him by faith and who lead lives devoted to righteousness and justice. Empty religion never saved anybody, but those who obey the commands of God demonstrate that they have hearts that have been reborn in Christ. King Saul disobeyed God by taking lambs as part of the spoil from the battle, and he tried to satisfy God by sacrificing them. But God wanted obedience rather than sacrifice and to listen to Him more than burnt offerings (1 Samuel 15:22). Obedience to God's commands is how we prove our love for Him, not by vain rituals devoid of submission to God in the heart (John 14:15).

**⁴ Haughty eyes and a proud heart,
The lamp of the wicked, is sin.**

The wicked person is driven by a deceitful and wicked heart (Jeremiah 17:9), and he is filled with pride and arrogance. He is a scoffer and a mocker, not having any fear of God in his heart. He looks down on others, and selfishness rules in his heart. His sin nature leads him to all kinds of sin. Only Jesus can change his heart and grant him newness of life.

**⁵ The plans of the diligent *lead* surely to advantage,
But everyone who is hasty *comes* surely to poverty.**

Planning, strategizing, and seeking godly counsel are all wise things to do. Those who make hasty, careless decisions without any forethought often will find that their decisions don't end well.

**⁶ The acquisition of treasures by a lying tongue
Is a fleeting vapor, the pursuit of death.**

It is not worth it to pursue money, wealth, and the world's treasures by cheating, stealing, and conning. Much of the way people gain wealth in the world today is not honestly but by oppression, exploitation, deception, and through blackmail or favoritism. This lifestyle is evidence of a person who is on the fast track to hell because he loves himself and money more than his own soul or the welfare of others.

**⁷ The violence of the wicked will drag them away,
Because they refuse to act with justice.**

Violence and wickedness have a strong association throughout the book of Proverbs. Proverbs 13:21 says that adversity pursues sinners because they create needless harm and destruction for themselves by loving sin rather than what is good. Being unjust creates feelings of animosity, inability to trust one another, and lots of anger that leads to violence. Evildoers will likely be victims of their own evil and violence, and God will be sure to punish evil in eternity.

**⁸ The way of a guilty man is crooked,
But as for the pure, his conduct is upright.**

A guilty man has to continue to lie and cover up his wrong, and he must constantly live in fear and worry that he will one day be caught. Thus, his way veers all over the place, his answers change, and he is unreliable and untrustworthy. The pure in heart have nothing to hide, nothing to fear, and nothing to run from, and thus all that they do can be straightforward, honest, and above reproach.

**⁹ It is better to live in a corner of a roof
Than in a house shared with a contentious woman.**

Solomon wants people to be careful who they marry because it could be more miserable than being holed up in an attic. Being unequally yoked by marrying somebody who doesn't know how to submit to Christ and how to love others cannot end well. It might not always be this bad, but if the woman is never agreeable, always nit-picking, and always nagging and complaining, then it will be. (see also v. 19, Proverbs 25:24, and Proverbs 27:15).

**¹⁰ The soul of the wicked desires evil;
His neighbor finds no favor in his eyes.**

Wicked people crave evil in their souls because their hearts are evil, and evil is what drives them. Their evil nature causes them to be unable to love others, and they are unable to follow Christ's command to love their neighbors as themselves. They look down on others and are ready and willing to do them harm if it would pose an advantage for them.

**¹¹ When the scoffer is punished, the naive becomes wise;
But when the wise is instructed, he receives knowledge.**

This verse parallels Proverbs 19:25. The idea is that a wise man learns from instruction, responds humbly to it, and is changed unto righteousness as he receives knowledge. A scoffer remains hardened by pride, and the only learning he receives is how to be shrewder in his sinful acts so as not to get punished again. The punishment is not something that he grows spiritually from, but it is something that makes him more devious. Thus, it all comes down to the state of a person's heart, whether or not they are pliable, humble, and teachable. Discipline given should be in the context of understanding what is going on in the heart rather than trying just to render punishment for punishment's sake.

**¹² The righteous one considers the house of the wicked,
Turning the wicked to ruin.**

The ESV translates this verse, "The Righteous One observes the house of the wicked; he throws the wicked down to ruin." God is paying attention to all that the wicked do, and He will one day pour out His wrath and judgment upon them. Eternal destruction will be their destiny, for the Righteous One will bring it to pass according to His perfect justice.

**¹³ He who shuts his ear to the cry of the poor
Will also cry himself and not be answered.**

God hates when people are cruel to the poor and when they neglect those in need when it is in their power to do something to help. Those who know the love of Christ should have compassion on the needy, and they should use their opportunity to give physical provisions as a chance to share the spiritual message of hope in the gospel of Christ. Those who neglect the cry of the poor demonstrate a hardness of heart and a selfish arrogance that is indicative not of those who walk humbly before God and have the privilege of answered prayer (John 15:7) but of those who regard iniquity in their heart such that the Lord cannot hear (Psalm 66:18). This would be expected of unbelievers, but even believers can be guilty of being greedy and lacking compassion, and God will not hear their prayers if they are harboring evil in their hearts.

**¹⁴ A gift in secret subdues anger,
And a bribe in the bosom, strong wrath.**

A person can be bought off with money and gifts. Bribing is usually wrong because it perverts justice, but there may be a time when it is worth settling out of court, so to speak, to pay for one's debts or to make up for one's wrongs (Luke 12:58).

**¹⁵ The exercise of justice is joy for the righteous,
But is terror to the workers of iniquity.**

The righteous enjoy seeing justice meted out because they have nothing to fear, and justice is protection and vindication for them. Those who do evil and commit injustice will find that the enforcement of justice is frightening because they deserve to face the consequences. The righteous have hope and joyful anticipation for the day when Christ judges the world and renders to each according to his deeds (Revelation 22:20).

**¹⁶ A man who wanders from the way of understanding
Will rest in the assembly of the dead.**

A man who has heard the truth and even received it with excitement but whose profession of faith was never really possession of Christ in the heart will demonstrate the lack of genuineness regarding his conversion by eventually wandering away (Matthew 13:18-23). He will go out from the true assembly of believers because he was never really one to begin with (1 John 2:19). He will end up with others who enjoy sin, and their eternal destiny is eternal destruction. Believers who wander (1 Timothy 1:18-20) will not end up spiritually dead by losing their salvation, but they will find that being turned over to Satan by the church for the destruction of their flesh for the preservation of their souls is not pleasant (1 Corinthians 5:5). Sin's passing pleasures always cause the soul to ache, to yearn, to be parched, and to suffer, particularly in comparison to knowing Christ and enjoying His good and perfect gifts. Though believers who harden their hearts in sin will still go to heaven, their rebellion could cost them their lives or, at the very least, their health (1 Corinthians 11:30).

**¹⁷ He who loves pleasure *will become* a poor man;
He who loves wine and oil will not become rich.**

Practically, the idea is that those who are addicted to spending lots of money on luxuries such as wine and oil and throwing money away on wasteful pleasurable pursuits will often find that they have no money left to keep wasting and spending (compare with the treasures of the wise who have saved diligently in v. 20). The prodigal son blew his entire inheritance on prostitutes and immoral living. Money can evaporate very quickly when spending it at a feverish pace or gambling it away in order to keep a sinful high going. What people need to understand is that sinful pleasures are like a giant black hole, sucking life and joy and likely even a person's financial well-being until all is gone. Worse yet, a heart that lives for sin will find its eternal destiny in hell on account of its spiritual bankruptcy. If man would repent and put his faith in Christ, then He could have access to all the spiritual pleasures and riches that are in Christ (Ephesians 1:3, Psalm 16:11). After all, it is not pleasure or enjoyment which is of itself wrong as if God forbids happiness and exuberance. Doing things God's way is actually the only hope of

true ecstasy in this life and in the next. There are no hangovers or bad trips with a holy and God-honoring lifestyle, only new mercies each morning.

There is nothing wrong with enjoying life (Ecclesiastes 5:18, 9:9), but what is wrong is living life in the pursuit of selfish sinful pleasures. The lust for pleasure, wealth, and the high life (Ecclesiastes 10:19) is a lifestyle of idolatry, and it does not value God and His eternal priorities. People would be wise to enjoy life by honoring and thanking God for His good and perfect gifts such as food, drink, family, and the chance to work and serve Him. Whether rich or poor, joy can be full when choosing to seek first the kingdom of God.

**¹⁸ The wicked is a ransom for the righteous,
And the treacherous is in the place of the upright.**

Jesus Christ is the ransom for the righteous (Psalm 31:5) because He took upon Himself all the wickedness of man. He Who knew no sin became sin that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21). He, being perfect, took on all the treachery of sinners so that God would punish Him and offer them the opportunity to have eternal life if only they would repent and seek forgiveness and salvation in Christ.

**¹⁹ It is better to live in a desert land
Than with a contentious and vexing woman.**

Solomon will say later that a contentious wife is like a dripping faucet (Proverbs 27:15), constantly making the husband feel worthless and unloved. Now he adds that a man would be better off wandering in a desert wilderness than being stuck under the same roof with a woman who loves to mock, insult, provoke, and vex. These character qualities are in line with the descriptors throughout the book of Proverbs regarding the fool. The fool likes fighting, anger, and the lack of peace. This is not the type of person to marry unless one enjoys being miserable. (see also v. 9 and Proverbs 25:24)

**²⁰ There is precious treasure and oil in the dwelling of the wise,
But a foolish man swallows it up.**

The righteous recognize that they are stewards of what God entrusts them with, and they save some things so that they can take care of their own and others in time of need. They use their resources and opportunities wisely, but the foolish man lives a life of greed, waste, and overly-indulgent spending (see v. 17) such that he has nothing saved for trying times or to be able to help others.

**²¹ He who pursues righteousness and loyalty
Finds life, righteousness and honor.**

Those who seek the truth will find it in Christ because the door will be opened to those who eagerly and humbly knock upon it (Matthew 7:7). Those who practice the truth will come to the Light (John 3:21), and their deeds will have seen in the end to have been wrought in God all along. No man seeks God of his own initiative (Romans 3:11), but

God draws all people (John 12:32). Some respond by pursuing truth, righteousness, and loyalty, and they will find Jesus Who gives eternal life, Who makes men holy, and Who will honor them in eternity (Matthew 22:14). There is no such thing as righteousness apart from Christ and the gospel, for that is empty moralism that is filled with vain God-denying, self-exalting pride. Only the pursuit of Christ by faith can lead to righteousness and the benefits thereof.

**²² A wise man scales the city of the mighty
And brings down the stronghold in which they trust.**

It is good to have wisdom in military situations, but Solomon is likely after more than that here. There is a greater battle than any military conquest that has ever been fought, and that is the battle for souls based upon the proclamation of gospel truth. Wisdom reasons with the lost, shows them the error of their thinking, points out the sin of their ways, and shows them the legitimacy of Christ and the reliability of Scripture. Wisdom shows the mighty and worldly-wise that their assumptions are flawed and that their philosophical models are incomplete. Wisdom tears down their stronghold of pride by exposing error and exalting Christ. Paul did this admirably in Acts 17 by showing the Athenians the weakness of their philosophies and the glory of the risen Christ.

**²³ He who guards his mouth and his tongue,
Guards his soul from troubles.**

Those who can control their tongue and speak wisely, graciously, and peaceably will keep from getting into a lot of the trouble that those who speak without thinking will get themselves into. Being able to control the tongue is a sign that God has control of the heart because no man can of his own will control the tongue (James 3:2). Self-control is a fruit of the Spirit, something we are dependent upon God to learn and practice (Galatians 5:22-23). Thus, those who are able to guard their lips demonstrate fruit that they are indeed of God and that their souls have been redeemed (Matthew 7:20).

**²⁴ “Proud,” “Haughty,” “Scoffer,” are his names,
Who acts with insolent pride.**

God hates pride, for it is the ultimate offense to deny His deity, which is what pride does in effect. Pride refuses to acknowledge God, to thank God, to praise God, to glorify God, and to worship God, preferring to act instead as if self is due the glory, the credit, and the sufficiency. Only God is sufficient, and man must recognize His dependency upon God and the authority of God. Those who scoff at God and His Word, those who have an over-inflated view of themselves, and those who look down on others are highly offensive to God. These store up God’s wrath for themselves, and they need to learn the way of the righteous (Psalm 1).

**²⁵ The desire of the sluggard puts him to death,
For his hands refuse to work;
²⁶ All day long he is craving,**

While the righteous gives and does not hold back.

The lazy person is not motivated by the fear of God, to work hard, and to provide financially for himself and for his own. He chooses not to labor and to earn an honest living because he desires to do nothing. He should expect to be in need and to end up even in poverty, and he will have nothing to give to others in need. The righteous through honest labor earn money that they can use to feed themselves and care for their families and even have some left over to give to others who are in need. This doesn't mean enabling laziness, but it means taking care of those who are unable to provide for themselves or their own. There is a great difference between choosing not to work when one is able and when work is available as compared to the person who is not able to work or who does not have any immediate option available to him (2 Thessalonians 3:10).

**²⁷ The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination,
How much more when he brings it with evil intent!**

God takes no pleasure in religious acts and rituals when the heart behind the act is far from Him. He sees all, and He sees down into the depths of the heart, dissecting motives, attitudes, and intents. The wicked person cannot please God or atone for himself with religious acts, for he needs to turn to God begging for forgiveness and cleansing in Christ. That is his only hope. God wants obedience more than sacrifice, and obedience is only possible as a result of a heart that has been reborn in Christ. The wicked have diabolical hearts (Jeremiah 17:9), and the evil intents of their hearts need to be changed. To think that one can atone for himself apart from Christ is actually an evil intent because it spurns the sacrifice of Christ on the cross.

**²⁸ A false witness will perish,
But the man who listens to *the truth* will speak forever.**

Those who are of the devil live to lie, but the righteous listen to the truth and respond obediently to it because of their love for Christ. They have eternal life in Him, and they will praise His name forever. The wicked will be cut off from God and sentenced to condemnation in hell.

**²⁹ A wicked man displays a bold face,
But as for the upright, he makes his way sure.**

A wicked man might act confidently and feign boldness, but the righteous man seeks wisdom, trusts in the Lord for guidance and protection, and takes the necessary steps of planning and taking precautions as God enables and leads. The wicked person tries to act tough, but the righteous person has real strength and hope in the Lord. The wicked can only have confidence in themselves and their own abilities and provisions, but the righteous have the God of the universe on their side fighting for them (Deuteronomy 3:22). Thus, the confidence of the wicked is but their own personal opinion and a figment of their imagination (Proverbs 18:11), but the confidence of the righteous is boasting in He Who is strong even though they are weak (2 Corinthians 12:10).

**³⁰ There is no wisdom and no understanding
And no counsel against the Lord.**

Since wisdom is found in Christ and since God is wisdom personified, there can be no wisdom that speaks against Him, His will, or His Word. His Word will endure forever, but no counsel that mocks Him or taunts Him will stand in the end. Truth will always win out because God will judge the world.

**³¹ The horse is prepared for the day of battle,
But victory belongs to the Lord.**

Planning and preparation are man's responsibility, but ultimately nothing can be accomplished without the help of the Lord. He is sovereign over all the affairs of men. Psalm 127:1 says, "Unless the Lord builds the house, They labor in vain who build it; Unless the Lord guards the city, The watchman keeps awake in vain." (see also Proverbs 16:9, John 15:5)

Proverbs 22

**A good name is to be more desired than great wealth,
Favor is better than silver and gold.**

Some things money cannot buy like a good reputation, a noble name, and a God-honoring testimony. These things come by faith and a life lived in the fear of God. Despite what others may think or say, the only thing that really matters is the state of a person's heart which God knows and sees. What God thinks and His approval is what has ultimate value, and no amount of gold or silver can buy God's favor or redemption. Man's only hope is redemption through Christ. His favor and being adopted into His family is the greatest wealth of all.

**²The rich and the poor have a common bond,
The Lord is the maker of them all.**

Sometimes those who have been given much in this world act as though those who are not as fortunate are less human or important. The Christian loves all indiscriminately because Christ died for all. God made all people, and He desires that all would come to faith in Jesus. The evil heart hates others, mocks them for things that they can't control, and judges them for things for which they are not at fault (John 9:2). They do this because they glory in their possessions and in their status (Luke 16:14), and they neglect others because of their arrogance and pride (John 12:43). This is not to be the perspective of the Christian.

