

The Proverbs

Lesson 29

Proverbs 26

Proverbs 26:1 Like snow in summer and like rain in harvest, so honor is not fitting for a fool.

In Israel, snow does not fall in the summer. Although it might be a welcome event, it is foolish to expect it to occur. Rain during the harvest season is never a welcomed event. Failure to be able to get into the fields to harvest a dry crop will devastate the possibility of survival through the rough winters. In the same way, honor will not come to a fool just as snow will not come in the summer and honor does not help a fool as rain does not help in a harvest.

Proverbs 26:2 Like a sparrow in *its* flitting, like a swallow in *its* flying, so a curse without cause does not alight.

Curses are just empty words with no true power unless they have been pronounced by the LORD. Numbers 23:8 says, "How shall I curse, whom God has not cursed? And how can I denounce, whom the LORD has not denounced? "

Proverbs 26:3 A whip is for the horse, a bridle for the donkey, and a rod for the back of fools.
⁴ Do not answer a fool according to his folly, lest you also be like him. ⁵ Answer a fool as his folly *deserves*, lest he be wise in his own eyes. ⁶ He cuts off *his own* feet, *and* drinks violence who sends a message by the hand of a fool.

A fine line must be walked when answering a fool. First, a person answering a fool should never use the same reasoning used by the fool. In doing so, the responder has become a fool. Those who minister to lost people should never adopt and live with the same principles as the lost. They should live and act in a godly way rather than in the ungodly way of the lost. Those who are righteous should be different and should continue to live by a different standard, one that is approved by the LORD. Living like a lost person with the intention of changing that person only fosters his belief that his way of life is better than the one being offered. "Answer a fool as his folly deserves," means to be candid with him about what he needs to change in order to become wise in the LORD. Godly people, even while they are called to minister to the fool, should conduct their business with other godly people while they are ministering to the fool. Allowing a fool to handle your business is like "cutting off your own feet and drinking violence".

Proverbs 26:7 *Like the legs which hang down from the lame, so is a proverb in the mouth of fools.*

Lame legs are useless to the body. In the same way, Solomon's proverbs are useless when used by a fool. He will not learn from them, use them properly or hold on to them when times become rough.

Proverbs 26:8 *Like one who binds a stone in a sling, so is he who gives honor to a fool.*

The Hebrew actually says, "As he puts a piece of precious stone among a heap of stones, so is he that giveth honor to a fool." The sliver of a most precious of stone thrown into a pile of stones will render the sliver useless. Honor thrown into the pile of foolishness of a fool adds nothing to his character and being, he is still a fool.

Proverbs 26:9 *Like a thorn which falls into the hand of a drunkard, so is a proverb in the mouth of fools.*

What good is a thorn in the hand of a drunkard? What can he do with it? It will not buy him another drink. It will not buy him a bite of food. It is useless. What good can come from a proverb in the mouth of a fool? No good! He will not use it for good in any way.

Proverbs 26:10 *Like an archer who wounds everyone, so is he who hires a fool or who hires those who pass by.*

An employer should never hire an employee out of benevolence. As much as an employer may want to help a fool, hiring him will bring great consternation to other employees who have to work side by side with him. In essence, when the employer hires the fool, he has wounded the rest of his employees.

Proverbs 26:11 *Like a dog that returns to its vomit is a fool who repeats his folly.*

In 2 Peter 2, Peter presents a tremendous commentary on this verse and uses it to conclude his example.

2 Peter 2:¹ But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves.² And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned;³ and in *their* greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.⁴ For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment;⁵ and did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly;⁶ and *if* He condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by

reducing *them* to ashes, having made them an example to those who would live ungodly thereafter; ⁷ and *if* He rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men ⁸ (for by what he saw and heard *that* righteous man, while living among them, felt *his* righteous soul tormented day after day with *their* lawless deeds), ⁹ *then* the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment, ¹⁰ and especially those who indulge the flesh in *its* corrupt desires and despise authority. Daring, self-willed, they do not tremble when they revile angelic majesties, ¹¹ whereas angels who are greater in might and power do not bring a reviling judgment against them before the Lord. ¹² But these, like unreasoning animals, born as creatures of instinct to be captured and killed, reviling where they have no knowledge, will in the destruction of those creatures also be destroyed, ¹³ suffering wrong as the wages of doing wrong. They count it a pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are stains and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, as they carouse with you, ¹⁴ having eyes full of adultery and that never cease from sin, enticing unstable souls, having a heart trained in greed, accursed children; ¹⁵ forsaking the right way they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam, the *son* of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness, ¹⁶ but he received a rebuke for his own transgression; *for* a dumb donkey, speaking with a voice of a man, restrained the madness of the prophet. ¹⁷ These are springs without water, and mists driven by a storm, for whom the black darkness has been reserved. ¹⁸ For speaking out arrogant *words* of vanity they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality, those who barely escape from the ones who live in error, ¹⁹ promising them freedom while they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved. ²⁰ For if after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. ²¹ For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment delivered to them. ²² It has happened to them according to the true proverb, "A DOG RETURNS TO ITS OWN VOMIT," and, "A sow, after washing, *returns* to wallowing in the mire."

