

The proverbs in this chapter cover a variety of topics, emphasizing the benefits of being good and righteous over the selfish and often wicked quest for riches. We are given financial advice, as well as advice concerning the raising of children and giving to the poor. We are also warned against socializing with angry and argumentative people and that men should avoid immoral women.

1 A *good* name is rather to be chosen than great riches, *and* loving favour rather than silver and gold.

Having a reputation for honesty, integrity and righteousness is much more valuable than money, because such people earn the respect and favor of others. Although these qualities can often lead to prosperity, the primary benefits are the blessings and approval of God.

2 The rich and poor meet together: the LORD *is* the maker of them all.

The rich may think that they are superior to the poor, but the two “meet together” (have one thing in common): they have both been created by God. Having been created by God, both are equal in His sight and are accountable to Him for their actions.

3 A prudent *man* foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished.

A prudent (shrewd, crafty) man sees trouble ahead and takes steps to avoid it, while the simple will suffer the consequences of not taking the appropriate precautions to avoid the trouble.

4 By humility *and* the fear of the LORD *are* riches, and honour, and life.

Some believe that the path to true riches, honor and a long, fulfilling life is to ignore the LORD and proudly pursue their own desires, but the exact opposite is true. The LORD blesses those who humbly fear and reverence Him through their obedience.

5 Thorns *and* snares *are* in the way of the froward: he that doth keep his soul shall be far from them.

“**Thorns and snares are in the way of the froward** [*distorted; perverted*]” – Those with perverted morals will encounter various troubles and trials as a result of their sin. Disobedience to God never pays in the end.

“**he that doth keep** [*guard*] **his soul shall be far from them**” – Those who guard their soul from such sins will avoid those troubles.

6 Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

Our habits and ways of thinking are shaped by our childhood. The habits and training that we teach our children when they are young will stick with them throughout their adulthood and influence their behavior.

7 The rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower *is* servant to the lender.

Solomon is emphasizing the power of money, enabling the rich to exercise authority over the poor. We give a certain amount of control over us to those we borrow money from, who can take advantage of our obligation to them and exercise control over us.

8 He that soweth iniquity shall reap vanity: and the rod of his anger shall fail.

“**He that soweth iniquity shall reap vanity** [*sorrow; trouble*]” – People commit sin because they believe that it will benefit them, but the truth is that it will ultimately bring them sorrow and pain.

“**and the rod of his anger shall fail**” – This man’s efforts to get what he wants (including violence) will come to nothing.

9 He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed; for he giveth of his bread to the poor.

“**He that hath a bountiful eye** [*good; pleasant; kind*] **shall be blessed**” – God will bless the person who is pleasant and kind toward others.

“**for he giveth of his bread to the poor**” – The reason God blesses this person is because of his generosity to the poor.

10 Cast out the scorner, and contention shall go out; yea, strife and reproach shall cease.

The scorner is one who talks arrogantly and mocks others. He is the source of fighting and strife because it ceases once he leaves.

11 He that loveth pureness of heart, *for* the grace of his lips the king *shall be* his friend.

Someone who loves being pure of heart and speaks graciously to others will attract many to be his friend, including someone as important as the king.

12 The eyes of the LORD preserve knowledge, and he overthroweth the words of the transgressor.

“**The eyes of the LORD preserve** [*to guard; keep watch*] **knowledge**” – God will always ensure that the knowledge that comes from Him will benefit those who use and trust in it.

“**and he overthroweth** [*to subvert; overturn; ruin*] **the words of the transgressor**” – However, God will also make sure that the plans and purposes of the transgressor will not succeed.

13 The slothful *man* saith, *There is* a lion without, I shall be slain in the streets.

The “slothful” (lazy) man will make any excuse he can for why he can’t go to work. Here he claims that there is a lion outside roaming the streets and so he must remain inside his house for his own safety.

14 The mouth of strange women *is* a deep pit: he that is abhorred of the LORD shall fall therein.

A “strange woman” can refer to either a pagan from another nation or to an immoral woman such as a prostitute. Her mouth is described as a dangerous pit that someone could fall into and be trapped, injured, or killed. The disobedient who are under God’s wrath will not be protected by Him and will succumb to the strange woman’s flattering and seductive words.

15 Foolishness *is* bound in the heart of a child; *but* the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.

This verse declares the importance of disciplining a child. Children have not yet learned the ways of righteousness and often need corporal punishment to compel them to avoid their natural sinful tendencies.

16 He that oppreseth the poor to increase his *riches*, *and* he that giveth to the rich, *shall* surely *come* to want.

Two actions are listed here that have the opposite effect than what the perpetrators intended: 1) defrauding the poor for personal gain; 2) giving to the rich (presumably bribes or gifts to gain favor). Those who do these things with the intent of becoming wealthy will bring poverty to themselves.

17 Bow down thine ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply thine heart unto my knowledge. 18 For *it is* a pleasant thing if thou keep them within thee; they shall withal be fitted in thy lips. 19 That thy trust may be in the LORD, I have made known to thee this day, even to thee.

We are advised to make an effort to listen to the wisdom spoken by the wise and to seek to understand and learn from that wisdom. It will be pleasant for you to have heard and understood this wisdom, for it will strengthen our trust in the LORD, which is the reason that the writer here (probably Solomon) has written these words of wisdom to us.

20 Have not I written to thee excellent things in counsels and knowledge, 21 That I might make thee know the certainty of the words of truth; that thou mightest answer the words of truth to them that send unto thee?

The writer has given us valuable wisdom in Proverbs in order to help us understand the genuineness of the truth. Our confidence in the truth will compel us to pass along this wisdom to those who come to us for advice.

22 Rob not the poor, because he *is* poor: neither oppress the afflicted in the gate: 23 For the LORD will plead their cause, and spoil the soul of those that spoiled them.

We are commanded to not take advantage of those who are less fortunate than us. Beggars often sat by the gate of a city because of the large numbers of people passing by. The gate was also the place where legal issues were settled. Beggars and people looking for justice were to be treated fairly, because the LORD will defend them and punish those who take advantage of them.

24 Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go: 25 Lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul.

We are cautioned about being associated with people who can’t control their temper. We will often pick up the bad habits and wicked ways of the people we spend time with, so we are warned to avoid being friends with angry people or spending time around them.

26 Be not thou *one* of them that strike hands, *or* of them that are sureties for debts. 27 If thou hast nothing to pay, why should he take away thy bed from under thee?

“Be not thou *one* of them that strike hands, *or* of them that are sureties for debts” – Striking hands and becoming sureties for debts can be compared to co-signing for a loan today. We are warned that it is unwise to assume the responsibility for another person’s debts because we are placing our financial well-being at the mercy of someone else.

“If thou hast nothing to pay, why should he take away thy bed from under thee?” – If the creditor comes to us for payment and we are unable to pay, then we have voluntarily placed ourselves in a situation where we are in danger of losing our possessions.

28 Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set.

The ancient landmarks were the markers designating the boundaries between the land of your neighbors and your own land. Some people would steal land by moving the landmarks to give themselves more land at the expense of their neighbor.

29 Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean *men*.

“Seest thou a man diligent [prompt; skilled] in his business?” – Our attention is called to man who is skilled in his line of work.

This is a man who excels at what he does.

“he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean [obscure; insignificant] *men*” – This man’s skill and accomplishments will attract the attention of kings, who will want to honor him and utilize his services. He will not spend his time working for common men because his time will be occupied working for the king.