**³The prudent sees the evil and hides himself,
But the naive go on, and are punished for it.**

Those who are wise avoid trouble by seeing danger signs early, and they take steps to move out of the way and to protect themselves. Those who lack discernment and the compass of Scripture as well as the leading of the Holy Spirit in their hearts are bound to err in their decision-making and to be vulnerable to getting taken advantage of. Those who lack knowledge will suffer on account of it. Those who fear God will find sufficient wisdom in Christ. Those who do not fear God's punishment will refuse to change the direction of their lives and end up getting His wrath.

**⁴The reward of humility *and* the fear of the Lord
Are riches, honor and life.**

God will reward those who fear Him and obey Him in this life (1 Peter 5:6, 1 Samuel 2:30). They will find eternal riches and honor in heaven. Even in this life, given that eternal life is knowing Christ which they do even now (John 17:3), they can enjoy the blessings of relationship with Him. His wisdom will help them enjoy this life and live a life that is abundantly fruitful (John 10:10, 15:8).

⁵ Thorns *and* snares are in the way of the perverse;

He who guards himself will be far from them.

Sin is destructive by nature, and those who love evil can expect to find trouble and adversity even if they seem to get away with their evil for a time (Proverbs 13:21). Those who desire to walk in righteousness will be protected from so much of the needless pain and strife that accompanies sin. Sin has a way of compounding on itself, whereas faith in Christ leads to the manifestation of the goodness and mercy of God throughout life.

**⁶ Train up a child in the way he should go,
Even when he is old he will not depart from it.**

This verse should be a great encouragement to parents who have invested themselves wholeheartedly in the lives of their children by teaching them the Scripture and the truths concerning Jesus Christ. Children need to see a consistent theology and a life that validates that theology with God-honoring behavior. They need to see the love of Christ demonstrated, but most of all they need to understand the gospel. Just growing up in a family that goes to church and prefers Christian media is not sufficient to be called child training. Though the church can and should help, parents must take full responsibility on themselves to teach their children what the Bible is about, why they should believe it, and why it is reliable in a world that hates Jesus and rejects the Bible. They must guide their little hearts down the right path, and, as the children grow older, they can see the errors of others' paths and the benefits of the right way. Children are ultimately responsible for their own direction in life, but parents can have confidence and assurance that their children will persevere in the truth if their hearts belong to Jesus Christ. This is why child training is not about getting a child to submit and follow a system, but it is about guiding their hearts to love Jesus and showing them why that is the best decision and the only sensible way. (see also v. 15)

**⁷ The rich rules over the poor,
And the borrower *becomes* the lender's slave.**

The general reality of the world is that those who have riches tend to treat the poor in an oppressive manner, and there is a tendency to show personal favoritism toward other rich people. This is why God commands Christians to be different and to think against the grain by valuing other human beings and loving when others hate and think only of themselves. Debt should be avoided as much as possible to avoid any chance of being exploited by the rich. Debt may be necessary for a time, but it is wicked to not pay it back (Psalm 37:21). Thus, any borrowing must be done in wisdom and not greed, and too much debt only leads to destruction and serfdom.

**⁸ He who sows iniquity will reap vanity,
And the rod of his fury will perish.**

The end of evil deeds is wrath and judgment, and God will render justice due a person on account of their wrongdoing. There is no eternal value in a life lived without Christ and against His commands, for it is ultimate vanity and meaninglessness. Those who live to

stir up anger and get ahead in life regardless of what it means for others will one day die, and they will pay for what they have done.

**⁹ He who is generous will be blessed,
For he gives some of his food to the poor.**

The church should care for those in need within its fellowship first and foremost, but it should also be mindful of those in need in the surrounding community (Galatians 6:10). The mission of the church extends to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8), and thus there should always be a concern for those in need regardless of where they live (Matthew 5:16). God will honor and bless those who act in generosity toward the poor, and this is a personal act of love toward the Savior (Matthew 25:45).

**¹⁰ Drive out the scoffer, and contention will go out,
Even strife and dishonor will cease.**

Those who scoff and mock do so because they enjoy division and destruction. When these people who seek animosity and violence are put out of a group, it can make peace multiply quickly. The church of Jesus Christ should be a place where unity and peace are sought (John 17:21, Hebrews 12:14) as all desire to conform to the Word of God (1 Corinthians 1:10). Those who reject sound teaching and who like stirring up a fight will pervert that unity and cause a problem. This is why those who harden themselves in sin must be put out of the church (1 Corinthians 5:5, Matthew 18:15-18).

**¹¹ He who loves purity of heart
And whose speech is gracious, the king is his friend.**

When a society comes to value deception, lying, scheming, and whatever is most convenient to get ahead in the moment regardless of whether it is pure or gracious, practically nobody can be anybody's friend (Matthew 24:12). But a king that has any sense will value an honest person as a trustworthy friend and confidant. He will find in a person with a pure heart wise and gracious words that can help him lead. A wicked king might spurn or execute a good person, but, then again, it might just make the king think twice and learn about the God who makes the person good (Daniel 3-4). Being pure of heart and gracious in speech is always the best and right approach.

**¹² The eyes of the Lord preserve knowledge,
But He overthrows the words of the treacherous man.**

The Word of the Lord endures forever, and He strongly supports those whose hearts are completely His. He preserves the way of His godly ones (Proverbs 2:8), and the proud will be recompensed according to their wicked deeds (Psalm 31:23). He remembers the boastful words of the wicked and treacherous, and they will suffer His wrath on account of them. His Word will stand in judgment over them rather than the other way around.

¹³ The sluggard says, "There is a lion outside;

I will be killed in the streets!”

Fear, whether real or imagined, can lead a person to become lazy and unproductive, both practically and spiritually. Christians must not bury their talents in the ground out of fear of failure or any other fear. They must take the gospel to the street and proclaim it from the rooftops so that their boldness and confidence can even make the enemies of Christ tremble (Nehemiah 6:16). A lazy person makes excuses, but a faithful person finds reasons to participate in the Lord’s harvest (Matthew 9:37-38).

**¹⁴ The mouth of an adulteress is a deep pit;
He who is cursed of the Lord will fall into it.**

Those who commit adultery bring great destruction upon themselves and their families. Those who fear God will stay far away from any provision for the lusts of the flesh, while those who are cursed of God and sons of the devil will eagerly tread the minefield of immorality. God is always ready and willing to forgive sin, but, particularly in the case of sexual immorality, some damage is very difficult to reverse.

**¹⁵ Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child;
The rod of discipline will remove it far from him.**

There is a need to train children in righteousness because all children are born with fallen and sinful hearts. They instinctively know how to rebel and to be stubborn, and they need to be trained as to what is right, good, and pleasing to God. They need discipline to set their boundaries and to show them that their parents are concerned for their well-being and that they seek to protect them from danger. Discipline is not wrathful or cruel, but it is a loving means of teaching, training, and protecting one’s children from sin, evil, and unnecessary harm. Each child responds to varying methods of reproof and correction differently, and parents must be attune to their child’s needs and continue to find out what is the best way to help shape their character and to teach them to obey. Anger at one’s children or abusive practices have no place in Christian discipline, but parents who train their children long to see their children learn wisdom and forego foolish thinking and behavior. (see also v. 6)

**¹⁶ He who oppresses the poor to make more for himself
Or who gives to the rich, *will only come to poverty.***

Those who take unrighteously from the poor to benefit the rich unfairly and those who do harm to the poor by using them for selfish gain reveal the wickedness of their hearts and the reality that they will be eternally impoverished in hell. If justice is served on earth, they ought to be punished for their crimes.

**¹⁷ Incline your ear and hear the words of the wise,
And apply your mind to my knowledge;**

**¹⁸ For it will be pleasant if you keep them within you,
That they may be ready on your lips.**

**¹⁹ So that your trust may be in the Lord,
I have taught you today, even you.
²⁰ Have I not written to you excellent things
Of counsels and knowledge,
²¹ To make you know the certainty of the words of truth
That you may correctly answer him who sent you?**

By seeking after wisdom and eagerly absorbing sound teaching from the Word, a person can be filled with peace and joy and ready to speak good, helpful advice to others. Wisdom moves a person to trust wholly in God and not in self, to love Him above all else, and to value his neighbor as more important than himself. Wisdom believes in the certainty of the truth of Scripture, and the Scripture by faith in Christ works to make a person wise and able to give a wise response as needed. The more confidence a believer has in the Word of God and the fact that it is eternal, certain, and irrefutable, the wiser he will be, the more He will be moved to study the Word, the more it will impact him, and the more his life will impact the world as he is better equipped to give an apt answer to those who ask (1 Peter 3:15).

**²² Do not rob the poor because he is poor,
Or crush the afflicted at the gate;
²³ For the Lord will plead their case
And take the life of those who rob them.**

Those who rob the poor and are cruel to the poor show themselves to have wicked hearts that care only for their own gain. These who do not fear God enjoy oppressing the less fortunate, and they will suffer God's wrath on the day of judgment and maybe even in this life.

**²⁴ Do not associate with a man *given* to anger;
Or go with a hot-tempered man,
²⁵ Or you will learn his ways
And find a snare for yourself.**

Wisdom says to avoid those with hot tempers and who are quick to anger because they are marks of a fool. This leads to adversity, danger, and destruction because bad company corrupts good morals.

**²⁶ Do not be among those who give pledges,
Among those who become guarantors for debts.
²⁷ If you have nothing with which to pay,
Why should he take your bed from under you?**

Being a co-signer or a guarantor for another's debts is unwise because it could cost a person all of his possessions if the other person was in financial distress. (see also Proverbs 6:1-5, 11:15, 17:18)

**28 Do not move the ancient boundary
Which your fathers have set.**

If property lines are drawn in a certain place because of a promise made, then to move the lines is stealing, dishonest, and unrighteous.

**29 Do you see a man skilled in his work?
He will stand before kings;
He will not stand before obscure men.**

Given the way the world works, it is common for those who have great skills and talents to have the opportunity to associate with those in positions of power. Those who are not endowed with elite talent and skills are usually forgotten and snubbed by those who enjoy being among the elites. It is not wrong to be very skilled, but those who have been blessed with great talent need to remember just Who it is Who gave them that talent lest they succumb to pride and the approval of people and the love of the praise of the world. It is no accident or coincidence that the true church is not made up of many who are wise according to the flesh, mighty, or noble according to the world (1 Corinthians 1:26) because of how difficult it is to love God when it will come at such a great cost. As Jesus told the rich man who loved his stuff and status as a result of his stuff, “Looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him and said to him, ‘One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.’ But at these words he was saddened, and he went away grieving, for he was one who owned much property.” (Mark 10:21-22)

Proverbs 23

**When you sit down to dine with a ruler,
Consider carefully what is before you,
² And put a knife to your throat
If you are a man of *great* appetite.
³ Do not desire his delicacies,
For it is deceptive food.**

Inferring from verses 6-8, the idea presented here is that the ruler has a selfish agenda that he is trying to sway a person into giving into. He wants to buy the person off and use him for his purposes and agenda. Taking of his delicacies, benefits, gifts, and even bribes could cloud a person's ability to make good decisions and more prone to join forces with a bad person. The pressure to cede a just position in the presence of power, prestige, and possessions can be strong, but a person must not desire anything the ruler can offer. He must focus on the truth of the situation, and this will keep him from being deceived.

**⁴ Do not weary yourself to gain wealth,
Cease from your consideration of it.
⁵ When you set your eyes on it, it is gone.
For *wealth* certainly makes itself wings
Like an eagle that flies *toward* the heavens.**

It is not a good spiritual and eternal investment to become consumed by making money or by the desire to get rich. The command here is to stop thinking about money all the time, for that is idolatry. It is impossible to love God and money at the same time (Matthew 6:24). Wealth cannot even deliver upon what it promises, for it can easily be lost or stolen. It certainly cannot buy salvation or go into the afterlife (Matthew 6:20). Its value is purely temporary, and it ought to be used to help others rather than for spurious selfish gain.

**⁶ Do not eat the bread of a selfish man,
Or desire his delicacies;
⁷ For as he thinks within himself, so he is.
He says to you, "Eat and drink!"
But his heart is not with you.
⁸ You will vomit up the morsel you have eaten,
And waste your compliments.**

A selfish person with a wicked heart thinks ill thoughts in his mind about others. He may be pleasant on the surface, but ultimately he will betray and use a person for his own gain. It is important for a wise person to protect himself by not taking benefits from a person who is selfish, for what the person takes will end up costing him and being misery to him. A selfish person cannot and does not give freely without expecting something in return, and this is not worth the morsel eaten. It is also not worth getting tricked into thinking a person is decent-hearted and even saying as much when the reality is just the

opposite. Taking gifts from those with evil motives of selfishness can blind one's judgment and cause a person to make mistakes and be exploited. Being used and being played is a majorly undignifying and dehumanizing experience, and it is a great way to waste one's time and energy.

**⁹ Do not speak in the hearing of a fool,
For he will despise the wisdom of your words.**

It is a good thing to want to share wisdom with others, but fools will reject it and despise it. Thus, rather than cast pearls before swine, it is sometimes better to not say anything than to waste words.

**¹⁰ Do not move the ancient boundary
Or go into the fields of the fatherless,
¹¹ For their Redeemer is strong;
He will plead their case against you.**

Wicked people seek to steal property and land by voiding ancient contracts and moving agreed-upon lines. The powerful may try to take from the weak, undiscerning, and vulnerable, but God will avenge the wrongs done. He hates when the weak and innocent are oppressed and maltreated, and this is why part of being a Christian is to be compassionate and fair to those who are less fortunate.

**¹² Apply your heart to discipline
And your ears to words of knowledge.**

Even after a person trusts Christ and is given a new heart, there is still a lifelong journey of sanctifying work to be done. The Christian's heart desire should be for being submissive to the Word of God and to the Spirit's working in his heart. The Christian needs self-control and discipline to apply himself to study God's Word (2 Timothy 2:15) and to resist the devil (James 4:7) and not make provisions for the flesh and its lusts (Romans 13:14). The Christian life is an ongoing battle for truth and righteousness, and it requires a heart that trembles before God's Word. The believer must wield Scripture as a sword to fight off Satan's lies (Ephesians 6:17), and he must allow the Spirit to use truth to convict the heart of sin and to teach and strengthen the spirit. Wisdom keeps pressing on toward the prize of the upward call in Christ Jesus by listening to and applying God's Word (Philippians 3:14).

**¹³ Do not hold back discipline from the child,
Although you strike him with the rod, he will not die.
¹⁴ You shall strike him with the rod
And rescue his soul from Sheol.**

A parent who neglects to reprove or correct his child doesn't love his child. He is content to let the child's evil nature which he is born with grow until it consumes him and sends his soul to hell. Wisdom understands that children are born with a wicked heart, and

those who love Jesus and their children will teach them about the nature of their sin and how Christ wants to forgive them and change them. Parenting done according to Scripture shows children the value of obeying God and how to walk in the fear of God. Parents must be willing to deal with rebellion and stubbornness quickly, and discipline cannot be an afterthought. Children need to know their boundaries, why they are there, and that they will consistently be enforced. Authoritarian parenting, abusive parenting, or parents that are just overly strict and mean are not according to the Biblical model. God is patient with us, His children, He is gracious, He is faithful to discipline us, and He is good to show us how it produces righteousness in our lives (Hebrews 12:11). The same should be true of parents raising their children. They cannot be afraid of their children getting mad at them on account of their discipline, and they cannot stop and give into thinking that they are harming their children by imposing consequences for bad behavior. This does not stymie their growth or development, but it should make them less selfish and proud. Self-esteem is useless if it is not under the authority of Christ and found in Him. Discipline shows us that we need Jesus to help us obey and that we do have a heavenly authority. It helps us learn to love Him, to deny ourselves, and to care about the needs of others. Discipline will not be fun for the child, and it is hard work for the parent. However, it is an eternally necessary investment in their lives. Spanking is not the only Biblically accepted mode of discipline, but it is a valid one if done right, without anger, and without harming the child. Parents just must remember to pay attention to their children's hearts and to what consequences are helping them best respond to instruction and which are best leading to repentance and sorrow for sin. For some, spanking may not be the best mode of discipline, and they might respond to other incentives and consequences better. There is no spiritual magic in spanking, but discipline is a combination of teaching, forgiving, unconditional love, seeking humility on the part of the child, and working together as a parent-child team to defeat sin and to love Jesus more. Parents who take out their anger with their children on their children and call it discipline are abusive, and that is not Christian discipline. (see also Proverbs 22:6, 15)

**¹⁵ My son, if your heart is wise,
My own heart also will be glad;
¹⁶ And my inmost being will rejoice
When your lips speak what is right.**

A parent who has faithfully trained his children can be glad when he sees his children walking with the Lord. Hearing him teach wisdom to others that he has himself been taught is a wonderful blessing and evidence of a truly reborn heart in Christ.

