

Chapter 10 of Proverbs begin a section containing proverbs on various subjects in a rapid-fire succession. Many are single verse bits of wisdom, while some may deal with a subject spanning multiple verses. Most all of the proverbs in chapter 13 are single-verse, with little or no context drawn from the surrounding verses but still containing wisdom that we should take to heart.

1 A wise son *heareth* his father's instruction: but a scorner *heareth* not rebuke.

The Hebrew word for “scorner” refers to someone who has a boastful attitude and thinks that he has no need of listening to his father’s “instruction” (Hebrew: discipline, correction, chastening). It is the wise son who understands that his father has more wisdom than he does and is willing to learn from it.

2 A man shall eat good by the fruit of *his* mouth: but the soul of the transgressors *shall eat* violence. 3 He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life: *but* he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction.

These two verses emphasize the importance of filtering what we say. Good things come to those who choose their words wisely but violence will come to those who transgress with their mouth. Those that guard their mouths are also guarding their lives while destruction will come to those who say anything and everything that comes to their mind without any filter or any consideration of the harm that their words may do.

4 The soul of the sluggard desireth, and *hath* nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat.

Lazy people will never have the things that they desire in life since they are not willing to do the work necessary to get them, but those willing to work hard (“diligently”) for what they want will have what they want and more (“be made fat”).

5 A righteous *man* hateth lying: but a wicked *man* is loathsome, and cometh to shame.

Righteous men hate dishonesty and hypocrisy and all other forms of falsehood. The word “loathsome” means “to stink” which gives us an idea of the shame and embarrassment that the wicked man who engages in these experiences because of his habitual lying.

6 Righteousness keepeth *him that is* upright in the way: but wickedness overthroweth the sinner.

The righteousness of the upright will protect him and keep him on the proper path, but the wickedness of the sinner will cause him nothing but trouble and eventual destruction.

7 There is that maketh himself rich, yet *hath* nothing: *there is* that maketh himself poor, yet *hath* great riches.

There are two kinds of people that lie about their financial status: 1) those who pretend to be rich even though they have nothing; 2) those who pretend to be poor even though they are rich. Both are attempting to hide the truth.

8 The ransom of a man's life *are* his riches: but the poor *heareth* not rebuke.

The “ransom” (price) of a rich man’s life is the wealth that he has. His wealth often makes him the target of blackmail or kidnapping by those wanting his money. Poor men, on the other hand, do not have to worry about such “rebukes” because of their inability to pay a ransom or a blackmailer’s price.

9 The light of the righteous rejoiceth: but the lamp of the wicked shall be put out.

“Light” seems to be synonymous with life and prosperity. God will bless the righteous with these things but will suppress them for the wicked.

10 Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised *is* wisdom.

The proud reject any advice given to them and are insulted by it because they think they don’t need it. However, those who accept advice will gain wisdom.

11 Wealth *gotten* by vanity shall be diminished: but he that gathereth by labour shall increase.

Money made without much effort (“vanity”) can be lost just as easily (“easy come, easy go”). However, wealth gained through hard work will be of more lasting benefit.

12 Hope deferred maketh the heart sick: but *when* the desire cometh, *it is* a tree of life.

It is disappointing and discouraging when you aren’t able to immediately get the things your heart desires. However, it is a “tree of life” (great encouragement or satisfaction) when your desires are fulfilled.

13 Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed: but he that feareth the commandment shall be rewarded.

“**Whoso despiseth** [to disregard; to not respect] **the word shall be destroyed**” – The “word” refers to the commandments and law of God. Anyone who disregards God’s word and chooses not to obey it will reap the consequences of their actions: they will be destroyed in judgment.

“**but he that feareth** [to be afraid; to revere and honor] **the commandment shall be rewarded**” – In contrast, those who reverently honor God’s commandments through their obedience will be blessed by Him.

14 The law of the wise *is* a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.

The “law” (instruction, teaching) given by the wise man gives life because he is passing along wisdom that will enable the hearer to avoid the snares of death.

15 Good understanding giveth favour: but the way of transgressors *is* hard.

“**Good understanding** [*insight; good sense*] **giveth favour**” – Those with Godly insight will find favor with both God and man. “**but the way of transgressors is hard** [*perpetual; continuous*]” – Transgressors of God’s law and wisdom will continually have troubles.

16 Every prudent *man* dealeth with knowledge: but a fool layeth open *his* folly.

The decisions of a “prudent” (sensible; shrewd) man are based on knowledge because he doesn’t act impulsively. However, a fool “layeth” (spreads) out his folly for all to see. It may be that he is overconfident in what he thinks and lets everyone else see his actions.

17 A wicked messenger falleth into mischief: but a faithful ambassador *is* health.

“**A wicked messenger falleth into mischief** [*distress; injury*]” – An unfaithful messenger will inevitably cause distress and injury to his master because he doesn’t faithfully deliver his master’s messages. Wars can be lost if messages aren’t accurately delivered. “**but a faithful ambassador** [*envoy; messenger*] **is health** [*brings healing*]” – The loyal messenger will faithfully represent his master and be part of the solution, rather than creating problems like the wicked messenger.

18 Poverty and shame *shall be to* him that refuseth instruction: but he that regardeth reproof shall be honoured.

The future of stubborn people who refuse to be advised will eventually result in poverty and shame, but those who listen to and learn from advice will eventually be honored for the things that they have learned.

19 The desire accomplished is sweet to the soul: but *it is* abomination to fools to depart from evil.

It is sweet to experience the satisfaction of accomplishing that which you have set out to do, particularly if it is accomplishing God’s will. Fools, however, are not willing to depart from their evil ways. In fact, they find it distasteful to do so.

20 He that walketh with wise *men* shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.

Who we spend our time with is very important since their ways will rub off on us. Spending time with wise people typically results in learning from them while being with fools usually results in sharing in the consequences of their foolish actions because we have acquired their bad behaviors.

21 Evil pursueth sinners: but to the righteous good shall be repayed.

Sinners are constantly attempting to elude the consequences of their sin without success since they can’t hide from God. In contrast, God will bless the righteous for their good deeds.

22 A good *man* leaveth an inheritance to his children's children: and the wealth of the sinner *is* laid up for the just.

God will bless a good man to the extent that he will be able to leave an inheritance for his grandchildren. God does not bless the sinner and any wealth the sinner may accumulate will not be left to his grandchildren. Instead God will give that wealth to those who obey him (“the just”).

23 Much food *is in* the tillage of the poor: but there is *that is* destroyed for want of judgment.

“**Much food is in the tillage** [*untilled or fallow ground*] **of the poor**” – The untilled land owned by the poor man is capable of producing more than enough food to feed himself and his family.

“**but there is that is destroyed for want** [*lack*] **of judgment** [*justice*]” – While a poor man’s land can produce enough food, the lack of justice prevents him from taking full advantage of it because the land’s benefits are compromised by those who would cheat and oppress him. The implication is that poverty is caused by injustice.

24 He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.

The “rod” is the rod of correction used to execute corporal punishment. The father who never punishes his son for wrong-doing does not truly love his son. A father’s strongest expression of love for his son is when he corrects him “betimes” (diligently), because he wants to make his son a better man.

25 The righteous eateth to the satisfying of his soul: but the belly of the wicked shall want.

God will provide for those who love and obey Him so that they will not do without. They will be satisfied by what God has provided for them. However, God will not satisfy the hunger of the wicked.