

Proverbs Lesson 14

Proverbs Chapter 14

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Introduction: In Proverbs Chapter 14 the contrast between wisdom and folly continues. However, there is a slight shift in the nuance of the theme. Where the contrast in recent chapters has been between the wisdom of righteousness and the folly of wickedness, now the thought pattern seems to focus upon the wisdom of goodness versus the foolishness of wrongdoing.

I. Wise Women Build their House

Pro 14:1 Every wise woman buildeth her house: but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands.

The thought shifts now to the distinction between a wise woman and a foolish one. A wise woman will build up her house. The thought refers to one's family. Accordingly, a wise woman will strengthen and build up her family. The word translated as plucketh it down (orhharac) in its simplest sense means to 'break down' or to 'tear down.'

A wise woman will encourage and strengthen her family while a foolish woman will criticize and tear them down. Though the thought is of doing so with her hands, that may be a metaphor. The likely thought is of tearing down one's family by criticism and nagging.

Pro 14:2 He that walketh in his uprightness feareth the LORD: but he that is perverse in his ways despiseth him.

Pro 14:3 In the mouth of the foolish is a rod of pride: but the lips of the wise shall preserve them.

The word translated as uprightness (rvy yosher) refers to upright living. It is the practical outworking of the principle of righteousness. The point is that he who walks uprightly (in righteousness) demonstrates a fear of the Lord. A direct link between the fear of the Lord and righteousness is set forth.

Doing what is right manifests the fear of the Lord. In contrast, he who is perverse (crooked) has no regard for the Lord. The converse is true as well. When one has little regard for the Lord, he very well may become crooked.

In Verse 3, we find that fools are often proud and it shows in what they say. The idea of a “rod of pride” in the mouth of a fool simply means that fools in pride use their tongue like a whip or rod on others. In contrast, the mouth of a wise man will protect and preserve himself. The fact is how that fools are proud and sharp with their tongue. Wise men keep their mouths shut and it preserves them.

Pro 14:4 Where no oxen are, the crib is clean: but much increase is by the strength of the ox.

Pro 14:5 A faithful witness will not lie: but a false witness will utter lies.

Oxen can be messy animals. But they also are very productive creatures. Likewise in God’s work, ministries such as training men for the ministry can create problems and messes, but these men along with time, training and patience can be very productive in God’s work. These men make mistakes and often overlook things that seem unimportant. They grow and get stronger over time.

The point in verse 5 is as simple as it is profound. A faithful witness will tell the truth. A devious witness will lie. Character is important. It will predict how a person will act. Faithful men tend to be honest. Devious men are more prone to lie and will more often than not.

Pro 14:6 A scorner seeketh wisdom, and findeth it not: but knowledge is easy unto him that understandeth.

Pro 14:7 Go from the presence of a foolish man, when thou perceivest not in him the lips of knowledge.

Two profound and related truths are at hand. Those who early in life under value education and learning will someday seek for wisdom and struggle to find it. In contrast, one who has continually sought to understand the issues of life will find new knowledge (and by extension wisdom) easy to come by. The word translated as knowledge (tedda’ath) also has the sense of ‘discernment’ and ‘wisdom.’

The point is that those who throughout their lives have sought to learn and sought after wisdom will find new learning and wisdom easy to come by. Those who disdained schooling, counsel and higher learning will find wisdom hard to obtain.

Wise teaching comes from verse 7. When we perceive one to be foolish, especially by what is coming out of his mouth, leave. Stand not in the way of sinners nor sit in the seat of the scornful. Separate from those with a foolish mouth.

Pro 14:8 The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way: but the folly of fools is deceit.

Pro 14:9 Fools make a mock at sin: but among the righteous there is favour.

Prudent men endeavor to understand the issues of life. They try to understand their own path in life. Fools (The lost) demonstrate their foolishness by lack of integrity. Wise men endeavor to understand problems. Fools are devious and are likely to cause problems. What a contrast!

To this day, fools snicker and joke about sin. The popular culture is full of it. The entertainment world routinely laughs at sin. They build their corrupt entertainment around it. In contrast, the righteous do not take the matter of sin lightly. Rather, the righteous develop a solid reputation. Fools never do.

Pro 14:10 The heart knoweth his own bitterness; and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy.

Pro 14:11 The house of the wicked shall be overthrown: but the tabernacle of the upright shall flourish.