**¹⁷ Do not let your heart envy sinners,
But *live* in the fear of the Lord always.
¹⁸ Surely there is a future,
And your hope will not be cut off.**

It can be tempting to envy the wicked, for their schemes may lead to them being prosperous in worldly terms, at least in the short term. But the Christian must always live

in the fear of God, meaning that he is regularly reminding himself of the reality that God will judge all men. He will reward the righteous and condemn the wicked. Their prosperity will end in eternal poverty, and those who loved righteousness will be rich in Christ. This world can be unjust, and the wicked may die gloating. But their pride will come to a vicious end, for their future is of fire and agony. The believer can take heart that he has a future and a hope of being forever with Christ (Jeremiah 29:11). He will never be cut off from that which brings Him the greatest joy, Jesus Himself. (see Psalm 37:7-10)

**¹⁹ Listen, my son, and be wise,
And direct your heart in the way.
²⁰ Do not be with heavy drinkers of wine,
Or with gluttonous eaters of meat;
²¹ For the heavy drinker and the glutton will come to poverty,
And drowsiness will clothe *one* with rags.**

A major pitfall that many fall into is drunkenness. Our modern world thrives on beer, wine, and strong drink, but Christians are not to be drunk but rather filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18). When our minds are corrupted and under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or other substances, it impairs our judgment and our thinking. It inhibits our ability to reason according to the Bible, and it depresses the functioning of the conscience. The Bible says that we are to be sober in spirit rather than drowsy (1 Peter 5:8), being alert and attentive to what God is doing and to what He wants us to do. Those who overeat and who drink too much do not show evidence of the fear of God in their hearts, for they do harm to themselves and put others at risk by their behavior. Christians need to be careful who they associate with because this behavior can quickly rub off. Heavy drinking can be consuming and addictive, and it can bring a person to complete dependence, loss, and poverty. The same can happen with overeating. Sin always is destructive by its very nature, and the Christian must put aside the entanglements of sin (Hebrews 12:1). (see also v. 29-35 and Proverbs 20:1)

**²² Listen to your father who begot you,
And do not despise your mother when she is old.
²³ Buy truth, and do not sell it,
Get wisdom and instruction and understanding.
²⁴ The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice,
And he who sires a wise son will be glad in him.
²⁵ Let your father and your mother be glad,
And let her rejoice who gave birth to you.
²⁶ Give me your heart, my son,
And let your eyes delight in my ways.**

Children are wise to listen to the wise teaching of their parents and to thank them for what they have invested in their lives. The best investment is to learn truth and to hold tightly to it no matter what happens, knowing that the Word of the Lord endures forever even in a constantly changing world. Parents should want their children to have hearts

that are eager to learn about the Lord, and this brings great joy to them. Their teaching should be modeled for their children by how they live so that their children can delight not only in what they say but in what they do. A life that is consistent in word and deed and in truth and grace has a way of capturing a child's attention and allowing Christ to capture his heart.

**²⁷ For a harlot is a deep pit
And an adulterous woman is a narrow well.
²⁸ Surely she lurks as a robber,
And increases the faithless among men.**

Solomon mentions the dangers of the adulteress again (see Proverbs 5-7) knowing that so many young men fall prey to her temptations. Those who go to her will find themselves trapped in a narrow well, for she promises refreshing drink but leaves them near death. She, like the devil who comes to steal, kill, and destroy, promises life and pleasure but gives destruction and misery in the end. She cannot give what she promises, for life and pleasure are found in Christ and in the good and perfect gifts which He provides. There is no need to become faithless and reject God's commands, for faithfulness is the only hope of true satisfaction in this life.

**²⁹ Who has woe? Who has sorrow?
Who has contentions? Who has complaining?
Who has wounds without cause?
Who has redness of eyes?
³⁰ Those who linger long over wine,
Those who go to taste mixed wine.
³¹ Do not look on the wine when it is red,
When it sparkles in the cup,
When it goes down smoothly;
³² At the last it bites like a serpent
And stings like a viper.
³³ Your eyes will see strange things
And your mind will utter perverse things.
³⁴ And you will be like one who lies down in the middle of the sea,
Or like one who lies down on the top of a mast.
³⁵ "They struck me, *but* I did not become ill;
They beat me, *but* I did not know it.
When shall I awake?
I will seek another drink."**

Those who get drunk typically do it regularly. Even after doing a bunch of dumb things on account of impaired judgment, they are still quick to plot their next over-indulgence of alcohol. They view the destruction that they do to themselves and others while intoxicated as funny, for they do not fear God or value Him or others. Their lives lead to arguments, fights, injuries, pain, sorrow, regrets, and personal harm. Drunkenness leads to seeing things that aren't real and to doing things that are foolish. It draws out the

worst in a person, and it puts them in danger. Yet, because they have no value of eternity or concern for others, they keep doing it again and again. Sexual immorality and alcoholism are two of the most travelled paths to death and destruction, and the Christian needs to purpose to avoid both at all costs. Both promise pleasure and relief, but both end with the bite of a snake. No man ever found happiness and satisfaction this way, and nobody ever will. Satan promises quick shortcuts, but God's way, even though it takes a lot of time, energy, and sacrifice, is the only way that works. There is far more satisfaction in a marriage where two Christians are enthralled with each other and in doing the work of God than in a bottle of alcohol or in the batting of the eyes of a prostitute. Sadly, despite the danger and destruction of drunkenness, people go right back to doing it again. They will only find more pain, frustration, and strife as a result.

Proverbs 24

**Do not be envious of evil men,
Nor desire to be with them;
² For their minds devise violence,
And their lips talk of trouble.**

When the wicked prosper and when it seems that sinful shortcuts are the better way, it can be tempting to be envious of their position and circumstances. It can be tempting to want to assimilate to their way of being in order to get the passing pleasures of sin. But Christians must not desire their evil ways or their companionship. Evil people love violence, betrayal, harm, and selfish gain. There is no real trustworthy friendship among evil people, but each uses the other for his own personal gain. Loyalty, love, peace, and trust are in the house of the righteous, but in the path of evil men comes trouble. Their eternal destiny is death, and their lifestyles ought not to be envied or copied (Psalm 37). The righteous will be rewarded and honored in the end (2 Corinthians 5:10). (see also v. 19-20)

**³ By wisdom a house is built,
And by understanding it is established;
⁴ And by knowledge the rooms are filled
With all precious and pleasant riches.**

Wisdom is how the kingdom of God advances in a heart, in a home, in a church, and in a nation. All that is spiritually valuable, worthwhile, and lasting requires faith in Christ and wisdom according to His Word. Christ will one day judge the acts of believers according to whether they are truly fruitful or not, and rewards will be dependent upon whether or not the deeds were done in faith and wisdom and according to the power of Christ alone (1 Corinthians 3:10-15). Wisdom is required for things of eternal value, and it is what strengthens a church, advances the kingdom of God, and builds a home that honors Christ and provides joy to its members. The fruit of wisdom and the knowledge of God and His Word is spiritual blessing upon spiritual blessing (Ephesians 1:3, Psalm 16:11).

**⁵ A wise man is strong,
And a man of knowledge increases power.
⁶ For by wise guidance you will wage war,
And in abundance of counselors there is victory.**

Wisdom makes a person spiritually strong, it teaches him how to discern false teaching, and it helps him rightly dissect the Word of truth. There is power in Christ and in His Word, and the wise man embraces its full power by learning it and believing it. The fool, on the other hand, may have a form of godliness while denying the power of Christ and His Word. Thus, his life is powerless against sin as he remains a captive of the devil. Believers are no longer slaves to sin, but they can by faith present their bodies as instruments of righteousness to Christ for His use in His service. Believers can do

nothing of themselves, but their sufficiency is in Christ and His Word which makes them strong, able, and powerful in and through Him to do all that Christ calls them to do. Apart from Christ, believers can do nothing (John 15:5), but in Christ and by His power working in them, they will be changed and used to change others (Galatians 2:20). Wisdom is useful for winning spiritual battles and for navigating the events of this life and this world. The more a person knows the Word and the more godly counselors he has, the better decisions he will make.

**⁷ Wisdom is *too* exalted for a fool,
He does not open his mouth in the gate.**

Wisdom leads to spiritual success, but such wisdom is too much for the fool. He has nothing to offer those who walk in wisdom. He has nothing to say to add value to a conversation between wise men.

**⁸ One who plans to do evil,
Men will call a schemer.
⁹ The devising of folly is sin,
And the scoffer is an abomination to men.**

A schemer is not an honorable label to have because it implies exploiting people, deception, lying, and pragmatism over morality. It also implies intended harm and the advancement of a personal agenda over the welfare of others. Those who plot evil do so because of the evil in their hearts. This is foolishness, and plotting foolish deeds is sin. Those who do not fear God or take sin seriously are abominable before God. Scoffing at God and His Word is a great way to store up His wrath (Psalm 1).

**¹⁰ If you are slack in the day of distress,
Your strength is limited.**

Just as physical strength and emotional fortitude helps a person overcome in battle, spiritual strength to do what is right and to keep believing the truth is necessary to persevere and still have joy when trouble and trials come (James 1:2-4). Those who are strong recognize that their strength comes in and through Christ in them, not by way of their own flesh. They trust wholly in Him, and the joy of His presence is their strength (Nehemiah 8:10).

**¹¹ Deliver those who are being taken away to death,
And those who are staggering to slaughter, Oh hold *them* back.**

**¹² If you say, "See, we did not know this,"
Does He not consider *it* who weighs the hearts?
And does He not know *it* who keeps your soul?
And will He not render to man according to his work?**

The hope, prayer, and desire of every believer should be that none would perish but that all would come to believe in Jesus. This is God's desire also (2 Peter 3:9). The reality,

however, is that many people suppress their conscience, ignore the revelation of God in creation, blaspheme the Holy Spirit calling to their hearts, and ignore the commands of the Bible. They reject Jesus despite the reality of His historical life on earth and subsequent death and resurrection. Man will not be able to plead ignorance, for God has made Himself known (Romans 1:18-20, 32; Psalm 19:1-2). The only unforgiveable sin is to reject the Spirit's drawing on the hearts of men (Luke 12:10), and this proves that men are accountable and responsible for their choosing to keep on sinning and raising their fists in the air against God in anger and rebellion. They willfully choose to refuse to give Him thanks, and God allows them to sin. He will not force a person to believe, but He wants them all to repent. Those who earnestly practice the truth and want to know the truth will find it in Christ (John 3:21). Those who enjoy evil will be punished accordingly. He will one day judge all people according to their deeds, and only those who are made righteous in Christ will enter His heaven. Only on account of His righteous life can we be made holy.

**¹³ My son, eat honey, for it is good,
Yes, the honey from the comb is sweet to your taste;
¹⁴ Know *that* wisdom is thus for your soul;
If you find *it*, then there will be a future,
And your hope will not be cut off.**

Wisdom is a choice delicacy and a delicious treat for the soul. Just as honey tastes good and then is pleasing to the stomach, wisdom brings joy, peace, satisfaction, hope, and life to the full (John 10:10) because of eternal life found only in Christ (John 17:3).

**¹⁵ Do not lie in wait, O wicked man, against the dwelling of the righteous;
Do not destroy his resting place;
¹⁶ For a righteous man falls seven times, and rises again,
But the wicked stumble in *time of calamity*.**

God looks after the righteous, and He upholds them with His righteous right hand. It is not that they are never allowed to experience trouble, hardship, or suffering, for they will. But by faith they will continue to persevere in love, hope, and good deeds no matter how many times they are opposed, persecuted, and insulted. No attack or plot of the wicked can make a Christian stop loving Christ, stop hoping in heaven, stop believing and preaching the gospel, and stop loving even those who are doing the persecuting. The wicked have nothing to hold onto when they fall into trouble, for God is not on their side. The wicked will pay for attacking the righteous, but the righteous have a heavenly dwelling to look forward to even if their earthly resting places are destroyed.

**¹⁷ Do not rejoice when your enemy falls,
And do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles;
¹⁸ Or the Lord will see *it* and be displeased,
And turn His anger away from him.**

There is a certain joy that comes from seeing God's vengeance poured out, and there is a certain hope in the reality that God will settle all accounts in eternity. Justice is something that believers can be encouraged by. However, that does not mean that this gives believers the right to hate their enemies, for Scripture commands that they love them even as they are persecuting them (Matthew 5:44). Believers should hate their sin and their master, the devil, but they must love their souls. Sending a person to hell on account of their evil deeds doesn't make God giddy with pleasure as a result of their pain and eternal suffering, but it does satisfy His justice. We can rejoice in justice, but we should never wish bad things to come upon people or enjoy that they are in pain. Christ kindly calls to the lost and the wicked offering them hope and a chance to start anew. But when that opportunity is passed over, then justice must be meted out. In this world, believers should take no joy in evil, and they should hope for justice on earth. But that doesn't mean that they can become callous in regard to the state of the souls of the people doing the evil. If Christians do not love them, how can they ever hope to compassionately share the gospel with them? Given how harmful it is as far as gospel advancement for a believer to hate an unbeliever, God may actually, according to verse 18, stop punishing the unbeliever temporarily on earth in order to stop the boasting of the disobedient believer. Believers should boast in the Lord in regard to both His kindness and justice but not concerning the pain and suffering of others, even of their enemies.

¹⁹ Do not fret because of evildoers

Or be envious of the wicked;

²⁰ For there will be no future for the evil man;

The lamp of the wicked will be put out.

Picking up the theme from verse 1, believers are told not to get frustrated when they see wicked people who are not yet being punished for their sin because they will be punished in eternity. Justice will be served by Almighty God, and their eternal sentence in hell apart from the God is sure. Christians must not ever envy their passing prosperity because spiritual prosperity and eternal prosperity is what counts (Psalm 37). Jesus will settle all accounts.

²¹ My son, fear the Lord and the king;

Do not associate with those who are given to change,

²² For their calamity will rise suddenly,

And who knows the ruin *that comes* from both of them?

It is never wise to stand in opposition to God, for God will bring ruin to the wicked. It is also generally not a good idea to try to act subversively toward a governing authority, given that it will likely end with their rage being poured out upon the conspirators. This verse is not denouncing change, reform, social progress, or even political redress. There are times when a government is so wicked that it needs to be overthrown. However, in general, it is God-honoring to respect and submit to governmental authorities even if one despises some of their policies and positions (Romans 13:1-7).

²³ These also are sayings of the wise.

To show partiality in judgment is not good.

²⁴ **He who says to the wicked, “You are righteous,”**

Peoples will curse him, nations will abhor him;

²⁵ **But to those who rebuke the *wicked* will be delight,**

And a good blessing will come upon them.

Wisdom does not show partiality or pervert justice, calling the wicked righteous or the righteous wicked. Those who care for justice hold such judgments and those who make them in spite, and the people, if they have any sense, appreciate a just system where evildoers are punished. They recognize that justice is for their own benefit, protection, and welfare.

²⁶ **He kisses the lips**

Who gives a right answer.

A wise response that brings edification and encouragement is like a kiss of affection. Of course, there is also the possibility of a kiss of betrayal like Judas, who gave the answer that the religious leaders were seeking but which was not according to wisdom. We would do well to give the right answer according to God rather than kissing up to people to make them like us at the expense of the truth and justice.

