

Proverbs Lesson 20

Proverbs Chapter 20

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Introduction: The format of the book of Proverbs now changes slightly from proverbs contrasting wisdom and folly to those of warning and instruction.

I. Wine is a Mocker

Pro 20:1 Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.

Pro 20:2 The fear of a king is as the roaring of a lion: whoso provoketh him to anger sinneth against his own soul.

Alcoholic beverages cause men to mock and rage. Foolish men drink intoxicants, thinking to float but sink instead. The world advertises alcohol as a great way to enjoy, loosen up, and get a buzz. The truth is, alcohol is a great deceiver. In place of its short 'high' comes nothing but trouble and destruction.

Many churches today teach that there is nothing wrong with a few social drinks taken in moderation. The only thing wrong with that is that it is a lie from Satan. Truly, alcoholic beverages are demons in a bottle. Few things in the history of humanity have been more destructive to life, happiness, and family than alcohol. Those who drink are not wise. See also Proverbs 23:29, and Isaiah 28:7.

Pro 23:29 Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes?

Pro 23:30 They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine.

Pro 23:31 Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright.

Pro 23:32 At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.

Isa 28:7 But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment.

Some people can not hold their liquor and become totally addicted to drinking. The end may find that person in the gutter as a wino. If that person had never taken that first drink, this would not have happened. Believe God in this warning.

Verse 2 tells of provoking a person in authority to anger is like provoking a lion—

not smart. To provoke a ruler or one in authority is to bring great trouble down upon oneself.

Pro 20:3 It is an honour for a man to cease from strife: but every fool will be meddling.

Pro 20:4 The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing.

The thought is how that it is honorable and wise for man to back down from a fight. Fools, however, agitate and meddle. Wise men avoid fighting. Fools go for it.

Verse 4 teaches that lazy men avoid work because of uncomfortable conditions. Come harvest time, (payday), they have little or nothing. Our society is filled with many who want to get paid, they just don't want to work to receive it. Everyone must start somewhere. Good work means advancement. A little cold will not hurt us. Bundle up and work when it is needful. Your family is dependent upon a father working to make a living.

The moral is that laziness leads to poverty.

Pro 20:5 Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water; but a man of understanding will draw it out.

Pro 20:6 Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness: but a faithful man who can find?

Sound advice is not easy to obtain. But a man of understanding will seek it out. The analogy is of a deep well which means work in drawing the bucket up. But deep wells have the best water. The moral is that good advice may mean considerable effort to obtain. But it is worth it. See Proverbs 18:4.

Pro 18:4 The words of a man's mouth are as deep waters, and the wellspring of wisdom as a flowing brook.

Most people will tell you how nice they are, but reliable (i.e., faithful) men are hard to find.' Talk is cheap. The real test of character is in how faithful, reliable, dependable, and trustworthy one is.

Pro 20:7 The just man walketh in his integrity: his children are blessed after him.

Pro 20:8 A king that sitteth in the throne of judgment scattereth away all evil with his eyes.

A righteous man has integrity. He will do that which is right. Accordingly, his children are blessed. See Psalm 112:1-3.

Psa 112:1 Praise ye the LORD. Blessed is the man that feareth the LORD, that delighteth greatly in his commandments.

Psa 112:2 His seed shall be mighty upon earth: the generation of the upright shall be blessed.

Psa 112:3 Wealth and riches shall be in his house: and his righteousness endureth for ever.

Two profound principles are in view.

- (1) God blesses righteousness (which manifests itself in integrity.)
- (2) The children of those who are upright are blessed after them.

We will never go wrong to do what is right! Moreover, our children are the beneficiaries.

When one high in office is present, his mere glance deters evil it says in verse 8.

Pro 20:9 Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?

Pro 20:10 Divers weights, and divers measures, both of them are alike abomination to the LORD.

