

## INSIGHT FOR LIVING – A STUDY ON PROVERBS

Of the thirty-one chapters in the book of Proverbs, twenty-nine are ascribed to Solomon. Chapter 30 is attributed to Agur, Son of Jakeh, and Chapter 31 to King Lemuel. It is not known who they were (CP Pr 1:1; 10:1; 25:1 with 30:1 and 31:1).

Proverbs is not just a collection of pithy sayings with a practical emphasis on how to live a happy and prosperous life, but Divine instructions for God's people to govern their whole conduct of life, providing moral and spiritual guidelines for Godly living. They contain the applications and implications of all that is in God's moral law. They deal with sin and holiness, and are directed to the unlearned, the simple, the foolish, the young, and even to the wise, that all may increase in learning. Ch 1 teaches the use and the end of the Proverbs; an exhortation to flee the company of the wicked; and to hearken to the voice of wisdom. (CP Pr 1:1-6). *Wisdom* in Proverbs is not simply a high degree of intelligence or vast knowledge, but the skill of living a Godly life as God intended man to live – knowing the truth and how to apply it to any situation (CP Pr 1:2-3, 7, 20; 2:2, 6-7, 10; 3:13, 21; 4:5, 7, 11; 5:1; 7:4; 8:1, 5, 11-12, 14; 9:1, 10; 10: 13, 21, 23, 31; 11:2, 12; 12:8; 13:10; 14:6, 8, 33; 16:16; 17:16, 24; 18:4; 19:8; 21:30; 23:9, 23; 24:3, 7, 14; 29:3, 15; 31:26 with De 4:5-8; 1Cor 1:18-31; 2:4-7, 12-16; Jas 3:13-17). Later on in scripture, in the book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon observes that in much wisdom there is grief, and that it is also vanity, but there he is not referring to Godly wisdom, but human wisdom (CP Ecc 1:18; 2:15). What Solomon is saying here is that as an ultimate value, human wisdom and knowledge only highlight problems – they do not rectify them; that a life lived strictly for the sake of acquiring human wisdom is futile (CP Ecc 2:12-16 with Pr 18:1; 23:4). Only wisdom imparted by God has lasting value. The rest is transitory.

*Instruction* in Pr 1:2 refers to chastisement, reproof, warning, correction, discipline, doctrine (CP 1:2-3, 7-8; 4:1, 13; 5:12, 23; 6:23; 8:10, 33; 9:9; 10:17; 12:1; 13:1, 18; 15:5, 32-33; 16:22; 19:20, 27; 23:12, 23; 24:32). *Understanding* in Pr 1:2 looks at the mental discipline that matures one for spiritual discernment. It is knowledge seasoned and modified by wisdom and insight; it makes wise, guides willingly, behaves self; it refers to discretion, sense, intellect, reason, skilfulness (CP Pr 1:2, 5; 2:2-3, 6, 11; 3:4-5, 13, 19; 4:1, 5, 7; 5:1; 6:32; 7:4, 7; 8:1, 5, 14; 9:4, 6, 10, 16; 10:13, 23; 11:12; 12:11; 13:15; 14:29, 33; 15:14, 21-22; 16:16, 22; 17:18, 24, 27-28; 18:2; 19:8, 25; 20:5; 21:16, 30; 23:23; 24:3, 30; 28:2, 11, 16; 30:2). *Equity* in Pr 1:3 refers to the living of life that is just and fair; uprightness, concord, straightness (CP Pr 1:3; 2:9; 17:26).

*Subtily* in Pr 1:4 is used in a good sense. It means prudence, wisdom (CP Pr 1:4). *Dark sayings* in Pr 1:4 refers to riddles, enigmas, allegories, parables (CP 1:6). The lack of context sometimes clouds the interpretation of some Proverbs, but often a verse is partially repeated elsewhere where the variant form clarifies the meaning.

In Pr 1:7 Solomon teaches that the first step in becoming knowledgeable and wise and acquiring wisdom is based on the fear of God – holding Him in reverential awe (CP Pr 1:7, 24-29, 2:4-7; 8:12-14;

9:10; 15:33 with Job 28:28; Psa 111:10 – 112:1). The fear of God is the beginning and principal part of knowledge, the first essential. It is the sum of what God's word requires. It reflects the reality that God's word directs His children in the way they are to walk (CP Psa 119:9 with Ecc 12:13). Next, Solomon admonishes God's children to obey their parents (CP Pr 1:8). Solomon's admonition to his son here to obey his parents extends to every professing Christian in the New Testament Church (CP also 3:1; 4:1-4; 6:20; 7:1-3; Ex 20:12 with Eph 6:1-3; Col 3:20). Obedience to their parents' advice will bring honour to the children (CP Pr 1:9).

God's children must reject out of hand any enticement to sin (CP Pr 1:10-14 with 11:19). Children of God must not even fraternise with those who would entice them to sin (CP Pr 1:15-19 also 14:7 with Psa 1:1-6; 119:101). This translates to New Testament believers heeding Paul's injunction not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers (CP 2Cor 6:14-18). Next, wisdom is personified as a woman identifying sin and calling sinners to repentance (CP Pr 1:20-33). This indicates that everyone is endowed with natural faculties to know right from wrong and make Godly decisions (CP Jn 1:9; Ro 2:12-16). It is man's own God-given wisdom that will laugh and mock at the calamity he brings upon himself through folly and rejection of wisdom's pleading in Pr 1:26, but God too will also laugh and hide His face (CP 1:26 with Psa 2:4; 37:12-13; 59:1-8; Mic 3:4). V 30-33 in Pr 1 teaches God's spiritual law of sowing and reaping (CP V 30-33; 11:18-19; Ga 6:7-8).

Next, in Pr 2, we learn that there are conditions attached to receiving the knowledge of God and His wisdom. We learn the advantages of wisdom and the evils from which it delivers (CP 2:1-6). If we receive God's word and treasure up His commandments within us (CP Psa 119:11); making our ears attentive to skilful and Godly wisdom (CP Isa 55:3a); inclining and directing our heart and mind to understanding – applying all our power to the quest for it (CP Pr 2:2-7); if we pray for discernment and understanding and seek wisdom as silver, and search for it as for hidden treasure (CP 1Ki 3:9-12 with Mt 7:7-11, also Lu 11:7-11), then we will understand the reverent and worshipful fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God, and receive the wisdom He gives to the righteous (CP Pr 1:7a and 2:6-8 with Jas 1:5-6; Psa 91:1-7, 11-12; Ecc 2:26). The principle of life Solomon expounds in Ecc 2:26 is that God rewards righteousness and punishes evil. Wisdom will save from the enticements of men to follow perverse ways (CP Pr 2:9-15 with 1Cor 2:14-16; He 5:14).

When wisdom enters into a person's heart and knowledge is pleasant to their soul, discretion shall preserve them and understanding shall keep them to deliver them from marital infidelity and sexual immorality (CP Pr 2:10-11, 16-22 with 5:1-23; 6:20-29; 7:1-27; 9:13-18; 22:14; 23:26-28). We will examine only 2:16-22 here and the others individually as we come to them. *Strange woman* in V 16 refers to either a harlot, a prostitute or an adulteress who leaves the guidance and friendship of her husband and breaks the marriage covenant (CP V 16-19 with Ex 20:14; Lev 20:10). The irreversible nature of this continuing sin points to its devastating consequences. It leads to

physical death and eternal damnation. Anyone can be saved though under the New Covenant who turns to Christ and walks in the way He has prescribed for them (CP Pr 2:20-22 with Jn 2:16-18, 26; He 7:25).

Pr 3 is an exhortation to the practice of virtue. Children are again admonished to obey their parents (CP 3:1-2). Law in V 1 is **Torah** – God’s law (CP 29:18), but in 3:1 as elsewhere in Proverbs, it is used of the principles and commands that God gave through Solomon to His children to obey in every age, if they want to live long peaceful lives and please God (CP Ex 20:12 with Pr 4:10; Eph 6:1-3; Col 3:20). God’s children must never let the virtues of mercy and truth forsake them (CP Pr 3:3-4). This translates to New Testament Christians “putting off” that which Paul commands in Col 3:8-9, and “putting on” what he commands in V 10-17 (CP Col 3:8-17). God’s children must begin, continue, and end every work, purpose, and plan with God (CP Pr 3:5-6). God must be the sum total of every facet of a Christian’s existence (CP Psa 127:1). As the navel is the means by which a child in the womb receives life and nourishment from its mother, so revering God and shunning evil will bring health to the flesh and nourishment to the bones of a child of God (CP Pr 3:7-8). Next, Solomon teaches that no one can out give God (CP 3:9-10). This does not teach tithing as some believe, nor the law of sowing and reaping per se. For New Testament Christians it translates to stewardship of possessions. All that they have belongs to God and it all must be placed at His disposal. God will reward those who use it for the extension of His kingdom (CP Pr 3:27-28; 19:17; 21:25-26 with Lu 6:38).

God’s children must not shrink from or reject God’s chastening. He chastens those He loves just as their earthly fathers do (CP Pr 3:11-12). This is quoted by the writer of Hebrews and translates to New Testament Christians being chastened by God’s word. *Chastening* refers to activity directed toward a child to influence conscious will and action. It means to instruct, to educate, to correct. New Testament Christians are corrected by God’s word. It redirects their paths from sin to holiness (CP He 12:5-11 with 1Cor 11:27-28, 31-32; 2Cor 13:5). Wisdom and understanding yield the richest of treasures, described in V 13-18 that follow in Pr 3 as more profitable than silver, better returns than gold, more precious than rubies. There is nothing one can desire that compares, giving long life with one hand, and riches and honour with the other. The way of wisdom and understanding is pleasure and peaceful, the source of life, blessing all who lay hold of her (CP Pr 3:13-18 with Pr 8:12-21; 1Ti 4:8; Jas 3:13-18). Wisdom is basic to all of life. By it God created the universe (CP Pr 3:19-20 also Psa 104:24-32; Jer 10:12-13; 51:15-16 with Pr 8:22-31).

When the child of God meets all the conditions of life laid down by God, he will not stumble. He can live in confidence, securely, safely (CP Pr 3:21-26 with Psa 91:5-16). God’s children must not withhold good from those to whom it is due, nor put off till tomorrow what they can do for their neighbour today (CP Pr 3:27-28). *Those to whom it is due* in V 27 are the rightful owners thereof (CP Lu 20:25; Ro 13:7). *Neighbour* in V 28 is anyone in need, but especially other Christians (CP Lu 10:29-37; Ga 6:9-10; Jas

2:14-16; 1Jn 3:16-19). God’s children must not contrive to do evil to their neighbour who lives trustingly and unsuspectingly beside them (CP Pr 3:29 with 11:21), nor contend with anyone for no reason (CP Pr 3:30 with Ro 12:18; He 12:14), nor be envious of how the wicked prosper (CP Pr 3:31 with 24:1; Psa 37:1, 7). The perverse person is an abomination to God (CP Pr 3:32 with Psa 73:1-28). *His secret* in Pr 3:32 is God’s revelation of Himself and His truth to the righteous (CP Pr 25:14). God curses the wicked, but blesses the righteous and gives grace to those who humble themselves (CP Pr 3:33-35 with Zech 5:3-4; Mal 2:2; Psa 37:22; Jas 4:6; 1Pe 5:5).

Pr 4 is a further exhortation to seek after wisdom. Solomon urges God’s children to spare no effort in gaining insight and acquiring Godly wisdom, which they must never forsake (CP 4:1-9). V 4b-9 is a summary of what Solomon’s father – King David – taught him. In V 10-22 that follow Solomon resumes his appeal to God’s children to heed wise counsel to ensure eternal life (CP V 10-22). For New Testament Christians this translates to being totally consecrated to the service of God and completely yielded to the authority of Christ’s word (CP Psa 119:9 with Mt 7:21-27; Jn 6:46-49, 63; 8:31-32; Ro 2:13; 2Ti 3:16; Jas 1:21-25; 1Pe 2:23-25). Christians must keep their heart with all diligence for out of it are the issues of life (CP Pr 4:23-27 with Mt 15:18-19; Mk 7:14-15, 20-23; Lu 6:45). *Heart* is used figuratively in this context to represent the seat or source of human motives, desires, feelings, affections, passions, impulses, thoughts etc. While Christians must always outwardly be seen to be conforming to the image of God, they must always inwardly – in the deepest recesses of their heart – also conform. The root cause of unanswered prayer is iniquity cherished in the heart (CP Job 27:8-9; Psa 66:18; Pr 15:29; 28:9; Isa 1:15; Jn 9:31; Jas 4:3). Christians must constantly examine themselves and ensure that their hearts are right before God (CP 2Cor 13:5). Christians must not speak perversely (CP Pr 4:24 also 2:12; 6:12), but must single-mindedly keep their focus on God (CP Pr 4:25 with 1Jn 2:15-17), and ponder the path of their feet. This means that they must remove every moral hindrance from their Christian walk; they must walk in the way of righteousness (CP Pr 4:26-27 also 5:21 with He 12:13).

Pr 5:15 is an exhortation to flee unlawful lust and the occasions of it. Solomon warns young men against deceptively pleasant and desirable women luring them into sexual immorality and ultimate ruin with flattery and enticingly sweet words (CP Ac 5:1-14). A *strange woman* in V 3 once again refers to either a prostitute or adulteress. Throughout Proverbs their charm is used as an example of any temptation to sin or abandon the pursuit of wisdom (CP 2:16-19; 6:20-35; 7:4-27; 22:14; 23:26-28; 29:3; 30:20; 31:1-3). All the prostitute wants is the young men’s money. In the end he will be brought down in remorse and bodily suffering by the prostitute. In this remorse the young man will be awakened to the sense of his foolishness (CP Pr 5:10-14). Young men of God must heed the instructions of wisdom and never be involved in anything that would distract them from their Christian walk (CP Ro 6:4-13, 19-23; Col 2:6-10). Their own wives must be the only source of pleasure for young men of God, for God carefully weighs every man’s

goings (CP Pr 5:15-21 with 15:3, 2Chr 16:9; Job 31:4; 34:21; Jer 16:17; Hos 7:2; He 4:3). The wicked will be entrapped with their own iniquities – this is the law of sowing and reaping (CP Pr 5:22-23 with Nu 32:23; Psa 9:15; Pr 1:31-33; Isa 3:11; Ro 1:19-21, 28-32 and Ga 6:7-8).

Next, in Pr 6:1-5, Solomon warns Christians against going surety for anyone (CP 6:1-5). Christians going surety for someone else creates such an intolerable situation for themselves in God's eyes, that they are commanded to make every effort to free themselves from it as quickly as they can – like an antelope escapes from the hands of the hunter, or a bird from the snare of the fowler (CP also Pr 11:15; 17:18; 22:26-27). Christians must never go guarantor for anyone else's debt. This is not teaching against Christians helping others in need though. But they must maintain a balance between generosity and good stewardship (CP Lev 25:35-37; Mt 5:42; Jas 2:14-17; 1Jn 3:16-18). Solomon then goes on to use ants as an object lesson for Christians (CP Pr 6:6-11). These verses are a protest against laziness in Christians. Christians here are being admonished to copy the industry of ants, who are unsurpassed as workers, needing no chain of command. Their activities are so purposeful and directed, Christians need to take a leaf out of their book. Slothful or lazy people exasperate, frustrate and annoy those they work for (CP Pr 10:26). Slothful or lazy people are procrastinators – they keep putting off what needs to be done (CP Pr 22:13; 19:24; 26:13-15); they never finish what they start (CP Pr 12:11, 24, 27); they take the easy way out in everything (CP Pr 20:4). The result of slothfulness is that poverty will come with irresistible fury and they will not be prepared to cope with it (CP Pr 10:4-5; 12:11, 24, 27; 13:4; 14:23; 15:19; 18:9; 19:15; 20:13; 24:30-34; 27:23-27). In the New Testament Paul teaches that it is wrong to support men who are able, but will not work and share their own responsibilities (CP 2Th 3:10-12).

It should be noted there that Pr 6:6-8 is used by some in the contemporary church to teach that New Testament Christians must make provision and set aside reserves for their family's future financial needs as the ant makes provision and sets aside reserves for its further needs. But as is plainly evident in the context of V 6-11, it is not teaching that at all. If it did it would contradict what Jesus Himself, as well as Paul and Peter, all teach (CP Mt 6:19-21, 25-34; Php 4:6; 1Ti 6:6-8; He 13:5-6; 1Pe 5:6-7). None of this however is teaching that Christians are prohibited from owning their own home and providing the necessities of life for their family (CP Psa 112:1-3; Pr 8:18-21; 21:20). But Christians are prohibited from setting aside financial reserves for future needs because that could become the focus of their life. They would no longer see life from the vantage point of eternity. Their goal and fulfilment would no longer be in God but in themselves and the wealth they have set aside for future needs. The word *conversation* in He 13:5 (KJV), means manner, or way of life. This teaches that a Christian's way of life has to be without the desire for more than that which will satisfy their everyday needs. (For more detailed teachings on this subject see author's comments on Mt 6:24, 13:3-9, 19:16-22, 19:23-26; Lu 12:13-15, 12:16-21, 12:33-34, 16:19-21; Ac 2:44-45; 1Cor 10:14-22; 2Cor 12:14;

1Ti 6:6-10; He 13:5-6 in his book, **A Question and Answer Study of the New Testament**, and his study *Christians and Wealth*, lesson 15, in his book, **Foundational Truths of the Christian Faith**.

Solomon next names seven sins of the wicked and what the end of the wicked will be, and then names seven things God hates (CP Pr 6:12-15; 6:16-19). Solomon again admonishes Christians to heed their parents' instruction which will lead them in the way, keep them safe, and talk with them. God's commandments are a lamp, and His law is a light. His reproofs of instruction are the way of life in which His children are to walk (CP 6:20-23 and 1:8 with Psa 19:8; 119:105 and 119:9). Heeding God's word will keep Christians from the folly of adultery and harlotry. When they are physically attracted to someone of the opposite sex they must regard that as a warning to beware of being carried away by their own lusts and enticed into sin (CP Pr 6:24-26 with Jas 1:12-17). Solomon compares an adulterer to a man who holds fire against his chest, or walks on hot coals. Just as no man can do either of those things without being burned, so the one who commits adultery with another man's wife will not go unpunished. Excuses might even be found for a thief who steals to feed his hungry family – he can make restitution for his crime. But an adulterer can never make amends to the husband he has wronged. Solomon declares him to be an utter fool who has completely destroyed his own soul. The shame of what he has done will never leave him; the disgrace of it can never be wiped away (CP Pr 6:27-35 with 2:16-19; 5:3-6, 8-11, 15-23; 7:5-23, 25-27; 9:13-18). Under the New Covenant though the adulterer need not completely lose his soul. Providing he repents and accepts Christ as Saviour, his sins will be forgiven (CP Jn 3:16-18, 36; Ac 2:38; 4:10-12; 1Jn 1:9). 1Jn 1:9 is directed to Christians who have sinned (CP 1Jn 1:7-10).