²⁷ **Prepare your work outside**

And make it ready for yourself in the field;

Afterwards, then, build your house.

It is much more effective and efficient to preplan a building project and gather all of the required materials so that they can be ready when needed. Otherwise progress is slowed when more figuring has to be done and when more product has to be gathered. There is wisdom in planning and strategizing, but ultimately even then we still need the blessing and provision of God on our work (Psalm 127:1). Christians should equip themselves with the Word of God and prepare themselves to be able to share the gospel. That way, when the opportunity comes for spiritual fruit, they are ready and prepared, thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

²⁸ **Do not be a witness against your neighbor without cause,**

And do not deceive with your lips.

As has been said many times in this book, God hates deceptive witnesses, those who pervert justice, and those who make a practice of lying.

²⁹ **Do not say, “Thus I shall do to him as he has done to me;**

I will render to the man according to his work.”

The natural bent of the unredeemed heart is revenge, but God says that Christians ought to follow the golden rule of doing to others what they would want others to do to them (Matthew 7:12). God also says to leave vengeance to Him, knowing that He will repay

(Romans 12:19). The whole idea of just retribution such as an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth is to be left to God ultimately in eternity (Matthew 5:38-39). Crime should be punished by a justice system on earth where a punishment is proportionate to the crime, but, even still, there are a lot of evil things done that are not able to be prosecuted or that would not be considered technically illegal. Peace must be found in knowing that wrong that escapes justice now will be punished by God ultimately. Christianity is not about taking revenge, holding grudges, or looking to get even. The policy of Christians should be to love those who do them harm and to treat them as they themselves would wish to be treated. They must be willing to forgive (Luke 6:37) and to love their enemies (Luke 6:27).

**³⁰ I passed by the field of the sluggard
And by the vineyard of the man lacking sense,
³¹ And behold, it was completely overgrown with thistles;
Its surface was covered with nettles,
And its stone wall was broken down.
³² When I saw, I reflected upon it;
I looked, *and* received instruction.
³³ “ A little sleep, a little slumber,
A little folding of the hands to rest,”
³⁴ Then your poverty will come *as* a robber
And your want like an armed man.**

Those who are lazy and who lack sense can expect to starve at harvest time because they have neglected their vineyards. They can expect to not earn enough money to live on. The reality of this world is that it takes work to grow food and to earn a living. Things go from order to disorder, chaos, and destruction. The world is cursed with thorns and thistles being one such manifestation. Laziness allows sin and its effects to run amok, but wisdom resists the pull to give in and give up.

Proverbs 25

These also are proverbs of Solomon which the men of Hezekiah, king of Judah, transcribed.

God was faithful to preserve the proverbs of King Solomon through the work of righteous Hezekiah, a king who came many years after him during the divided kingdom.

**² It is the glory of God to conceal a matter,
But the glory of kings is to search out a matter.
³ As the heavens for height and the earth for depth,
So the heart of kings is unsearchable.**

One of the things that makes God God is that He has kept some things secret (Deuteronomy 29:29). He has instructed us in what we need to know, but some things are just beyond us. He is God, and we are not. Kings, however, make it their business to be informed and to know the inner workings of their kingdom. They are not God, and thus they need to be informed as to the goings on of their kingdom and of those around them so that they can make the best possible leadership decisions. God knows the state of a king's heart, but no man can know with one hundred percent certainty what motivates a leader.

**⁴ Take away the dross from the silver,
And there comes out a vessel for the smith;
⁵ Take away the wicked before the king,
And his throne will be established in righteousness.**

A king that rules by righteousness and justice will find that it strengthens the kingdom by preserving peace and promoting equitable treatment of others. Those who make sure that the wicked are justly punished reduce corruption and bring benefit to all.

**⁶ Do not claim honor in the presence of the king,
And do not stand in the place of great men;
⁷ For it is better that it be said to you, "Come up here,"
Than for you to be placed lower in the presence of the prince,
Whom your eyes have seen.**

It is foolish to be presumptive and disrespectful to an authority figure by putting oneself forward or taking a higher seat than one should take. Rather, one should wait for the king to say where one should go rather than to suffer the humiliation of being put lower. A respectful and gracious approach is wisest.

**⁸ Do not go out hastily to argue your case;
Otherwise, what will you do in the end,
When your neighbor humiliates you?
⁹ Argue your case with your neighbor,**

**And do not reveal the secret of another,
¹⁰ Or he who hears *it* will reproach you,
And the evil report about you will not pass away.**

Rather than taking a neighbor's personal offense to the world at large by taking it to the courts or shouting about his error from the rooftops to shame him, it is wiser to try to work things out privately with one's neighbor first. Otherwise, it will be clear to others that the one offended has no discretion and no mercy or forbearance. Everybody makes mistakes, and it is no fun to have a neighbor that is a tattletale. Tattletales tend to lose a lot of friends fast.

**¹¹ Like apples of gold in settings of silver
Is a word spoken in right circumstances.
¹² Like an earring of gold and an ornament of fine gold
Is a wise reprover to a listening ear.**

A timely word to encourage, edify, or provide needed advice is priceless, for wisdom is more valuable than gold and silver. Learning from those who are wise is like receiving a gift of gold for a person who recognizes the value of such reproof.

**¹³ Like the cold of snow in the time of harvest
Is a faithful messenger to those who send him,
For he refreshes the soul of his masters.**

It is always refreshing and encouraging when a person is trustworthy enough do what he said he would do and say what he said he would say. Reliable and loyal people are not that common, and they are a joy to have as friends.

**¹⁴ Like clouds and wind without rain
Is a man who boasts of his gifts falsely.**

Lots of people talk a big talk, but it is the walk that matters. Some people boast about their gifts and abilities, while others faithfully become the servant of all and allow God to strengthen them despite their human weakness and insufficiencies. We will be judged not on account of our boasting and empty promises, for faith without works is dead. Even those who give gifts while seeking the attention and approval of man will have had their reward in full (Matthew 6:2). Serving God is about living a peaceful and tranquil life (1 Timothy 2:2, 1 Thessalonians 4:11) that honors God in the heart and which is satisfied with His approval. Whether others are there to see or not, a humble heart always does what it does for God rather than for men (Colossians 3:23).

**¹⁵ By forbearance a ruler may be persuaded,
And a soft tongue breaks the bone.**

Those in authority don't appreciate being intimidated or talked down to when trying to convince them to change their policy or alter a course of action. But those who speak

graciously, kindly, respectfully, and gently have a much better chance of getting their message through.

**¹⁶ Have you found honey? Eat *only* what you need,
That you not have it in excess and vomit it.**

Honey is a delicious treat, but eating too much of it at one time will make a person sick enough to throw it up. The spiritual principle at work here is that of balance. There is wisdom in not hoarding wealth but in being generous, there is wisdom in working and still finding enjoyment in life, and there is wisdom in laboring for the kingdom but also taking time to rest in the embrace of Christ. It is easier to endure over the long haul if we do not overcommit ourselves, do not push ourselves too hard too fast, and make sure to take time to invest in the different stewardships and relationships that God has given us in life. The “honey” of life will keep being delightful when taken in proper portions and in balance. (see also verse 27 for further application)

**¹⁷ Let your foot rarely be in your neighbor’s house,
Or he will become weary of you and hate you.**

It is a good thing to open up one’s home and to be hospitable to others, but it is impolite and annoying after a while to presume that somebody else’s home is one’s own. Constantly invading somebody else’s personal space and privacy is wearying and can cause a person to hate the one who has no respect of proper boundaries.

**¹⁸ Like a club and a sword and a sharp arrow
Is a man who bears false witness against his neighbor.**

Lying and telling an untruth concerning a person is like beating him with weapons of war, for it slanders his testimony, perverts justice, and harms the innocent. A lot of damage can be done with the tongue.

**¹⁹ Like a bad tooth and an unsteady foot
Is confidence in a faithless man in time of trouble.**

A bad tooth makes us doubt whether or not we can chew our food, and a weak foot makes us wonder if we will fall when we take our next step. This is the perfect analogy of the doubt that comes by having to put one’s faith and confidence in a weak, doubting, and faithless man when we need his help in time of trouble. This is why friends that are loyal, trustworthy, and full of faith to do what is necessary are so precious and valuable.

**²⁰ Like one who takes off a garment on a cold day, or like vinegar on soda,
Is he who sings songs to a troubled heart.**

A troubled heart needs compassion, understanding, sympathy, and comfort. Forcing somebody to try to buck up and be happy and not mourning with them is not a sign of love (Romans 12:15). It is like stripping somebody of a winter coat in freezing

temperatures or causing a bubbling reaction between soda and vinegar. The lack of kindness and grace can even make a person angry. Let a person be comforted first, and songs can be sung later.

**²¹ If your enemy is hungry, give him food 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.**

The Christian response toward our enemies is not to hate them or wish trouble upon them but to love them by being kind to them. If they are hungry, we should feed them. If they are thirsty, we should give them something to drink. This alone is what could change their minds by the refining fire of the gospel made real to them. It is as the world, including the enemies of believers, sees their good works that they will glorify God (Matthew 5:16). Vengeance and hate don't point people to God, but kindness and mercy do. Love also brings eternal rewards, for it is glorifying to God and indicative of His nature and love for the lost (John 13:34-35, 1 John 4:7-8). Hateful people find pleasure in making other people hate also, but seeing a love that cannot be turned to hate could convict them of their sin. Love is the reality that must define the Christian and demonstrate to the world that Christ is real and powerful.

**²³ The north wind brings forth rain,
And a backbiting tongue, an angry countenance.**

Just as a shift in wind points to incoming rain, so too does a backbiting tongue lead to somebody getting very angry. Betrayal is sure to frustrate and disappoint and to bring division between friends.

**²⁴ It is better to live in a corner of the roof
Than in a house shared with a contentious woman.**

Solomon has made this point several times already in this book that being married to a woman who provokes anger, is disrespectful, is spiteful, is hateful, and is ungrateful is one of the worst existences possible. One is better off isolated on the corner of a roof somewhere than in that situation. Thus, one must choose wisely when getting married, being sure that one's wife fears God and values the descriptions of the excellent wife given in chapter 31. She is a rare find indeed and priceless at that. (see also Proverbs 21:9, 19)

**²⁵ Like cold water to a weary soul,
So is good news from a distant land.**

Hearing good news, even if it is from somewhere across the globe, is always something that is encouraging. Hearing of good triumphing over evil is always like a refreshing glass of cold water to one who has been wandering in the wilderness of a world which

loves evil. Testimonies of the gospel changing hearts is always good news and always so fun to hear.

²⁶ ***Like a trampled spring and a polluted well***
Is a righteous man who gives way before the wicked.

A righteous man who falls into temptation or who doesn't stand against the schemes of the wicked perverts himself, makes God look small, and destroys his testimony. Even if it means death, a righteous person must not compromise.

²⁷ **It is not good to eat much honey,**
Nor is it glory to search out one's own glory.

Searching out one's own glory is the ultimate pride and arrogance. It is making an idol of oneself, worshipping one's own looks, ability, intellect, and accomplishments. It is rejecting God, His provision, His blessing, and His sufficiency. It is calling the insufficient one sufficient, and it is calling the weak one strong. It is viewing the world in the totally wrong perspective. The end of self-glory and vanity is meaninglessness, disappointment, and failure to find true satisfaction. It is outright deception, and those who love self and hate God will pay in eternity. We should search out the glory of God, for He made the world, He has all power, and He alone can forgive sin. Satan wanted more glory for himself, and it led to him to being cast out of heaven (Isaiah 14:14). We must always seek to decrease so that He can increase through the testimony of our lives (John 3:30).

²⁸ ***Like a city that is broken into and without walls***
Is a man who has no control over his spirit.

In battle, a city has been overrun when its defenses have been broken through and its walls taken down. Those who have no self-control prove that Satan has control of them, and they need to turn their lives over to Christ so that He can be their Lord and Master and set them free from their chains to sin and death. In Christ alone is the victory.

Proverbs 26

**Like snow in summer and like rain in harvest,
So honor is not fitting for a fool.**

Fools do not deserve honor, reward, and commendation, but they store up for themselves the judgment of God and the disrespect and wrath of men. The irony is that while many in the world hate believers on account of their testimony, they do not respect a lifestyle of sin. They know it is the easier route to take in life, and doing what is noble is more respectable even if it is not acknowledged as such.

**² Like a sparrow in *its* flitting, like a swallow in *its* flying,
So a curse without cause does not alight.**

It doesn't make sense to wish somebody ill or seek to do them harm when they are righteous and undeserving of cursing. Righteousness will always lead to blessing from God with the fullness of that blessing coming in heaven. Those who reject Christ remain cursed and destined for hell.

**³ A whip is for the horse, a bridle for the donkey,
And a rod for the back of fools.**

Those who continue to act as fools will continue to find themselves getting into trouble and being gluttons for punishment. They need discipline to be trained in righteousness, but unfortunately fools reject instruction and continue to do themselves and others harm.

**⁴ Do not answer a fool according to his folly,
Or you will also be like him.**

**⁵ Answer a fool as his folly *deserves*,
That he not be wise in his own eyes.**

It is not worth playing along with the foolishness of a fool, but a fool needs to be called out for his error with grace and love. Truth requires that believers do not laugh at evil and assent to treachery. Believers should not get drawn into foolish debates where truth is not actually sought, and they need to not learn the behavior and banter of fools. The only hope a fool has of seeing his own foolishness and then turning from it is to be confronted with the truth (Romans 1:16, 10:17).

**⁶ He cuts off *his own* feet *and* drinks violence
Who sends a message by the hand of a fool.**

Trusting in a fool to deliver an important message is just about a guarantee of things going wrong. A fool doesn't care about honesty or loyalty, and he is not diligent to accurately portray the truth which he has been entrusted with.

⁷ Like the legs *which* are useless to the lame,

So is a proverb in the mouth of fools.

Fools might be able to quote a wise saying, but it is of no value to them because they don't receive it, believe it, or put it into practice. Their hearts are wicked and hardened against the truth and sound wisdom. The only way for a fool to become wise is to stop being wise in his own eyes and to listen to instruction. It is not enough just to know the truth, but one must keep it. It is not enough to profess to love Christ, one must possess Him in their hearts. (see also verse 9)

**⁸ Like one who binds a stone in a sling,
So is he who gives honor to a fool.**

Praising the unpraiseworthy and honoring the ignoble is setting a dangerous precedent that evil is good and that righteousness is not valued. This will lead to others violating the rights of others and to a quick propagation of wickedness. (see also verses 1, 10)

**⁹ Like a thorn which falls into the hand of a drunkard,
So is a proverb in the mouth of fools.**

A drunkard will not be able to recognize a thorn from a piece of cotton, and he will harm himself and others with its sharpness. A proverb in the mouth of fools will be misspoken, misapplied, taken out of context, and manipulated for selfish gain and destruction. Even the truth of God's Word is fodder for fools who enjoy making it say something that it doesn't say. The end of this is much harm, deception, confusion, and destruction. (see also v. 7)

**¹⁰ Like an archer who wounds everyone,
So is he who hires a fool or who hires those who pass by.**

Those who enable and empower a fool and put their trust in him will regret it, for it will cause rampant harm, wounds, and pain for others. A fool cannot be trusted or given increasing responsibility. It will be dry powder for him to use for evil. It is wise to use discernment and discretion in terms of whom one trusts or hires.

**¹¹ Like a dog that returns to its vomit
Is a fool who repeats his folly.**

Dogs can be disgusting and even confuse their own vomit with food and like it. This is meant to be deeply repulsive and disgusting, for what fools do by continuing to reject God, to despise Christ, and to fail to heed His Word is repulsive and abominable to God. God doesn't just roll His eyes at evil, but He stores up wrath to repay. A fool is one who enjoys the junkfood and refuse of the devil and who is satisfied with idiocy and never even caring to find out truth, purpose, or meaning. He will keep doing stupid, rebellious things until it costs him his life and his soul. A fool doesn't learn from consequences, but he keeps repeating the same mistakes over and over again.

