

The Proverbs

Lesson 19

Proverbs 16

Chapters 1 - 9 contain the discourse from Solomon to his only son. It is Solomon's attempt to convince his son to strive for the righteous and godly life instead of the wicked godless path of the world. Chapters 10 – 15 contain the proverbs of Solomon which are mostly antithetic, the second clause contrasts with the first. Chapters 16 – 22 contain Solomon's proverbs which are mostly comparisons or completions of the first clause.

HEART/TONGUE

Proverbs 16:1 The plans of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the LORD.

Here Solomon compares a man's plans against those of the LORD Who is sovereign over all humans. A man may make his plans to put things in order or establish his ways but the true answer comes from the LORD. The Lord pronounces evil as evil and good as good. Whether or not a man is good or evil, the LORD's Word will prevail over the man's plans and actions because He is in control.

WAYS/MOTIVES

Proverbs 16:2 All the ways of a man are clean in his own sight, but the LORD weighs the motives.

The Lord will judge a person based on his thoughts, his motives and his intentions. His motives and intentions may seem justified to the individual, but if he is ungodly, the LORD will not bless his actions.

WORKS/PLANS

Proverbs 16:3 Commit your works to the LORD, and your plans will be established.

Are your works and plans in agreement with the LORD's? Are they His plans or are they yours. It is good to find the LORD's will and do those things; therefore, you must put your plans and desires aside if you wish to be successful.

EVERYTHING/WICKED

Proverbs 16:4 The LORD has made everything for its own purpose, even the wicked for the day of evil.

The first three verses are comparison proverbs; however, verse 4 is the first completion proverb in this section. Solomon completes the thought of the first clause in the second. This proverb is shocking to many in religious circles. Some teach, "Surely God can not look upon sin;" however, Proverbs 15:3 says "The eyes of the LORD are in every place, watching the evil and

the good.” Now in 16:4, Solomon says, “The LORD has made everything … even the wicked for the day of evil.” It is true. The LORD made the good and the evil! John 1:3 says, “All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.” What else needs to be said? He has a reason for the creation of wickedness on this earth; nevertheless, those who are wicked will be judged one day in one place at one time and sent to the Lake of Fire.

PROUD/PUNISHED

Proverbs 16:5 Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD; assuredly, he will not be unpunished.

This completion proverb is both a warning and a promise. If you are “proud in heart” you are “an abomination to the LORD.” As “an abomination,” you will be punished by Him and you cannot avoid that punishment; it will occur in the LORD’s timing. The only way to avoid the punishment is to change your thoughts and rid yourself of the pride within your heart.

ATONED/LORD

Proverbs 16:6 By lovingkindness and truth iniquity is atoned for, and by the fear of the LORD one keeps away from evil.

A better translation of the Hebrew is “By mercy and truth He shall atone for iniquity.” The LORD will come to earth one day to atone for the sins of the people. He will do this with His mercy and truth. How does a person keep himself “away from evil” and receive the mercy and truth of the LORD? He must fear the LORD; that is, he must worship the LORD Who has come to offer Himself for the atonement of sin.

PLEASING/PEACE

Proverbs 16:7 When a man's ways are pleasing to the LORD, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.

The LORD is the Savior and Deliverer of all who love and worship Him. He will do a wondrous work by changing the hearts of the enemies toward those who are acting in accordance with His plans and will.

LITTLE/GREAT

Proverbs 16:8 Better is a little with righteousness than great income with injustice.

Two verses in chapter 15 carry this same idea. In Proverbs 15:16, Solomon says, “Better is a little with the fear of the LORD, than great treasure and turmoil with it.” In 15:17, he says, “Better is a dish of vegetables where love is, than a fattened ox and hatred with it.” Great wealth seems to carry with it injustice, turmoil and hatred. Not everyone can handle great wealth. Here again, Solomon compares the traits of little and great wealth. In either case, the key to contentment is the fear, or worship, of the LORD.

WAY/STEPS

Proverbs 16:9 The mind of man plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps.

This proverb follows the same thought found in 16:1 which says, “The plans of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the LORD.” In both verses, the LORD has sovereign authority over the plans of a man. If a man’s plans are evil and his heart is hardened by evil, the LORD will direct his path in that evil. The LORD will use that evil for His own purpose, often to chastise those who belong to Him, yet, He will still punish the evil one for his sin. The same is true for the godly man; the LORD directs his path too, often to chastise the evil man for his wrongdoing. In other words, the LORD is directing it all!

LIPS/MOUTH

Proverbs 16:10 A divine decision is in the lips of the king; His mouth should not err in judgment.

In the context of this proverb, it seems that when the king has received a divine decision from the LORD, he is to be careful not to enact that decision incorrectly. However, that is not the intent of the proverb in the original language. The word “divine” is incorrectly translated; it should be “divination.” The word “divine” means a revelation from the Almighty; the word “divination” means a revelation from the supernatural by means of sorcery or magic. Therefore, this verse originally indicated that even though the king has used sorcery and magic to influence his decision, he should never use sorcery or magic when dispensing judgment on the people.