The whole of Pr 7 is a warning to Christians against allowing immorality to ruin their lives. The love of wisdom is the best preservative from being led astray by temptation (CP 7:1-5). Wisdom here is contrasted with the evil woman who is to be carefully avoided by Christian men. Wisdom should be treated with the honour and respect due to a Christian man's sister and understanding as one of his female relatives. V 6-23 that follow gives a graphic account of a prostitute plying her trade and seducing a young man (CP 7:6-23). Christians must reject out of hand all forms of immorality (CP V 24-27 with Ro 13:12-14; 1Pe 4:1-4; 2Pe 2:12-15).

Following on from here in Pr 8 and 9 both, wisdom is again personified as a woman identifying sin and calling sinners to repentance (CP 8:1-11). Wisdom's call here is to all mankind – *men, sons of men, simple, and fools* – to choose instruction in preference to silver, and knowledge in preference to gold. Wisdom is even better than rubies and everything else that anyone can desire, finding out knowledge and discretion (CP Job 28:12-18). The literal English translation of the Hebrew in Pr 8:12 is "*I, wisdom, dwell with sense, and search out knowledge of wise actions*". Hence the KJV rendering, "*I, wisdom, dwell with prudence and find out knowledge of witty inventions*". Wisdom is practical, choosing the best means to an end. Those who embrace wisdom and

follow after understanding are assured that patience, discernment, favour, prosperity, safety, and other benefits will follow as a result (CP Pr 8:12-21 with 1:9; 3:13-26; 4:5-9; 9:11). The wisdom of God will adorn one's life for all to see its beauty. Wisdom is as eternal as God is. She was with Him before creation (CP Pr 8:22-31 with 3:19-20; Psa 104:24-31; 136:4-9; Jer 10:12-13; 51:15-16). Some in the church see the personification of wisdom in Pr 8:22-31 as applying to Christ because He created all things and is referred to in the New Testament as Wisdom (CP Lu 11:49; 1Cor 1:24-30; Col 2:3 with Jn 1:3; Col 1:16; He 1:2). This author does not agree that Christ is referred to in Pr 8:22-31, nor that it teaches His Deity or eternity, as some also claim. Whoever finds wisdom acquires grace and the favour of God (CP Pr 8:32-36). It is man himself who receives or rejects wisdom which leads to eternal life. If he receives it, sin will have no dominion over him. He will obey God's word and resist the Devil, who will flee from him (CP Ro 6:14-23; 8:12-13; Jas 4:7).

In Pr 9 wisdom is represented as ruler of that which she has built (CP 9:1-12). In V 1-6 wisdom is seen as having built a house, prepared a banquet for the invited and sent the maidservants of the house out with the invitations. The invitation is to the simple and those who lack understanding to forsake the foolish things of life and live by going in the way of wisdom and understanding. Wisdom's invitation to eat her bread and drink her wine translates in the New Testament to partaking of the body and the blood of Jesus, which gives life to all who appropriate their benefits by faith (CP V 1-6 with Mt 6:26-28; Mk 14:22-24, Lu 22:19-20; 1Cor 11:23-26). Wisdom's admonition in Pr 9:6 to *forsake the foolish, and live* translates to New Testament Christians forsaking all for Christ (CP Mt 4:18-22; 9:9; Mk 1:16-20; 2:14; Lu 5:10-11; 14:25-35).

In Pr 9:7-9 we learn that the index of a man's character is how he receives correction. Scoffers will abuse those who correct them; wicked men will assault them. They will be hated by scoffers, whereas a wise man will be thankful for the instructions given, and become even wiser. A just man increases in learning from what is being taught (CP 9:7-9). The fear of God is basic to all wisdom. The key verse in Proverbs is 9:10 (CP 9:10). Knowing God results in every other kind of understanding. Wisdom makes the hours of a Godly person more profitable, and the years of their life more fruitful (V 11 also 1:7, 24-29; 2:4-7; 3:13-18; 8:12-14; 10:27-30; 14: 26-27; 15:16, 33; 16:6-7; 19:23; 22:4-5; 23:17-18 with Psa 91:1-16). Wisdom is its own reward. Those who scorn her only hurt themselves (CP Pr 9:12 with 16:6; Job 35:6-8). Next, the foolish woman is labelled loudmouthed, empty-headed and brazen-faced. She claims that illicit pleasures are sweeter because they are forbidden. She is out to seduce gullible men, appealing to their baser instincts. But she does not reveal the other side of the story – for a moment of pleasure there is a lifetime of shame and an eternity in Hell if men do not repent (CP Pr 9:13-18 and 2:18-19; 5:3-5; 6:32-33; 7:21-27 with 1Cor 6:9; He 13:4). The foolish woman or harlot in Pr 9:13-18, is typical of all sin.

Next, righteous and wicked lifestyles are contrasted by Solomon. They cover a wide range of topics (CP

10:1-7). A son's behaviour directly affects his parents emotionally. A wise son brings his father joy; a foolish son brings his mother grief. Mothers are affected worse by a foolish son's behaviour because they play a more intimate role in their children's upbringing (CP V 1 with 23:15-16 and 15:20; 17:25). There is no gain from ill-gotten wealth after death, but there is for righteousness. The righteous are made immortal (CP Pr 10:2 with Psa 49:6-20 also Mt 6:19-21 and Jas 5:1-6). God will not suffer the righteous to hunger (CP Pr 10:3 with Psa 34:10; 37:25; Mt 6:25-33). But it is equally true that God thwarts the cravings of the wicked (CP Psa 37:16-20). Solomon praises diligence and the profit it brings and condemns laziness as a cause of hunger and poverty (CP Pr 10:4-5 also 6:6-11; 12:11, 24, 27; 13:4; 14:23; 15:18; 18:9; 19:15; 20:13; 24:30-34; 27:23-27). As noted previously in this study, in the New Testament Paul teaches that it is wrong to support men who are able, but will not work and share their own responsibilities (CP 2Th 3:10-12, (see author's comments on Pr 6:6-11)).

In contrasting the just and the unjust, Solomon declares that a good man is covered with blessings from head to foot, but the mouth of the wicked conceals violence. What is remembered of a righteous man is a blessing – his name lives on. But a wicked man is soon forgotten – his name dies out (CP Pr 10:6-7 also V 11; 12:13; 18:6-7 with Psa 112:6 and 37:10; Ecc 8:10). It is worth noting here that the name Paul is perpetuated among men, but not Judas, who betrayed Jesus (CP Psa 109:8-15). This prophecy referred to Judas. He had a wife and children. When Judas died his wife became a widow and his children, vagabonds – wanderers – who had to beg all the rest of their days. Judas' family name died out in that generation. It was lost to posterity forever – no one was left to carry on that name. Solomon next contrasts two attitudes – a wise man and a vain talking fool (CP Pr 10:8). A wise man is teachable. He will listen to Godly instruction and so be lifted up, but a vain talking fool lacks insight to do God's will and so will perish (CP also 9:9; 10:10, 14, 18-19 with Jas 1:19). The contrast that follows is two walks (CP Pr 10:9). There is safety and security in an upright life, but the life that is built on deception will be found out and exposed (CP Pr 13:6; 26:26; 28:18 with Psa 23:4; Isa 33:15-16 also Lu 8:17; 1Ti 5:24-25, 2Ti 3:9).

Solomon next contrasts the use of the tongue (CP Pr 10:10-14). *Winketh with the eye* in V 10 is a gesture of malice, signifying that the one doing it is plotting evil with deceit in his heart (CP V 10 also Pr 6:12-14 with Psa 35:19-20). Solomon's declaration in Pr 10:11 that the mouth of a righteous man is a well of life means that it is a source of life – giving wisdom (CP V 11 also V 13 and 20; 12:14, 18; 15:2; 16:22; 18:21; 21:23 with Psa 37:30; 119:98 and Mt 12:35). *Love covereth all sins* in Pr 10:12 means that Christian love is blind to the faults in other Christians. It seeks their highest good. Of course, those faults must be confessed and repented of, but love does not gossip about them (CP V 12 also 17:9 with 1Cor 13:1-7; 1Pe 4:8). The rod for the back of him who is void of understanding in Pr 10:13, is the rod of correction (CP V 13 with 22:15; 23:13-14; 26:3). Combined with reproof the rod is also an instrument of knowledge (CP 29:15). Solomon next contrasts the rich and the

poor (CP Pr 10:15). *Wealth is his strong city* means literally that wealth is the city of his strength (CP also 18:11). The rich man's wealth makes him many friends (CP Pr 14:20; 19:4), and brings him power (CP Pr 18:23; 22:7), but his ultimate security of course is only in God (CP Pr 11:4; 28; 28:11; Psa 20:7; 49:6-15; 52:1-9; Ecc 9:11-18 with Mk 10:17-25; 1Ti 6:17-19; Jas 2:1-9; 4:13-16; 5:1-6).

Solomon observes that the labour of the righteous is for eternal life; the gain of the wicked is for sin (CP Pr 10:16). He who heeds instruction is in the way of life; but he who refuses reproof is going astray (CP V 17, also 15:10). He who hides hatred with lying lips and he who speaks defamatory of others is a fool (CP 10:18; 26:24-26, 28 with Psa 15:1-5). There is sin in many words, but he who holds his tongue is wise (CP Pr 10:19 also Ecc 5:3 with Jas 3:2-12). The tongue of the righteous is as choice silver, but what is spoken from the heart of the wicked is worthless (CP Pr 10:20 with Mt 10:33-37). The lips of the righteous instruct many, but fools perish because they lack insight to do God's will (CP Pr 10:21). The blessing of God is the Christian's greatest wealth (CP Pr 10:22 with Psa 1:1-3). There is no sorrow associated with the wealth God provides as with that which is ill-gotten (CP Pr 13:11; 15:6; 16:19; 21:6; 28:6). Sin is as sport to the wicked, but the righteous hate it (CP Pr 10:23 with 15:21). The wicked will reap what they fear (CP 10:24 with 11:27; Isa 66:4), but the desire of the Godly will be granted (CP Psa 37:4; Mk 11:24).

Solomon next observes two unfailing comparisons (CP Pr 10:25-26). As a hurricane destroys everything in its path, so the wrath of God will destroy the wicked; but the righteous will not be moved (CP V 25 also 11:23; 12:3 with Psa 15:1-5; Mt 7:24-27; Lu 6:46-49). As vinegar sets the teeth on edge, and as smoke irritates the eyes, so the lazy man exasperates, frustrates and annoys those he works for (CP Pr 10:26 with 12:27; 24:30-33; 26:13-15). Solomon goes on then to contrast four destinies (CP Pr 10:27-30). The fear of God promotes righteousness and long life, but wickedness shortens life (CP V 27 with 11:19; Psa 91; 1Pe 3:10-12). The hope of the righteous will be realised, but that of the wicked will not (CP Pr 10:28 with 11:23). The righteous are constantly being strengthened in God, but sudden destruction will come to the wicked (CP 10:29 with 2Cor 4:16 and Pr 29:1). The righteous will never be removed. They will inhabit the earth eternally; the wicked will be cast into the Lake of Fire (CP Pr 10:30 with 2:21-22 and Rev 20:4-6, 11-15). Solomon then observes that the mouth of the righteous speaks wisdom but the perverse tongue shall be cut off. The lips of the righteous know what is pleasing, but the wicked knows only perversities (CP Pr 10:31-32 with 2:12-15; Psa 12:3-7; 37:30 (CP also Mt 5:30)).

God demands fairness and justice in every business deal (CP Pr 11:1). God hates cheating, but delights in honesty – all weights and measures must be standard (CP also Pr 16:11; 20:10, 23 with Lev 19:35-36; De 25:13). God's children must deal honestly with all people (CP Psa 15:1-2; 24:3-5 with Pr 28:8; Amos 8:4-6; Mic 6:10-11). With pride comes shame; but with the humble is wisdom (CP Pr 11:2 with 15:33; 16:18-19; 18:12; 29:23). The honesty of the righteous

keeps them on track; the unrighteous are doomed by their dishonesty (CP Pr 11:3 with 13:6). How wealthy one is will count for nothing in the day of God's wrath – only righteousness will count (CP Pr 11:4 with 10:2; Eze 7:19; Zeph 1:18; Lu 12:6-21). The upright will be saved because of their righteousness (CP Pr 11:5-6 with 5:22-23; 21:18). The wicked hope to be saved, but their hope will die with them (CP Pr 11:7 with 10:28-29). God will deliver the righteous from trouble and let the wicked suffer in their stead (CP Pr 11:8 with 21:18). As Old Testament example of this occurring is Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego being delivered from the fiery furnace while their would-be executioners perished in the flames (CP Dan 3:19-26). God's retribution is sure and appropriate (CP Ro 12:19; He 10:30).

Next, in Pr 11:9, Solomon observes that the loose tongue of the ungodly spreads destruction, but the Godly are delivered through their righteous knowledge (CP 11:9 with 16:29). A city will celebrate the success of the righteous, and when the wicked perish there will be shouts of joy. By the blessing of the righteous the city is exalted, but it is destroyed by the mouth of the wicked (CP 11:10-11 with 14:34). He who lacks wisdom is contemptuous of his neighbour, but a man of understanding keeps silent (CP 11:12 with 14:21). A talebearer is a walking busybody – a peddler of scandal, who reveals everything confided to him. But he that is of a faithful spirit does not break a confidence; he keeps the matter hidden (CP 11:13, also 10:12, 14; 18:8; 20:19; 26:20-22; Psa 52:1-4 with Lev 19:16; Jas 1:26; 1Pe 4:8). Without wise leadership a nation will fall, but having many good advisers makes victory sure (CP Pr 11:14 with 15:22; 24:6). It goes without saying of course that the advice received must always be sound. There is no safety in any unsound advice from unwise counsellors (CP Pr 20:18).

Following on from this, Solomon again warns Christians against going guarantor for anyone (CP Pr 11:15). We dealt with this subject in our study on Pr 6:1-5. The clear teaching throughout is that Christians must never guarantee another person's debt. If they have gone surety for someone they must extricate themselves from the situation as quickly as they possibly can. Suretyship is a sign of a lack of understanding (CP Pr 6:1-5 with 17:18; 22:26). A gracious woman holds to honour, and a man in great power holds to wealth (CP Pr 11:16 with 31:30). Next, Solomon observes that a man's disposition affects his own health – the man who is merciful and kind benefits himself; a cruel man does himself harm (CP Pr 11:17 with 14:27 and Mt 5:7). A wicked man does deceptive work, but he that sows to righteousness will have a sure reward (CP Pr 11:18 also 20:17 and Hos 10:12-13 with Ga 6:8-9; Jas 3:18). Solomon then contrasts two destinies (CP Pr 11:19): righteousness unto life; wickedness unto death (CP also 4:10-12; 10:11; 12:28 with Psa 91; Ro 6:17-23; Jas 1:15; 1Pe 3:10-11). Those with perverse hearts are an abomination to God, but He delights in the upright (CP Pr 11:20 also 2:12 and 3:32 with Psa 16:3). Though the wicked pledge support for each other in sin they will not go unpunished. Only the righteous will be delivered (CP Pr 11:21 also 16:5 with Psa 112:1-2).

Solomon then asserts that like a gold jewel in the nose of a pig, is a beautiful woman who shows no discretion (CP Pr 11:22). *Discretion* here means taste, perception, intelligence, behaviour, reason, judgement, and understanding. Thus, as a gold jewel in the snout of a pig is incongruous, so too is a beautiful woman who has no bearing, is immodest, and lacks moral sense. To quote *The Message* version of the Bible: “like a gold ring in a pig’s snout is a beautiful face on an empty head” (CP 11:23). The righteous are consecrated to the good things of God, but the wicked are consecrated to things that will incur His wrath (CP 10:28 with Ro 2:7-9). Solomon next highlights six unyielding laws in the Divine order (CP Pr 11:24-26): what you give you gain; what you keep you lose (CP V 24 with 13:7; 19:17; Psa 112:9; Mt 5:7). God blesses the bountiful and repays what is cheerfully given (CP Pr 11:25 with 22:9; 28:27; Ecc 11:1-6; Lu 6:38; 2Cor 8:13-15; 9:6-15), the man who takes advantage of scarcity to make himself rich will be cursed, but blessing will be upon the one who helps others in adversity (CP Pr 11:26 also Amos 8:4-7 with Ecc 11:1-6; Ac 20:35). These all comprise the law of sowing and reaping, as also do the last five verses in Pr 11 (CP V 27-31 also V 18 with Ga 6:7-9).

Those open to instruction show that they really want to learn, but one who resents being told anything is as stupid as a brute beast (CP Pr 12:1 also 1:22; 30:2 and Psa 49:20; 73:22; 92:6 with Pr 1:7; 6:23; 10:17). God gives grace to the righteous, but condemns the wicked (CP Pr 12:2 also 8:35-36 and Job 5:13 with 1Cor 3:19; Jas 4:5-12). Not wickedness, but righteousness, shall establish a man (CP Pr 12:3 also 10:25; 11:5 with Psa 1:1-6; Jer 17:7-8). A wife with strength of character is the crowning joy of her husband, but one who disgraces her husband is as rottenness to his bones (CP Pr 12:4 with 31:10-31). *Virtuous* here means valiant, wealth, valour, strength, worthy, strong, might (CP Pr 12:5). A man’s aims are a mirror of his character (CP 12:6). The wicked make plans to shed the blood of the innocent, but they are delivered by the words of the righteous (CP 12:7-9). The wrath of God will destroy the wicked, but the righteous will not be moved (CP V 7 also V 3; 10:25 and 11:23 with Psa 15:1-5; Mt 7:24-27; Lu 6:46-49). A wise man with insight is spoken well of, but he is held in contempt who has no principles (CP Pr 12:8 with 18:3). Better is the man who is slighted but has a servant, than he who honours himself but has nothing to eat (CP Pr 12:9 with 13:7). Low rank and food on the table is better than pretended status and starvation.