**¹² Do you see a man wise in his own eyes?
There is more hope for a fool than for him.**

Pride is the archenemy of humility which is required for those who come to the truth. Pride rejects the need for a Savior, and pride puts full confidence in the flesh. Pride enjoys flaunting its own strength and independence, but Christ is the only all-sufficient One. Thus, those who harbor pride are the ultimate in being unteachable. A fool doesn't have much hope of turning from his error, but there is always hope that one day he will recognize that the life Jesus offers makes Satan's offers look like pig slop. A prideful person recognizes just that, but he still rejects God because he wants it to not be true so badly. He is willing to defy God to the end just so that he can remain on the throne of his own life.

**¹³ The sluggard says, "There is a lion in the road!
A lion is in the open square!"**

**¹⁴ As the door turns on its hinges,
So *does* the sluggard on his bed.**

**¹⁵ The sluggard buries his hand in the dish;
He is weary of bringing it to his mouth again.**

**¹⁶ The sluggard is wiser in his own eyes
Than seven men who can give a discreet answer.**

The lazy person may use fear and danger as an excuse for not trying and not working. He typically lies around in bed or on the couch and does nothing productive or of value to others. Even bringing his food from the plate to his mouth is laborious and wearying to the sluggard. He prefers that others would do all the work for him, and he justifies his behavior in his own mind. He thinks that he is full of wisdom, but he lives a life that manifests the reality of his own foolishness.

**¹⁷ Like one who takes a dog by the ears
Is he who passes by *and* meddles with strife not belonging to him.**

It is noble to come to the rescue of somebody in danger, but it is also wise to be sure of what one is getting himself into before making assumptions that could endanger himself. Sometimes fights and strife are between mutually evil parties, and intervening in such instances is like provoking an attack dog.

**¹⁸ Like a madman who throws
Firebrands, arrows and death,
¹⁹ So is the man who deceives his neighbor,
And says, " Was I not joking?"**

Some people lie and deceive their neighbor, caring not for the consequences and the harm and hurt that could befall him. Then, once the damage has been done, they try to argue that it was all just a joke. This demonstrates a lack of concern for others and a cavalier attitude towards friendship.

**²⁰ For lack of wood the fire goes out,
And where there is no whisperer, contention quiets down.**

**²¹ Like charcoal to hot embers and wood to fire,
So is a contentious man to kindle strife.**

**²² The words of a whisperer are like dainty morsels,
And they go down into the innermost parts of the body.**

Some people like to feast upon gossip and the latest secrets of other people's lives. Maybe it makes them feel better about themselves to learn the dirt about others, or maybe they enjoy feeling like they have fodder for manipulation. Either way, those given to gossip are better off doing something productive and God-honoring rather than that which can only lead to malice, pride, contention, and strife. Gossip may seem like a minor sin, but sin is always destructive and leading to death. Contentious people like getting a reaction out of others and getting under their skin, but believers should be peacemakers, building others up and encouraging them rather than tearing them down and provoking them to anger.

**²³ Like an earthen vessel overlaid with silver dross
Are burning lips and a wicked heart.**

**²⁴ He who hates disguises *it* with his lips,
But he lays up deceit in his heart.**

**²⁵ When he speaks graciously, do not believe him,
For there are seven abominations in his heart.**

**²⁶ Though *his* hatred covers itself with guile,
His wickedness will be revealed before the assembly.**

**²⁷ He who digs a pit will fall into it,
And he who rolls a stone, it will come back on him.**

The Bible is clear about wolves that come in sheep's clothing, trying to deceive others and do them harm. They look like solid silver, but in the inside they are nothing but dirt. They speak grand words that sound like wisdom but are actually foolishness, and they lead to division and destruction. They have dark, wicked hearts, even though they may masquerade as light. Deceit runs rampant in the wicked person's heart, though on the outside they may feign love, loyalty, and affection. They are master liars and skilled in using words to manipulate and exploit. Gracious speech is fake from a wicked person, for the desires of his heart are full of many kinds of wickedness (Proverbs 6:16-19). Eventually a wicked person's deeds make his intentions manifest to those who desire to know the truth and be set free by it, for believers can know deceivers by their fruits (Matthew 7:20). Those who have spent their efforts tripping up others and laying traps for them will often fall prey to their own evil devices and schemes. They will certainly be paid back for their evil when God judges them in eternity.

**²⁸ A lying tongue hates those it crushes,
And a flattering mouth works ruin.**

Those who speak ill of others and who spread lies about them do so because of hate. Love rejoices with the truth, but those who speak flattery do so not to edify or encourage but to destroy and ruin. Flattery might be described as “nice” lies, but they are still deceptive and thus destructive. Lying is not consistent with loving but with hatred.

Proverbs 27

**Do not boast about tomorrow,
For you do not know what a day may bring forth.**

Indications of pride and arrogance include being over-confident in one's strength and having a false conviction of one's own sovereignty over his life. Only God is sovereign and in total control, and only He knows what will happen this day and the next. A believer's boasting should always be in God alone, for He is faithful and true. Christians should not make presumptions upon the future as if there is nothing that could go wrong or hinder them, for even their very next breath is dependent upon the grace of God (Colossians 1:17). If the Lord wills, they will do this or that. Other such boasting is evil. (James 4:13-14)

**² Let another praise you, and not your own mouth;
A stranger, and not your own lips.**

It is foolish to praise oneself and laud one's own achievements, for the only approval that matters is that of Jesus Himself. Believers should not live for the approval of others, but it is better to be praised by others as they recognize something honorable that believers have done than for believers to boast about it of their own accord. Vain glory in and of itself is dishonorable and unpraiseworthy.

**³ A stone is heavy and the sand weighty,
But the provocation of a fool is heavier than both of them.**

Sticks and stones can break bones, and words can actually do even more damage. Fools enjoy provoking others to anger and evil, and the damage that their words do can exceed that of other attacks. It is very tempting and easy to respond in selfish wrath to a fool, but wisdom is gracious, gentle, and always peaceable, not seeking a fight. Letting a fool provoke one to folly is just dumb, and wisdom knows how to walk away and let a fool boast in his own stupidity.

**⁴ Wrath is fierce and anger is a flood,
But who can stand before jealousy?**

Jealousy has a way of consuming a person such that he will do drastic things that involve all sorts of evil. Wrath is a strong motivator as is anger, but envy can consume a person. Our God is a jealous God (Exodus 20:5) and a consuming fire (Hebrews 12:29), seeking the worship of Him alone, and we can be sure that He will render judgment to those who do not worship Him.

**⁵ Better is open rebuke
Than love that is concealed.**

A reproof out in the open might be truthful, but it may not be in the appropriate setting. There is a time to correct a person or challenge his thinking, but initially it should be done in private if at all possible. Otherwise, it can be seen as public humiliation rather than instruction. But at least in a rebuke there is a sign that a person cares about truth and about the relationship. However, those who pretend that they do not love when they actually do commit such a travesty because it robs a person of a fulfilling relationship. By not backing up actually loving convictions with actual words and actions, a person is left thinking that they are unloved or even despised. Thus, there is unnecessary sorrow and loss for no good reason. It is better to be corrected which in and of itself demonstrates some level of care and concern than to be loved and never know it and even wonder if the person cares at all.

**⁶ Faithful are the wounds of a friend,
But deceitful are the kisses of an enemy.**

The wounds of a friend are for our good because they will only rebuke us if we need it. However, those who hate us will gladly enable and empower our own foolishness because they know it will harm us in the end.

**⁷ A sated man loathes honey,
But to a famished man any bitter thing is sweet.**

A person who is full is not going to be hungry even for something sweet like honey, but those who are starving will eat just about anything even if it is bitter. Even bitter foods will be sweet to a person who is desperate for food. When a person is full of the joy of the Lord and knows he is loved by others, there will be no need to seek out the bitter scraps of the devil. Bitterness can be appealing and appetizing to a person who is desperate for love and affection. But those who are filled with confidence in Christ's goodness and love will find in Him all that they need, and they will not find an appetite even for Satan's best efforts at putting honey on grime.

**⁸ Like a bird that wanders from her nest,
So is a man who wanders from his home.**

There is a difference between wandering aimlessly from home where one's responsibilities are and taking off with one's family to a new place where God has led. Wandering implies confusion and foolish decision-making and possibly even an abandonment of loved ones, but a person led by the Spirit will know what God wants of him and will lead his home accordingly.

**⁹ Oil and perfume make the heart glad,
So a man's counsel is sweet to his friend.**

A friend who loves and who fears God is well-equipped to give godly counsel, and his friend will receive it gladly. A good and wise word is like a fragrant aroma to a humble heart.

**¹⁰ Do not forsake your own friend or your father's friend,
And do not go to your brother's house in the day of your calamity;
Better is a neighbor who is near than a brother far away.**

A friend who is near will be insulted if a person who suffers a calamity rejects his help or doesn't even turn to him in his time of need opting rather to travel a great distance to take refuge in the home of a family member. Now, there might be a good reason to do this, but the thing to remember is not to spurn or underestimate the care and concern of local friends and family. Those friendships should be honored, and a true friend longs to be able to help in difficult times.

**¹¹ Be wise, my son, and make my heart glad,
That I may reply to him who reproaches me.**

When a son who has been taught in wisdom and trained in righteousness by a parent grows up and walks in it, it is a source of great joy for the parent. It vindicates him in his own mind that he has indeed chosen wisely and done right in raising his child even if others have mocked him for what he has done and said in the process. Fools may never be convinced that godly teaching and discipline is good and right, but a godly child is vindication enough (Matthew 11:19).

**¹² A prudent man sees evil *and* hides himself,
The naïve proceed *and* pay the penalty.**

Those who are wise are able to identify danger, traps, and trouble ahead of time because they are looking at the world through the grid of Scripture. They know that violating God's principles is inherently destructive, and they watch out for danger accordingly. Those who are naïve are blind to the danger around them because they are either part of it or just overestimate the goodness of people. Those who walk blindly into a trap and who think evil people will act righteously will suffer for their foolish and erroneous thinking.

**¹³ Take his garment when he becomes surety for a stranger;
And for an adulterous woman hold him in pledge.**

As has been said many times already in this book (Proverbs 6:1-5, 11:15, 17:18, 22:26), it is dangerous and unwise to become a guarantor for another person's debt. It could cost a person everything including the shirt on his back. The naïve don't recognize this danger and walk right into it. They also commit evil such as adultery without realizing that it might cost them even their lives. There is no way to repay that kind of wrong to a jealous husband (Proverbs 6:35). It is like literally becoming a debt that can never be repaid.

**¹⁴ He who blesses his friend with a loud voice early in the morning,
It will be reckoned a curse to him.**

Those who bless their friends with a loud voice so that others can hear may be honest and innocent in their intentions, but a person will be prone to thinking that they are up to something evil or that they are aware of some malicious plan afoot of which they are trying to cover their tracks. Otherwise, why not say the blessing privately and with a normal voice or just pray for the person in the quiet of one's heart?

¹⁵ A constant dripping on a day of steady rain

And a contentious woman are alike;

**¹⁶ He who would restrain her restrains the wind,
And grasps oil with his right hand.**

Here is yet another reference to the contentious woman (Proverbs 21:9, 19; 25:24), and it is equally not positive. The warning is for a person to marry wisely, for the agony and frustration of being married to a wife who enjoys arguing, fighting, nagging, complaining, and being bitter is like a dripping faucet that never gives one peace and quiet. Trying to teach her how to be respectful, kind, and considerate is like trying to catch the wind or grasp at oil. Fools cannot be taught, and a contentious wife demonstrates her foolishness. By creating a miserable existence for her husband, she demonstrates her wicked heart and love for misery, pain, and strife.

¹⁷ Iron sharpens iron,

So one man sharpens another.

People influence one another whether they are trying to or not, and this is why bad company corrupts good morals. It is also why being around other wise people can be beneficial to one's heart, mind, and soul if any humility is present. Ultimately, a person is sanctified by the Word of truth (John 17:17), and this is what is needed for a man to sharpen another man the right way. Even in the absence of wise counsel and godly friends, a person can still be trained and sharpened by the Word of God. Jeremiah 23:29 says, "Is not My word like fire?" declares the LORD, "and like a hammer which shatters a rock?"

¹⁸ He who tends the fig tree will eat its fruit,

And he who cares for his master will be honored.

There will be no fruit for those who do not plant, water, and tend to the plants and trees. It takes work to have food, and a godly master will be grateful for a helper who honors him by caring for him and tending to his fields and possessions. Both parts of the Proverb point to spiritual realities regarding reaping and sowing, for our Master wants us to bear abundant spiritual fruit and to honor and care for His priorities in all that we do and say. The Master will faithfully reward his servants.

¹⁹ As in water face *reflects* face,

So the heart of man *reflects* man.

The heart of man is the real man, and what is in the heart will be reflected by what is said and done. The fruit from a person's life will reveal whether a person's heart is good or evil (Matthew 7:20, Mark 7:20).

**²⁰ Sheol and Abaddon are never satisfied,
Nor are the eyes of man ever satisfied.**

Those who are sentenced to face the sting of the second death of being cast into hell will find that it never ends. A wicked heart will never be satisfied in wickedness, for true satisfaction comes only in knowing Christ. Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness will be satisfied, but those who live according to the lust of the eyes and flesh will find that they always need to lust for more. Their emptiness will never end, and their foolishness will never bring them the abundant life.

**²¹ The crucible is for silver and the furnace for gold,
And each is tested by the praise accorded him.**

When a person is loved and adored by people, it will test his resolve not to become prideful, to be able to have self-control, and to continue to fear God and keep His commandments. It will reveal whether or not he is truly humble and servant-hearted or if he is drawn to power, prestige, and the approval of people over the approval of God. The praise of men is indeed a great test, and those who love God with all of their hearts will come through the test refined and purified.

**²² Though you pound a fool in a mortar with a pestle along with crushed grain,
Yet his foolishness will not depart from him.**

A fool does not respond to the challenges of life and to the consequences of sin by learning and changing his ways. No matter what trouble befalls him or how corrupt he becomes, he will not humble himself. He is the dross, not the silver or the gold.

**²³ Know well the condition of your flocks,
And pay attention to your herds;
²⁴ For riches are not forever,
Nor does a crown endure to all generations.
²⁵ When the grass disappears, the new growth is seen,
And the herbs of the mountains are gathered in,
²⁶ The lambs will be for your clothing,
And the goats will bring the price of a field,
²⁷ And there will be goats' milk enough for your food,
For the food of your household,
And sustenance for your maidens.**

Riches can come, and riches can go. Wealth is fleeting, and positions of power tend to come and go as well. One should never put all of his eggs in one basket or presume on the future. Those who have faithfully tended to the little things day after day will find

that they have what they need in the day of trouble. They have not frittered away what God has given them, but they have preserved it, cared for it, and invested it wisely. It is never good or wise to neglect the little things while presuming on one big thing to work out. Similarly, spiritual fruit is often a result of daily investments made and service done rather than one big accomplishment or event.

Proverbs 28

**The wicked flee when no one is pursuing,
But the righteous are bold as a lion.**

The wicked person must live in fear because there will be many risks to him on account of the wrongs he has done to many people. Even when no one is actually threatening him, he will always have to wonder and look over his shoulder. The righteous do not have to live in fear because they have sown seeds of peace, love, and righteousness. If somebody wants to harm them on account of that, even their persecution for Christ's sake is a blessing to them. God upholds them with His righteous right hand, and they need not fear on account of His provision, His strength, His grace, and His help. The righteous can still expect trouble in this life, but they can face anything with confidence and boldness in Christ. The wicked have no divine help, but the righteous have in Christ the ability to rest in the shadow of the Almighty.

**² By the transgression of a land many are its princes,
But by a man of understanding *and* knowledge, so it endures.**

Where sin and wickedness multiplies, division and destruction is sure to follow. But a person who loves wisdom and knowledge according to the commands of Scripture will be best able to create unity, commonality, and an attitude of peace, forgiveness, and hope. He will not lie to his people or sell them false theories of hope, but he will live out and put into practice the truth that he believes in. The church is the pillar and support of the truth, and a godly leader points people to truth. Only righteousness can preserve and unify a people, and only truth can set them and keep them free.