Proverbs 26:12 Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.

Notice how this same idea is used in other places in God's Word.

Proverbs 29:20 Do you see a man who is hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him.

Luke 18:11 The Pharisee stood and was praying thus to himself, 'God, I thank Thee that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax-gatherer.

Romans 12:16 Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation.

Revelation 3:17 Because you say, " I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need

of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked.

The truly wise person does not consider himself to be wise but is always searching for more teaching and instruction. The one who considers that he has already attained wisdom is a fool.

Proverbs 26:13 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.

These verses present the same thoughts found in Proverbs 22:13 and Proverbs 19:24. Solomon presents a picture of the claim of every sluggard who has ever lived, "There is a lion outside; I shall be slain in the streets!" What is the sluggard really saying? "I am a victim!" He is saying that out in the streets of the city, someone has it in for him and intends to bring him harm. He is transferring his plight to someone else and blaming all his ills on the other person. Additionally, Solomon states a proverb that exemplifies the epitome of a sluggard. It is a picture of a man who is so lazy that he will not even feed himself!

Proverbs 26:16 The sluggard is wiser in his own eyes than seven men who can give a discreet answer.

There is wisdom in the multitude of counsel but most sluggards believe that by themselves, they know more than all the counselors in the world.

Proverbs 26:17 *Like* one who takes a dog by the ears is he who passes by *and* meddles with strife not belonging to him.

Fools, sluggards and know-it-alls will meddle in other people's business and open up all forms of temptations.

Proverbs 26:18 Like a madman who throws firebrands, arrows and death, ¹⁹ so is the man who deceives his neighbor, and says, "Was I not joking?"

Madmen cannot be trusted and neither can the neighbor who willfully deceives and then claims that he is just joking. Paul gives the Christian specific instruction about such deeds. **Ephesians 5:**⁴ and *there must be no* filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting

Proverbs 26:20 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.

Back in **Proverbs 15:18** Solomon says, "A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but the slow to anger pacifies contention." Later in **Proverbs 29:22** Solomon says, "An angry man stirs up

strife, and a hot-tempered man abounds in transgression.” Even the happiest of situations can turn bad when a contentious man stokes a fire. Conversely, even the worst of situations can be calmed down when the fuel that can ignite a flame is removed by a calmer and cooler head.

Proverbs 26:22 The words of a whisperer are like dainty morsels, and they go down into the innermost parts of the body.

At first glance, this proverb seems to be positive, yet it is not! The words of a whisperer refers to those of a tale-bearer. The “dainty morsels” that “go down into the innermost parts of the body” are deadly poison. The same proverb is found in Proverbs 18:8. Today a whisperer is called a gossip. Few people in this world are immune to the sin of gossip. With greedy excitement, the “dainty” details of the gossip’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 gossip is to spread a toxic cancer that will destroy the listener’s knowledge and the subject’s integrity.

Proverbs 26:23 *Like* an earthen vessel overlaid with silver dross are burning lips and a wicked heart.

An earthen vessel is merely a clay pot that has been fired in an oven; it is nothing special. If it is covered with silver dross, it is still nothing special because the dross consists merely of the impurities that were removed in the purification of the silver. In the same way, burning lips and a wicked heart are nothing special to be desired; they are worthless.

Proverbs 26:24 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.

The hatred of a man can be concealed from public sight for a time. When Solomon says, “there are seven abominations in his heart”, he is using a Hebrew saying that means he is completely full of hatred. No matter how well he can hide his hatred, eventually it will be revealed. In a way, this proverb teaches that we should be ever so careful in determining whom we listen to and follow. The teacher should be well-known and proven before he is allowed to teach. If he is filled with hatred, he should never be given a platform on which to speak.

Proverbs 26:27 He who digs a pit will fall into it, and he who rolls a stone, it will come back on him.

It is harder to be bad than it is to be good. The bad person will dig the pits and roll the stones to hurt others; yet, each pit and each stone will become a potential peril to the bad person. The good person need not fear that he will ever fall into a pit that he has dug or be injured by a stone

he has rolled because he has neither dug a pit nor rolled a stone! However, he must be on guard for the pits and stones prepared by the bad person.

²⁸ A lying tongue hates those it crushes, and a flattering mouth works ruin.

Two kinds of sin are presented in this proverb, a lying tongue and a flattering mouth. The lying tongue clearly intends to crush the one being attacked. His intent is open and clear. The flattering mouth is much more dangerous. His words seem appealing but his intent is deceiving. A message cloaked in flattery can be far more devastating than an outright lie.