SCALES/WEIGHTS

Proverbs 16:11 A just balance and scales belong to the LORD; all the weights of the bag are His concern.

The LORD is extremely concerned with how people interact with each other in business. Unjust scales and balances have already been set out as an abomination to the LORD in previous proverbs. The LORD looks with disdain on those who steal in the marketplace by shaving the weights and measures. Standard weights and measures were used in Solomon’s day as they are today. The wicked merchant would alter the weights and measurements in their favor. In light of the Proverbs 16:10 and 12, this verse may be directed at the king who enacts an unjust punishment.

WICKEDNESS/RIGHTEOUSNESS

Proverbs 16:12 It is an abomination for kings to commit wickedness, for a throne is established on righteousness.

The LORD established governments on earth to resemble the organization He has established in heaven. Colossians 1:16 says, “For by Him all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities-- all things have been created by Him and for Him.” However, this verse does not promise that all thrones and governments will be righteous even though that was His purpose. Wicked thrones and governments are “an abomination,” meaning a stench in the nostrils, of the LORD.

DELIGHT/LOVE

Proverbs 16:13 Righteous lips are the delight of kings, and he who speaks right is loved.

Not all kings are righteous; therefore, voters should elect those who possess righteous words directly from the LORD and from no source of divination or wickedness. History proves that wicked kings are hated and righteous kings are loved.

WRATH/WISE

Proverbs 16:14 The wrath of a king is *as* messengers of death, but a wise man will appease it.

Evil and wicked kings often dispense harsh and unjust judgments on the people in their domain. It is a wise man who carefully keeps himself out of the way of the anger of a wicked king.

LIFE/RAIN

Proverbs 16:15 In the light of a king's face is life, and his favor is like a cloud with the spring rain.

Proverbs 16:13 says, “Righteous lips are the delight of kings.” Even wicked kings appreciate kind words from righteous lips. This appreciation was often accompanied by favors and fortunes dispensed from the king. The spring rains were welcomed by every farmer and rancher; they brought the promise of abundant crops and water for the livestock. Likewise, the favor of the king brought the promise of a peaceful life even under the reign of an evil ruler. However, the righteous lips must not endorse the unrighteous ways of the king.

GOLD/SILVER

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

Wisdom from the LORD is more precious than any other commodity in the world. Gold and silver cannot provide true wisdom and understanding in the area of eternal things. Everyone will live much longer in eternity than here in the temporal life. Therefore, money cannot buy what only the LORD can give.

DEPART/PRESERVE

Proverbs 16:17 The highway of the upright is to depart from evil; He who watches his way preserves his life.

Evil surrounds a righteous person. To preserve his life, the righteous person must make wise choices. In this verse, Solomon uses the word “life”, but what kind of life is Solomon addressing? Is it physical life, psychological life or spiritual life? In this case, Solomon is speaking of his psychological life, meaning the life of the soul. The King James Version rightly states, “He who watches his way preserves his soul.”

DESTRUCTION/STUMBLING

Proverbs 16:18 Pride *goes* before destruction, and a haughty spirit before stumbling.

Pride and destruction along with haughtiness and stumbling are forever linked together in the eyes of the LORD; one marches to the other in each case. In this context, pride is the undue confidence in one's own ability to provide and is almost always in rebellion to the LORD's will and plans. A righteous person lives in humility before the LORD; he waits on the Lord to provide, guide and direct. The rebellious exalt their arrogance and the LORD abhors such an attitude. We should not worry about the pride and haughtiness of others; rather, we should make sure that we possess neither.

HUMBLE/PROUD

Proverbs 16:19 It is better to be of a humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud.

The wicked world offers great benefits to those who will partake of them. But whatever benefit is gained from the wickedness of the world is still obtained through sin. In Proverbs 15:27 Solomon says, “He who profits illicitly troubles his own house, but he who hates bribes will live.” **Humility of the spirit will cause a person to be careful in how he benefits from opportunities in this world.** He will take advantage of godly prospects; he will run from ungodly schemes. Becoming wealthy by means of plunder will puff up a person's pride and lead to destruction.

WORD/TRUST

Proverbs 16:20 He who gives attention to the word shall find good, and blessed is he who trusts in the LORD.

When a person takes note of the Word of God, he will have the LORD's blessing which will bring contentment into his life. The second clause completes the thought with the importance of trust. Giving attention to His Word develops his trust in the LORD.

HEART/SPEECH

Proverbs 16:21 The wise in heart will be called discerning, and sweetness of speech increases persuasiveness.