**³ A poor man who oppresses the lowly
Is *like* a driving rain which leaves no food.**

A strong wind and rain that destroys crops is devastating and likely to cause a food shortage. This is a metaphor for a person who keeps back from those who need food or other provisions. A poor person keeping back good from other needy people is downright shameful. It is never God-honoring to oppress others for one's personal gain, but the command of Christ is to think of the interests of others above one's own (Philippians 2:3-4).

**⁴ Those who forsake the law praise the wicked,
But those who keep the law strive with them.**

Those who refuse to follow the commands of God by their disobedience glorify evil people. They, by imitating their evil ways, praise wickedness, treachery, and abominations. But those who obey the commands of God show them a better way, and they keep calling to them to repent and believe the gospel.

⁵ Evil men do not understand justice,

But those who seek the Lord understand all things.

Evil men pervert justice because their selfishness, greed, and corrupt view of morality inhibits their ability to delight in righteousness, to even define holiness, and to believe in truth. But those who love Christ and walk in obedience toward Him understand what ultimately matters, that Jesus is truth and that His Word is truth and where life is found. They don't know everything that God knows, for some things He keeps secret (Deuteronomy 29:29). But in all things pertaining to life and godliness (1 Peter 1:3), believers have no lack, for they have the mind of Christ to be able to see the world as He sees it through the same grid of truth, righteousness, and justice (1 Corinthians 2:16).

**⁶ Better is the poor who walks in his integrity
Than he who is crooked though he be rich.**

It is better to be poor but to know Christ and have eternal life than to have all the world's goods and be corrupted and destined for hell. The joy of Christ and the wisdom He gives are more valuable than anything money can buy.

**⁷ He who keeps the law is a discerning son,
But he who is a companion of gluttons humiliates his father.**

Those who know the commands of God and by faith keep them demonstrate that they have wisdom and discernment. The more they study God's Word, the more their discernment and wisdom can and will increase. But those who reject God's Word and choose to be a companion of scoffers, mockers, gluttons, and other fools demonstrate that they reject the teaching of wisdom that their parents gave them and bring humiliation to them and great grief and disappointment. Being unable to evaluate character and being unbothered by associating with those who have a clear negative influence is a sign of a profound lack of discernment.

**⁸ He who increases his wealth by interest and usury
Gathers it for him who is gracious to the poor.**

The Law condemned charging interest to fellow countrymen (Deuteronomy 23:19, Nehemiah 5:7), and it certainly condemned lying and stealing and other forms of unjust gain. Those who wanted to make money by creating oppressive terms for borrowers and who enjoyed harming their own fellow countrymen violated the commands of God. Rather than being generous to the poor, they were further impoverishing people and leading them into perpetual debt servitude. Yet somehow, according to this verse, God would find a way so that those who were gracious to the poor would have the opportunity to demonstrate their generosity. Perhaps this is a hint at the parable of the talents in which the wicked servant who hoards his talent is punished and forced to give it to the one with ten talents already (Matthew 25:27-29). God will faithfully open opportunities for service for those whose hearts are devoted to Him, and He will reward them for their faithfulness.

**⁹ He who turns away his ear from listening to the law,
Even his prayer is an abomination.**

Those who do not obey God cannot impress or please Him with religious ritual and sacrifice (1 Samuel 15:22). Even his prayers will repulse God because the heart is far from Him (Proverbs 15:8), and that is what matters to God, not some articulate oratory littered with religious jargon. Even believers need to repent of any outstanding sin issues before God will hear and answer their prayers (Psalm 66:18).

**¹⁰ He who leads the upright astray in an evil way
Will himself fall into his own pit,
But the blameless will inherit good.**

It makes God very angry to see people trying to lead His children astray (Matthew 9:42). The reality is that deceivers cannot keep the true believer from inheriting eternity, nor can he stop God from being good and merciful to His own. The deceiver will come to his eternal doom, and he who tries to create trouble for others will find it returned to him. Injustice on earth will be settled once for all in eternity.

**¹¹ The rich man is wise in his own eyes,
But the poor who has understanding sees through him.**

Rich people really have trouble entering the kingdom of God (Matthew 19:23), and they tend to boast in their wealth as if they are so wonderful, powerful, and deserving. But a poor man who has wisdom and understanding is able to see the foolishness that is really there because he knows the truth of Scripture. He knows that being poor doesn't make somebody stupid and that being rich doesn't mean that one is wise. He understands that true wisdom is more valuable than all the world's riches combined, and he rejoices in that fact.

**¹² When the righteous triumph, there is great glory,
But when the wicked rise, men hide themselves.**

It makes the world far more unjust and dangerous when wicked people rule, commit violence, love injustice, and oppress those they have conquered. But when righteous people come to power, righteousness can be praised, good can be done in freedom, and justice can be carried out. (see also verse 28 and Proverbs 29:2, 4)

**¹³ He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper,
But he who confesses and forsakes *them* will find compassion.**

Those who sin and hide their sin will find misery in their souls (James 5:16) and pain even in their bodies (Psalm 32:3-4). They need to confess their sin to God Who is faithful and just to forgive (1 John 1:9), and they need to confess their sin to those whom they have wronged. Christians must always be willing to forgive others who in repentance seek forgiveness for their wrongs. Christ showed us compassion by loving us

before we loved Him, and we need to be ready and willing to forgive and be compassionate also. However, it is not enough just to say one is sorry, but confession must be met with the forsaking of the sin. True repentance is proven by real and actual life change (2 Corinthians 7:10-11). Once the sin is confessed and forsaken, healing and restoration can begin.

**¹⁴ How blessed is the man who fears always,
But he who hardens his heart will fall into calamity.**

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom as we recognize that God alone has power to cast the soul into hell. The fear of God means recognizing sin for what it is and wanting to be on the right side of God's judgment. Once a person has repented and trusted Christ for salvation, he comes to know God's perfect love which casts out the fear of punishment in hell. However, this doesn't mean that he will stop revering God and being mindful of His absolute holiness and hatred of sin. Those who know that they are loved by God also honor Him with their lives and recognize Him as Lord and Master and the One Whom they will stand before when they are judged based upon their faithfulness as believers (2 Corinthians 5:10). The fear of God for the Christian is not fear of wrath, but it is a serious recognition of one's stewardship before the Master Who deserves full worship, devotion, and obedience. Those who harden their heart and reject Christ will find disaster and eternal catastrophe as they are judged at the Great White Throne and sentenced to hell.

**¹⁵ Like a roaring lion and a rushing bear
Is a wicked ruler over a poor people.**

As in verses 12 and 28, wicked rulers are frightening to a people, particularly one that they have conquered, oppressed, and impoverished in order to keep them enslaved and subdued. They must live in dread and humiliation and a constant fear of danger. This kind of government is lacking understanding (v. 16).

**¹⁶ A leader who is a great oppressor lacks understanding,
But he who hates unjust gain will prolong his days.**

The oppressive ruler will be hated by those whom he oppresses, for he will exploit them for his gain and treat them terribly. This is traditional worldly wisdom, but it actually lacks understanding, for, if the people ever have a window of opportunity, they will fight back and take him out. The leader would be better off creating a valuable partnership and ally by being just and fair even while in a position of authority. This would earn the respect of the people, and they could serve him readily and not under compulsion or fear of his wrath. That is how he could prolong his days as king.

**¹⁷ A man who is laden with the guilt of human blood
Will be a fugitive until death; let no one support him.**

A murderer who has run from the law must not be aided or abetted by people, for he deserves to be punished and kept from being able to harm others again. Once one has murdered once and that line has been crossed, it makes doing it again that much easier and thus makes the person that much more dangerous.

**¹⁸ He who walks blamelessly will be delivered,
But he who is crooked will fall all at once.**

The blameless will be honored in due time by the Lord. Perhaps they will receive some honor and vindication in this life, but perhaps not. Perhaps they will be thought of as scum as Paul and the early Christians were (1 Corinthians 4:13), but what is sure is that in eternity God will honor and reward those who have lived to honor Him (2 Corinthians 5:10). Part of faith is believing in a God Who is a rewarder of those who seek Him (Hebrews 11:6). The evil and corrupt will likely create trouble for themselves on earth, but some may seem to prosper. Regardless, their eternity will be misery forever in hell, and the sentence will come quickly, sternly, justly, and all at once.

**¹⁹ He who tills his land will have plenty of food,
But he who follows empty pursuits will have poverty in plenty.**

Those who waste their time and do not work hard will not have money or resources to take care of themselves or even feed themselves. Those who do not work the land cannot expect crops to magically appear. Harvest time is a good time for those who have sown, watered, and cared for their crops. Those who sow seeds of life will have a glorious harvest with abundant spiritual fruit leading to abundant spiritual rewards (Galatians 6:6-10).

**²⁰ A faithful man will abound with blessings,
But he who makes haste to be rich will not go unpunished.**

Those who try to take shortcuts to get rich often get themselves into trouble, and it often requires them to steal, lie, and cheat. The wrath of God is not worth any amount of riches, but a faithful man will have an abundance of blessings. He may not be rich in terms of money or possessions, but he is privy to every spiritual blessing in Christ and all the eternal riches that belong to Him. (see also verse 22)

**²¹ To show partiality is not good,
Because for a piece of bread a man will transgress.**

Partiality leads to anger, bitterness, jealousy, and envy, even if the matter of favoritism is over something as small as a piece of bread. Our God is not partial, and Christians must not show personal favoritism.

**²² A man with an evil eye hastens after wealth
And does not know that want will come upon him.**

Those who have evil intentions in their hearts and who have lust in their eyes for money will do anything and everything even if corrupt and immoral and at the expense of others in order to get rich. They will face God's judgment for their evil deeds, and they may find that even in this life their wickedness catches up to him (Proverbs 13:21). (see also v. 20)

**²³ He who rebukes a man will afterward find *more* favor
Than he who flatters with the tongue.**

Flattery is a flat out lie. It might be a nice saying to make somebody feel good, but it is untrue. Therefore, it has no value, meaning, or actual ability to help. A person needs the truth to help him change, grow, and learn (John 17:17), and those who experience the fruit of righteousness after having responded to reproof will be grateful to those who pointed out the error of their ways (Hebrews 12:11).

**²⁴ He who robs his father or his mother
And says, "It is not a transgression,"
Is the companion of a man who destroys.**

Stealing from one's parents is a terrible crime, and saying that it is not a sin is just plain foolish and completely undiscerning. This person is to be counted among those who enjoy ruin and destruction and who definitely do not fear God.

**²⁵ An arrogant man stirs up strife,
But he who trusts in the Lord will prosper.**

Those who boast in their own resources, looks, intellect, or abilities enjoy pointing out the weaknesses of others and proving themselves to be strongest, smartest, and better than others. They enjoy putting people down and creating strife and a spirit of competition and cruelty rather than of peace and harmony. Those who trust in the Lord and boast in Him because they know that strength is found only in Him seek peace with others and are not trying to paint themselves in a better picture so as to make others feel worse. This is a better way to go through life as the other is repulsive and not indicative of Christ's character. It also carries with it the benefit of eternal rewards.

**²⁶ He who trusts in his own heart is a fool,
But he who walks wisely will be delivered.**

Every person is born with a wicked and deceitful heart (Jeremiah 17:9), and only in Christ can they be remade from the inside out (2 Corinthians 5:17). The heart in its natural state cannot be trusted until it is transformed by Christ and made new and able to be clean, pure, and in alignment with the desires of God (Psalm 24:3-4, 37:4). Those who walk wisely will trust God to change them and keep changing them from the inside out, and they will be delivered from sin and its consequences.

²⁷ He who gives to the poor will never want,

But he who shuts his eyes will have many curses.

Those who remember the poor and give to them as they are able demonstrate that they have the love of Christ in their hearts. God promises to meet the needs of His people (Philippians 4:19), and He asks them only to seek first the kingdom of God and to trust Him to meet their needs (Matthew 6:33). Even if one is suffering persecution and dying of starvation or disease in a prison cell, the needs of the soul have been met in Christ and blessed forevermore. The soul will have been satisfied by the Bread of Life and the Living Water of Christ. Those who hate Jesus and do not show love to Him by loving those in need will end up cursed in hell. Their hoarding mentality will not make them happy but miserable, and those who hold too tightly to money will find it has a way of eluding their grasp (Proverbs 27:24). The best investment to make is to give to the Lord and store up treasures in heaven (Matthew 6:20).

**²⁸ When the wicked rise, men hide themselves;
But when they perish, the righteous increase.**

It is a frightening proposition to see wicked people in positions of power, and it may make even righteous people have to conduct their affairs in secret. But, when the wicked perish, the righteous can be free to do good, to advance their cause, and to be sure that justice is served. It encourages more people to do what is right when righteousness is not a danger but a positive. (see also verse 12 and 29:2)

Proverbs 29

**A man who hardens *his* neck after much reproof
Will suddenly be broken beyond remedy.**

The fool is reproved for his error, but he doesn't listen, humble himself, or change his ways. Even after a great deal of correction, teaching, and training, he continues to do evil and to go his own way. The wages of sin is death, and eternal hell awaits those who harden themselves in their sin. Eventually, there will no longer be any chance for repentance, for time will have run out as judgment will have begun (see also Romans 1:24, 26, 28).

**² When the righteous increase, the people rejoice,
But when a wicked man rules, people groan.**

As in Proverbs 28:12, 28, a righteous ruler brings hope, peace, and justice to a people, which is a source of comfort and protection for them. A wicked ruler can be bought off, he will show favoritism, he will oppress, and he will not uphold justice. This is not a safe or joy-filled existence for those under his rule, but it is a reason to groan.

**³ A man who loves wisdom makes his father glad,
But he who keeps company with harlots wastes *his* wealth.**

A son who grows up loving wisdom and who chooses to order his life based upon the commands of God is a joy to a parent who loves the Lord and His ways. But a son who wastes what he has earned and been given on frivolous and sinful practices will dishonor God, himself, and his family.

**⁴ The king gives stability to the land by justice,
But a man who takes bribes overthrows it.**

An unjust ruler will lead to a loss of trust from his people and a prevalence of corruption and oppression, thereby destabilizing a land and his kingship. Justice will help a kingdom endure, and it will lead to peace and stability.

**⁵ A man who flatters his neighbor
Is spreading a net for his steps.**

Flattery is not a true compliment, for it is self-seeking in nature and without the best interests of others in mind. It may even be part of a scheme to trick, trap, use, and exploit a person for one's own evil agenda. It is better to keep company with those who will speak the truth even if it means that one has to change than to be lied to by those who will say anything to protect themselves and preserve their own welfare (see also Proverbs 27:6).

⁶ By transgression an evil man is ensnared,

But the righteous sings and rejoices.

Solomon has already said the righteous should not rejoice in their enemy's adversity (Proverbs 24:17), but there is great joy, hope, and satisfaction in seeing justice meted out. When a person who is trying to do evil or harm somebody is caught as a result of his actions, the consequences are just. Justice is always something the righteous should rejoice in, for it stabilizes a society and it reflects the nature of God. The fruit of the wicked is destruction, but the fruit of the righteous is joy, life, and singing of praise to God.

**⁷ The righteous is concerned for the rights of the poor,
The wicked does not understand *such* concern.**

Part of upholding justice is making sure that the poor are not treated unfairly. The wicked person adores the high and noble of this world, and he looks down upon those who are of little repute, of low status, and with little money. The wicked don't understand why they should bother to care, and they are confounded by people who do. They see nothing in such sacrificial and selfless acts for themselves, and they think it is foolish to look out for others ahead of themselves. They enjoy when justice favors them, and they prefer to waste their resources on sinful practices than to give it to those in need.

**⁸ Scorners set a city aflame,
But wise men turn away anger.**

People who show others extreme disrespect and taunt and insult them provoke them to anger. The result of this antithesis of kindness, peace, love, and grace is fighting, animosity, and even war. Wisdom doesn't get provoked so easily, and it seeks out peace (Proverbs 15:1). Some conflicts cannot be prevented because self-defense may become necessary and the rights of the innocent may need to be fought for, but wisdom is always looking for peace gently and without an eagerness to fight.