The kindness of the righteous extends to their animals, but even in this regard the kindness of the wicked is still cruel (CP Pr 12:10). Kindness to animals is legislated under the law of the Old Covenant and even concerns birds’ nests (CP Pr 27:23; Ex 20:10; 23:4-5; De 22:6-7; 25:4). Paul quoted De 25:4 in 1Cor 9 in the New Testament in the context of ministers of God’s word being able to live off the gospel (CP 1Cor 9:9-14). Next Solomon contrasts the honest pursuits of the wise worker with the worthless pursuits of a man with no common sense (CP Pr 12:11 with 28:19). The wicked desire the ill-gotten gains of other evil men, but as firmly rooted trees the righteous yield their own fruit (CP Pr 12:12, also V 3 and 7; 10:25 and 11:30 with Psa 1:1-3). The lies of the wicked get them into trouble; the wholesome talk of the righteous

keep them from it. A righteous man is satisfied with the fruit of his lips and he will reap what he sows (CP Pr 12:13-14, also 1:29-33; 11:8-9; 13:2-3; 15:23; 21:23; with 2Pe 2:9). A fool will not listen to wise counsel as will the wise (CP Pr 12:15 also 3:7 and 21:2 with 9:9). A fool will quickly make his wrath known, but a prudent man will hold his peace (CP Pr 12:15 with 11:13 and 29:11).

A truthful witness gives honest testimony, but a false witness tells lies (CP 12:17 also V 22; 14:5, 25; 19:5, 9 and Psa 52:1-5 with Ex 23:1 and Rev 21:8; 22:15). The words of the wicked hurt and injure like a sword piercing the body, but the tongue of the wise is health (CP Pr 12:18 with 15:4 and Psa 64:2-3). Lies will be refuted and all liars punished (CP Pr 12:19 with 19:9; Psa 52:4-5 and Rev 21:8). Deceit is in the hearts of those who devise evil, but joy fills the hearts of those who plan for good (CP Pr 12:20 with 6:12-14; 24:1-2). No vain thing will happen to the just, but the heart of the wicked is filled with evil (CP Pr 12:21 with V 13; 1:31, 33; 2:8; 11:5, 8; 22:8). God abhors lies, but delights in those who keep their promises (CP Pr 12:22 with 3:32; 6:16-19; 11:20). A wise man does not air his knowledge, but a fool displays his foolishness (CP Pr 12:23 with 10:14; 13:16; 15:2; 29:11). Hard workers become leaders; the lazy never succeed (CP Pr 12:24 with 10:4; 17:2). Anxious hearts become heavy, but a word of encouragement lightens them (CP Pr 12:25 with 15:13-15, 23 also Isa 50:4). The just man guides his friend in righteousness, but the wicked leads them astray (CP Pr 12:26 with 5:22-23 and 14:22). A lazy man wastes what he has; a diligent man makes good use of this wealth (CP Pr 12:27 also V 11 with 19:24). The path of the Godly leads to eternal life – there is no fear of death (CP 12:28 also 3:1-2, 13-18; 11:4; 14:32 with Jn 3:36, 4:36; 8:51; 11:26; 1Cor 15:54; Ga 6:8).

In Pr 13:1 next, Solomon contrasts two kinds of sons: a wise son and a scoffer. The wise son will learn from his father’s instruction; the scoffer will not even listen (CP Pr 13:1 with 1:8, 22). Solomon’s next two proverbs observe the secret of life (CP Pr 13:2-3). The mouth of a righteous man produces blessing and life, but that of the wicked, cursing and destruction (CP also 12:14 with 8:6-10; 10:19; 18:21; 21:23; Jas 1:26; 3:1-18; 1Pe 3:10-11). The desires of a lazy man are not satisfied, but those of a righteous man are (CP Pr 13:4 with 10:4-5, 24; 12:11, 24, 27; 14:23; 21:25-26; 27:23-27; 28:19). The righteous hate lying, but a wicked man is loathsome and brings shame upon himself (CP Pr 13:5 with 12:22; 19:26; Rev 21:7-8). Righteousness guards him who is upright in the way, but wickedness overthrows the sinner (P Pr 13:6 with 2:21-22; 5:22-23; 10:9; 11:3, 5-6; 21:12).

Opinions are divided among bible scholars as to the exact meaning of Solomon’s next Proverb (CP Pr 13:7). This is a Proverb where the lack of context clouds the interpretation and the verse is not repeated elsewhere, so there is no variant form to help interpret the meaning. This author accepts it at face value that it is simply stating a fact: “there are some who act as if they are rich but have nothing, and there are others who act as though they are poor but have great wealth”. Readers will have to decide for themselves how they interpret this and V 8 that follows (CP Pr 13:8). The literal English rendering of this verse

according to **Hendrickson's Interlinear Bible** is, "*the ransom of a man's life are his riches but the poor man does not hear rebuke*" (CP Pr 13:9). This Proverb is a prophecy which will be fulfilled in the new earth. The light of the righteous will never go out. They will rule and reign with Christ throughout eternity, whereas the wicked will be eternally damned (CP also V 13; 4:18-19; 20:20; 24:20 with Rev 20:11-15).

Next Solomon observes that nothing but strife comes by pride, but wisdom is with the well-advised (CP Pr 13:10 also 11:2 and 14:3 with 10:12). Easily obtained or ill-gotten wealth does not last as long as that which is worked hard for (CP 13:11 with 10:2; 20:21). When desire is delayed in its fulfilment it is disheartening, but when it is fulfilled it revives and strengthens both body and soul – it is a tree of life (CP 13:12 also V 19 with 10:28). Whoever despises God's word will be eternally damned; whoever heeds it will have eternal life. God's word is a fountain of life to the wise man, for by heeding it, he escapes the penalty of disobeying it (CP Pr 13:13-14 also 1:29-33; 3:1-3; 5:21-23; 14:27 and Nu 15:31 with Psa 1:1-2; 119:9). Good understanding wins favour for the Godly – it is a wellspring of life, but the way of the wicked is hard – desolate and fruitless (CP Pr 13:15 also 3:1-4 and 16:22 with 8:32-35). A man's conduct reveals his character – the wise man does all things with understanding, but a fool displays his folly (CP Pr 13:16 with 12:23 and 14:33; 15:2). A wicked messenger fails to carry out his duty, but one who is faithful brings honour to the one who sent him (CP Pr 13:17 with 25:13). He who ignores correction comes to poverty and shame, but he who heeds it is honoured (CP Pr 13:18 also V 1, 5:7-13; 8:33-35; 10:17; 15:5, 31-32). Pr 5:7-13 here can be used in our study on 13:19 also (CP 13:19 also V 12). Good men pursue worthy objectives, but sinners are unwilling to depart from evil because of their hatred of correction (CP Pr 13:20).

A man is known by the company he keeps – friends must be chosen with care. He who follows after wise men will himself be wise, but whoever follows after fools will be brought to ruin (CP 16:29; 22:24-25; 23:20-21; 28:7, 19 also 1Cor 15:33-34 with Psa 1:1-6). Sinners will reap evil, the righteous will reap good (CP Pr 13:21 also V 13 with Pr 3:1-2, 16-18; Psa 32:10; Isa 47:10-11). A good man leaves an inheritance to his grandchildren, but a sinner's wealth is laid up for the righteous (CP Pr 13:22 with 28:8 and Job 27:16-17). Solomon is not referring to material wealth here as the grandchildren's inheritance but to moral stability and a Godly life as their example, which is the whole theme of Proverbs. For New Testament Christians this translates to leaving their descendants a rich spiritual heritage in the Christian way of life in Christ. As we learned earlier in our study of Pr 6:6-11, New Testament Christians are clearly forbidden in scripture to lay up earthly treasures for themselves, or as a future inheritance for their families. (For more detailed teachings on this subject see author's comments on Mt 6:24, 13:3-9, 19:16-22, 19:23-26; Lu 12:13-15, 12:16-21, 12:33-34, 16:19-21; Ac 2:44-45; 1Cor 10:14-22; 2Cor 12:14; 1Ti 6:6-10; He 13:5-6 in his book **A Question and Answer Study of the New Testament**, and his study

*Christians and Wealth*, lesson 15, in his book **Foundational Truths of the Christian Faith**).

Although the land of a poor farmer produces much food, it is swept away by injustice (CP Pr 13:23). *Tillage* here (KJV), means ploughed land. *Judgement* means justice. *Destroyed* means literally, swept away (CP Psa 35:10; Jas 5:1-6). The tillage of the poor is often swept away by injustice (CP Pr 13:24). Here Solomon declares that if a man does not discipline his children when the need arises it proves he hates them. He who loves his children corrects and disciplines them (CP also 19:18; 22:6, 15; 23:13-14; 29:15, 17). These admonitions to parents by Solomon are all inspired by God – He sanctions corporal punishment for children regardless of what modern-day "experts" say or think. Inspired Scripture teaches that corporal punishment is rooted in the love parents have for their children (CP Pr 3:11-12 with He 12:5-11). Parents who have genuine love for their children but withhold corporal punishment, will produce the same kind of child as a parent who hates his children. Pr 23:13-14 teaches that a child's eternal destiny is forged by the corrective discipline he receives. But none of this is advocating undue punishment or punishment that provokes children to wrath so as to discourage them, or make them indisposed toward parental obedience (for further teaching on this subject see author's study *Husbands, Wives, Children – their duties and obligations to each other*, in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**, also, his comments on Pr 19:18 and 22:15 in this study).

It should be noted there that just as God sanctions corporal punishment for children, he also sanctions capital punishment – the death penalty – for adults (CP Ro 13:1-5). This teaches that, (in the ideal governmental system), civil authorities are not a terror to good people, but to those who do wrong. The sword, in V 4, is an instrument of death. It symbolises the right of (ideal) governments to inflict capital punishment – *execute wrath* – upon wrongdoers, with God's approval (CP V 4 with Ac 25:11 and Rev 13:10). In the last verse in Pr 13, Solomon declares that the righteous are assured that their needs will be met, while the unrighteous are equally assured that they will receive nothing (CP Pr 13:25). This states more directly the teachings of V 13 18 and 21 (CP V 13, 18 and 21, also 10:3 and Psa 34:10).

A wise wife and mother centres all her activities around her husband and children, creating a loving, caring, stable environment for her family – she *builds her house*. A foolish uncaring woman neglects her husband and children, causing the eventual breakdown of her family (CP Pr 14:1 with 9:1-6; 31:10-31 also Tit 4:4-5). The upright in heart fear the Lord – they hold Him in reverential awe. But the ungodly despise Him (CP Pr 14:2 also 1:7). As we learned in our study of Pr 1:7, the fear of God is the principal part of knowledge, the first essential. It is the sum of what God's word requires. It reflects the reality that God's word directs His children in the way they are to walk (CP Psa 119:9; Ecc 12:13). The words of a foolish man are a source of pride which causes him to fall, but those of a wise man keep him from falling (CP Pr 14:3 with 10:13; 12:6; 16:18; 29:23). Solomon's next Proverb translates to New Testament Christians not

living only for themselves, but being actively involved in reaping a bountiful harvest for God's eternal kingdom (CP Pr 14:4 with Jn 4:35-36; 15:16). A truthful witness gives honest testimony, but a false witness tells lies (CP Pr 14:5 also V 25; 12:17, 22; 19:5, 9; and Psa 52:1-5 with Ex 23:1 and Rev 21:8; 22:15).

The wicked seek wisdom and cannot find it because they reject God, the source of wisdom (CP Pr 14:6 with 1:7 and 9:10). As we learned earlier, 9:10 is the key verse in Proverbs – knowing God results in every other kind of understanding. Knowledge is hard for those who rebel against the truth to receive it when they hear it, but is easy for those to understand who are open to the truth and believe what they hear (CP Pr 17:24 also Isa 6:9-10 with Mt 13:10-17; Jn 12:39-40; Ac 28:25-27). Solomon admonishes God's children not to associate with those who can neither convey nor receive truth (CP Pr 14:7 also 23:9 with Mt 7:6). This translates again to New Testament believers heeding Paul's injunction not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers, the same as Pr 1:15-19 (CP 1:15-19 with 2Cor 6:14-18). Solomon next contrasts the purposes of the prudent, and fools. The wisdom of the prudent is to direct their way rightly, but the folly of fools is to live deceitful lives. Fools make sport of sin and do not find favour with God as do the righteous (CP Pr 14:8-9, also 10:23 and 11:27 with Ro 8:1-6). Solomon then observes that both sorrow and joy have a personal dimension that cannot be shared with anyone else (CP Pr 14:10). Only the person directly involved can know the real bitterness of his soul or the joy of his heart (CP Pr 14:11).

This Proverb is also a prophecy presently being fulfilled, which teaches that the Godly will live in the new earth forever (CP also Pr 10:25; 12:3, 7; Psa 15:1-5 with 1Cor 15:58). Whatever is not God's way will end in death and Hell (CP Pr 14:12 also 16:25 (16:25 is a repeat of 14:12) and 5:21-23; 12:15 with Mt 7:13-14). Outward laughter cannot overcome inward sorrow. The sorrow remains when the laughter is ended (CP Pr 14:13 with Ecc 2:1-2). Next, the wicked and the disobedient are again contrasted with the Godly wise (CP Pr 14:14 with 1:31-33; 11:3, 5, 8; 12:15). He who is immature and lacks understanding is easily persuaded. He is gullible and believes in every way of man. But the wise man looks well to his going – he approaches life with caution and discernment (CP Pr 14:15 with 4:26-27; 9:4-6). A wise man avoids sin because he fears the consequences of his actions, but the fool becomes arrogant and presumptuously confident (CP Pr 14:16 with 1:7; 3:7; 12:18; 13:3; 22:3; 27:12 also Psa 34:11-14). A short tempered man acts foolishly, he flies into a rage and does not stop to consider the consequences, and a man of evil intentions is hated (CP Pr 14:17). The contrast here is between hot temper labelled as folly, and deliberate wicked intentions (CP Job 5:12-13 with 1Cor 3:19 and Psa 37:7-8).

Next, Solomon observes that the simple are born with the predisposition to act foolishly, but the wise are rewarded with knowledge (CP Pr 14:18 also V 24 with 4:7-9). From a New Testament perspective the next Proverb simply means that good will eventually triumph over evil (CP Pr 14:19). Many worldly friendships are formed on the basis of self-interest.

The poor are despised and avoided, but the rich are cultivated (CP Pr 14:20-21, also 19:4, 6-7 and 29:26). New Testament Christians are strictly forbidden to show partiality toward anyone (CP Jas 2:1-5, 9). This does not mean that Christians are not to help provide for the poor though. They are obligated by Scripture to do so (CP Jas 2:13-16; 1Jn 3:17-18). Solomon declares the error of those who think evil in contrast to God's mercy and truth to those who think good (CP Pr 14:22 and 5:22-23 with 12:26). All labour profits, but idle talk brings only poverty (CP Pr 14:23 with 10:4 and 21:5 also 12:11, 24, 27; 13:4; 18:9; 27:23-27; 28:19). The crown of the wise is their riches of wisdom; the foolishness of fools only yields folly (CP Pr 14:24 also V 18 with 10:22). Solomon next observes that a true witness delivers souls, but a deceitful witness speaks lies (CP Pr 14:25 also V 5 and 12:17). From a New Testament perspective this can be applied to the true witness of Christians who deliver souls from eternal damnation in contrast to cultists and other false teachers who speak lies and lead them to Hell.

The man who fears God has a strong confidence, and his children have a place of refuge. The fear of God is a fountain of life to depart from the snares of death (CP Pr 14:26-27 also 3:7-8 with 13:14; 18:10; Isa 33:6 and Ro 8:31). To depart from evil through the fear of God is to obtain eternal life (CP Pr 14:28). Leaders are honoured in having many followers, but there is no honour when there are no followers (CP Pr 30:29-31). A wise man controls his temper, but a quick tempered man magnifies his folly (CP Pr 14:29 also 15:18; 16:32; 19:11 and Ecc 7:9 with Jas 1:19-20). A sound heart gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones (CP Pr 14:30). A sound heart fears God (CP Pr 3:7-8; 9:10-11; 10:27; 19:23). He who oppresses the poor insults God who made them, but he who blesses the poor honours God (CP Pr 14:31 also 17:5; 21:13 with 14:21; 19:17; 22:2, 9). In the New Testament Jesus equates Christians' treatment of those in need with Himself (CP Mt 25:31-46 also Jas 2:13-17; 1Jn 3:16-19).

There is no hope for the wicked who die in their wickedness, but the righteous have hope in death of eternal life (CP Pr 14:32 also 11:3, 5-6, 18-19; 12:28). However, God has made provision for the wicked to be saved if they turn away from their wickedness and follow after righteousness (CP Eze 18:20-23, 27-32; 33:11-20 with Ga 6:7-8). The wise do not parade their wisdom, but a fool's lack of wisdom is reflected in his words and actions (CP Pr 14:33 with 12:16). Godliness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people (CP Pr 14:34 with 11:11). A wise servant will gain the king's favour, but a foolish servant will incur his wrath (CP Pr 14:35 with 16:14-15; 19:12).

Next, in V 1 and 2 in Ch 15, Solomon contrasts the difference between soft and harsh words, and the tongues of the wise and the foolish (CP Pr 15:1). A gentle response will turn away anger, but harsh words stir it up (CP V18 also 14:29; 16:14; 25:15). In Pr 15:2 Solomon observes that a wise man uses knowledge rightly, but a fool has no true sense of its proper use (CP Pr 15:2 also V 7 and 28 with 12:23; 13:16; 14:33). In V 3 Solomon alludes to the omnipresence of God (CP Pr 15:3 also 5:21 with Job 31:4; 34:21-22; Psa 139:7-12; Jer 16:17; Mt 6:1-18;

He 4:13). The ways of man are before God and He records every word and deed, which will be brought up, at both the Judgement Seat of Christ in Heaven where the righteous will be judged (CP Ecc 12:14; Ro 14:10-13; 2Cor 5:10), and the Great White Throne Judgement where the wicked will be judged before being cast into the Lake of Fire, at the end of Christ's millennial reign (CP Rev 20:11-15; 21:8). A gentle tongue soothes and revives, but a piercing tongue breaks the spirit (CP Pr 15:4 with 12:18 and Psa 64:2-3). A fool spurns his father's instruction, but he who heeds correction benefits from it (CP Pr 15:5 with 13:18). There is priceless treasure in the house of the righteous, but in the ill-gotten gains of the wicked there is trouble (CP Pr 15:6 with 1:10-19; 8:18-21; 10:2, 16, 22; 15:27; 24:4). It is in the hearts of the wise to disperse knowledge, but not so with fools (CP Pr 15:7). The sacrifice of the wicked is an offence to God, but He delights in the prayer of the righteous (CP Pr 15:8, also 3:32 and 21:3, 27 with Ecc 5:1; Isa 1:10-16; Jer 6:19-20; Amos 5:21-24; Mic 6:6-8; He 11:4).

