

The Proverbs

Lesson 21

Proverbs 18

SEPARATE/QUARREL

Proverbs 18:1 He who separates himself seeks *his own* desire, he quarrels against all sound wisdom.

A literal translation of Hebrew is, “He who is separated will seek the object of his desire, and will interfere with all realities or all essential knowledge.” The various cultures of the world have customs and laws governing accepted and rejected behaviors and norms. When a person separates himself from that which is deemed socially good and publicly lawful to seek his own desires, he will clash with the wisdom at large. Throughout history, rebels to community norms are viewed as destructive to the health of the society. Nevertheless, in some cases, rebels have been needed to change the direction of a community for the better. This need for change in direction is a reason for the establishment of America in rebellion to the desires of England, Calvin in rebellion to the Catholic Church and before the Civil War, the southern agricultural states of America were in rebellion to the smothering tariffs imposed by the northern industrial states. All of these examples highlight the rebel with a righteous cause; however, this proverb is directed toward the rebel with a selfish and wicked intent.

UNDERSTANDING/REVEALING

Proverbs 18:2 A fool does not delight in understanding, but only in revealing his own mind.

According to Hebrew, this verse should say, “But a fool does not delight in understanding, though it should even manifest itself.” Wise men want to understand in full the matters of a subject; fools do not! Fools focus on manifesting to the world the things they understand as they perceive them, whether they be true or not.

CONTEMPT/DISHONOR

Proverbs 18:3 When a wicked man comes, contempt also comes, and with dishonor *comes* reproach.

Contempt means scorn, disdain, disrespect and derision. When a person is considered a wicked man, people will immediately disrespect him. He is not considered a man of honor and therefore others denounce everything he does.

DEEP WATERS/BUBBLING BROOK

Proverbs 18:4 The words of a man's mouth are deep waters; the fountain of wisdom is a bubbling brook.

In this verse, Solomon uses a twist on his favorite phrase, “fountain of life” when he says “fountain of wisdom.” In both cases, the translation should say the “vein of life” and the “vein of wisdom.” It is a picture of the great aorta which pumps fresh blood throughout the body from the heart. In this verse, Solomon is moving from the physical blood that flows through the body to the thoughts and words that flow from the mind and mouth of a wise person. Similarly, the well of the truly informed is deep. His wisdom can be pumped out but never depleted. The fool does not pose such depth of understanding; his cistern can be drained and left depleted and dry in short order. David says in Psalm 36:9 “For with Thee is the fountain of life; in Thy light we see light.”

WICKED/RIGHTEOUS

Proverbs 18:5 To show partiality to the wicked is not good, *nor* to thrust aside the righteous in judgment.

It is obvious that Solomon is thinking of the courtroom in this proverb. Perhaps he is thinking of the wicked man who has influence with the judge or perhaps the man who seeks to bribe the magistrate. Falling prey to such a wicked man is not good. Neither is it good to cast a wicked verdict on an innocent righteous man. The LORD does not approve of either action.

LIPS/MOUTH

Proverbs 18:6 A fool's lips bring strife, and his mouth calls for blows.

Proverbs 18:7 A fool's mouth is his ruin, and his lips are the snare of his soul.

Proverbs 18:6 – 7 address the fate of fool who brings disaster because of the misuse of his tongue. As a result of this action, the fool's soul is doomed.

MORSELS/BODY

Proverbs 18:8 The words of a whisperer are like dainty morsels, and they go down into the innermost parts of the body.

Today a whisperer is called a gossip. Few people in this world are immune to the sin of gossip. With greedy excitement, the dainty facts of the gossiper's tale are swallowed into the memory of the soul. The facts are secretly decorated for the eye, perfumed for the nose, savored for the tongue and textured for the skin. Yet, the purpose of the gossiper is to spread a toxic cancer that will destroy the listener's knowledge and the subject's integrity.

SLACK/DESTROY

Proverbs 18:9 He also who is slack in his work is brother to him who destroys.

When Solomon uses the word “brother” in this verse, he is making a comparison. The slacker is similar to the destroyer. The person who fails to cook his meat within a proper period will see it putrefy and go to waste. He is similar to the person who intentionally destroys the meat so no one can use it for sustenance. Both are destructive!

TOWER/SAFE

Proverbs 18:10 The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous runs into it and is safe.

Here Solomon uses the word “LORD”. In Hebrew, it is Yahweh, in Latin it is Jehovah. Because of the New Testament, we know this is a reference to the pre-incarnate Christ. It is Jesus, the Creator of everything and the One who can save those who will turn to Him. Jesus is the strong tower, He is the place of safety and refuge, and He is the only place a person can run to and find protection from the evils of this world.

CITY/WALL

Proverbs 18:11 A rich man’s wealth is his strong city, and like a high wall in his own imagination.

Wealth cannot protect a man from the evils of this world. For a while he may be able to fend off the troubles that come his way, but in the end, even his money cannot fully protect him; only the LORD Jesus can provide a place of total guaranteed fortification.

HAUGHTY/HUMILITY

Proverbs 18:12 Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, but humility *goes* before honor.

The word “haughty” means an attitude of arrogant superiority. Rarely can the actions of such a person be redirected from the path of self-destruction. A wise person knows to step aside to a place of safety when dealing with a haughty fool. The path of the humble person is different. He will listen to the wisdom of others and seek the best options for the best results. Honor will come to the humble even when the road is rocky and convoluted.