Most people will seek counsel when they are having trouble discerning what to do. Whom do they seek? In most cases, they will go to the wisest person they know. To complete this thought, Solomon incorporates a trait of most wise people. He says they will possess a “sweetness of speech” **that will increase the likelihood that their counsel will be persuasive enough to convince a person to act promptly on their guidance.**

UNDERSTANDING/FOLLY

Proverbs 16:22 Understanding is a fountain of life to him who has it, but the discipline of fools is folly.

This proverb breaks from the pattern of verses in this section to return to the antithetic form of chapters 10 – 15. Solomon contrasts the understanding of the godly versus the folly of the fools.

Once again, Solomon uses the Hebrew words *mekor chayim* which is an allusion to the major artery that carries the fresh oxygen-filled blood to the body. Understanding does the same thing in the psyche or soul and thus gives him spiritual life. Conversely, discipline, rejected by the fool, starves the soul of the life giving truth.

TEACH/PERSUADE

Proverbs 16:23 The heart of the wise teaches his mouth, and adds persuasiveness to his lips.

A wise person speaks as his heart directs. That same heart fills his speech with such wisdom that his words carry an influence that is almost irresistible to the listener.

HONEYCOMB/HEALING

Proverbs 16:24 Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.

Very few foods were sweeter than honey in Solomon's day. Both then and now, the honey still cased in the comb contains a sweetness far greater than that in which the cap has been removed and the honey exposed to the air. It is the pure fresh honey that Solomon is comparing to the pleasant words of a wise man. His words are sweet to the deepest core of the psyche and healing to the physical body as they relieve turmoil, stress and pain.

WAY/DEATH

Proverbs 16:25 There is a way *which seems* right to a man, but its end is the way of death.

In Proverbs 14:12, Solomon says, “There is a way *which seems* right to a man, but its end is the way of death.” Why is this verse in Proverbs twice? In both cases, this language returns the reader to the influence and impact of the carnal world. The wise and righteous are few; the ungodly are many. The ungodly believe they know best. Because of their wickedness, they will conjure lies to force their positions, badger and persecute the righteous into submission, change history to meet their personal agendas and ridicule those who do not hold their beliefs. The righteous need not fear because their end is eternal life; the wicked must fear because their end is death. Why? It is because their right is wrong in the eyes of the LORD.

APPETITE/HUNGER

Proverbs 16:26 A worker's appetite works for him, for his hunger urges him *on*.

This proverb applies to both the wicked and the righteous. The appetite of the wicked compels him to continue in his wickedness. Additionally, the appetite of the righteous compels him to continue in righteousness. Most likely, because of the proverbs that follow this verse, Solomon has in mind the appetite of the ungodly.

WORTHLESS/FIRE

Proverbs 16:27 A worthless man digs up evil, while his words are as a scorching fire.

The word “worthless” is better translated “troublemaking”. Such men plot evil deeds to stir up strife and perpetrate violence. He is literally a scoundrel, a useless man, deeply ingrained in immoral sin. Such sin is accompanied by language that acts like “a scorching fire” upon everyone in his path.

STRIFE/SLANDER

Proverbs 16:28 A perverse man spreads strife, and a slanderer separates intimate friends.

The word perverse means crooked or twisted and describes a person involved in moral error. His moral error stirs up dissension among friends causing them to doubt and distrust each other. As a slanderer, he is a gossip who tells untruths to cause hatred among friends.

ENTICE/LEADS

Proverbs 16:29 A man of violence entices his neighbor, and leads him in a way that is not good.

The man in this proverb is not content with his own plight: he longs to lead the righteous away into his kind of sin!

EYES/LIPS

Proverbs 16:30 He who winks his eyes *does so* to devise perverse things; He who compresses his lips brings evil to pass.

The man in this proverb gives silent gestures to lead the righteous into his kind of perverse sin.

GLORY/RIGHTEOUSNESS

Proverbs 16:31 A gray head is a crown of glory; it is found in the way of righteousness.

Many sinners have gray hair and to them it tends to show the rugged path down which they have trod; however, those who are righteous can look upon their gray hair as a “crown of glory” because it brightens their physical appearance which is a result of the glow from deep within their souls.

RULE/CAPTURE

Proverbs 16:32 He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit, than he who captures a city.

The most difficult enemy to conquer is the one within rather than the one without. One may conquer the nations of the world but if he cannot conquer the anger within, it will preside over his spirit and destroy his physical and spiritual. Anger is not a sin; how one acts on that anger can result in a sin. Nevertheless, when anger is allowed to fester, the whole person will suffer in this life until it is adequately resolved.

LOT/DECISION

Proverbs 16:33 The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD.

A lot was an object used to divine the will of the gods. We do not know how lots were used nor do we know how they were interpreted; however, we do know that in the Bible days the people accepted the result of the casting of the lot to be the absolute will of the LORD. In such cases, the casting of the lot settled matters once and for all in the minds of both parties. In such cases, the lots were being cast as an appeal to the LORD for a direct and immediate answer. The results of the casting were accepted as the kindness and mercy of the LORD in disputed matters.