God hates the way of the wicked, but He loves that of the Godly (CP Pr 15:9 with 21:21). Correction is grievous to the backslider and he who hates correction will die (CP Pr 15:10 with 5:12, 23 with 10:17). If God knows all about what transpires in death and beyond, how much more does He know the secrets of men here and now (CP Pr 15:11 with 1Sam 16:7; 2Chr 6:30; Job 26:6; Psa 44:21; 139:8; Jn 2:24; Ac 1:24; He 4:13). Those Scriptures all teach the omniscience of God (CP Pr 15:12). A scoffer resents being corrected, nor will he go to the wise person for counsel (CP Pr 1:22, 30; 10:8; 13:1; 17:10; 2Ti 4:3-4). A merry heart causes a smiling face, but a broken spirit causes dejection and despair (CP Pr 15:13 also 15:15 with 12:25; 17:22; 18:14). A wise man seeks knowledge, but a fool feeds on foolishness (CP Pr 15:14 with Isa 32:6). The afflicted are always sad, but the merry are always happy (CP Pr 15:15 (see also comments on 15:13)). Better is poverty with the fear of God than riches with troubles (CP Pr 15:16 with 10:2; 16:8; Psa 37:16 and 1Ti 6:6). Better a little to eat where love is than a fattened ox where there is hatred (CP Pr 15:17 with 17:1). A fiery-tempered man causes trouble, but one slow to anger averts it (CP Pr 15:18 also V 1 with 14:29; 16:32; 19:11; 26:21; 28:25; 29:11 and Jas 1:19). The way of a lazy man is beset with many obstructions, but the way of the upright is smooth (CP Pr 15:19 with 20:4; 22:5, 13; 26:13-16).

A wise son brings joy to his father, but a foolish son is the grief of his mother (CP Pr 15:20 with 10:1). Folly delights a man who lacks judgement, but a man of understanding walks uprightly (CP Pr 15:21 also 10:23 with Eph 5:15). Plans fail for lack of good advice, but succeed with many advisers (CP Pr 15:22 also 11:14; 20:18; 24:6 with Lu 14:31). A man enjoys giving sound advice, and to be able to say the right thing at the right time is good (CP Pr 15:23 with 24:26; 25:11 and Isa 50:6). The way of the wise leads upward to life and avoids the pitfalls of Hell (CP Pr 15:24, also 2:18 and 14:16 with Php 3:20; Col 3:1-2). The Lord will judge the proud, but preserve the humble (CP Pr 15:25 with 2:21-22; 10:25; 12:7; 14:11 also Psa 68:5-6). The Lord hates the thoughts of the wicked, but delights in the kind words of the righteous (CP Pr 15:26 with 3:32; Psa 24:3-5). He that is greedy of dishonest gain brings grief to his family; but he

who hates bribes enjoys life (CP Pr 15:27 with 11:29; 28:16; and De 16:19; Ecc 7:7; Jer 17:11 also 1Ti 6:10). The righteous man thinks carefully about how he answers, but the mouth of the ungodly pours forth evil (CP Pr 15:28 also V 2; 10:32; 12:23 with Eph 4:29 and 1Pe 3:15). The Lord is far from the wicked, but He hears the prayers of the righteous (CP Pr 15:29 also Psa 34:15-17; 145:18-19). From a New Testament perspective this translates to Christians being assured always of answered prayer (CP Jn 9:31 with Mk 11:22-24; Jn 15:7; Php 4:6-7; 1Jn 3:22; 5:14-15). Righteousness rejoices the soul and good news is healthful (CP Pr 15:30 also V 13 with 16:15 and 17:22). He who heeds advice shall be a companion of the wise (CP Pr 15:31 also V 5 with 1:23; 6:23). He hates his own soul who rejects advice, but the one who profits by it gains understanding (CP Pr 15:32 also V 5 and 31 with 1:7; 5:12-13, 23 and 8:36). Wisdom teaches the fear of the Lord, and humility comes before honour (CP Pr 15:33 also 18:12 with Mt 23:12; Lu 14:11; 18:9-14; 1Pe 5:5-6). Wisdom also comes with humility (CP Pr 11:2; 13:10).

God prepares both the plans in the heart of the righteous and the answer of their tongue (CP Pr 16:1 also V 33; 3:6; 19:21; 20:24; 21:1, 30-31 with Jer 10:23 and Mt 10:19). While man can be self-deceived, God sees the motives and intentions of the heart (CP Pr 16:2 also 21:2 and Psa 19:12-13 with 1Sam 16:7; 1Cor 4:4-5; He 4:12). The plans of the righteous entrusted to God will be fulfilled (CP Pr 16:3 also 3:5-6 with Psa 1:1-3; 22:8; 37:5; 55:22; 90:16-17 and 1Pe 5:7). Next Solomon observes that the Lord has made all things for His own purpose, even the wicked for the day of Judgement (CP Pr 16:4 also Isa 43:7; Col 1:16-17 and Rev 4:11 with Job 21:30; Ro 1:18-20; 8:28-30; 9:17-23). Pr 16:4 is used by some in the contemporary Church to teach the Doctrine of Predestination; that God has already predetermined the eternal destination of everyone who has ever been, or ever will be born, and decreed their lifestyle. But when studied in the light of the other scriptures on this subject noted here the clear teaching is that God has simply reserved the wicked for the day they will receive their well-deserved punishment and He will be glorified. (For a more detailed teaching on the Doctrine of Predestination see author's study *Salvation – a free will choice or predestinated?* In his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**).

The wicked are an abomination to God and although they may pledge support for each other in sin, they will not go unpunished (CP Pr 16:5 also 3:32 and 11:20-21). Iniquity is atoned for when sin is repented of; and in the reverential awe of God men turn aside from evil (CP Pr 16:6 also 8:13 and 14:16 with Jer 3:22; 18:23, 30-32; 33:11-12; 14-16; Hos 14:1-2, 4). Solomon's next declaration that God makes a righteous man's enemies to be at peace with him does not however preclude New Testament Christians from persecution (CP Pr 16:7 and 2Chr 12:6-7; 17:10 with Mt 5:10; Mk 10:29-30; Lu 21:17-18; Jn 15:20; 2Ti 3:12). It is better to be poor and righteous than to be rich and unrighteous (CP Pr 16:8 also 15:16 and Psa 37:16 with Pr 10:2). A righteous man's heart devises many plans but the Lord directs his steps (CP Pr 16:9 also 19:21, 20:24 with Psa 37:23; 119:133). Next Solomon observes that a righteous king has great

power, but also Divine wisdom to execute judgement (CP Pr 16:10. From a New Testament perspective this translates to Jesus (CP Isa 11:1-4 with Lu 4:16-20).

Just scales and balances are decreed by God. All weights and measures are of His making (CP Pr 16:11 also 11:1 and 20:10, 23 with Lev 19:35-36; De 25:13-16; Eze 45:10; Amos 8:4-6; Mic 6:10-11). God detests dishonesty. There is no middle ground for Christians. Every transaction in which they are involved must be scrupulously honest (CP Pr 16:12-15). Here Solomon expresses confidence in righteous kings to rightly govern (CP also V 10; 20:2, 8, 26, 28; 24:21; 25:5; 29:4, 14; 31:1-5). As previously noted in our study on 16:10 righteous kings have great power, but also Divine wisdom to execute judgement (CP Pr 16:16 also 3:13-14; 8:10, 18-19). This is also claimed by David in the book of Psalms for the commands and precepts of the Lord (CP Psa 19:9-10; 119:72, 127). These scriptures highlight the chastening power of God's word. The righteous man is ever departing from evil; he walks in the way prescribed by God and preserves his soul (CP Pr 16:17 also 15:19 and 22:5 with Isa 35:8). In the next Proverb Solomon observes the effect of pride and haughtiness (CP Pr 16:18 also 11:2 with Isa 14:12-15).

It is better to be humble and associate with the lowly than to share plunder with the proud (CP Pr 16:19 and 3:34 with Isa 57:15; Mt 5:3). Solomon next observes some fundamental principles of life: God blesses those who obey Him; happy is the man who puts his trust in the Lord (CP Pr 16:20 with 13:13; 28:25 and Psa 34:8). A wise man is acknowledged for his discernment and insight; his pleasant way of speaking increases learning (CP Pr 16:2 and V 24). Wisdom is a fountain of life for those possessing it, but the instruction of fools is folly (CP 16:22 with 10:11; 13:13-15; 15:10). Careful and persuasive speech comes from a wise heart which increases in learning (CP 16:23 with 22:17-18). Pleasantly spoken words refresh the soul (CP 16:24 and V 21). There is a way that seems right to a man, but whatever is not God's way will end in death and Hell (CP Pr 16:25). This is a repeat of 14:12 (CP 14:12 also 5:21-23 and 12:15 with Mt 7:13-14).

Solomon's next observations are that very little labour is for anyone but self – it is to satisfy some appetite or meet some need in life. The ungodly man works as hard at doing something evil and setting men against each other as the labourer does to earn a living. The ungodly causes strife and separates friends. He leads his righteous neighbour into unrighteousness and meditates on what sins he can commit. Hoary heads are crowns of glory on righteous men (CP Pr 16:26-31 with 12:26; 17:9; 20:29 and Lev 19:32). Conquest and self-control within accomplishes more than physical prowess without (CP Pr 16:32 with 14:29; 15:18; 19:11). God, not chance, is in control of what happens (CP Pr 16:33 with V 1-4, 9; 19:21; 20:24; Psa 37:23-24).

In Pr 17 Solomon observes that a little with peace and contentment, is better than plenty with strife (CP Pr 17:1 with 15:7). Solomon then declared that a wise servant will be promoted above a son who brings shame to his family, and will share in the inheritance (CP Pr 17:2 with 10:5; 11:29; 19:26; 28:7). It is worth

noting here that God gave Solomon's own servant Jeroboam control over ten of the twelve tribes of Israel, but only two to his son, Rehoboam (CP 1Ki 11:9-13, 29-43). Next, Solomon observes how precious metals are purified by fire, but God tries men's hearts (CP Pr 17:3 with 15:11; 16:2; Psa 26:2; 139:23-24; Jer 17:10). The refining fires for New Testament Christians are trials of their faith which they will undergo (CP Mt 5:10-12; Jas 1:2-4; 1Pe 1:3-9 with Ro 2:5-7; 5:3-4). The kind of talk a man listens to determines what he is at heart (CP Pr 17:4). Mocking the poor is mocking God who made them. He will punish those who rejoice in others' troubles (CP Pr 17:5 also 14:31). Grandsons are the glory of old men, and fathers are the glory of sons (CP Pr 17:6). *Childrens' children* here (KJV), are literally sons' sons – grandsons – and father are the glory of sons, not children *per se* (CP Pr 17:7).

As eloquent speech is unsuited to a fool, much less does lying suit a prince (CP also 12:22; 16:12-13). A gift is a precious stone in the eyes of the one possessing it. It prospers him wherever he goes (CP Pr 17:8). A *gift* here (KJV), refers to a bribe – something given in return for a favour. Solomon is not condoning bribery; he merely observes that the one giving it generally prospers in his evil ways (CP also V 23; 21:14). Throughout scripture bribery is condemned (CP Pr 15:27; 28:16; Ex 23:8; De 16:19; Ecc 7:7; 10:19; Amos 5:12; Mt 28:11-15 with 1Ti 6:9-12). The man who forgives and forgets an offence against him procures love, but he who keeps remembering a matter alienates even close friends (CP Pr 17:9 also 10:12 and Jas 5:20; 1Pe 4:8 with 1Cor 13:4-7). Rebuking a wise man does more good than one hundred beatings to a fool (CP Pr 17:10). Solomon's observation here is that the wise receive rebuke with appreciation; fools do not (CP also Pr 9:7-8; 10:17; 15:12). An evil man who seeks only to stir up rebellion will face just retribution (CP Pr 17:11). Fools are less rational in anger than a wild bear robbed of her cubs (CP Pr 17:12).

Solomon next asserts that evil will never leave the house of the man who rewards evil for good (CP Pr 17:13 with Psa 109:4-5; Jer 18:20-23). Solomon's own father David repaid Uriah the Hittite's loyalty with evil. He committed adultery with Bathsheba, Uriah's wife, and then had Uriah killed. Evil never left David's house thereafter (CP 2Sam 11:1 – 12:12). This translates to the law of sowing and reaping for New Testament Christians (CP Ga 6:7-10). Next, Solomon observes that it is hard to stop a quarrel once it starts; it is like letting out water, so do not let one even begin (CP Pr 17:14 with 20:3). Solomon then highlights two abominations to God (CP Pr 17:15 also 18:5; 24:24 with Ex 23:6-7; Isa 5:22-23). Next, Solomon questions why pay for a fool to get wisdom when he has no heart for the truth (CP Pr 17:16 with 21:25-26). A true friend is always there but a brother is born for the time of trouble (CP Pr 17:17 also 18:24 with 1Cor 13:7).

A man who guarantees another's debt in the event that he should default is devoid of good sense (CP Pr 17:18 with 6:1-2 (see also author's comments on Pr 6:1-5)). He who loves contention loves sin, and he who glorifies his position courts destruction (CP Pr 17:19 with 16:18). One crooked in heart finds no

good, and he who has an unmanageable tongue falls into evil (CP Pr 17:20). Now contrast Pr 10:31-32 and 16:20-21 and CP Jas 3:1-12 (CP Pr 10:31-32; 16:20-21 with Jas 3:1-12). There is no joy in being the father of a fool, only sorrow (CP Pr 17:21 also V 25 with 10:1; 19:13). A cheerful heart does good like medicine, but a broken spirit makes one sick (CP Pr 17:22 with 12:25; 15:13, 15 and 18:14). The wicked are able to pervert the course of justice with bribes (CP Pr 17:23 with 21:14 and Ecc 10:19). Wisdom is within reach of everyone who looks for it, but the fool's eyes are on everything else (CP Pr 17:24 with Ecc 2:14). Solomon observes again in Pr 17:25, as in V 21, that there is no joy in being the parent of a fool – only vexation for the father, and bitterness for the mother (CP Pr 17:25 also V 21 with 10:1). Next, Solomon also observes that it is a perversion of justice to punish the righteous and to strike leaders for uprightness (CP Pr 17:26 also V 15 with 18:5). Rash talk and quick temper betray a shallow character. Even a fool is considered wise and a man of understanding, who keeps quiet (CP Pr 17:27-28 with 10:19; 16:32 and Jas 1:19).

Readers will have to decide for themselves how they interpret this next Proverb (CP Pr 18:1). Lack of context makes this Proverb difficult to interpret. Some see this man as the nonconformist who is going to have his own way even if it conflicts with tested knowledge or approved methods. He flies in the face of sound wisdom by his self-assertion. Others interpret it as commending the life of separation from sin and folly. The man who does this desires his own higher interests and mingles himself with all true wisdom (CP Pr 18:2). Here Solomon observes that a fool has no desire for wisdom; he only wants to express his stupidity and emptiness (CP also Ecc 5:3; 10:3, 12-14). Next Solomon observes that outward shame and disgrace follow upon inward wickedness and the contempt it produces (CP Pr 18:3 with 3:35 and 6:32-33). A wise man's words are profound and his wisdom a source of life (CP Pr 18:4 with 10:11 and 20:5). It is not good to show partiality toward the wicked, so as to deprive the righteous of justice (CP Pr 18:5 with 17:15, 26; 24:23-24 and 28:21 also Lev 19:15; De 1:17; 16:19-20).

A loud-mouthed fool gets involved in many quarrels inviting beatings. His continual mouthing off consistently brings him trouble and is a snare to himself (CP Pr 18:6-7 with 10:13-14; 12:13-14 and Ecc 10:12-14). The words of a slanderer or talebearer are as wounds penetrating even to the deepest, innermost parts of the body (CP Pr 18:8). This is repeated in 26:22 (CP Pr 26:22 also 11:13). Now contrast this with Paul's admonition to New Testament Christians (CP Eph 4:29-30). A lazy worker is also a brother to him who is a destroyer – a waster of both time and opportunity (CP Pr 18:9 with 10:4; 12:11, 24, 27; 13:4; 14:23; 27:23-27; 28:19). The name of the Lord is a place of complete safety to all who trust in Him (CP Pr 18:10 with 29:25). *The name of the Lord* represents His person, authority and character (CP Ex 15:2; 2Sam 22:1-3, 33; Psa 18:2; 20:1; 27:5; 61:1-4; 91:1-16; 144:1-2). In the same way as the righteous put their trust in the Lord, the misguided, rich in their imaginations, believe that wealth is the source of their security (CP Pr 18:11 also V 23 with 10:15; 11:4, 28; 14:20; 19:4; 22:7; 28:11).

As noted previously in our study on Pr 10:15, *the rich man's wealth is his strong city* which means literally that wealth is the city of his strength. It makes him many friends and brings him power, but his ultimate security of course is only in God (CP Job 31:24-28; Psa 20:7; 49:6-15; 52:1-9; Ecc 9:11-18 with Mk 10:17-25; 1Ti 6:17-19; Jas 2:1-9; 4:13-16; 5:1-6).

Next, Solomon observes that pride ends in destruction; humility in honour (CP Pr 18:12 with 16:18-19; 29:23 also 15:33; Mt 23:12; Lu 14:11; 18:9-14; 1Pe 5:5-6). Wisdom also comes with humility (CP Pr 11:2; 13:10). New Testament Christians are warned that unless they are totally surrendered to God in true humility they are unable to resist the Devil and make him flee from them (CP Jas 4:7-10). Solomon then declares that a man who gives his opinion in a matter without knowing the facts shows himself to be a fool (CP Pr 18:13 with 18:15 and 18:17). This translates to New Testament Christians not jumping to conclusions (CP Jn 7:51). A man's spirit will sustain him in his sicknesses; but who can endure a wounded or broken spirit (CP Pr 18:14 with 15:13 and 17:22, also 12:25). Now contrast Lu 4:18 (CP Lu 4:18). Nobody living under the New Covenant needs to endure a broken spirit – Jesus is their all-sufficiency (CP Pr 18:15). The wise man never comes to the place where he ceases to learn. His mind is always open to instruction and his ear is always receptive to knowledge. Contrast this with V 13 (CP 18:13).