This verse at first seems perplexing, yet the truth is relatively simple. Only one's heart fully understands its own bitterness, anguish, or disappointments. Furthermore, a stranger cannot really partake of the joy of one's heart. Our heart is a very private place. No one else can understand our disappointment or joys. The only exception is our Lord. He understands, He cares for you.

In verse 11, the house of the wicked shall be overthrown: but the tabernacle of the upright shall flourish. Though the literal sense of house very well may be in view, the greater thought likely is of one's legacy, family, and posterity. The greater thought is of the instability and calamity which often follow after wicked men. Even their family suffers.

In contrast, the home, family, and posterity of an upright man are not only stable, but will prosper. There is great benefit in righteousness and great folly in sin. A house is a house. It's not a home until it is occupied. It takes more than people to make a house a home. The tabernacle of the upright is occupied.

II. Way May Seem Right to a Man

Pro 14:12 There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.

Pro 14:13 Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful; and the end of that mirth is heaviness.

There are two major applications of this proverb. There is always a danger in self-righteousness. Such pride of spirit easily leads to destruction. There is a

presumed way to salvation which seems right to many but leads to the second death. Counterfeit religion has always been a favorite device of the devil. Those ignorant of the Scriptures think their religion is right, but wind up going to hell. Legion is the number thereof. There is a correlation between the two applications noted. Pride and self-righteousness often blind and harden hearts to the truth of salvation in Christ.

The world often masks the emptiness and burden of their hearts by entertainment and comedy. Yet, under the outward gaiety, there are hearts carrying a heavy load of sin. Once the fun and entertainment of the world are soon over (as it always is), the sinner is back to the reality of an empty heart and a guilty conscience. The prodigal son certainly learned that the hard way. And indeed, the way of the transgressor is hard.

Pro 14:14 The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways: and a good man shall be satisfied from himself.

Pro 14:15 The simple believeth every word: but the prudent man looketh well to his going.

The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways: and a good man shall be satisfied from himself. The direct analogy is of a beast of burden such as an ox or mule which rebels at its harness, digs its hoofs in, and backs away. The word translated as backslider (gwocuwg) has the sense of being rebellious, difficult, or insolent.

The point at hand is how that rebels and backsliders will reap what they sow. The souring spirit will reap the same. In contrast, a good man will likewise reap what he has sown and it will bring satisfaction. Backsliders and rebels reap a bitter harvest. Doing right and good before God brings a pleasant and satisfying harvest.

In verse 15, the word translated as simple (ytppehiy) has the idea of being 'naive' or 'gullible.' Indeed, the naive tend to believe everything they hear or read. A prudent person will take the time to think through a matter. The greater thought is of the wisdom of being prudent and not believing everything we hear or read.

III. Wise Man Departs from Evil

Pro 14:16 A wise man feareth, and departeth from evil: but the fool rageth, and is confident.

Pro 14:17 He that is soon angry dealeth foolishly: and a man of wicked devices is hated.

A wise man in perceiving trouble ahead will avoid it. A fool charges ahead and gives no thought to the trouble at hand. The word translated as evil (er ra') can

either have the idea of evil in an unethical and sinful sense or of evil in the sense of trouble. The latter is likely the case in this verse. The word translated as rageth {be ' abar} has the sense of 'passing over' or of 'going on.'

One short of temper will deal foolishly. Whether there are words which should not have been said or decisions which should not have been made, reacting when angry is a trademark of a fool. Furthermore, those who so live their lives are not well thought of. Emotions, of which anger is one, are God given. But woe to the person who allows himself to be controlled by his emotions. The biblical concept of meekness implies discipline of emotions. See also Ecclesiastes 7:9 and Proverbs 16:32.

Ecc 7:9 Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry: for anger resteth in the bosom of fools.

*Pro 14:18 The simple inherit folly: but the prudent are crowned with knowledge.
Pro 14:19 The evil bow before the good; and the wicked at the gates of the righteous.*

Those who have never made the effort to think through a matter often make foolish decisions. In contrast, however, those who are prudent are blessed and prospered from their discernment. The word translated as crowned (ted da`ath) in its most basic sense has the idea of 'completed' or 'encircled.'

In this context therefore, the thought is how that the prudent surround themselves with information. Those not well informed make foolish decisions. But prudent men surround themselves with good information.

In the long run, evil men will become subservient to the good (i.e., godly) it teaches in verse 19. In like fashion, the wicked will knock on the door of the righteous seeking help. Though the ungodly seem to prosper for the moment, in the long run, they will fail and the righteous will prosper.