One of the ironies of human nature is that sinful humanity is by nature self-righteous. Therefore, the sacred writer asks, who can claim to be pure from sin? The answer is apparent notwithstanding the self-righteous tendency of humanity. See verse 6 in this lesson also.

Only those cleansed by the precious blood of Christ are pure from sin.

The thought in verse 10 parallels that of Proverbs 11:1.

Pro 11:1 A false balance is abomination to the LORD: but a just weight is his delight.

The reference is to the ancient method of commerce, using a balance-beam scale. 'Standard weights' were used to weigh out a commodity. Crooked merchants might use 'shaved' weights to cheat buyers. In like fashion, deceptive 'measures' of volume were used by unscrupulous dealers to defraud the unwary.

The greater issue is that dishonesty and deception are an abomination to God. See also Proverbs 16:11 and Leviticus 19:35-36.

Pro 16:11 A just weight and balance are the LORD'S: all the weights of the bag are his work.

Lev 19:35 Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, in meteyard, in weight, or in measure.

Lev 19:36 Just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin, shall ye

have: I am the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt.

II. Even a Child Is Known by His Ways

Pro 20:11 Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right.

Pro 20:12 The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the LORD hath made even both of them.

In the greater scope of life, even a child is known by his behavior. Even more so are adults. One's behavior fairly well advertises his character. One who consistently does what is right develops a reputation thereto. If it is true for children, how much more so is it so for adults?

In verse 12 several thoughts are at hand. Two of the most intricate parts of any creature are its eyes and ears. No camera or microphone has ever been devised which is more sensitive, versatile, or precise as the eyes and ears which God has created in us. They are miraculous in their intricacies.

Ears that hear and eyes that see are taken for granted, yet it is God who not only created them but created them to work perfectly. Deficiencies in either are the greater result of sin in the creation.

Ears that hear and eyes that see are a greater metaphor of understanding and perceptiveness. It is God which has given the ability to understand and perceive. The creative genius of God is infinite in its complexity.

Pro 20:13 Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty; open thine eyes, and thou shalt be satisfied with bread.

Pro 20:14 It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer: but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth.

The simple moral is that laziness breeds poverty. Getting up and going first thing in the morning is one key to prosperity. Sleeping in reflects an undisciplined life, both of which point toward destitution.

Benjamin Franklin certainly was not inspired, but was right when he wrote, "Early to bed, early to rise; makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise." Those who are prone to stay up late and get up late tend to struggle economically in life.

The thought is of haggling over a price of an item in verse 14. The buyer will point out all the shortcomings and flaws of the product, hoping to talk the seller down in price. However, having done so and purchased at a bargain price, he then brags about the deal later. Such is human nature. People will try to get as

much for as little as they can. There is here a point of understanding about human nature.

Pro 20:15 There is gold, and a multitude of rubies: but the lips of knowledge are a precious jewel.

Pro 20:16 Take his garment that is surety for a stranger: and take a pledge of him for a strange woman.

One might have much money (i.e., gold) and assets (i.e., many rubies), but true wealth is in wisdom and knowledge. Out in the world, how many a person has won a lottery or received a large inheritance, but in a relatively short period of time has blown it all? Having an understanding and a knowledge of the issues of life is priceless.

The thought in verse 16 is of untrustworthy individuals. The point is to not trust those who will vouch for a stranger. Neither trust one who frequents loose women. Con men and fornicators are cut from the same cloth. Neither are to be trusted.

III. Bread Of Deceit is Sweet to a Man

Pro 20:17 Bread of deceit is sweet to a man; but afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel.

Pro 20:18 Every purpose is established by counsel: and with good advice make war.

This verse speaks of the 'before and after' of a crooked deal. Up front, it seems sweet to the con man. He has succeeded in ripping off the unwary. However, inevitably he is found out and has to contend with the unpleasant consequences. Deception may seem sweet at the time, but the long-term consequences are like eating gravel.

Verse 18 tells us that plans come to pass through good counsel. If a leader intends to start a war, he had better have good advice in advance. The moral is to always seek advice and counsel in making plans, especially before starting a fight.