A man's gift brings him into favour with potentates (CP Pr 18:16). *Gift* here does not refer to a bribe, as in Pr 17:8 (CP 17:8 (see also author's comments on 17:8)). *Gift* in 18:16 refers to a present (CP Gen 32:20-21; 43:11; 1Sam 25:27). Cross examination avoids hasty judgement (CP Pr 18:17). Contrast this with V 13 (CP 18:13). Solomon next observes that casting lots causes contentions to cease and keeps the mighty apart (CP Pr 18:18). This is because God, not chance, is in control of what happens (CP Pr 16:33 with V 1-4, 9; 19:21; 20:24; Psa 37:23-24). In his next Proverb Solomon declares that it is harder to be reconciled with a brother who is offended than it is to conquer a fortified city; their contentions separate them like the bars of a castle (CP Pr 18:19). From a New Testament perspective however this should never be an issue because of the love Christians are to have for one another (CP Jn 13:34-35 with 1Cor 13:1-7). The consequence of one's words should produce satisfaction and fulfilment ((CP Pr 18:20 also V 4 with 12:14; 13:2-3 (see also author's comments on 12:14, 13:2-3 and 18:4)). Solomon taught that the tongue is the source of death and life. The New Testament teaches this also (CP Pr 18:21 also 12:13 with Mt 12:37 and 1Pe 3:10-11).

Next, Solomon observes that whoso finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favour of the Lord (CP Pr 18:22 also 5:15-19; 12:4 and 19:14 with 31:10). The New Testament also confirms this teaching (CP 1Cor 7:2; He 13:4). This also refutes the teaching by some in the church that celibacy is required of those who minister God's word. God originally stated that it was not good for man to be alone and this will always be the truth (CP Gen 2:18, 21-24). God's favour is upon all who carry out His original creative purpose to multiply and replenish the earth (CP Gen 2:26-28; Isa 45:18). The poor use entreaties in their speech, but the

rich man answers roughly (CP Pr 18:23 also 14:31 with Jas 2:1-7). Not all rich people of course have bad manners (CP Pr 18:24). This last Proverb in Ch 18 is another that has many interpretations ascribed to it. Again readers will have to decide for themselves which one they choose. The thought in the KJV and NKJV on the first line is friendliness wins friends. In the NIV, NASB and others it is that a man with lots of friends will come to ruin. They all agree however on the second line – that there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother. It is not hard to see Jesus here.

Next Solomon declares that an honest poor man is better than a devious rich fool (CP Pr 19:1). Solomon is undoubtedly referring to a rich fool here because his teaching essentially is that integrity is better than wealth (CP Pr 15:16; 16:8; 19:22; 28:6; Ecc 4:13). Being zealous without knowledge is no good; acting rashly is a sin (CP Pr 19:2 with 21:5). The fool ruins his chances by his own folly and then blames it on the Lord (CP Pr 19:3 with Gen 4:5; Isa 8:21; Lam 3:39-41). The rich have many friends, but the poor lose theirs (CP Pr 19:4 also V 6-7 with 14:20 and 29:26 (see also author's comments on Pr 14:20-21)). A liar will reap what he sows, and in due time will be punished (CP Pr 19:5 also V 9; 6:16-19; 21:28; Ex 23:1 and De 19:16-19 with Rev 21:8 and 22:14-15). In his next two Proverbs Solomon notes with derision the fact that many are attracted to the rich and the powerful in the hope of obtaining their favour, while the poor are disregarded by brethren and friends alike. All their entreaties and efforts to be friendly are rejected (CP Pr 19:6-7 also V 4 with 14:20 and 29:26). Now contrast this with Jas 2:1-9 (CP Jas 2:1-9 (see also author's comments on Pr 14:20-21)).

Next, Solomon encourages those who really care about themselves to seek wisdom (CP Pr 19:8 with 8:35 also 13:13). Solomon then observes again that all liars will have their part in the eternal lake of fire (CP Pr 19:9 (see author's comments on Pr 19:5)). It is unseemly for a fool to live in luxury or for a slave to rule over his master – neither are suited for possessions or for responsibilities beyond the scope of their capacity to wisely manage them (CP Pr 19:10 with 29:2; 30:21-23). A wise man restrains his anger and overlooks others offences against him (CP Pr 19:11 with Mt 5:44; Eph 4:32; Col 3:13; Jas 1:19). Solomon's next Proverb notes two contrasting effects – a king's wrath, and his favour (CP Pr 19:12). A King's wrath is as fearsome as the roaring of a lion (CP 16:14 also 20:2). A king's favour is as refreshing as dew is upon the grass (CP 16:15 also Psa 72:1-2, 4-6). Solomon then notes two unbearable things (CP Pr 19:13). A foolish son is the grief of his father (CP 17:21, 25 with 10:1; 23:15-16); and a perpetually contentious wife is like dripping water (CP 21:9, 19; 25:24; 27:15-16).

Property and wealth are inherited from parents but a prudent wife is from God (CP Pr 19:14). One receives an inheritance as a family blessing (CP 2Cor 12:14), but a prudent wife is a Divine blessing (CP Pr 12:4; 18:22; 31:10-31). Contrast this wife with the wife of Pr 19:13. It should be noted here that 2Cor 12:14 does not teach as some believe that Christians must set aside reserves to meet their family's future needs (see author's comments on 2Cor 12:14 in his book **A Question and answer Study of the New Testament**).

Also, see author's comments on Pr 6:6-11 in this study). Next Solomon observes two effects of laziness (CP Pr 19:15). *Deep Sleep* here is the sleep that fell upon Adam, Abraham, King Saul, and others (CP Gen 2:21; 15:12; 1Sam 26:12; Job 4:13; 33:15; Isa 29:12). The idea in Pr 19:15 is that the slothful man becomes unconscious to all interests and responsibilities of life, and an idle soul shall suffer hunger (CP Pr 6:6-11; 10:4-5 (see author's comments on Pr 6:6-11 and 10:4-5)). To obey God's word is self-preserving; to disobey is self-destructive (CP Pr 19:16 also 13:13; 15:10; 16:17 with Lu 10:25-28; 11:27-28).

Solomon then declares that whatever help is given to the poor becomes God's own debt to the giver (CP Pr 19:17). To have God as a debtor is the greatest privilege in life one could possibly imagine. All one has to do is help poor people. Throughout Scripture God identifies with them (CP De 15:7-11; Pr 14:21, 31; 28:27; Mt 10:42; 16:27; 25:31-40; 2Cor 9:1-9 (Psa 112:9); Ga 6:6-10; He 6:10). Solomon next admonishes parents to discipline their children before their habits are formed and sealed for life, but warns against undue punishment which could ruin their lives (CP Pr 19:18) – NKJV, NIV, AMP, NASB, NRSV, Interlinear and Latin Vulgate – see also author's comments on Pr 13:24 and 22:15 in this study). A hot-tempered man must pay the penalty for his temper, otherwise he will have to be continually rescued from its consequences (CP Pr 19:19 with 14:16-17, 29 and 15:18). A short-tempered man acts foolishly; he flies into a rage and does not stop to consider the consequences. The chief end of instruction for God's children is to hear counsel and live by it that they may grow into wise men (CP Pr 19:20 with 4:1; 8:33 also Psa 37:37). Wisdom is a long-term investment (CP Pr 19:21).

This is a similar theme to Pr 16:1, 9 and 33 (CP 16:1, 9, 33). It bears repeating here, as was noted in our study on those passages of scripture, that while man can be self-deceived, God sees the motives and intentions of the heart (CP again Pr 16:2 also 21:2 and Psa 19:12-13 with 1Sam 16:7; 1Cor 4:4; He 4:12). Next Solomon observes that a man's love for others is measured by his loving kindness; but it is better to be poor than make promises and not keep them (CP Pr 19:22 also 3:3-4 with 19:1). Solomon then goes on to highlight three blessings of Godly fear (CP Pr 19:23). The fear of the Lord is the pathway to life. Those who have it will not be overtaken with calamity (CP also Pr 1:7-8; 3:7-8; 12:13; 13:13-14; 14:26-27; Job 5:17-26; Psa 91:1-16; Isa 46:4; Dan 6:26-27 with 1Ti 4:8; 2Ti 4:8. See also author's comments on Pr 1:7; Pr 13:13-14 and Pr 14:26-27 in this study, also author's study, *Psalm 91*, in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**). Solomon then observes that some men are so lazy they will not even feed themselves (CP Pr 19:24 also 26:15).

Punish a scoffer and those who lack understanding will learn prudence; reprove a wise man and he will even increase in wisdom (CP Pr 19:25 also 21:11; 1:5; 9:8; 14:3; 17:10). How New Testament Christians respond to criticism determines whether or not they grow in wisdom (CP 1Ti 5:20). A son who mistreats his father and mother is a public disgrace (CP Pr 19:26 with 28:24). Under the Old Covenant children who smote or cursed their parents were put to death (CP Ex

21:15, 17; Lev 20:9; De 27:16). The next Proverb has been interpreted three ways – all of which are acceptable (CP Pr 19:27). It can mean that God's children are to listen to nothing that would cause them to err from the truth of God's word (KJV); they should cease to hear instruction if not going to obey it (RSV) or, if God's children cease listening to instruction, they will stray from the knowledge of the truth (NKJV and NIV). An ungodly witness cares nothing for truth – he enjoys sinning too much (CP Pr 19:28 also 12:17 with Job 15:16). Mockers and fools will be severely punished – judgment awaits them (CP Pr 19:29 with 10:13).

Next, Solomon warns of the inherent dangers of the excessive use of wine and other strong drink. It causes men to become mockers and brawlers and to generally behave badly (CP Pr 20:1 also 4:14-17; 21:17; 23:20-21, 29-35). King Lemuel also warns of wine's corrupting influence in Pr 31 (CP 31:4-9). From a New Testament perspective this translates to Christians also not drinking to excess, for drunkards will not inherit the Kingdom of Heaven (CP Ga 5:21; Eph 5:18; 1Ti 3:2-3, 8, 11; Tit 2:1-4). The wrath of a king is to be feared as the roaring of a lion; whoever provokes him to anger wrongs his own soul (CP Pr 20:2 also 16:14 and 19:12). The lesson for New Testament Christians is found in Ro 13:4 (CP Ro 13:1-5). It is a mark of honour to avoid quarrels, but fools will gladly pick one (CP Pr 20:3 with 6:12-14; 14:17; 15:18; 18:6-7). A peacemaker is better than a troublemaker (CP Pr 20:4). The lazy man who does not plough because of the cold, will have to beg at harvest time, for he will have nothing (CP Pr 6:6-11; 10:4; 13:4; 19:15; 21:25-26 (see also author's comments on Pr 6:6-11)). The motives behind a man's plans lies deep within his heart, but a wise counsellor knows how to draw them out (CP Pr 20:5 with He 4:12). Men are plentiful who brag about themselves, but a truly faithful man is hard to find (CP Pr 20:6 also 19:22 with Psa 12:1-2). The only assured truth is God's word (CP Jn 17:17).

A righteous man will be rewarded by his children being blessed after he dies. His children come into a noble heritage and benefit from his life and example (CP Pr 20:7 also 2:7; 13:22; 14:26 with Psa 37:23-26 (see also author's comments on Pr 13:22)). When a king sits on his throne to judge, he winnows out all evil with his eyes, meaning that he sees through all pretence and sifts all evidence (CP Pr 20:8 also V 26 and 16:10 with Psa 11:4 and Isa 11:3-4). Solomon's next Proverb is a question (CP Pr 20:9). No one can ever say that they made their own heart clean and purified themselves from their sins (CP Psa 14:1-3; Ecc 7:20; Isa 53:6; 59:1-8; Ro 3:10-18, 23; 5:12; 1Jn 1:8, 10). It is only by walking in complete obedience to God's word that mens hearts can be made clean and that they can be purified of sin (CP Psa 119:9; Mt 7:21-27; Jn 15:3; Tit 2:11-14; 3:3-7; 1Pe 1:18-25; 1Jn 1:7 (see also author's study, *Psalm 119 – A Study on Salvation by the Word of God* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**). Even the Old Testament saints were cleansed, purified and redeemed by Christ's atoning death. He died for the sins of all men – past, present and future (CP Psa 32:1-5; 51:1-12; Isa 1:18; 9:6-7; Ac 17:30-31; Ro 3:23-26; He 9:15; 1Jn 2:2).

God despises every kind of cheating; He requires standard weights and measures for all transactions (CP Pr 20:10 also V 23; 11:1; 16:11 and Amos 8:4-6; Mic 6:10-11 with De 25:13-16). As noted in our study on Pr 16:11, God detests dishonesty. There is no middle ground for Christians. Every transaction in which they are involved must be scrupulously honest (CP Pr 20:11). Solomon observes here that even the character of a child can be known by the way he acts – whether or not what he does is pure and right (CP Mt 7:16). The basic nature of a person reveals itself early in life. Children carry their characters into adulthood, whether for good or for evil. Next, Solomon observes that the Lord created the hearing ear and the seeing eye (CP Pr 20:12). God has created all things for Himself and they should be used for His glory and be dedicated to the end for which they were made (CP Col 1:15-18; Rev 4:11). The next Proverb warns Christians against being so overtaken by sleep that they become lazy and overcome by poverty; they must remain alert and diligent to prosper (CP Pr 20:13 with 6:10-11; 24:33-34 (Pr 24:33-34 is a repeat of 6:10-11). See also author's comments on Pr 6:6-11)). A trick buyers use to pay less for something is to belittle its quality. Then they brag about the bargain they got (CP Pr 20:14).

Next, Solomon again declares that knowledge is more valuable than riches (CP Pr 20:15 with 2:1-5; 3:13-15; 8:10-11). Christians are reminded here that the knowledge of Proverbs is more than just information, facts and sense knowledge. It begins with the fear of God and is therefore Godly knowledge that includes Him as the primary factor. Because of its Divine source it comes with understanding implicit in it (CP Pr 2:1-11; 3:13-18; 8:1-22). Solomon then warns creditors of one guaranteeing the debt of a stranger or who becomes surety for an immoral woman, to ensure they have taken sufficient collateral security from him (CP Pr 20:16). This is repeated in Pr 27:13 (CP 27:13 also 6:1; 11:15; 17:18; 22:26). The pleasures from ill-gotten gains are fleeting; afterwards they leave a bad taste (CP 20:17 with 9:17; 10:2-3; 21:6 and Job 20:12-16). This is God's spiritual law of sowing and reaping (CP Pr 11:18; Ga 6:7-8). No plans should be acted upon without wise counsel, nor wars made without expert advice (CP Pr 20:18 also 11:14; 15:22; 24:6 with Lu 14:28-31). Gossips betray confidences; they flatter with their lips, and Christians are to have nothing to do with them (CP Pr 20:19 with 11:13 and Ro 16:17-18).

Under the law of Moses in the Old Testament whoever smote or cursed their father or mother were put to death, leaving no posterity – descendants to carry on their name (CP Pr 20:20; 30:11, 17 also Ex 21:15, 17; Lev 20:9; De 27:16 (see also author's study, *Husbands, Wives, Children – Their duties and obligations to each other* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**). Solomon declares that an inheritance may be hastily gotten – which implies unjust means – at the beginning, in the end will not be blessed (CP Pr 20:21 also 13:11; 21:5-6; 28:20, 22). This is also true of any get-rich-quick schemes (CP Hab 2:6). To repay evil for evil will not be blessed of the Lord, but those who trust God to recompense it in His own time will be delivered and vindicated (CP Pr 20:22 also 17:13 and

24:29 with De 32:35; Psa 27:14; 37:34; Lu 18:7-8; Ro 12:17-19; 1Th 5:15; He 10:30; 1Pe 3:9; 4:19). Jesus himself is our example (CP Isa 53:7 with Mt 27:12-14, 34-44; 1Pe 2:23). Next, Solomon again declares that God requires standard weights and measures for every transaction (CP 20:23 also V 10: 11:1; 16:11 with De 25:13-16; Eze 45:10; Amos 8:4-6; Mic 6:10-11 (see also author's comments on Pr 11:1, 16:11 and 20:10)).

God's providence is over all His creation; therefore men ought always to look to Him for direction and not do things their own way (CP Pr 20:24 also 16:1-2, 9, 33; 21:2 with Psa 37:23). Under the Old Covenant it was a snare for a man to make vows rashly and then retract them (CP Pr 20:25 with Nu 30:2; De 23:21-23; Psa 50:14; Ecc 5:2, 4-6). Under the New Covenant Jesus forbids Christians making vows at all. All they have to do is tell the truth (CP Mt 5:33-37 also Mt 12:36-37 and Jas 5:12 (see author's comments on Mt 12:36-37 and Jas 5:12 in his book, **A Question and Answer Study of the New Testament**)). A wise king does not tolerate the wicked; they are separated from the righteous and punished severely (CP Pr 20:26 also V 8 with Psa 101:8). God uses man's spirit as a light to search out the inward parts and determine what is good or bad (CP Pr 20:27 also 15:11). *Spirit* here refers to conscience, which serves as a lamp, throwing light on human thoughts, motives, affections and actions. It approves and reproves the innermost thoughts and intents of life (CP Psa 139:23; Jer 17:10; Ro 2:14-16; 1Cor 2:11; Rev 2:23). When a king is merciful and truthful, his kingdom is secure. The king's authority is maintained by the loyalty generated by the loving kindness he extends to others (CP Pr 20:28 also 16:12 and 29:14 with 21:21). The glory of young men is their strength; the beauty of old men is their grey head (CP Pr 20:29). Grey, or hoary heads are crowns of glory on righteous men (CP Pr 16:31). Punishment that hurts chases evil from the heart (CP Pr 20:30 with 22:15; 23:13-14; 26:3).

Solomon's next observation in Pr 21:1 is that just as a water course can be channelled to flow where directed, a king's heart in the hands of God is pliable (CP Pr 21:1 also 16:1, 9; 19:21; 20:24). Many times in the Old Testament God moved on the hearts of kings to influence their decisions so as to further His redemptive purpose in history (CP Ex 10:1; Ezra 6:22; 7:21; Isa 10:5-7; 45:1-6; Dan 4:31-32). Under the New Covenant the prayers of Christians influence the Lord to direct the decisions of kings more fully in accordance with His will (CP Ro 13:1; 1Ti 2:1-3; Tit 3:1-5; 1Pe 2:13-23). The next Proverb, 21:2 is essentially the same as 16:2 (CP 21:2, 16:2). While man can be self-deceived God sees the motives and intentions of the heart (CP 1Sam 16:7; Psa 19:12-13; 139:23-24; 1Cor 4:4-5; He 4:12). God desires His children to be righteous and just rather than ritualistic (CP Pr 21:3 also V 27 and 15:8). Worship and offerings are unacceptable to God if His children are not living righteously (CP Isa 1:10-20; Hos 6:6; Mic 6:7-8; Ro 12:1-2; He 10:5-9). A haughty look and a proud heart, the lamp, or light of the wicked, are sin (CP Pr 21:4 also 16:5, 18 with 6:16-19; Psa 18:27; 101:5). *Lamp or light of the wicked* is used as a symbol of the eyes, which convey their pride.

