

The Proverbs

Lesson 26

Proverbs 23

Proverbs 22:20 indicates that Solomon is writing anew to Rehoboam with more important sayings. With this new letter, Solomon's sayings become longer passages which, in many cases, form small complete illustrations.

Proverbs 23:1 When you sit down to dine with a ruler, consider carefully what is before you; ²and put a knife to your throat, if you are a man of *great* appetite. ³Do not desire his delicacies, for it is deceptive food.

This proverb instructs Rehoboam, and all other readers, in the etiquette of dining with kings. Solomon specifically addresses the person who is extremely hungry or perhaps a glutton. Restraint and humility should be the rule rather than giving into the desire to fill the stomach when sitting at the table of a king. The way a person presents himself at the table of the king will determine the king's attitude toward him. By saying "put a knife to your throat", Solomon is not recommending suicide; rather, he is explaining how the actions of a ravishing glutton might taint the attitude of the king. Additionally, the person is a guest at the table of the king for some reason, and that reason may not be for the good because not all kings are righteous, a fact well known to Solomon. The delicacies, the special foods not normally eaten except on special occasions which are placed before the guest may, in fact, be deadly!

Proverbs 23:4 Do not weary yourself to gain wealth, cease from your consideration of *it*. ⁵When you set your eyes on it, it is gone. For *wealth* certainly makes itself wings, like an eagle that flies *toward* the heavens.

Money! – "A root of all sorts of evil!"⁵⁸ The LORD will provide for that which is needed. Those who fill their day with the pursuit of money will find only frustration. In many cases, the gain of today becomes a loss tomorrow and the following day. Even though you have money today you may not have money tomorrow. Wise restraint is needed because having riches today does not mean having wealth tomorrow.

Proverbs 23:6 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. ⁸You will vomit up the morsel you have eaten, and waste your compliments.

⁵⁸ 1 Timothy 6:10

The warning here is against eating with a stingy person who will judge every bite you take. The stingy person will make the guest so miserable that he will wish he had never accepted the invitation!

Proverbs 23:9 Do not speak in the hearing of a fool, for he will despise the wisdom of your words.

In the process of growing older each day, we all come to know people who are just foolish in almost everything they say and do. They have an opinion about everything and every person. In our encounters with them we learn that they despise and reject everything we say and do. Nevertheless, they continue to make the same mistakes and suffer the same consequences by doing things their way instead of taking the good counsel we try to give them. At some point, we need to forsake giving them counsel.

Proverbs 23:10 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.

The purpose of this Proverb is to highlight the sin of stealing from an orphan and, most likely, a widow. It is a sin against the LORD to steal from a neighbor by encroaching on his land; it is a greater sin to take from the fatherless and husbandless! He will avenge the innocent and helpless in such causes.

Proverbs 23:12 Apply your heart to discipline, and your ears to words of knowledge. ¹³ Do not hold back discipline from the child, although you beat him with the rod, he will not die. ¹⁴ You shall beat him with the rod, and deliver his soul from Sheol.

Solomon has made many attempts in Proverbs to state his point on the proper and appropriate use of spanking a child for outright defiance. Proper discipline can be used to save a person from eternal death. Paul speaks on the issue of delivering “his soul from Sheol” in his first letter to the Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 5:5 *I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.*

Proverbs 23:15 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. 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. ¹⁹ Listen, my son, and be wise, and direct your heart in the way.

This passage is probably intended as Solomon’s prayer in connection with the previous exhortation to administer the rod to save the child from Sheol. The purpose of the rod of

correction is to bring the child in line with wisdom. When a child shows wisdom, the parent's heart becomes glad; when the child shows folly, the parent's heart grieves. Therefore, the prayer of Solomon is that the child never desire to engage in the wicked acts of sinners but to worship the LORD and follow Him consistently and continually!

Proverbs 23:20 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 a man with rags. 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 begets 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.

Here Solomon addresses the things which are useless and senseless in life. The heavy use of wine and the act of gluttony provide nothing for the family in the end except the lack of what is needed and cannot be purchased because the money has been spent on impractical things. Instead of buying wine and lavish meals, take the direction of your father and mother to "buy truth" which will carry along with it "wisdom and instruction and understanding." Do not be tempted to fluff off the truth that has been learned; it will be useful in years to come. Good fathers and mothers give good counsel. A young adult should listen and act on the good counsel of parents and forsake the useless things of life and bring joy to the parents in return.

Proverbs 23:26 Give me your heart, my son, and let your eyes delight in my ways. 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 has learned his lesson from his past about the lure of wayward women and strong drink. These two sins have brought the destruction of many millions of otherwise good men. The unfaithful man, no matter how good he is otherwise, is not good at all in the eyes of the LORD. In the same manner, the drunkard, no matter how good he is otherwise, is not good at all! Solomon has surely regretted his reprobate life involving women and wine and here he implores Rehoboam not to be tempted by the same.

Proverbs 23:29 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."

The Adam Clarke Commentary says the following about this passage.

Let neither the color, the odor, the sparkling, etc., of the wine, when poured out, induce thee to drink of it. However good and pure it may be, it will to thee be a snare, because thou art addicted to it, and hast no self-command. He is utterly regardless of life; which is expressed very forcibly by one in a state of intoxication ascending the shrouds, clasping the mast-head, and there falling asleep; whence, in a few moments, he must either fall down upon the deck and be dashed to pieces, or fall into the sea and be drowned. Reader, if thou be a man given to this appetite, put a knife to thy throat. Though beat and abused, full of pain, and exhibiting a frightful figure; yet so drunk was he, as to be insensible who had struck him: still, after all this abuse and disgrace, he purposes to embrace the next opportunity of repeating his excesses! SIN makes a man contemptible in life, miserable in death, and wretched to all eternity. Is it not strange, then, that men should LOVE it?