

The topics covered in this chapter include cautions against such things as boasting in oneself and becoming the target of anger and jealousy. The writer also points out that even negative actions that from a loving friend are superior to positive actions of an enemy. In fact, even positive actions performed in the wrong circumstances can be an annoyance.

1 Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.

We should not assume what will happen in the future because only God knows the future. Wise people realize that unforeseen things often happen that totally demolish the plans they had for tomorrow. Fools think they can control the future.

2 Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips.

Self-praise does not carry as much weight as when the praise comes from someone else. It is assumed that we are just bragging when we praise ourselves but people take notice when the praise comes from someone else (particularly a stranger).

3 A stone *is* heavy, and the sand weighty; but a fool's wrath *is* heavier than them both.

The wrath of a fool is compared to the heavy objects familiar to the writer. A stone and sand are heavy and wearisome to move but fool's wrath is even more wearisome because it is not easily removed from oneself. This is because a fool's wrath tends to be based more on emotion than on the facts.

4 Wrath *is* cruel, and anger *is* outrageous; but who *is* able to stand before envy?

The Hebrew word translated "outrageous" refers to a flood or downpour. Wrath and anger are used as a basis of comparison, emphasizing their cruelty and overwhelming nature, but even worse is "envy" (jealousy). Jealousy can produce wrath, anger, hatred, and many other destructive emotions that collectively overwhelm the person they are focused against.

5 Open rebuke *is* better than secret love.

The Hebrew word translated "open" means "to uncover." This "open rebuke" may refer to a public reprimand, but it most likely refers to a private rebuke that is motivated by love (or an intent to help). In contrast, secret love is hidden and unknown to the target of its affections. Open rebuke, because it is an expression of love, will be of more benefit than love that is never expressed.

6 Faithful *are* the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy *are* deceitful.

Ordinarily we prefer kisses over wounds but we have to consider their source. A friend may cause us pain when he rebukes us or refuses to help us go down the wrong path, but presumably this is because our friend wants the best for us. On the other hand, an enemy may pretend to love us but any expressions of love from him are a lie because in reality he wants to see our downfall.

7 The full soul loatheth an honeycomb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.

Someone who has a full belly will reject even the sweetness of honey but even bad tasting food appeals to someone who is starving. The lesson here seems to be that the wealthy often don't appreciate what they have while the poor appreciate everything that they do have.

8 As a bird that wandereth from her nest, so *is* a man that wandereth from his place.

A bird that has wandered away from her nest has left her young neglected and exposed to predators and has exposed herself to danger as well. The same can be said of a man who has wandered from home and neglected his responsibilities there.

9 Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so *doth* the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel.

The writer uses the pleasant fragrances of ointments and perfume and their power to put a smile on our face because of their sweet smell as a point of comparison. Just as they can "rejoice the heart," so also can the sweetness of having a friend give us advice from the heart. It's sweet because we know that it comes from someone who loves and cares for us.

10 Thine own friend, and thy father's friend, forsake not; neither go into thy brother's house in the day of thy calamity: *for* better *is* a neighbour *that is* near than a brother far off.

We are given two pieces of advice in prioritizing friendship: 1) never forsake our friends or those who have befriended our father, for we will quickly lose friends by our disloyalty; 2) It is better to go to your neighbor's house who is close by when you are in need of help instead of going a longer distance to your family member. Some commentators suggest that this neighbor may also be closer in affections than the far off brother. The writer is emphasizing practicality here.

11 My son, be wise, and make my heart glad, that I may answer him that reproacheth me.

Apparently this father is being "reproached" (taunted; blasphemed) concerning his son being unwise. He appeals to his son to embrace wisdom, so that 1) he, as a father, will be pleased with his son, and 2) to prove that what this reproacher is saying is not true.

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

A repeat of Prov. 22:3. 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.

13 Take his garment that is surety for a stranger, and take a pledge of him for a strange woman.

We are warned elsewhere in Proverbs of the foolishness of taking responsibility for another person's debts and of associating with "strange women," both of which can bring a person to poverty. Garments were often used as security for loans and we are advised that if a man owes you money and has engaged in this foolish behavior, then you had better accept his pledge that you will be paid.

14 He that blesseth his friend with a loud voice, rising early in the morning, it shall be counted a curse to him.

The Hebrew word translated "blesseth" can mean "to praise" or "to greet." Ordinarily a man's neighbor would welcome such a "blessing," but not early in the morning while he is still sleeping. This neighbor will likely curse the man for waking him.

15 A continual dropping in a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike. 16 Whosoever hideth her hideth the wind, and the ointment of his right hand, *which bewrayeth itself*.

"A continual dropping in a very rainy day and a contentious [quarrelsome; nagging] woman are alike" – Just as a dripping faucet drives us crazy today, the writer here is pointing out the annoying nature of the constant dripping of perhaps a leaky roof on a rainy day. He then points out that a quarrelsome woman can be just as annoying.

"Whosoever hideth [to restrain; to contain] her hideth the wind, and the ointment [oil] of his right hand, which bewrayeth itself" – Restraining a contentious woman is as difficult as restraining or containing the wind. He also compares it to the uselessness of trying to grab oil with his right hand (presumably his dominant hand).

17 Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.

Just as a sword, axe, or other sharpened implement is sharpened against an iron tool, a man's intellect can be sharpened through intellectual and spiritual discussion with other people. We grow when we are challenged and enriched by other people's ideas.

18 Whoso keepeth the fig tree shall eat the fruit thereof: so he that waiteth on his master shall be honoured.

Just as man benefits from the work he puts into caring for a fig tree, so a servant will be honored for serving his master well.

19 As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man.

Just as a man can see his own face in a pool of water, so a man can see hopes, dreams, desires and fears similar to his own in the hearts of other men. We should recognize that, despite our differences, the members of the human race all have the same strengths, weaknesses, hopes and fears.

20 Hell and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied.

The Hebrew word for "hell" is *sheole* and can refer to the grave, death, or to the abode of the dead. Death and destruction will never refuse another victim and by the same token, the desires of mankind are never satisfied. Our flesh will always want "more."

21 As the fining pot for silver, and the furnace for gold; so is a man to his praise.

A refining pot and a furnace were used to purify and test the purity of gold and silver. Purity was determined by how much impurity rose to the top when the metal was melted. A man's impurities are exposed by how he reacts to praise from other people.

22 Though thou shouldest bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him.

The Hebrew word translated "bray" means "to pound; to grind." Foolishness is so ingrained in a fool that he would not lose it even if you were to grind him (figuratively) in a mortar and pestle. It is part of his nature, unlike the "simple" who are able to learn and become wise.

23 Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds. 24 For riches are not for ever: and doth the crown endure to every generation?

We are advised to take diligent care of our possessions and property in preparation of the future. Wealth is fleeting and even kings (the wearers of crowns) are not guaranteed to remain on the throne. Who knows what will happen in the future? The material things we trust in may be temporary, so we had better take care of what we have.

25 The hay appeareth, and the tender grass sheweth itself, and herbs of the mountains are gathered. 26 The lambs are for thy clothing, and the goats are the price of the field. 27 And thou shalt have goats' milk enough for thy food, for the food of thy household, and for the maintenance for thy maidens.

These are the benefits of being diligent to watch over your flocks and herds (v. 23) instead of trusting in your riches or royalty. Your land will produce the hay, grass and herbs to feed your flocks, herds and yourself. You can use the wool of the lambs to make clothing, the goats can be used to buy another field and to provide milk and meat to feed your family and servants.