ANSWER/SAME

Proverbs 18:13 He who gives an answer before he hears, it is folly and shame to him.

This proverb can be applied to many different circumstances and situations, but in all cases, it focuses on the hearer, not the one making the request. Simply put, when a person is making a request, the hearer should listen to the complete story before revealing his answer. Let the speaker exhaust his thoughts, then the hearer can ask for needed clarification and then, after all is said and done, he can reveal his answer and the reasons for his decision. To do less is folly; folly means wickedness in Solomon’s proverbs; wickedness is a shameful sin.

SICKNESS/BROKEN SPIRIT

Proverbs 18:14 The spirit of a man can endure his sickness, but a broken spirit who can bear?

The original says, “The breath of a man can endure his sickness, but a broken breath who can bear?” It seems reasonable from the comparison of the first and second clauses that Solomon is addressing the attitude of a man. A person who has a wonderful attitude about the sickness that is overtaking his body will protect his heart. Whether he lives or dies, the sickness will not defeat his relationship with the LORD and others. Whether he is crippled or restored, the sickness will not defeat his inner joy. Conversely, even the best physical health cannot heal the inner sorrow of man with a broken soul.

PRUDENT/WISE

Proverbs 18:15 The mind of the prudent acquires knowledge, and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge.

The word “prudent” describes a person who gives thought for the future and shows great care in his decisions. The wise man prudently accepts and incorporates the things that add to what he already possesses mentally. How does a wise person add to his knowledge? In Solomon’s day, it was primarily by word of mouth rather than reading a book.

MAN’S GIFTS/GREAT MEN

Proverbs 18:16 A man's gift makes room for him, and brings him before great men.

Nothing is required to approach the LORD and His holiness, yet, in the world, Solomon recognized that man can use money to buy entrance to the presence of influential men. Money cannot buy eternal salvation but money can be used to obtain earthly benefits that are not readily available to all men.

FIRST/SECOND

Proverbs 18:17 The first to plead his case *seems* just, *until* another comes and examines him.

When a person is given a report about something he has never heard before, it is common for that report to be accepted as the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Yet, given time and investigation, new discoveries often differ from the facts of the original report. The fool most often believes the first report over all subsequent reports. The wise will adjust his opinion based on all new information that is obtained.

CONTENTION/DECISION

Proverbs 18:18 The lot puts an end to contentions, and decides between the mighty.

Solomon mentioned the casting of a lot in Proverbs 16:33. The method of the practice has been lost in time and cannot be fully explained. Nevertheless, in Solomon’s day, the casting of a lot brought a permanent resolution to a conflict and all concerned accepted its result as fate.

OFFENDED/BARS

Proverbs 18:19 A brother offended is *harder to be won* than a strong city, and contentions are like the bars of a castle.

Offences and contentions often erect barriers between people that cannot be scaled without a life-changing encounter with the LORD by all parties.

MOUTH/LIPS

Proverbs 18:20 With the fruit of a man's mouth his stomach will be satisfied; He will be satisfied *with* the product of his lips.

Just as food eases the pain of an empty stomach, the words that pass the lips of a person’s heart often determine the joy or sorrow in life.

TONGUE/FRUIT

Proverbs 18:21 Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit.

In Matthew 12:37 Jesus says, "For by your words you shall be justified, and by your words you shall be condemned." More than just the joy and sorrow in a person's life, the words that pass through his lips can often determine the length of days on this earth and most certainly his ultimate destination in eternity. In Solomon's mind, words represent the true intent of the heart and the use of those words can adversely or favorably determine a person's future.

WIFE/FAVOR

Proverbs 18:22 He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor from the LORD.

Solomon is not implying by this verse that all marriage relationships are good, rather, he is simply making the point that a man "who finds a wife" enters into the completed plan and "favor from the LORD" who made the woman as a helper to the man to fulfill the LORD's eternal design for his creation to be fruitful and multiply. Marriage between a man and woman is honorable and all other sexual unions fall into the category of immorality and conversely a bad rather than "good thing." Later in Proverbs 19:14, Solomon says, "House and wealth are an inheritance from fathers, but a prudent wife is from the LORD." In Proverbs 31:10 he says, "An excellent wife, who can find? For her worth is far above jewels." These verses speak of the outward blessing a good wife brings to the honor of the man which is not the intent and context of Proverbs 18:22.

SUPPLICATION/ROUGH

Proverbs 18:23 The poor man utters supplications, but the rich man answers roughly.

Wealth often gets in the way of proper conduct and so does poverty. Both the wealthy and the poor become demanding in similar situations. However, the rich demand from a position of financial strength while the poor from a position of financial need. Ultimately the rich can speak his mind and walk away. Usually, the poor must humble themselves and beg for help.

FRIENDS/FRIEND

Proverbs 18:24 A man of *many* friends *comes* to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

Artificial friendships are often costly in every way. Maintaining such relationships require time, effort and monetary investment to continue to impress with a lavish and flamboyant lifestyle designed to establish some perception or status. However, Solomon noticed that most people have a few friends who do not base their mutual relationship on status, wealth, prestige, or heritage.