

The Proverbs

Lesson 30

Proverbs 27

Proverbs 27:1 Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth.

² Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips.

Tomorrows are not guaranteed for anyone in this world. We can plan for tomorrow, we can gather resources for all the tomorrows that follow, but we cannot be assured that we will live to see tomorrow or that circumstance will not change our plans. Solomon makes the point in this proverb that no one should boast about something that has not occurred. Even after the event occurs, Solomon instructs that the planner should not boast in his accomplishments; rather, the planner should allow others to give the praise for the activity. Self-praise is an indication of pride.

Proverbs 27:3 A stone is heavy and the sand weighty, but the provocation of a fool is heavier than both of them.

Fools provoke people and their provocation is one of the reasons they are considered fools. Their constant provoking is worse than wearing a heavy stone around the neck or being weighed down by sand.

Proverbs 27:4 Wrath is fierce and anger is a flood, but who can stand before jealousy?

Wrath, anger and jealousy are three of our most dangerous emotions. According to Solomon, wrath and anger are bad enough, but jealousy is the worst of the three.

Proverbs 27:5 Better is open rebuke than love that is concealed. ⁶ Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but deceitful are the kisses of an enemy.

A person can receive an open rebuke and make adjustments and corrections. When a person does not know that someone loves him, he can do nothing about it. Thus, verse six completes the thought by explaining how important the open rebuke from a friend is; it may cause a wound, but one that can heal. The deceitful love of an enemy will provide kisses that will continue to hurt whereas a concealed love does no harm.

Proverbs 27:7 A sated man loathes honey, but to a famished man any bitter thing is sweet.

The word “sated” means satisfied. When the stomach of a man is satisfied with a meal that he has consumed, then honey, which would normally be craved, is no longer a desired treat. But for the man who is starving, anything that he can eat is sweet and satisfying.

Proverbs 27:8 Like a bird that wanders from her nest, so is a man who wanders from his home.

Focus on the word “wander” in this passage which means to move about without an aim or purpose. Birds do not wander from their nests where their eggs or chicks remain. When they leave the nest, it is for a specific purpose. When birds leave their nests without a purpose, they put themselves and their offspring in grave danger. So too, the man who wanders aimlessly from his home will leave his family in grave danger.

Proverbs 27:9 Oil and perfume make the heart glad, so a man's counsel is sweet to his friend.

Especially in Solomon’s day, when baths were not taken daily and deodorants were not available, perfumes and scented oils were a welcomed product used in everyday life. Likewise, the counsel of a good friend is a welcomed product, useful to everyday life.

Proverbs 27:10 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.

Solomon is not dismissing the importance of relying on families in this proverb. Rather, he is bringing to light the importance of trusting and relying on a neighbor when family members are not nearby.

Proverbs 27:11 Be wise, my son, and make my heart glad, that I may reply to him who reproaches me.

When a father bears a son who shows great wisdom, any complaints that the father is incompetent fade in light of the good child-rearing by the father.

Proverbs 27:12 A prudent man sees evil *and* hides himself, the naive proceed *and* pay the penalty.

This proverb is nearly identical to Proverbs 22:3. Evil abounds around every corner. The person who is wise and careful will quickly recognize that which is evil and will shield himself from its lure. Those who do not know better will be lured into the lair of the evil person and be guilty even if only by association.

Proverbs 27:13 Take his garment when he becomes surety for a stranger; and for an adulterous woman hold him in pledge.

This proverb is the same as Proverbs 20:16 with one important addition. This verse encourages a creditor to take the outer garment of a person who co-signs for another. Holding the outer garment is the one surety that the debt will be paid. Israelites were commanded not to borrow money in Deuteronomy 9. They were also instructed not to take another Israelite's garment in pledge. However, they were allowed to lend to foreigners and strangers. In that case, they needed something to act as collateral and the outer garment was a vital piece of clothing that generally assured that the debt would be paid quickly. When an adulterous woman has taken the privacy of a man, she holds the collateral that generally can assure that the debt will never be paid.

Proverbs 27:14 He who blesses his friend with a loud voice early in the morning, It will be reckoned a curse to him.

A blessing is not wrong; however, a blessing given at the wrong time shows a lack of wisdom. A curse can come even with a right action when it is given at the wrong time.

Proverbs 27:15 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.

A constant dripping indicates the irritating nature of a contentious woman. Solomon fully understands that restraining a contentious woman is just as hard as trying to restrain the wind or a handful of oil!

Proverbs 27:17 Iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.

This proverb can be both positive and negative. The influence of a wise person in someone's life will make him a little wiser. The influence of a fool in a life will make the hearer a little more foolish. Wisdom sharpens the wise; foolishness sharpens the fool.

Proverbs 27:18 He who tends the fig tree will eat its fruit; and he who cares for his master will be honored.

Being the caretaker of a fig orchard has its privileges and the one who cares for his master well also enjoys his privileges.

Proverbs 27:19 As in water face *reflects* face, so the heart of man *reflects* man.

Water acts like a mirror and reflects the face. So too, the heart of a man reflects his intent and true desires.

Proverbs 27:20 Sheol and Abaddon are never satisfied, nor are the eyes of man ever satisfied.

In the Bible, Sheol and Abaddon represent the grave. Here Solomon speaks of how the grave is never satisfied, always wanting another live person dead. He compares it to the eyes of man - rarely satisfied with what he has, always wanting more.

Proverbs 27:21 The crucible is for silver and the furnace for gold, and a man *is tested* by the praise accorded him.

A fire is used to purify both silver and gold, each at different temperatures. Praise does the same for a person but symbolically at different temperatures. If he boasts in his praise, his arrogance shows through. If he accepts the praise with reserve, his humility shows through.

Proverbs 27:22 Though you pound a fool in a mortar with a pestle along with crushed grain, *Yet* his folly will not depart from him.

It is impossible to separate a fool from his folly. Beat him to a pulp and he will still be a fool.

Proverbs 27: 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.

Solomon uses the agriculture theme to develop the importance of caring for one's resources. Neither money in the bank nor the crown on a king's head will endure forever. Money must be invested to bring a return. The crown of a king is not guaranteed to pass down to all his descendants. In Solomon's day, a return on the investments can be made by caring for the property. When the herdsman moved his flocks to new fields of grass, the livelihood of the herd was assured in many cases. As the herds increased, the profits increased. As the profits increased, provisions for the family increased.