**⁹ When a wise man has a controversy with a foolish man,
The foolish man either rages or laughs, and there is no rest.**

A fool is only interested in nonsense, division, ruin, animosity, and his own selfish feelings, gain, and agenda. He is not interested in coming to a reasoned solution, and he only further provokes a righteous person along the way. There can be no peace or rest when a fool isn't actually interested in peace, rest, or actual problem-solving.

**¹⁰ Men of bloodshed hate the blameless,
But the upright are concerned for his life.**

Righteous people value the human life from conception to death, but wicked people are more concerned about money and power than about human dignity. The wicked enjoy violence and bloodshed, for they do not think of the souls of those whom they seek to

harm. There is no fear of God in their hearts to restrain them from killing even if only for a loaf of bread.

**¹¹ A fool always loses his temper,
But a wise man holds it back.**

A fool has no discretion or self-control, and he is quick to lose his temper. A wise person can feel angry and yet not lash out at others. He can trust God to help him be peaceful, to walk away when necessary, and to speak gently and graciously even when provoked. He knows that God will avenge wrongs suffered. He is able to control himself and his words and responses because he wants to honor God and be a testimony of love rather than of a personal vendetta of hate.

**¹² If a ruler pays attention to falsehood,
All his ministers *become* wicked.**

When wicked people see that a ruler can be bought, that he will listen to terrible advice without calling it terrible, and that he is willing to bend the rules a little for appearance's sake, then the whole culture of his servants and advisers tends to get corrupted. Good people don't want to work for a person who is corrupt and who requires them to lie, but a wicked ruler will attract people who enjoy scheming and twisting things.

**¹³ The poor man and the oppressor have this in common:
The Lord gives light to the eyes of both.**

God has made both the poor and the one who oppresses the poor, yet too often the wicked treat the poor unjustly and unfavorably as if they are less valuable. But God made them both and loves them both, and those who fear Him and think through the world from His perspective will recognize that it is abominable to discriminate and treat the poor unfairly. (see also Proverbs 22:2)

**¹⁴ If a king judges the poor with truth,
His throne will be established forever.**

This verse essentially combines what was previously said in verses 4 and 7 by emphasizing that a king can rule and pass on a kingdom of peace and stability if he is just and fair to everybody, including the poor.

**¹⁵ The rod and reproof give wisdom,
But a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother.**

Contrary to what the world says, there is no glory in letting a child follow the sinful and rebellious instincts of his heart and call it imagination, exploration, or creativity. It will not harm a child's self-worth by disciplining him, but it will actually help him grow in wisdom and make better decisions. Walking in wisdom is a path of greater usefulness, creativity, and blessing to others, and in Jesus alone can one's identity and worth be

realized (Galatians 2:20). Parents who do not train their children to obey should be ashamed of themselves, and children who do not obey shame their parents. God has given them a command to obey their parents in the Lord, for this is right (Ephesians 6:1). This is a blessing and honor to parents, and it pleases the Lord as well.

**¹⁶ When the wicked increase, transgression increases;
But the righteous will see their fall.**

Wicked leaders lead to wicked advisers and servants and to wickedness propagating throughout an entire kingdom. When sin is glorified, it increases, and, when it is tolerated and even celebrated, it is practiced all the more. The righteous will one day see the wicked pay for their sins, and the righteous will inherit eternal life.

**¹⁷ Correct your son, and he will give you comfort;
He will also delight your soul.**

This verse emphasizes that discipline is a good, healthy thing that demonstrates love and security to children. It will teach them to be respectful and to obey parents and God, and this will bring joy and peace to a home and to a family. When children are not trained to obey or given teaching as to what God wants of them, their sin nature will carry them into all sorts of rebellious and selfish behavior. The result will be misery for all around them, but those who train their children faithfully and lovingly can expect to see good and blessing result.

**¹⁸ Where there is no vision, the people are unrestrained,
But happy is he who keeps the law.**

A proper vision of life involves ordering one's steps according to the commands of Scripture, but, when the Bible's commands and authority are removed from society, chaos is free to reign. A proper vision is not just bringing people into order and with a common goal, but it is teaching them how to restrain the lusts of the flesh and how to fear God.

**¹⁹ A slave will not be instructed by words *alone*;
For though he understands, there will be no response.**

From verse 21, it is clear that God's will is not that anybody, including slaves, are treated poorly. In fact, owning slaves in the oppressive sense doesn't square with the Bible at all (Proverbs 28:16, Romans 13:8). However, in the context of history, when a nation overtook another nation and marched its captives off to enslavement, that slaves were going to be in existence was a political reality. It would often take more than just words to coax a defeated soldier into serving a foreign power. Some would likely resort to whipping and intimidation. This is not God's way (see Proverbs 28:15-16), however, for love for enemies is His way (Matthew 5:44). It is possible to treat all people with dignity even in less than desirable political circumstances. Through words and a godly testimony perhaps slaves could be won to Christ, but those who oppress them demonstrate a lack of

love and a wicked desire. A response of faith in the Lord should be more important to a Christian than anything else even if it means going against the common practice of the day.

**²⁰ Do you see a man who is hasty in his words?
There is more hope for a fool than for him.**

Wisdom thinks through what one will say before the words come out, and it takes the thoughts and puts them through the filter of God's Word. Those who are quick to run their mouths without thinking reveal a heart attitude that is antagonistic to truth and the fear of God. A naïve person who lacks knowledge has a better chance of coming to saving faith in Christ than a person who is proud to be a scoffer and a mocker and who refuses to think deeply about the world.

**²¹ He who pampers his slave from childhood
Will in the end find him to be a son.**

The Bible does not glorify ill-treatment of anybody, and even those who had servants could honor Christ by treating them like a son or daughter. This would infer a more employer-employee relationship as well as a parent-child relationship and nothing abusive, demeaning, dehumanizing, discriminating, or oppressive. In fact, it speaks of love, generosity, and being like family.

**²² An angry man stirs up strife,
And a hot-tempered man abounds in transgression.**

One mark of a fool is the love of anger and being easily provoked and enjoying provoking others. Those with a hot and quick temper will find that their lives abound in all kinds of evil and sin because being led by unrighteous anger is being led by the devil's impulses.

**²³ A man's pride will bring him low,
But a humble spirit will obtain honor.**

Those who are prideful and arrogant may be successful in worldly terms in this life, but they will be brought low before the throne of God for refusing to have humbled themselves and repented of their sin. Those who do bow the knee to Jesus now will be exalted later, but those who shake their fists at God in rejection, spite, and anger now will, on account of their arrogance and self-glory, be given the ultimate dishonor of eternity in hell. Humility pleases God in the life of the Christian, and God will use those who are contrite and who tremble at His Word (Isaiah 66:2).

**²⁴ He who is a partner with a thief hates his own life;
He hears the oath but tells nothing.**

Those who join forces and create partnerships with other evil people do so at their own risk. People who are willing to steal from others are not trustworthy and will steal or kill just to get more for themselves. The promise that is made between liars is absolutely unreliable, for liars will lie, cheat, steal, and destroy each other.

**²⁵ The fear of man brings a snare,
But he who trusts in the Lord will be exalted.**

Those who live seeking the approval of people will struggle to love the Lord above all and with all of their hearts. No one can serve two masters, and those who live fearing man and what people might do to them will find that their fear keeps them from seeking, obeying, and trusting God like they should. Those who refuse to fear man and instead keep obeying God by faith can expect to receive honor from God in due time. Being bold and courageous is the call of the Christian. As Deuteronomy 31:6 says, “Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid or tremble at them, for the LORD your God is the one who goes with you. He will not fail you or forsake you.”

**²⁶ Many seek the ruler’s favor,
But justice for man *comes* from the Lord.**

People in general enjoy trying to get an inside track with people in positions of power. They like to grease palms, give gifts, and flatter rulers in order to get favorable treatment. The reality of life on earth is that people make mistakes in judgment, and justice too often gets perverted. But God will judge the world in righteousness, rendering to each according to his due. He will vindicate the righteous and punish the wicked. All that was unfair on earth will be made right before the Almighty Who sees all and knows all.

**²⁷ An unjust man is abominable to the righteous,
And he who is upright in the way is abominable to the wicked.**

A righteous person should abhor what is evil and cling to what is pure (Romans 12:9). Love rejoices with the truth (1 Corinthians 13:6), but evil people reject truth, hate Jesus, and hate those who love Him (John 15:18). This doesn’t mean that Christians should hate sinners, but they should hate everything that they stand for, practice, and represent.

Proverbs 30

The words of Agur the son of Jakeh, the oracle.

The man declares to Ithiel, to Ithiel and Ucal:

**² Surely I am more stupid than any man,
And I do not have the understanding of a man.**

**³ Neither have I learned wisdom,
Nor do I have the knowledge of the Holy One.**

⁴ Who has ascended into heaven and descended?

Who has gathered the wind in His fists?

Who has wrapped the waters in His garment?

Who has established all the ends of the earth?

What is His name or His son's name?

Surely you know!

There is only one God Who knows all, Who has made everything, Who is in control of everything, and Who has the power to both descend to earth and ascend back again. The Lord God is the only Being with all knowledge, power, strength, and wisdom. Man apart from Christ has no wisdom, but in Christ he can learn wisdom and grow in knowledge so that his otherwise stupid, blind, and foolish heart can be trained in righteousness and honor (Romans 12:1-2). Agur recognizes his weakness apart from God and how small his understanding is against the backdrop of God's omniscience. He is not proud of his intellect, but he trusts in God to give him wisdom worth sharing.

**⁵ Every word of God is tested;
He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him.**

Every word of God is given by inspiration of the Spirit and profitable for teaching, correction, reproof, and training in righteousness in order to make the Christian ready, equipped, and able to do what God has asked of him (2 Timothy 3:16-17). God cannot lie (Titus 1:2), and His Word is sure. It will sanctify (John 17:17) and rightly judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart (Hebrews 4:12). Those who follow His Word will find it to be a shield and a refuge to them, keeping them from doing so much harm and destruction that sin would otherwise do (Psalm 119:105). God's Word has never failed or been proven wrong, and it will endure forever.

**⁶ Do not add to His words
Or He will reprove you, and you will be proved a liar.**

God has preserved His Word (Matthew 5:18), for it will endure forever (1 Peter 1:25). A curse awaits any who add to or take away from the Scriptures (Revelation 22:18-19). Scripture stands alone above all other literature because it is God-breathed, pure, true, and authoritative, the very Word of God to man. It is imperative that believers study the Word diligently so that they can share it and teach it rightly (2 Timothy 2:15).

⁷ Two things I asked of You,

Do not refuse me before I die:

⁸ Keep deception and lies far from me,

Give me neither poverty nor riches;

Feed me with the food that is my portion,

⁹ That I not be full and deny *You* and say, “Who is the Lord?”

Or that I not be in want and steal,

And profane the name of my God.

Two great prayers, desires, and ambitions are given here. First, he prays that God would keep deceit and lies far from his heart and mind. Lying is very often the first step into a multitude of sins, and it is imperative for those who wish to be sanctified to start speaking truthfully with others and being truthful with themselves. Second, he prays that he would have just what he needs. He is concerned that if he has too much that he might deny God because of pride and a false feeling of self-sufficiency. He also doesn't want to be so poor that he is tempted to steal and profane God's name. A life that is devoted to the truth and to honesty as well as one that has found contentment and isn't enslaved to any of the lusts of the world is a noble ambition and something wise to pray for.

¹⁰ Do not slander a slave to his master,

Or he will curse you and you will be found guilty.

Speaking ill of a servant to his master is absolutely unloving, demeaning, and insulting to a fellow human being. It is indicative of a lack of love and compassion in the heart. It could endanger the life of the servant if believed, and if not believed, it could lend punishment to the liar. Either way, it is dangerous, harmful, and destructive behavior and not something becoming of a Christian. (for more on proper servant-master relationships see Proverbs 29:21)

**¹¹ There is a kind of *man* who curses his father
And does not bless his mother.**

**¹² There is a kind who is pure in his own eyes,
Yet is not washed from his filthiness.**

**¹³ There is a kind—oh how lofty are his eyes!
And his eyelids are raised *in arrogance*.**

**¹⁴ There is a kind of *man* whose teeth are *like* swords
And his jaw teeth *like* knives,
To devour the afflicted from the earth
And the needy from among men.**

Here he describes four different kinds of wickedness that all have pride in common. The first type of person isn't respectful to his parents and violates the command of God to honor one's father and mother. The second type of person is so blinded by pride and arrogance that he cannot see the reality of his filthiness and sin. The third type looks down on others and exalts himself. He doesn't bow before God but scoffs at Him and mocks Him. The look of his eyes with the raised eyelids speaks of elitism, condescension, and extreme arrogance. The fourth type is a person who will do anything

and everything by word and deed to steal, kill, and destroy for his own gain. He would just assume see the “worthless eaters” be gone off the earth so that he can have more to himself. He has no compassion for the poor and weak, for he is full of pride, arrogance, and haughtiness. Pride manifests in different ways, but it is fundamental to all sin (1 John 2:16).

**¹⁵ The leech has two daughters,
“Give,” “Give.”**

It is not good to be a leech and always try to take from others while never seeking to give in return. Christians should be generous and cheerful givers, not greedy takers.

**There are three things that will not be satisfied,
Four that will not say, “Enough”:
¹⁶ Sheol, and the barren womb,
Earth that is never satisfied with water,
And fire that never says, “Enough.”**

Here he lists four things that are never satisfied and which will never stop begging for more or say “enough”. The place of the dead and the fire of hell will never be quenched or have an end. The barren womb will cry out in great distress for children, but a conception just won’t happen. Water is poured out on the ground and is absorbed like it was never even there. Lastly, fire that keeps on burning and destroying everything in its path will also never say “enough”. The teachable point here is that nature and the created order gives many illustrations of things that cannot be fixed, stopped, and that will keep going on and on. These are a shadow of the power of death which all men will face. All will one day die and then face the judgment (Hebrews 9:27). The fire of hell is more eternal and longer lasting than any earthly fire, and it must be taken seriously.

**¹⁷ The eye that mocks a father
And scorns a mother,
The ravens of the valley will pick it out,
And the young eagles will eat it.**

A heart that is never trained by discipline and that never learns humility, the fear of God, or the path of wisdom will likely end up never obeying God by faith and being destroyed by sin. God will metaphorically pluck out the eye that looks at Him and others in a haughty, prideful manner, and wrath will come to that person. Sin brings with it its own adversity, and the eternal consequences for sin are eternal pain and destruction.

**¹⁸ There are three things which are too wonderful for me,
Four which I do not understand:
¹⁹ The way of an eagle in the sky,
The way of a serpent on a rock,
The way of a ship in the middle of the sea,
And the way of a man with a maid.**

He speaks of four things that are too wonderful for him and beyond understanding, things that constantly move him to marvel at how the world is so much more than a cosmic accident and a freak result of impossible natural causations. God's creative genius is on display in an eagle soaring through the sky, in a snake slithering on a rock, in a ship sailing along endless waters, and the romantic affection between a man and his lover. All of these reflect something more and a God Who created it all. As Ecclesiastes 3:11 says, "He has made everything appropriate in its time. He has also set eternity in their heart, yet so that man will not find out the work which God has done from the beginning even to the end." With God, there is always more to marvel at and for which we can give Him praise and thanks.

**²⁰ This is the way of an adulterous woman:
She eats and wipes her mouth,
And says, "I have done no wrong."**

The adulterous woman feasts on the life that falls for her advances, and her conscience is so defiled that she is not even bothered by what she has done. She feels no guilt or shame, and she enjoys her lifestyle. It brings her glory in her mind, and she lives for her own pleasure and ease. She has no fear of God, and she does not reflect upon the fire of hell or the devastation she is bringing to many souls.