In the next three Proverbs, V 5, 6, and 7 in Ch 21, Solomon addresses the evils of ill-gotten gain: hastily

(CP V 5 with 10:4; 19:2; 20:21; 28:20), deceitfully (CP 21:6 with 13:11; 2Pe 2:3), and violently (CP 21:7 with 1:18-19; 12:6). The way of a guilty man is perverse, but the work of the righteous is right (CP Pr 21:8 with Psa 27:14). It is better to be alone in a small place, than in a large one with a brawling woman (CP Pr 21:9 also V 19; 19:13 and 27:15-16). Pr 21:9 is the same teaching as 25:24 (CP 25:24). To do evil is uppermost in the mind of the wicked; he has no regard for his neighbour (CP Pr 21:10 also 4:16; 10:23; 14:20). When a scoffer is punished the simple are made wise – they are no longer in danger of being led astray by the scoffer; the wise man learns from instruction (CP Pr 21:11 with 19:25 also 1:5; 9:8; 14:3; 17:10). The KJV translates Solomon's next Proverb as, "the righteous man wisely considereth the house of the wicked; but God overthroweth the wicked for their wickedness" (CP Pr 21:12). The NKJV more correctly translates it as, "the righteous God wisely considers the house of the wicked, overthrowing the wicked for their wickedness" (CP also 10:25; 14:11; 20:22).

The law of sowing and reaping is again highlighted in the next Proverb (CP Pr 21:13 with 19:17; 22:2, 9 also Mt 7:2; 18:30-34; Jas 2:13; 1Jn 3:17 (see also author's comments on Pr 14:31 and his study, *Sowing and Reaping* in his book, **Foundational Truths of the Christian Faith**)). Next, Solomon observes that gifts and bribes hold back anger and strong wrath in man (CP Pr 21:14 with 17:8, 23; 18:16; 19:6 (see author's comments on Pr 17:8)). It is joy to the righteous when justice is done, but dread to the wicked (CP Pr 21:15 also 10:29-30). This is best illustrated by Christ's second coming. It will be a time of joy for the redeemed of God, but of horror for all others (CP 2Th 1:7-10). The next Proverb in 21:16 is graphically illustrated by the man who succumbed to the adulteress earlier in this study (CP Pr 21:6 with 2:10-11, 16-22; 5:22-23; 7:23-27; 9:16-18 with Psa 49:14 (see also author's comments on Pr 2:10-11, 16-22; 5:1-14; 7:1-5; 7:6-23; 9:13-18)). The man who puts his social life first shall be a poor man (CP Pr 21:17 also 23:20-21 with 21:20). "*Pleasure*" in Pr 21:17 also means *sport*.

The wicked will be cut off by God's judgements in order to preserve the righteous (CP Pr 21:18 with 11:8 (see author's comments on Pr 11:8)). Solomon then declares that a man is better off living alone in the desert than with a quarrelsome and ill-tempered wife (CP Pr 21:19 also V 9 with 19:13; 25:24; 27:15). In the home of the wise man there is a plentiful supply of all the necessities of life, but the foolish man squanders his (CP Pr 21:20 also 8:12, 18-21 with Psa 112:1-3). He that pursues righteousness and mercy finds eternal life, righteousness, and also honour (CP Pr 21:21 also 3:13-18; 8:18-21; 15:9; 22:4 with Mt 5:6-7). Wisdom is better than might, in war or peace. It wins the battle in taking a city, or defending it (CP Pr 21:22 also 24:5 with Ecc 9:13-18). This translates to New Testament Christians using God's word to overcome all their circumstances of life (CP 2Cor 10:3-5). Guarding the tongue is the secret of peace and contentment (CP Pr 21:23 also 12:13; 13:3 and 1Pe 3:10-11 with Pr 18:21 and Jas 3:2, 5-6).

In the following Proverbs Solomon refers to six common classes of men (CP Pr 21:24-29). First, the

scorner: he is arrogant, proud, haughty and conceited (CP V 24 with 3:34; 19:25, 29; 21:11). Second is the lazy or slothful man: he desires to eat, drink, and be clothed, but he refuses to work. He lives and dies with his desires unsatisfied (CP Pr 21:25-26 also 13:4; 19:24 with 24:30-34 and 26:13-16). Third is the righteous man who gives and does not hold back from doing good. He is also in V 26 (CP 21:26 with 22:9; Psa 112:6, 9; Eph 4:28). Fourth is the wicked man: the sacrifice he brings is an abomination to God and even more so when he brings it to God with evil intent (CP Pr 21:27, 29 also 3:32; 15:8 with 21:3 and Isa 1:13-15). Fifth is the liar or false witness. A false witness will be discovered to be a liar and punished, but the word of the man who listens carefully and answers honestly, the sixth man referred to – the Upright man – will endure. He considers, directs and establishes his way with the confidence of integrity (CP Pr 21:28-29 with 12:17). The last two Proverbs in Ch 21 can be summarised as follows: Nothing avails against God (CP V 30 also 16:9; 19:21; 21:1 with Ac 5:39); and nothing avails without God (CP Pr 21:23 with Psa 20:7; Isa 3:1-3).

Next, in Pr 22:1, Solomon highlights the value of a good name above great riches; that being held in loving esteem is worth more than silver or gold. This translates in the New Testament to becoming a Christian (CP Pr 22:1 with Ecc 7:1). *Precious ointment* in Ecc 7:1 is very expensive and equates to great riches. Also, for New Testament Christians the day of their death is a better day than the day of their birth. They are received by God into Glory (CP Psa 116:15 with 73:24), and go to a far better life with Jesus (CP 2Cor 5:1-9; Php 1:21-23). God created all things – the rich and the poor have this in common (CP Pr 22:2 with 29:13 and Job 31:15). A prudent man looks ahead and saves himself from coming judgement (CP Pr 22:3). This is repeated in 27:12 (CP 27:12 also 29:13). The reward of humility and fear of the Lord is spiritual riches, divine honour and eternal life (CP Pr 22:4 also 15:33; 18:12 with 21:21). The unrighteous face problems that the righteous do not encounter (CP Pr 22:5 also 15:19 with 16:17). The righteous are able to make progress and attain their goals (CP Pr 3:6).

Solomon declared that if a child is trained up in the way in which God has prescribed it should walk, when the responsibility to stay on that path comes, the child will never stray from it (CP Pr 22:6 also De 4:9; 6:6-8; 11:18-21 with 13:24; 19:18; 23:13-14; 28:17). The word *chasteneth* means to instruct, to educate, to direct. This translates to New Testament Christians bringing up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (CP Eph 6:1-4; 2Ti 3:15) (for further teaching on bringing up children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord see author's study *Husbands, Wives, Children – Their Duties and Responsibilities to Each Other*, in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**). Solomon observes next that just as the rich rule the poor, so the borrower is servant to the lender (CP Pr 22:7 also 10:15; 18:23 with 22:22-23). Although the rich generally have oppressed the poor throughout history they are forbidden in scripture to do so (CP Pr 22:16 also De 24:14-18; Isa 5:8; Jer 34:13, 17; Mic 2:2 with Jas 2:1-9). That the borrower is servant to the lender refers to the fact that debt is a form of

bondage. It limits man's mobility and his ability to take advantage of opportunities (CP Pr 22:8-9).

The principle of sowing and reaping is emphasised here (CP Pr 11:24-25; 12:21; 14:21; 19:17 also Ecc 11:1-6; Hos 10:13 with Lu 6:38; 2Cor 9:6-10; Ga 6:7-9) (for further teaching on this subject, see author's study *Sowing and Reaping* in his book, **Foundational Truths of the Christian Faith**). When mockers are got rid of, contention and strife cease ((CP 22:10 with Psa 101:5). The king will be friend of the man who loves purity of heart and gracious speech (CP Pr 22:11 with Psa 24:3-5; 101:6 and Mt 5:8). Next, Solomon observes two works of God (CP Pr 22:12): The Lord preserves and perpetuates the knowledge of the truth, and He overthrows false teachings and exposes lies (CP Psa 1:6 with Pr 21:30). The lazy person will make any excuse for laziness (CP Pr 22:13 also 26:13). Here the lazy person's excuse is that there is a lion in the street, so he cannot go outside the house and work. He must remain inside lest he be killed (CP Pr 6:6-11 (see also author's comments on Pr 6:6-11)).

The seductive language of a harlot, or apostate woman, is as a deep pit into which men estranged from God fall (CP Pr 22:14). Throughout Proverbs the seductive charm of a harlot is used as an example of any temptation for men to sin or abandon the pursuit of wisdom (CP Pr 2:16-19; 5:3; 6:20-34; 7:4-27; 23:26-28; 29:3; 30:20; 31:1-3). Next, Solomon again advocates corporal punishment for children (CP Pr 22:15 also 13:24) (see also author's comments on Pr 13:24 and 22:6 and his study, *Husbands, Wives, Children – Their Duties and Obligations to Each Other*, in his book, **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**). Whoever oppresses the poor to increase their own wealth, or bribes the rich to court their favour, will themselves want (CP Pr 22:16 also 14:31 and 22:22-23 (see also author's comments on Pr 14:31 and 22:7)).

In 22:17-21 following, there are no Proverbs, but directions on how to profit by the knowledge Solomon has imparted through the wisdom received by those being instructed (CP Pr 22:17-21). The Proverbs commence again in V 22 (CP Pr 22:22-23). No one should take advantage of the poor, nor show injustice to the afflicted. For God pleads the cause of the poor, and He will punish the rich oppressor and the unjust judge (CP also Ex 23:6; Job 31:16-23; Psa 12:5, 140:12; Pr 22:16; Isa 3:13-15; Mal 3:5; Zech 7:9-10). Solomon then warns against fellowshiping a man of anger and fury lest his ways are learned, and one's own soul is snared (CP Pr 22:24-25 also 29:6, 22 with 1Cor 15:33). Following is another warning against being quick to make contracts and give promises, or to guarantee the debt of another (CP Pr 22:26-27 also 11:15 and 17:18 with 6:1-5 (see also author's comments on Pr 6:1-5 and 11:15)). The ancient landmark referred to next in Pr 22:28 are the boundary markers of one's property (CP Pr 22:28). This refers to stealing land by moving the boundary marker (CP also 23:10-11 with De 19:14; 27:17; Hos 5:10). It has been suggested that it could also refer to the boundaries of tradition – behavioural, as well as geographical (CP Pr 22:29). Here Solomon observes that a man who excels in his work will be promoted to a position of honour in the King's service. He will not be condemned to a life of obscurity.

(CP 23:1-3). The point of this Proverb is to be careful when invited to eat with someone of influence; they may be trying to bribe you (CP also V 6 with Psa 141:4). God's children must not labour to be rich. They must cease from their own wisdom which makes riches the chief end in life, for riches take wings and fly away. They are to concentrate on eternal things (CP Pr 23:4-5 also 11:28; 15:27; 27:24; 28:20, 22 with Mt 6:19-21; Lu 12:33-34; Ro 12:16; 1Ti 6:9-10, 17; He 13:5 (for a more detailed teaching on the subject see author's study *Christians and Wealth* in his book, **Foundational Truths of the Christian Faith**)). New Testament Christians are not to make anything temporary an object in life (CP Pr 23:6-8). There is more depth of meaning to this Proverb than what appears at first glance here. **Hendrickson's Interlinear Bible** renders it as a warning against eating the bread or desiring the delicacies of one having an evil eye, for although he tells you to eat and drink, his heart is far from you. Upon reflection you will see that you were not welcome and you will regret having accepted his invitation, as V 8 indicates " *the morsel which thou hast eaten shalt thou vomit up, and lose thy sweet words*" (CP also 26:24-26).

Do not waste time trying to talk to fools. They despise wisdom and hate knowledge and correction (CP Pr 23:9 also 1:7, 22; 9:7-8; 12:1 with Mt 7:6). Next, Solomon again warns God's children not to steal another's land by moving their boundary markers. God will punish those who do so (CP Pr 23:10-11 also 22:28 with De 19:14; 27:17; Hos 5:10). *Redeemer* in V 11 does not refer to God as redeemer of one's soul, but to next of kin – *kinsman redeemer* – who helps regain a relative's property (CP Lev 25:25-54; Nu 27:1-11; 36:1-13; Ruth 3:9 – 4:13; Jer 32:1-25). The kinsman redeemer had power to avenge the fatherless and marry the widow to preserve the family (CP De 25:5-10). God's children must not refuse to accept instruction and to grow in knowledge (CP Pr 23:12). Next, Solomon again admonishes parents not to withhold corporal punishment from their children; if they have to use a rod it will not kill their child, but will save his soul from Hell (CP Pr 23:13-14 also 13:24; 19:18; 22:6, 15; 29:15, 17 (see also author's comments on Pr 13:24)).

A father's heart is gladdened by a wise son (CP Pr 23:15-16 also V 24-25; 3:12; 10:1; 15:20; 27:11 and 29:3). God's children are not to envy sinners in their heart, but are to reverence the Lord all day long; there is another life to come, and their expectations of immortality shall not be cut off (CP Pr 23:17-18 also 24:1, 19 with Psa 37:1, 28-38; Pr 14:32). Next, Solomon counsels against winebibbing and gluttony, warning of the dire poverty, which is its ultimate end (CP Pr 23:19-21 also V 29-35; 20:1; 21:17 and Isa 5:22 with Pr 4:25-27). For New Testament Christians this translates to forfeiting their salvation (CP Lu 21:34-36; Ro 13:13; Ga 5:16-21), children are counselled to listen to their father and not despise their mother when she is old (CP Pr 23:22-23 also 1:8; 2:1; 3:1; 4:1; 5:1; 15:20; 30:17 with Eph 6:1-3; Col 3:20). The truth must be obtained at all costs, then never relinquished at any price (CP Pr 4:5-7; 14:5-7; 16:16; 18:15 with Dan 1:8). Solomon then declares that both the father and mother of a wise child shall have joy in him (CP Pr 23:24-25 also V 15; 10:1; 15:20; 27:11).

As previously noted in Proverbs, the seductive charm of a harlot or apostate woman, is as a deep ditch into which sinners fall (CP Pr 23:26-28 also 22:14 (see also author's comments on Pr 22:14)). The remaining verses in Pr 23 are a vivid description of the physical and physiological effects of drunkenness. They classically describe a drunkard who brings all kinds of woes upon himself and staggers from one sorrow to another (CP Pr 23:29-35). In his drunken state he gets into fights. His life is marked by contention and strife and he is in self-denial as to its cause. It never occurs to him that he himself is the cause. Solomon counsels him against drinking so potent a brew, but he will not listen and so must suffer the consequences. He will undergo *delirium tremens* and speak incoherently. He will hallucinate and ogle loose women. He will stagger to and fro like a sailor atop a mast in a raging sea. He will be savagely beaten and will not feel it. And like a typical drunkard, when he completely wakes up, he will back up for more (CP Pr 26:11; 27:22 also 20:1 and Isa 5:11, 22 with Pr 21:17). Being given to much wine is strictly forbidden for New Testament Christians – drunkards cannot inherit the Kingdom of Heaven (CP Ga 5:16-21; 1Ti 3:3; Tit 1:7; 2:1-6).

Next, Solomon again counsels against being envious of evil men (CP Pr 24:1-2 also V 19; 1:10, 15; 3:31; 23:17; Psa 37:1). Solomon then declares that a great household is built by Godly wisdom. It is established upon understanding the way of God and is furnished with all the precious things of God through knowledge of Him (CP Pr 24:3-4 also 9:1 and 8:14-21 (see also author's comments on Pr 9:1-12)). A wise man of God has greater power than a strong man and a knowledgeable man of God even increases in strength. War can be waged through wise counsellors – the more, the better (CP Pr 24:5-6 also 21:22; 11:14; 13:20; Ecc 9:16-18). This equates to New Testament Christians seeking Godly advice before making any big decisions. A fool will never attain to wisdom so he will never be chosen as a judge of the court (CP Pr 24:7 also 14:6 and Psa 10:4-5).

He who plans to do evil will be called a mischief-maker; the plans of the foolish is sin (CP Pr 24:8-9 also 12:23; 14:24; 15:2, 14; 19:3; 22:15; 27:22; Psa 38:5; 69:5). The kind of foolishness portrayed here makes one corrupt and perverse (CP Pr 24:10). Here we see that if we fail in time of discouragement and trial, it is proof of our weakness (CP Ga 6:9). Strength is not measured in good times, but in bad (CP 2Cor 12:9; He 12:3; Jas 1:2-4). If a man fails to deliver those condemned to death he is guilty of their blood, and if he pretends not to know about them going to their death, he will be judged by God (CP Pr 24:11-12 also 17:15; 21:2-3; Psa 82:4; Isa 58:6-7 with Psa 62:12; Ro 2:5-6). Knowledge of God and Godly wisdom to the soul are like honey and honeycomb to the mouth. When one has acquired them the reward and hope of eternal life will be realised (CP Pr 24:13-14 also 23:18 with Psa 19:7-11; 58:11; 119:103). Solomon warns the wicked against trying to overthrow the righteous, for though he falls many times God will enable him to stand, and the wicked will fall into their own trap (CP Pr 24:15-16 also V 20-22; 4:19; 6:15; 11:3-5; 12:6; Psa 34:19; 37:24). From a New Testament perspective God does not guarantee

Christians trouble-free lives, but He does promise to sustain them (CP Mk 10:30; 1Cor 10:13; 2Cor 4:7-10, 17-18; 2Ti 3:12).

The righteous must not gloat when their enemies fall lest God see it and it displeases Him and He turns away His wrath from them (CP Pr 24:17-18 also 17:5; 25:21-22). This translates to New Testament Christians always loving their enemies and praying for them (CP Mt 5:44-46). Once again, the righteous are warned against fretting over evil men or envying the wicked. Neither has anything good to look forward to. Instead, the light of their life will be extinguished. Their end is the Lake of Fire (CP Pr 24:19-20 also 13:9 with Psa 37:1-2 and Rev 20:11-15). God is to be given Divine honour and worship, and civic rulers must be obeyed. God's children are to have nothing to do with anarchists, for calamity will come upon all who rebel against God or civic rulers (CP Pr 24:21-22 also 17:11 with Ro 13:1-7; 1Pe 2:13-17 and 2Pe 2:10-12). New Testament Christians are to obey civic rulers but cannot compromise their loyalty to God.