Haman was forced to bow before Mordecai. The jealous princes of Babylon fell before Daniel. The godless men who are not humbled in this life, they certainly will be at the judgment.

Pro 14:20 The poor is hated even of his own neighbour: but the rich hath many friends.

Pro 14:21 He that despiseth his neighbour sinneth: but he that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he.

Friends come like ants to the one who has who has won the lottery. Seemingly, those in poverty have few friends. That is a sad commentary on human nature, but it remains true to this day. To despise a neighbor, especially one in need, is

sin. However, to be merciful to one in need is not only right, but it brings blessing. True happiness comes from helping others. The poor man that has a few (real) friends is blessed.

IV. Mercy and Truth Come to Those Who Devise Good

Pro 14:22 Do they not err that devise evil? but mercy and truth shall be to them that devise good.

Those who devise evil wind up in the ditch of life. Devious schemes have a nasty way of backfiring. Those who develop ways to do good to others, are paid back with mercy and truth. When we do good to others, they will stick up for us when we face trouble and will be merciful to us.

Pro 14:23 In all labour there is profit: but the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury.

Pro 14:24 The crown of the wise is their riches: but the foolishness of fools is folly.

Work is profitable whether by a paycheck or just the merit thereof. In contrast, talk is cheap. Those who are all blow and no go, tend to be poor. It is one thing to talk big, it is another thing to do the hard work.

In the long run, wisdom pays off with prosperity. Wise men tend to be sound and financially solid. The folly of fools leads to the opposite outcome. There are great blessings from wisdom and likely poverty from a life devoid of wisdom.

Pro 14:25 A true witness delivereth souls: but a deceitful witness speaketh lies.

Pro 14:26 In the fear of the LORD is strong confidence: and his children shall have a place of refuge.

Pro 14:27 The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.

The thought is how that a faithful witness will win souls. In contrast, a treacherous or devious person speaks lies. The application to New Testament evangelism is apparent. An accurate paraphrase might be, 'A faithful witness will see souls saved.' Fools could care less.

In verse 26, we find that one will never go wrong to fear the Lord. There is solid confidence of God's help and blessing when we fear Him altogether. Moreover, God's people (His children) always have a place of refuge from the storms of life. There is a strong confidence and refuge for those who fear Him.

The fear of the Lord leads ultimately to a "well of living water, springing up unto everlasting life" (John 4:14). The fear of the Lord will keep a wise man from the

folly of sin which often leads to unnecessary injury and great loss.

Pro 14:28 In the multitude of people is the king's honour: but in the want of people is the destruction of the prince.

Pro 14:29 He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding: but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly.

In the multitude of people is the king's honour: but in the want of people is the destruction of the prince. A king is gratified as his kingdom grows. When it shrinks, it may lead to the overthrow of the leader. Spiritually, our heavenly Father is glorified as we bear much fruit. His kingdom is enlarged. It behooves us therefore to continue to win people to Christ.

There is great wisdom (not to mention discipline of spirit) in being slow to wrath we find in verse 29. Great is the wisdom of controlling anger. Those who have a short fuse encourage folly. Discipline of emotions is one fruit of the Spirit. It is called meekness. See James 1:19-20 as well as Proverbs 15:18.

Jas 1:19 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:

Jas 1:20 For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.

Pro 14:30 A sound heart is the life of the flesh: but envy the rottenness of the bones.

Pro 14:31 He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker: but he that honoureth him hath mercy on the poor.

A sound heart is the life of the flesh: but envy the rottenness of the bones. The first thought literally is 'a healthy heart is the life of the flesh.' That certainly is true physically. Without the life-giving blood being pumped through the body, we die. We have a spiritual application here as well. A heart which is spiritually healthy—sound in the principles of truth, righteousness, holiness, love, wisdom, and mercy—will produce fullness of life spiritually.

In contrast, envy (i.e., jealousy) eats like a cancer of the bones. By implication, the greater thought is how a heart which is open, sincere, absent of bitterness and jealousy is spiritually vibrant whereas jealousy and envy eat away on the inside.

Verse 31 teaches that those who wrong the destitute taunt God to intervene. Unkindness to those truly impoverished may prompt God to act against such cruelty. In contrast, those who honor the Lord will have mercy on the destitute.

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Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

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Practice Random Acts of Kindness. Each act spreads, and many will be blessed.