**²¹ Under three things the earth quakes,
And under four, it cannot bear up:
²² Under a slave when he becomes king,
And a fool when he is satisfied with food,
²³ Under an unloved woman when she gets a husband,
And a maidservant when she supplants her mistress.**

Here he lists four things have earth-shaking ramifications. The first is when a kingdom is turned upside-down as a new leader takes to the throne. Perhaps implied here is the captives retaking the kingdom, and the slaves becoming the new victors. A whole new social order is the result. Jesus came as a suffering servant, but He will return as conquering King. Perhaps there is some prophetic implication here. Second, a fool will never be satisfied because only Christ brings satisfaction. In order to enjoy the gifts of life, one has to have the presence of Christ (Ecclesiastes 2:25, Psalm 16:11). Only those who hunger and thirst for righteousness will find satisfaction for their souls (Matthew 5:6). So if a fool is actually now satisfied with anything, even something as small as a meal, it is likely an eternally significant event in that he is no longer a fool but a follower of Christ (Ecclesiastes 5:18). Third, when an unloved woman who has spent most of her life being rejected by men or considered ugly or second-rate finds a man who loves her, it changes her entire life and fills her with hope and joy. Of course, the only way lasting satisfaction can be enjoyed in marriage is if both love Christ. But this may well be a picture of Christ loving we who were unloved and dying and demonstrating His love for us while we were yet sinners (Romans 5:8). We, the bride of Christ, have found in Him something life-changing and earth-shattering as we have found the kingdom of God.

Fourth, another thing that has major effects is when a maidservant displaces her mistress. This seems to indicate that the husband divorced his wife and took the female servant as his new wife. Obviously, this is adultery and wrong, and it has severe consequences for all involved. One person becomes instantly poor, unloved, and destitute, while the other gets all the benefits of moving up from a servant to a wife. An entire family is turned upside down, and children are hurt deeply in the process. Sin always has devastating effects, and adultery is certainly no exception.

**²⁴ Four things are small on the earth,
But they are exceedingly wise:
²⁵ The ants are not a strong people,
But they prepare their food in the summer;
²⁶ The shephanim are not mighty people,
Yet they make their houses in the rocks;
²⁷ The locusts have no king,
Yet all of them go out in ranks;
²⁸ The lizard you may grasp with the hands,
Yet it is in kings' palaces.**

Here he lists four of God's creatures which are small, but their instincts demonstrate a God who has made them wise in their own animal ways. The ants are very small and can easily be stepped on, but they are intelligent enough to feed themselves when they are doing their hard work, and, if necessary, storing up food for the winter. The rock badgers know how to live in the rocks and survive harsh conditions. The locusts have an order about them as they work together to eat everything green even though they have no locust king to give them orders. The lizard is small enough to hold in one's hands, meaning that it is vulnerable, yet it is able to sneak into king's palaces which are heavily guarded by men. Each of these creatures in being who God made it to be and following its God-given instincts brings praise to Him by showcasing His creative genius. Man is a steward over creation, and thus he should be protective of God's creatures and, if he has faith, see the wisdom of God at work in His creation. The creation declares God's glory (Psalm 19:1-2), and man should, too (Roman 1:19-20).

**²⁹ There are three things which are stately in *their* march,
Even four which are stately when they walk:
³⁰ The lion *which* is mighty among beasts
And does not retreat before any,
³¹ The strutting rooster, the male goat also,
And a king *when his* army is with him.**

Here he lists four things that are stately in their march and walk. First is the lion which is mighty among beasts and doesn't run from other animals. Then there is the rooster which struts proudly as does the male goat. A king also tends to act all proud when he is surrounded by his army. Jesus Christ, the Lion of Judah (Revelation 5:5), is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He doesn't need to strut, for His power is clear in what has been made. He is the Lord of hosts, and He cannot be defeated. Thus, the believer's

confidence must be in Jesus, not in himself, not in an earthly army, and not just because he is proud of himself. All boasting must be in Jesus.

³² **If you have been foolish in exalting yourself
Or if you have plotted *evil*, put your hand on your mouth.**
³³ **For the churning of milk produces butter,
And pressing the nose brings forth blood;
So the churning of anger produces strife.**

Boasting that is not in Christ is characteristic of exalting oneself, and pride is sin. Those who have fallen into pride need to repent immediately, and those who have plotted evil need to be ashamed and stop what they have started. The end of sin is always going to be strife and destruction, and wisdom stops and turns the other way.

Proverbs 31

The words of King Lemuel, the oracle which his mother taught him:

² What, O my son?

And what, O son of my womb?

And what, O son of my vows?

**³ Do not give your strength to women,
Or your ways to that which destroys kings.**

⁴ It is not for kings, O Lemuel,

It is not for kings to drink wine,

Or for rulers to desire strong drink,

⁵ For they will drink and forget what is decreed,

And pervert the rights of all the afflicted.

⁶ Give strong drink to him who is perishing,

And wine to him whose life is bitter.

⁷ Let him drink and forget his poverty

And remember his trouble no more.

⁸ Open your mouth for the mute,

For the rights of all the unfortunate.

⁹ Open your mouth, judge righteously,

And defend the rights of the afflicted and needy.

King Lemuel shares of the wisdom that his mother imparted to him concerning what makes a king rule with understanding and justice. His mother advised him to heed the commands of Scripture to stay away from all forms of sexual immorality (Ephesians 5:3) including the multiplying of wives, which was common practice among the kings of old. This would likely turn a man's heart away as it did Solomon's as the king became focused on sinful pleasure rather than upon the wisdom of God. Deuteronomy 17:17 says of the Israel's king, "He shall not multiply wives for himself, or else his heart will turn away; nor shall he greatly increase silver and gold for himself." A king who wants to rule wisely needs also to avoid drunkenness and the lure of escaping reality with strong drink. Proverbs 20:1 says, "Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, And whoever is intoxicated by it is not wise." Strong drink would impair his judgment, and it could lead to him to make terrible decisions without realizing what he was doing. He might forget the law of God and the law of the land and act in a way that defrauds people of their rights. It is the king's responsibility to look out for the needs of the downtrodden and lowly, and this would not happen if a king's mind is overtaken by a corrupt sex drive or by too much alcohol. King Lemuel's mother suggested leaving the alcohol to those facing imminent death to help cope with pain and suffering. Many who face poverty drink to forget the pain of their lives, and, while this is wrong and unwise (Ephesians 5:18), it is less dangerous for society at large than if the leader of a country is a drunkard. The weak, disabled, unfortunate, poor, and afflicted need the king to stand up and defend their rights and dignity. The king can't shirk his responsibility to lead and to dispense justice, and those who have a mind which is sober in spirit (1 Peter 1:13) and led by the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:14) can do just that.

¹⁰ An excellent wife, who can find?

For her worth is far above jewels.

¹¹ The heart of her husband trusts in her,

And he will have no lack of gain.

¹² She does him good and not evil

All the days of her life.

An excellent wife is a rare find (Ecclesiastes 7:27-29) and a gift from God (Ecclesiastes 9:9). Few people seek after God, and it is a special provision of God to find a mate who loves the Lord and who is fully trustworthy. No money can buy such a person, and thus her worth is beyond the value of any earthly possession or treasure. Her husband has full confidence in her loyalty and in her ability to keep her promises and commitments. Because of her character, there is no reason for her husband to be concerned that she will stop loving him, that she is only pretending to be devoted to him, or that she might find a better husband one day and leave him. Having her as a help, support, encouragement, friend, counselor, and lover is a source of strength for him and a great blessing that helps him succeed in what God gives him to do. He can be sure that she will never do something to harm or betray him, but, all of the days of her life with him, she will do him good. Because she fears God, she loves good and hates evil, and her life bears that out.

¹³ She looks for wool and flax

And works with her hands in delight.

¹⁴ She is like merchant ships;

She brings her food from afar.

¹⁵ She rises also while it is still night

And gives food to her household

And portions to her maidens.

¹⁶ She considers a field and buys it;

From her earnings she plants a vineyard.

The excellent wife is not bound to certain stereotypes or social norms in that she lets the Word of God dictate what she does with her time, skills, and energy. She is free to use her skillset and enjoy doing so if that is what she wants to do. If she likes to sow, she can gather the materials and sow to make her family clothes (see also verses 19-21). If she has other skills, she can use those, but she is always careful to do what she can do make sure her family has adequate food and clothing. She is not one who spends her life gossiping and getting into trouble (1 Timothy 3:11, 1 Timothy 5:13), but she lives a productive life as God gives her strength and according to the talents she has been given. Undertaking business ventures may be part of that skillset, and she is free before God to start a business. Perhaps she buys a field and plants a vineyard, and she does what she is able to help bring financial gain to the family (see verse 24). The Bible gives women the freedom to earn money if they so choose, but it is not a prerequisite or guarantee of godliness. The principle is that a woman of excellence will seize upon the opportunities that God puts in her path, and she will use her gifts to benefit her family and those who are less fortunate.

**¹⁷ She girds herself with strength
And makes her arms strong.**

The excellent wife is not afraid of work, and she is not lazy. Her arms are not weak from choosing to do nothing and frittering her day away not looking after her family's needs. In fact, her arms are strong as a result of her labor. The size of a woman's biceps is not indicative of godliness, but the principle here is that a godly wife isn't a busybody, a gossip, lazy, or a wasted talent. She uses the skills that God has given her for His glory, and she is faithful to be a worker at home so that her family does not get neglected (Titus 2:3-5).

**¹⁸ She senses that her gain is good;
Her lamp does not go out at night.**

A godly wife finds satisfaction in seeing the fruit of the works of her hands. Her productivity as a mother and wife is a good thing, and it is an honor to her and a blessing to her family. When a child comes in with a bad dream or something last minute needs her attention, she is not afraid to burn the midnight oil if she must. A woman's lack of sleep is not indicative of her level of spirituality, however, for all people need adequate rest. The principle is that she recognizes that, even at night, she is still on call if need be. This doesn't exempt the husband from pitching in around the house and helping out with the children so that mom can get some needed sleep. It is a team effort, and the instructions here are just focusing on the wife's responsibilities, not implying that the husband has no responsibilities at home.

**¹⁹ She stretches out her hands to the distaff,
And her hands grasp the spindle.**

**²⁰ She extends her hand to the poor,
And she stretches out her hands to the needy.**

**²¹ She is not afraid of the snow for her household,
For all her household are clothed with scarlet.**

**²² She makes coverings for herself;
Her clothing is fine linen and purple.**

In this specific instance, the wife is pictured as having great skill in making clothing, and she uses that skill to dress her own family and to give clothes to the needy. Those in her household will be ready even for cold weather with adequate coverings, and she even makes fine apparel for herself. It is not that fine dress makes a godly woman (1 Peter 3:3-4), but a godly woman is free to look her best as she desires in accordance with proper modesty and discretion. Having made sure her household is taken care of, she gives as she is able to those who are in need because she cares about the poor. Her love for the Lord compels her to be compassionate and concerned for those who do not have the resources, skills, money, and opportunity that she might have. Not every woman must feel that she has to sew or make clothes for the poor. The principles are clear, however, that a godly wife does all that she can to see that her family's needs are met, she

gives according to her ability to those who are in need, and she cares about those who are less fortunate.

**²³ Her husband is known in the gates,
When he sits among the elders of the land.**

A godly wife does not have to have a husband who is well-known or in a position of power and influence in the community. But what a godly wife will do is enable her husband to be all that he can be in the Lord and according to the gifts that God has given him. He will be more effective practically and spiritually because of her support, help, provision, and influence (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12).

**²⁴ She makes linen garments and sells *them*,
And supplies belts to the tradesmen.**

This particular woman uses her individual skills to help support her family and to have resources to provide for the needy. This particular woman was skilled at making various garments and belts that various tradesmen would purchase from her. This doesn't mean that all women need to learn this specific skillset, but the principle is that a godly woman is a wise steward of her individual gifting and skills. She uses her time, energy, and resources for the benefit of her family and for others. She is not lazy (v. 27) or consumed by worthless activities, but she recognizes what matters in life and acts accordingly.

**²⁵ Strength and dignity are her clothing,
And she smiles at the future.**

She has great internal confidence, boldness, and security in Christ, and she trusts Him for the future well-being of her family. She is faithful to do her part to prepare for the future and to plan accordingly, and thus she can look forward to what may come with hope, anticipation, and courage. She is dignified because she is a woman of loyalty, devotion, sacrifice, love, compassion, and integrity. She is strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might (Ephesians 6:10).

**²⁶ She opens her mouth in wisdom,
And the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.**

Essential to being a godly wife is believing the Bible and being able to teach it to her children. She must be able to speak words of wisdom to her children and to help train them in righteousness. She doesn't do this in wrath or impatience, but she is forbearing, gentle, gracious, and kind. She teaches her children how to hold tightly and rightly to the truth of the Lord and how to be full of kindness and grace as well. She models kindness by her actions so that her children can both hear the truth and see the truth in practice. She does all that she can to teach her children how to love God with all of their hearts and to love their neighbors as themselves.

²⁷ She looks well to the ways of her household,

And does not eat the bread of idleness.

A godly wife and mother is keenly aware of the practical needs of the household, she does her share of the labor, she trains her children how to work also, she teaches them the ways of the Lord, and she makes sure God is honored in the home. She does not waste her days or skirt her responsibilities (see also 1 Timothy 3:11, 5:13 and Titus 2:3). This doesn't mean that she cannot rest, socialize, or have some fun. In fact, she should live a life of balance as much as possible, and she is more likely to achieve balance which will help her endure if she has been faithful to train her children well, to plan ahead, and to work hard so that she can have time to relax as well.

²⁸ **Her children rise up and bless her;
Her husband *also*, and he praises her, *saying*:**
²⁹ **“Many daughters have done nobly,
But you excel them all.”**

The goal of every godly woman should be to raise children that will praise God. If she is successful at this, she will be filled with joy when they thank her and honor her for a job well done. Her husband also if he has any dignity whatsoever will clearly recognize the faithful labor, the steadfast love, and the joy that his wife has brought to the family, and he, too, will call her blessed, thank her, and compliment her many times. A godly husband will be attuned to the efforts that his wife makes to care for the family, and he will recognize her and praise her for her faithful love and devotion. He will be amazed at how special she is and amazed at what she has done.

³⁰ **Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain,
But a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised.**

The Book of Proverbs has included many warnings about the adulteress and her devious, destructive ways, but it concludes on a high note, having painted a picture of the noble characteristics of a godly wife. Charm can include lies, false pretenses, flattery, and deceit, but a woman of God is honest, loyal, trustworthy, and pure. That charm is deceitful doesn't mean that she shouldn't have a pleasant personality, but it means that she is straightforward in her dealings and conversations. She does not put forth a shady testimony or change her opinions and beliefs based upon the company just to make people like her. She is grounded in truth, and she lets her faith in Christ be a large part of her appeal. External beauty is vain in the sense that a beautiful woman who lacks discretion is like a gold ring in a pig's snout (Proverbs 11:22). Those who have such a woman as a wife will find her untrustworthy and difficult to live with. Many are the warnings in Proverbs about the contentious woman who seeks her own way and pursues her own agendas at the expense of her husband and children. But a woman who fears God will have tremendous character and inner beauty that will appeal to a godly man because he will recognize that she will be loyal, trustworthy, and devoted to him and any children they might have together. As two walk closely with Christ, they can grow closer together. This makes a woman's appeal that much greater and stronger, and it makes her external beauty shine brighter, purer, and truer. Physical appearances decay with natural

aging, but with a couple who fears God and adores one another, the attraction will always run deep because the marriage wasn't based upon selfishness, vanity, and passing things but upon depth of character and unity at the soul level. None of this is to underemphasize physical attraction in marriage given that Song of Solomon glorifies sexual attraction in marriage at great length. It is simply to say that physical beauty can either be rendered meaningless when love for Christ is absent, or a heart that loves the Lord can enhance the physical form and make the appeal to the right godly man irresistible.

**³¹ Give her the product of her hands,
And let her works praise her in the gates.**

It is a sad reality when the world doesn't recognize beauty, strength, and dignity of the inner person, but it is a godly testimony regardless of the response of society when a woman of character loves her husband, cares for her children, works hard, uses her skills and talents to God's glory, and has compassion for those who are less fortunate. As she shines forth the light of Christ in her integrity, compassion, and good works, God will be glorified, and the gospel will go forth (Matthew 5:16). She deserves praise and honor for a job well done and for being a tremendous example of godliness and how to make a wise investment (1 Timothy 2:15). The fruit of her life demonstrates the reality of her excellent spirit in Christ, and she will receive honor from Him for a life wisely lived.