Following is a new section of sayings that belong to the wise, extending through V 34. Solomon is still undoubtedly the author (CP Pr 24:23-24). The wise must have no respect of persons; they must not call the wicked righteous. He that justifies the wicked and condemns the just, will be cursed by the people. But those who rebuke the wicked will be blessed (CP V 23-26 also 17:15 and 18:5 with 16:13; 28:23; Isa 5:21-24; Jn 7:24). The wise must do all the preparatory work to building their house – building up their resources – outside first in the field, then establish a home (CP Pr 24:27 also V 3 and 27:23-27). The wise must never take up a cause against a neighbour unless it is necessary and never do it through prejudice or revenge (CP Pr 24:28-29 also 3:30; 6:19; 12:17; 14:5; 19:5; 20:22; 25:18 with Ro 12:17, 19). There is an object lesson for New Testament Christians in the next five verses of Pr 24 (CP V 30-34). Observation of the lazy man's farm makes vivid the tragedy of idleness (CP also Pr 6:6-11; 15:19; 20:4). This equates to New Testament Christians' laziness with regard to spiritual matters, the result of which will be the poverty of their soul.

The Proverbs that follow in Ch 25-29 were written by Solomon and copied out by King Hezekiah's men (CP Pr 25:1). The first of these Proverbs compares the roles of God and kings. God, whose knowledge is above all human knowledge, keeps things to Himself because He needs no counsel. In contrast, kings should rightfully seek to know what they must know in order to rule righteously. The average man can no more understand the workings of the heart of a King, than they can understand the height of Heaven and the depth of the earth (CP Pr 25:2-3). The application for New Testament Christians is that we should diligently and prayerfully search the depths of God's revelation in His word (CP 1Cor 2:6-16 with Eph 1:15-23; 3:14-19 and Php 3:15).

As pure silver can only be obtained when the dross or waste is removed from it, so too the king's reign can only be established on a righteous basis when the corrupt counsellors have been removed from his court (CP Pr 25:4-5 with 2Ti 2:20-21). The first thing

Christ will do when He returns to set up His eternal Kingdom will be to cleanse it of all rebellion and lawlessness and everything else that offends (CP Isa 1:22-27; Eze 22:18-22; Mal 3:2-5). Men are not to be too bold in the presence of kings; it is better to be invited to come closer than to be rebuffed for being too forward (CP Pr 25:6-7 with Lu 14:7-11). Lu 14:7-11 teaches that true honour is not that which one claims for oneself, but rather it is the honour conferred on one by God (CP Psa 18:27; 2Cor 10:18). Honour cannot be secured by self-assertiveness – it comes only through humility and servanthood (CP Pr 25:8-10). This is a warning about the seriousness of disputes (CP Pr 17:14), and the need to exercise caution in initiating a dispute (CP Pr 24:28). Differences with a neighbour should be settled directly with them. Confidences are not to be betrayed lest we be accused of being a gossip – unable to be trusted with a secret (CP 11:13; 20:19). The application for New Testament Christians is as Jesus directs in Mt 18 (CP Mt 18:15-17).

Timely advice is so precious – like apples of gold in settings of silver; and a wise friend's timely rebuke is like a gold earring for the ears of the one who obediently hearkens to it (CP Pr 25:11-12 also 8:19-21; 1:7-9; 15:23 with 24:26). A faithful envoy is as refreshing to his employers as the cold of snow in sweltering heat (CP Pr 25:13 also V 25 with 13:17). Whoever boasts of gifts he does not give is like clouds and wind without rain (CP Pr 25:14). This is an image applied to unproductive workers (CP 20:6 with Jude 12-13). Gentleness, patience perseverance and mildly spoken words win over the most obstinately resistant person (CP Pr 25:15 also 14:29 and 16:14, 32 with 15:1 and Ecc 10:4). Honey is good to eat but do not overdo it. Too much of a good thing is no good (CP Pr 25:16). This teaches moderation in all things of life. Even visiting a neighbour must be kept in moderation (CP Pr 25:17). Familiarity breeds contempt. One who bears false witness against his neighbour is likened to weapons of destruction (CP Pr 25:18 also 6:16-19; 12:17; 19:5; 21:28; 24:28). Just as a man's life can be destroyed by weapons of destruction, so too his life can be destroyed by one bearing false witness against him (CP also 12:18-20 and Psa 57:4 with Ex 20:16).

Having to rely on someone who is unreliable when in trouble is like chewing with a sore tooth, or running with a broken foot (CP Pr 25:19 with Job 6:15-17). For one to sing to a man with a heavy heart is as unsuitable and in as bad taste as taking away his warm clothing in winter, or pouring vinegar upon soda (CP Pr 25:20). Pouring vinegar upon soda causes a violent reaction or boiling. If you give your enemy food when he is hungry and water when he is thirsty, you will heap coals of fire on his head and the Lord will reward you (CP Pr 25:21-22). Paul quoted this Proverb in Ro 12 (CP Ro 12:17-21). This teaches Christians that repaying injury with kindness will bring a burning sense of shame and guilt upon their enemies head (CP also Pr 24:17-18 with Ex 23:4-5; Mt 5:44 (Ro 12:14); Lu 6:27-30). As the north wind brings rain, so does slander produce anger (CP Pr 25:33 with Psa 101:5). Solomon's next Proverb is virtually a repeat of 21:9. It emphasises the unpleasantness of living with a nagging woman (CP

Pr 25:24 also 21:9).

Good news from home when one is in a far country is like cold water to the thirsty (CP Pr 25:25 also 15:30). A righteous man who compromises with the wicked is like a polluted fountain and a contaminated spring (CP Pr 25:26). Like eating too much honey is not good, seeking one's own glory is not good either (CP Pr 25:27 also V 6-7, 16 with 27:2 and Lu 14:11). He who is without self-control is as defenceless as a ruined city without walls (CP Pr 25:28 with 16:32).

As snow in summer and rain in harvest are out of place, it is equally out of place to honour a fool (CP Pr 26:1 also V 8 and 30:32 with Isa 32:6). Like birds that fly aimlessly without landing, so a causeless curse does not land either; it is ineffective (CP Pr 26:2 with Nu 23:8 and De 23:5). Sadly, many Christians in the contemporary Church have a misconceived idea that they are under a generational curse – carried down from their forefathers who worshipped other gods – which is totally unscriptural. Curses are only carried down from the forefathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate God, not those who love Him. Them He promises to bless to a thousand generations (CP De 5:6-10; 7:9-15; 28:1-14; Psa 91:1-16; 103:1-5; Isa 53:1-12; 55:1-13 with Ga 3:13-14, 29).

The next ten Proverbs in Ch 26 are about fools (CP Pr 26:3-12). Readers need to be reminded here that Proverbs only presents two categories of people: the wise or prudent and the fool or scorners. The wise or prudent seeks wisdom and love instruction. The fool or scorners spurns discipline and rejects reproof. Also, each can be characterised by their response to parental and other authority. The former bring joy and delight, the latter bring shame, disgrace and sadness. The writers of Proverbs exhort their readers to become wise and despise the foolish and their folly. We need to recap some of their teachings here for a better understanding of the words in accord with the teaching of Proverbs. Fool has a more benign meaning attached to it today than it does in Proverbs.

In Proverbs a fool is someone who refuses to obey God's commands (CP Pr 10:8); he is a slanderer (CP 10:18); he enjoys doing evil (CP 10:23). He brings trouble to his family (CP 11:29); he rejects counsel (CP 12:15); he is easily annoyed (CP 12:16). He denies the reality of God (CP 14:2 also 14:16; 16:21; 17:10, 16, 21; 18:2). These are but a few of the many Scriptures describing fools in Proverbs. They will suffice for the purpose of this exercise. Now let us examine in more detail the Proverbs in Ch 25:3-12. Just as it is necessary to use a whip on a horse and a bridle on an ass to guide them, so a rod for the back of fools is suitable to guide them (CP Pr 26:3 also 10:13; 14:3; 19:29 with Psa 32:9). Do not answer a fool like a fool lest you be considered one, but answer him wisely and expose his folly, lest he consider himself wise (CP Pr 26:4-5 also 23:9; Mt 7:6 with Mt 16:1-4; 21:24-27; Ro 12:16). He who chooses to depend upon a fool to be his messenger has to suffer the consequences of the fool's misconduct (CP Pr 26:6). Contrast the fool here with the faithful messenger in 25:13 (CP 25:13 also 13:17).

A Proverb in the mouth of fools – like the legs of a lame man – is useless; they cannot apply the Proverb to the right situation (CP Pr 26:7 also V 9). As we learned at the outset of this study, Proverbs are designed to make one wise, but they require wisdom to be used correctly. Fools do not seek after this wisdom (CP 26:8). As it is nonsense to tie a stone in a slingshot so that it cannot be released, so it is nonsense to honour a fool (CP 26:9). As drunkards are insensitive to the prick of a thorn, so are fools in speaking Proverbs (CP 26:10). God, who created all things, will equally reward fools and transgressors according to their work. (There are many and varied translations of this Scripture, this author chose KJV (CP 26:11)). Fools repeat their own folly like a dog returning to its own vomit (CP 23:25). Peter applied Pr 26:11 in 2Pe 2:20-22 to those who once knew Christ and His saving grace, but fell away and went back into sin (CP 2Pe 2:20-22). Next, in Pr 26:12 Solomon declares that there is more hope for a fool than a person "wise in his own eyes" – a self-conceited person (CP 26:12 also V 18; 3:7; 28:11; 29:20 with Lu 18:11-14; Ro 12:16; Rev 3:14-18).

The next four proverbs in Ch 26 are about lazy men (CP 26:13-16). V 13 is almost identical with 22:13 (CP 22:13 (see also author's comments on 22:13)). As the door stays on its hinges and never goes any place, so the lazy man never moves from his bed (CP 26:14 also 6:10; 24:33 (see also author's comments on Pr 6:6-11 and 24:30-34)). Pr 26:15 is almost identical with 19:24 (CP 19:24 also 12:37). Some men are so lazy they will not even feed themselves (CP 26:16). The sluggard is more wise in his own eyes than seven truly wise men (CP Isa 5:21 with 1Pe 3:15). A passer-by who meddles in something that does not concern him is like one who grabs a dog by the ears (CP Pr 26:17). He is asking for trouble (CP Pr 26:18-19). The man who deals treacherously with his neighbour and then pretends that he was joking is like a madman shooting firebrands and deadly arrows (CP Eph 5:1-4). Where there is no wood the fire goes out so too tensions cease where there is no gossip present. As fuel kindles fires, so too contentious persons kindle strife (CP Pr 26:20-21 also 6:12-14, 18; 15:18; 16:28; 29:22). Solomon's next Proverb in 26:22 is a repetition of 18:8 (CP 26:22 and 18:8 also 11:13 (see author's comments on 18:8)). Warm kisses with a wicked heart are like broken pieces of pottery covered over with gilt (CP Pr 26:23). This is a picture of hypocrisy. Compare the clean outside of the cup and the platter in New Testament teaching (CP Mt 23:25-28; Lu 11:37-39). The thought in Pr 26:33 is expanded in V 28-29 (CP 26:24-28). The man who hates pretends no harm with his lips, but plots deceitful and destructive acts in his heart. Eventually his wickedness will be exposed before all men. He will fall into his own pit (CP V 27 also 11:5-8; 28:10 29:6 with Psa 7:15-16; 9:15; 10:2; 57:6).

Next, Solomon warns God's children against bragging about their plans for tomorrow, for no one knows what the day will bring forth (CP 27:1 also 16:9). New Testament Christians are also warned against boasting about their plans for tomorrow (CP Lu 12:16-21; Jas 4:13-16). God's children are warned next against commending themselves (CP Pr 27:2). Self-praise is

no recommendation (CP also Pr 25:27). This teaching is also applied in the New Testament (CP Mt 23:1-12; Lu 18:9-14 with 2Cor 10:12, 18). A fool's wrath is heavier than sand and stone both (CP Pr 27:3). As heavy as sand and stone are, they are easier to bear than a fool's unreasoning anger (CP Pr 27:4). Here Solomon declares that as dangerous and cruel as anger is, jealousy is even more so; who can stand against it (CP also Pr 6:34). Open rebuke is better than secret love (CP 27:5). The word *rebuke* here means disagreement. Being in open disagreement with a friend is better than a secret love which withholds a rebuke when it should be given (CP also Pr 15:31; 28:23 with Psa 141:5 and Ga 4:16).

Pr 27:6 continues the thought of Pr 27:5: the wounds of a friend are better than the deceitful kisses of an enemy (CP 27:6 also 5:3-5; 26:23-24). Now compare what Judas Iscariot did to Jesus on the night he betrayed Him (CP Mt 26:47-49). Even honeycomb is tasteless to the man whose stomach is full; but to the hungry man every bitter thing tastes sweet (CP Pr 27:7). This Proverb extends beyond food to things in general – the luxury and indolence of wealth makes things meaningless which mean so much more to those with little (CP 27:8). Here, a man who strays from his home is likened to a bird who wanders from her nest. Readers will have to put their own interpretation on this Proverb. It has no context and there is no variant form elsewhere in Scripture to help interpret the meaning. This author believes that it simply means that they are both lost and are therefore vulnerable to the circumstances of life (CP Pr 27:9-10).

These two Proverbs advise on friendships. The pleasantness of ointment and perfume in V 9 is compared to the loving advice from a friend, and in V 10 we are admonished not to fail a friend in need. Friendships must be cultivated and kept alive. Invariably old friends are the best, so stay in touch with them. When in need ourselves we are advised to rely on close friendships rather than mere family relationships. *Brother far off* in V 10 refers to a relative whose heart is far from your best interests, whereas *a neighbour that is near* refers to a dear friend who lives nearby and has your best interests at heart (CP also Pr 17:17; 18:24). A son's behaviour reflects on his father's instruction (CP Pr 27:11). A wise son serves as a powerful testimony that the father who has shaped him has shown himself to be a man of worth (CP also Pr 10:1; 15:20, 23:15-25). The wise man foresees danger and escapes from it, but the simple do not and suffer the consequences (CP Pr 27:12 also 9:16-18; 22:3). The next Proverb in 27:13 is a repeat of 20:16 (CP 27:13 (see also author's comments on 20:16)).

The flatterer who loudly praises his neighbour early in the morning is seen as cursing, not blessing him (CP Pr 27:14 with Psa 12:2). Next, a contentious woman is likened to constant cloudbursts on a continually rainy day. She is like the wind and storm that cannot be stopped or confined; like the smell of aromatic oil that cannot be hidden, which betrays itself, she cannot be restrained (CP Pr 27:15-16 also 19:13). As iron sharpens iron so one man sharpens another (CP Pr 27:17). Two friends who bring their ideas and thoughts together can help each other grow in

character (CP Pr 27:18). This Proverb underlines the rewards of service (CP also Mt 25:14-23; Lu 12:35-44; 19:11-19; 2Ti 2:6; 1Cor 3:8; 9:7-14 with Jn 12:26). As water reflects the face, so the condition of a man's heart reveals his true character (CP Pr 27:19 with Mt 5:8). Next, Solomon declares that man's desires are as insatiable as death and Hell, which never overfills (CP Pr 27:20 also 30:15-16 and Hab 2:5-6).

As the refining pot and the furnace test precious metals, so praise of a man tests his real character by how he reacts to it (CP Pr 27:21 also 12:8; 17:3 with Lu 6:26; Php 2:3). Solomon next declares that it is impossible to eradicate a fool's folly from him (CP Pr 27:22). Solomon considers foolishness almost indestructible (CP also 23:35; 26:11 with Jer 5:3). To conclude this section Solomon next extolled the virtues of forward planning in agricultural pursuits – reflecting the agricultural base of the ancient economy (CP Pr 27:23-27). Solomon emphasised the point here that pastoral prosperity can only be maintained by constant diligence, but these principles can be applied with equal force to any business in which New Testament Christians are engaged (CP also Pr 24:27).

The wicked will flee out of fear, though no one pursues them, at the time they have to face God. The righteous have no such fear; they are as bold as a lion (CP Pr 28:1 with Lev 26:17, 36-37; Psa 53:3-5). When a nation is in sin it produces many rulers because of its political instability, but wise rulership promotes a social order prolonging stability (CP Pr 28:2). An Old Testament example of a nation in sin with many vying for power is Israel in 1Ki 16 and 2Ki 15 (CP 1Ki 16:8-28; 2Ki 15:8-15). Now contrast these scriptures with Pr 8:12-16, 24:5-6 and 29:4 (CP Pr 8:12-16; 24:5-6; 29:4). When the poor oppress their own it is like destructive rain washing away the crops rather than watering them (CP Pr 28:3 also V 6, 19, 27). Jesus illustrates this Proverb in the New Testament in the parable of the two debtors (CP Mt 18:21-35). Those who are in sin praise the wicked, but the righteous resist them (CP Pr 28:4 also V 7; 29:9; Ro 1:19-32 with Eph 5:11-13).

Evil men do not understand justice, but those who seek to do the Lord's will understand it fully (CP Pr 28:5 also 2:1-11 with Psa 119:100; 1Jn 2:20, 27). It is better to be poor and righteous than rich and wicked (CP Ac 28:6 also 19:1). A wise son who follows God's law blesses his father, but he who associates with riotous wasters, disgraces him (CP Pr 28:7 also 10:1; 13:20; 23:19-25; 29:3). One who increases his wealth by charging exorbitant interest rates and other unjust means, only gathers it for someone who will pity the poor (CP Pr 28:8 also 13:22; 14:21, 31 with Job 27:16-17 and Ecc 2:26). Even the prayer of those who have stopped obeying him is an abomination to God (CP Pr 28:9 also 15:8, 29; Psa 66:18). Now contrast this with God's undertaking to those who are walking in obedience to His word (CP 1Jn 3:21-22; 5:14-15). He who leads the upright along an evil path will fall into his own pit, and the blameless shall inherit good (CP Pr 28:10 also 3:35; 11:6,8; 26:27; Psa 7:15 with Mt 5:19; 18:6 and He 6:12; 1Pe 3:9).

The rich man is wise in his own eyes, but the poor man who has discernment will see through him (CP Pr 28:11 also 11:2 with Mt 19:23-24). In the joy of the

righteous there is great glory, but when the wicked reign men go into hiding (CP Pr 28:12 also 11:10; 28:28; 29:2). The man who tries to hide his sins cannot be saved, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will be forgiven (CP Pr 28:13 also Psa 32:1-5; 66:18; with Jn 3:16-20; He 10:16-18; 1Jn 1:6-10). He who fears the Lord always will be forever blessed, but he who hardens his heart will be forever damned (CP Pr 28:14 also 23:17-18 with Psa 16: 8-9 and Ro 2:5-9). A wicked ruler is as unmerciful as a roaring lion or a ravenous charging bear (CP Pr 28:15 also V 12; 19:12 and 29:2 with Ex 1:13-14). The implication in Solomon's next Proverb is that the ruler who lacks understanding is covetous and that his oppressive reign will only be short-lived, because he then contrasts him with one who is not covetous and whose days will be prolonged (CP Pr 28:16 also 1:17-19).

Next, Solomon declared that a murderer will be a fugitive until his death; no one is to support him. In the Old Testament murder was punishable by death (CP Pr 28:17 with Gen 9:6; Ex 21:14). The righteous will be saved, but the unrighteous will be lost (CP Pr 28:18 also V 6; 10:9, 25; 11:5; 19:1). Solomon again contrasts plenty and poverty (CP Pr 28:19). Here Solomon contrasts the honest pursuits of the wise worker with the worthless pursuits of a man with no common sense. This is a repeat of Pr 12:11 (CP 12:11). An honest man who does not covet great wealth will be richly blessed, but he who seeks to enrich himself by unscrupulous means will be punished (CP Pr 28:20 also V 22; 10:6, 22; 11:24-26; 13:11; 20:21; 23:4-5 with 1Ti 6:6-10). To show partiality is wrong, yet a man will sin for a piece of bread (CP Pr 28:21 also 18:5; 24:23). Solomon observes next that a man motivated by greed to be rich does not consider that poverty will come upon him (CP Pr 28:22 also V 20; 20:21; 21:5; 23:4-6).

The man who speaks the truth will eventually gain more favour than the one who flatters (CP Pr 28:23 also 15:31; 16:13; 25:12; 26:28; 27:5-6; 29:5). The man who robs his parents and then insists he did no wrong is no better than a murderer (CP Pr 28:24 also 19:26 with Mt 15:4-6 and Mk 7:10-13). In Mt 15 and Mk 7 Jesus rebuked the Scribes and Pharisees for lying to their parents that whatever material possessions they had was a gift dedicated to God and therefore was not able to be used for the parent's benefit, even though their parents may have been in need. This was a gross deception by the Jews, enabling them to circumvent their duty to their parents and rob them of that which was rightfully theirs (CP Pr 28:25-26).

The man with a proud heart stirs up strife (CP Pr 6:12-14; 13-10); he is a fool for trusting in his own heart (CP Jer 17:9). But whoever puts their trust in the Lord will prosper and be delivered (CP Pr 3:5-6; 11:25; 13:4 and 29:25 with Jer 9:23-24). Solomon's next Proverb is a sure guarantee that there will never be any lack on the part of those who observe to do as it says (CP Pr 28:27 also 11:24-26; 19:17; 22:9; 29:7 with Lu 6:38; 2Cor 9:6-10; 1Jn 3:17-22). This is God's spiritual law of sowing and reaping in action (CP Ga 6:7-10 (see also author's comments on Ga 6:7-8 in his book, **A Question and Answer Study of the New Testament**, and his study *Sowing and Reaping* in his

book **Foundational Truths of the Christian Faith**)). Now to the last Proverb in Ch 28 (CP Pr 28:28). When the wicked are in power the righteous retire; when the righteous rule Godliness is revived (CP also V 12; 11:10; 29:2 with Job 24:4).

The man who continues in sin in spite of repeated warnings will suddenly be destroyed without hope of any further opportunity (CP Pr 29:1 also 1:24-32; 6:15; 28:14 with 2Chr 36:15-17; Mal 4:1-3). This can be translated in the New Testament to those who despise and reject God's chastening and correction (CP Jn 16:8-11; He 12:5-11, 25). Solomon's next Proverb in Ch 29 teaches the same truth as his last Proverb in Ch 28 (CP 29:2 with 28:28 (see also author's comments on 28:28 above)). Next, we see two sons contrasted again (CP Pr 29:3). This is the same truth as 10:1 and 15:20 (CP 10:1 and 15:20 also 5:7-13; 6:20-26 with Lu 15:11-14). Solomon now contrasts causes of stable and unstable government (CP Pr 29:4). A just king establishes the kingdom, but he that accepts bribes overthrows it through injustice (CP also 15:27 and 16:12).

A man who flatters his neighbour is setting a trap for his ruin (CP Pr 29:5 also 26:28; 28:23). A wicked man is snared by his own sin, but a righteous man can sing and be glad (CP Pr 29:6 also 1:10-19; 22:5). The righteous consider the needs of the poor; the wicked make no attempt to know what they are (CP Pr 29:7). This is the same truth as Pr 28:27 (CP 28:27 (see also author's comments on Pr 28:27)). Mockers inflame a city, but wise men turn away anger (CP Pr 29:8 also 6:14; 18:11; 26:21). Readers will have to choose for themselves the meaning of Solomon's next Proverb – it can be interpreted in two different ways (CP Pr 29:9 also 26:4-5). This can be interpreted to mean that when a wise man argues with a fool, the fool will only rage and laugh. He will never be persuaded, so there will be no peace. This author agrees with this interpretation in line with the teaching of Pr 26:4-5. The second interpretation is that when a wise man argues with a fool, whether the wise man uses severity or humour, it will not make any difference. Nothing positive is accomplished (CP Pr 29:10 also 1:10-19).

This has also been interpreted in two different ways. One is that the bloodthirsty hate a man of integrity and seek to kill the upright. Cain is a good Old Testament example (CP Gen 4:5-8 with 1Jn 3:12). The second interpretation is that the bloodthirsty hate the blameless, but they in turn seek to save the bloodthirsty man's soul. This is New Testament teaching (CP Pr 29:11). The teaching here is that a fool gives vent to his anger, but a wise man keeps himself under control (CP also 12:16; 14:16-17, 33 with 16:32). If a ruler listens to lies, all his servants are wicked (CP Pr 29:12). The thought here seems to be that if a ruler wants to be flattered and pandered to, all his officials will do it to please him. They will lie and flatter him, telling him only that which he wants to hear (CP Pr 29:13). The teaching here is essentially the same as Pr 22:2 (CP 22:2 also Job 31:15). God created all things – the rich and the poor have this in common (CP Pr 29:14 also V 4; 16:12-13; 20:28; 25:5). The king who metes out true justice will be established forever. This of course points to Jesus (CP Psa 72:1-17; Isa 9:6-7; 11:4).

Next, Solomon again advocates the need for corporal punishment of children (CP Pr 29:15 also V 17; 13:24; 19:18; 22:6, 15; 23:13-14 (see also author's comments on Pr 13:24)). When the wicked are increased, sin will also increase; but the righteous will see their downfall (CP Pr 29:16 also V 2; 10:25; 11:11; 14:11; 21:12; 28:12, 28 with Psa 37:34, 36; 91:8). The teaching in Solomon's next Proverb in Pr 29:17 is the same as 29:15 (CP 29:17 also V 15 (see also author's comments on Pr 13:24)). Next, Solomon declared that where there is no vision the people perish (CP Pr 29:18). *Perish* here means casts off restraint. *Vision* means prophetic revelation. The teaching is that when a society lacks any Divine insight, such a society heads in the direction of anarchy (CP 8:32; 28:4, 14 with Psa 1:1-6; 119:1-2; Jn 13:17). New Testament teaching is that the revealed will of God as expressed in Scripture must be continually enacted or many will begin to conform to the world and transgress God's word (CP Ro 12:1-2).

In Solomon's next Proverb the view seems to be that mere words are sometimes not enough to correct a servant, for though he understands he will not respond (CP Pr 29:19). The servant may need discipline (CP Jer 10:24). A fool has more hope than a fiery-tempered man (CP Pr 29:20). This means essentially the same as 26:12 (CP 26:12 also 10:19; 16:32; 17:27-28 with Jas 1:19-20). Solomon next views the servant who has been pampered from his youth as afterwards becoming his master's successor (CP Pr 29:21). The over-indulged servant usurps the place of a son (CP Pr 29:22). An angry man begets strife and a furious man abounds in sin (CP also 6:14; 15:18; 26:21). A man's pride shall bring him low; but honour shall uphold the humble of spirit (CP Pr 29:23 also 11:2; 15:33; 16:18-19; 18:12; Job 22:29; Isa 66:2). The New Testament teaches the same (CP Mt 23:12; Lu 14:11; 18:14; Ac 12:23; Jas 4:6-10; 1Pe 5:5-6).

An accomplice of a thief brings judgement upon himself because he swears to tell the truth and then refuses to testify (CP Pr 29:24 with Lev 5:1). He that fears man will quickly fall; he that trusts in the Lord will be set on high (CP Pr 29:25 also 3:5-6; 18:10; 1Sam 15:24 with Isa 51:11-16 and Lu 12:4-5). Many seek the favour of rulers, but they will have to face God in judgement (CP Pr 29:26 also 21:1 with Job 36:6; Isa 49:4). In his last Proverb in the book of Proverbs, Solomon observes that the wicked are an abomination to the just, and the just are an abomination to the wicked (CP Pr 29:27). This completes the Proverbs by Solomon in this study.

As noted at the outset of this study, authorship of the following chapter – Ch 30 – is attributed to Agur, Son of Jakeh (CP Pr 30:1-3). It is not known who Agur was, and it is not material to this study to consider him further (CP V 4). These are a series of rhetorical questions expressing God's greatness as He is revealed in nature as the Creator of the universe. He can ascend up into Heaven, and descend; He controls the wind; He has bound the waters and established the boundaries of the land masses (CP Gen 1:1; Job 26:8; 38:4-11; Psa 19:1-6; 102:25; 104:1-20; 135:6-7; Pr 8:22-31; Isa 40:12). He has a name (CP Gen 1:1; Ex 3:13-15; 6:2-3; 34:14; Psa 68:4; Isa 57:15 (*Jah* in Psa 68:4 is an abbreviation of Jehovah; the self-existent one, WHO IS, AND WAS, AND IS TO COME)).

Finally, He also has a Son, "*and what is His Son's name, if thou canst tell*". This is proof for those who profess to believe in God but argue against Him having a Son, that He does have a Son. His name is the Lord Jesus Christ (CP Jn 1:1-18; 3:13).

Agur then turns from the revelation of God in creation to His revelation in Scripture. He proclaims the infallibility of God's word – His every word is pure. He then declares that God is the protector of all who put their trust in Him (CP Pr 30:5; also Psa 12:6; 19:7-8; 119:140; 2Ti 3:16-17 with Pr 18:10; Psa 18:30; 84:11; 91:1-16; 115:9-11). He asserts that God will not tolerate anyone adding to His word (CP Pr 30:6 with De 4:2; 12:32; Rev 22:18-19). Pr 30:6 condemns the cults which give their own writings and traditions the same authority as Scripture. Agur then prays (CP Pr 30:7-9). This is the only prayer in the book of Proverbs. It contains two petitions. One petition covered Agur's spiritual needs and the other his physical needs. Agur wanted his spiritual life to be worthwhile and honest, not wasted on trivialities, and his physical life to be delivered from the extremes of affluence and poverty. He only wanted that which was needful for him (CP V 8 with Mt 6:11 and Php 4:11). Agur did not want to be wealthy lest he cease depending on God (CP Pr 30:9 with De 8:11-20; 10:15; 18:11; 31:20; Hos 13:6). Neither did he want to be poor, lest he steal and profane God's name (CP Pr 6:30). Agur then warns men against slandering a servant to his master lest the servant curse them and the curse comes to pass (CP Pr 30:10).

Next, Agur enumerates the characteristics of four classes of people 1). Those who do not honour parents (CP V 11 also V 17; 20:20 and Lev 20:9 with Ex 20:20). The hostility of young people toward their parents is a characteristic of society since its inception (CP Ex 21:15, 17; Mk 7:10-13; Ro 1:28, 30), but it will get progressively worse in the last days prior to Christ's second coming (CP 2Ti 3:1-7). 2). Those who are self-righteous (CP Pr 30:12). The people Agur refers to here are vile and unclean, having no sense of shame. Outwardly they are clean and wholesome, like whitewashed tombs, but inwardly they are full of dead men's bones (CP Pr 30:12 also 16:2; 20:9 with Isa 64:6; 65:2-5; Mt 23:23-28; Lu 18:9-14; Tit 1:15-16). 3). Those who are full of vanity and pride, and are insolent (CP Pr 30:13 also 6:16-19; 8:13; 16:18; 21:4; Psa 10:4; 73:6; Isa 2:11-12; 3:16-24; 5:15 with 1Jn 2:16-17). 4). Those who are cruel, greedy and oppress the poor (CP Pr 30:14 also 14:31; 22:16; 28:3; Psa 14:4-6 with Jas 2:6-7).

The greed of the oppressor in Pr 30:14 leads Agur on to give other examples of desires that are never satisfied (CP Pr 30:15-16). The leech is pictured as having two daughters that have an endless capacity for sucking blood – they are both named *give*. Death and Hell never says "no vacancy" – death never takes a holiday, and Hell never fails to accommodate its victims (CP Pr 27:20; Isa 5:14; Hab 2:5). The barren womb is never willing to accept its sterility – it always craves a child (CP Gen 16:2; 29:31; 30:1-2; 1Sam 1:5-20). The earth always longs for water no matter how much rain falls – it can always absorb more (CP De 28:23-24; 1Ki 18:1-6; Jas 5:18). The fire never says "enough" – it will devour as much fuel as it is fed (CP Mt 3:12; Mk 9:43-49; Jas 3:5; Jude 7). Agur's next

Proverb is a warning that whoever treats their parents irreverently will die a violent death and be denied a decent burial (CP Pr 30:17 also V 11; 19:26; 20:20; Ex 21:17; Lev 20:9 with Mk 7:10).

Agur then lists four things that were too wonderful for him to comprehend (CP Pr 30:18-19). How such a large and heavy bird like an eagle can soar through the heavens, a serpent can glide over a rock, a ship can plough through the water, a man has power over a woman – these are incomprehensible. Such is the power of an adulterous woman – she satisfies her lust, then wipes her mouth and disclaims any wrongdoing (CP Pr 30:20 with 5:3-6). Next, Agur lists four disquieting things (CP Pr 30:21-23). A slave who becomes king is overbearing and arrogant, drunk with the power of his new position (CP Pr 19:10; Ecc 10:7). An overfed fool's prosperity makes him more insolent than ever. A hateful woman's wretched disposition mars the joy of marriage. A maid-servant who succeeds her mistress becomes imperious and haughty.

Now Agur turns to four things which are wise out of all proportion to their size (CP Pr 30:24-28). Ants demonstrate foresight (CP also 6:6-8 (see also author's comments on Pr 6:6-11)). Conies (KJV), or rock badgers (NKJV), resemble overgrown guinea pigs. They represent security, shrewdly building their homes among the rocks where they are protected from larger animals (CP Psa 104:18). Locusts or grasshoppers have no leader but band together as one. They always travel with the wind. Spiders are noted for their great flexibility. They make their home even in king's palaces. Agur next draws his teaching to a close with four examples of graceful things with stately bearing (CP Pr 30:29-31). The lion is more majestic than any other beast; the greyhound is exceedingly graceful and fleet (here the NIV interprets *greyhound* as *strutting rooster*, as being stately in its stride); the he-goat or ram, is both fierce and majestic as the head of its flock; a king who walks boldly and gracefully among his subjects and against whom there is no hope or rebellion.

Agur closes now with two verses that are strangely unrelated to anything preceding them (CP V 32-33). This can be applied to mean that if feeble man has acted foolishly in lifting himself up or acted stupidly in thinking or planning evil, he should listen to the voice of wisdom and immediately put a stop to it; for otherwise there will be strife – as surely as the churning of milk makes butter, and the wringing of the nose makes it bleed. This completes Agur's Proverbs.

Now let us study King Lemuel's Proverbs, which are contained in Chapter 31. As also noted at the outset of this study it is not known who King Lemuel was and, as with Agur, it is not material to the study to consider

him further. V 1-2 affirm that what follows is a prophecy Lemuel's mother taught him. She warns him against a life of dissipation and sensual lust and pleads with him to refrain from the excessive use of wine and strong drink (CP 31:1-5). She sanctions strong drink being given only to him who is about to die, or those living in poverty with heavy hearts, so that they can forget their misery and their needs (CP V 6-7 with Psa 104:15). She admonishes Lemuel to judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy (CP Pr 30:8-9 also 14:21, 31; 16:10; Lev 19:15; Job 29:12-19; Isa 1:17). The king represents God as the defender of the poor and needy.

Lemuel's mother then continues the prophecy with a beautiful description of an excellent wife as defined by a wife and mother (CP Pr 31:10-31). *Virtuous* in V 10 (KJV), means strong in all moral and mental qualities (CP also 12:4). Ruth is the only woman in Scripture so-called (CP Ruth 3:11). Let us examine some of the characteristics of a virtuous woman highlighted in Pr 30:10-31 in more detail: Firstly she is morally perfect and invaluable (CP V 10). She is trustworthy – her husband has absolute confidence in her faithfulness; she demonstrates impeccable loyalty to her husband and her thrift and industry will add to his wealth. He will be blessed by her tireless industry all the days of her life. Her finest efforts are put forth to help him (CP Pr 30:11-19).

In addition to everything else she does, she finds time to help the needy. She unselfishly shares with those who are less fortunate. She does not dread the onset of winter because there is plenty of warm clothing for her family. Her labours anticipate her family's needs. The efforts she makes to honour others are rewarded for her. She contributes significantly to the advancement of her husband in public honour. With all her other responsibilities faithfully discharged, she also makes articles of clothing to sell. She herself is clothed in strength and honour, displaying Divine wisdom (CP Pr 30:20-26). Her children realise she is an outstanding mother and tell her so. Her husband also praises her as a God-given wife. She excels all other women (CP V 27-29 also 12:4; 18:22 and 19:14 with 1Cor 11:7). The Proverb closes with the declaration that grace of manner is deceitful and beauty of features will fade, but the woman who fears the Lord will be praised. Such a woman needs to be publicly acclaimed and the fruit of her hands rendered to her (CP Pr 30:30-31).

The cultural details of the virtuous woman subject of this prophecy may be different in this present age, but the principles are timeless – they apply to every family. They are set forth as the prayer of every mother for the future wife of her son. This completes this study on the book of Proverbs.