Pro 20:19 He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips.

Pro 20:20 Whoso curseth his father or his mother, his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness.

A gossip tends to tell everything they know. Therefore, avoid those who are convincing and make themselves safe from the aftermath of their tales. Things revealed to such parties will invariably be blabbed to others.

Verse 20 goes back to the antithesis of the fifth commandment to “Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee” (Exodus 20:12).

Exo 20:12 Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

Those who honor their parents will be granted longer life by the wisdom gleaned from them and by the direct providence of God. On the other hand, those who curse their parents will die an untimely death. The reason is again twofold.

- (1) Those who curse their parents will never learn the wisdom which could have been imparted thus leading to foolish decisions which shorten life.
- (2) God may judge such fools and end their lives prematurely.

Pro 20:21 An inheritance may be gotten hastily at the beginning; but the end thereof shall not be blessed.

Pro 20:22 Say not thou, I will recompense evil; but wait on the LORD, and he shall save thee.

The subject of this verse is how one might obtain an inheritance prematurely by illicit means, but in the long run, things will not be happy. God will not bless ill-gotten gain. Jacob stole his brother's birthright and faced trouble and fear years later as a result.

Verse 22 warns us to not seek revenge. Mans natural tendency is to get even or retaliate against those who oppose or wrong them. Godly advice is to wait on the Lord to work things out. Vengeance is His. See Romans 12:19.

Rom 12:19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

When God works things out, it is right thereafter. When we attempt to get even, there is nothing but trouble thereafter.

Pro 20:23 Divers weights are an abomination unto the LORD; and a false balance is not good.

Pro 20:24 Man's goings are of the LORD; how can a man then understand his own way?

The thought closely parallels that of verse 10. The greater thought is how that God abhors dishonesty and will not bless it. Furthermore, the ultimate consequence of deception is not good. Happiness never grows out of dishonesty.

Verse 24 indicates that only God fully knows the human heart. How then can a man understand even his own way, much less that of others? The thought is the

antithesis of Proverbs 3:5-6.

Pro 3:5 Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

Pro 3:6 In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

We seldom know what is ahead. We do not know where our plans will take us, but God does. It is incumbent upon us to trust Him with all our hearts, seeking His guidance for every decision. As Gordon Mote's song says, Don't worry about nothing, but pray about everything. Truly God has everything in control.

Pro 20:25 It is a snare to the man who devoureth that which is holy, and after vows to make enquiry.

Pro 20:26 A wise king scattereth the wicked, and bringeth the wheel over them.

The thought is of making rash decisions and then later vowing to make amends. Fools tend to act on impulse. They act first and think later. The wise tend to think first and then act.

The thought in verse 26 is how wise leaders will deal summarily against wickedness. The analogy of scattering and then a wheel stems from ancient methods of threshing and then milling grain. Threshed grain was tossed into the air so that the wind would scatter the chaff. A circular millstone (i.e., the wheel) was then used to grind the grain into flour.

The moral is how a wise leader will deal (i.e., scatter and crush) against evil in his jurisdiction.

IV. Holy Spirit Searches the Heart

Pro 20:27 The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly.

Pro 20:28 Mercy and truth preserve the king: and his throne is upholden by mercy.

The human spirit is at the heart of one's being. It resides in man. God works through one's spirit to examine the deepest secrets of the heart. God's Spirit deals with one's individual spirit. It is the primary level at which God works. In a more colloquial ways, we might say, 'God spoke to one's heart.'

Mercy is an act of kindness without any basis of merit. Truth is absolute and unbending. Mercy emanates from love. Truth emanates from holiness.

Mercy is gentle. Truth can be harsh. The principle at hand is how that those in authority and leadership need both. They need to stand for what is right regardless, but be merciful and tender to the transgressor.

Human authority and leadership are established particularly by being merciful. The parallel is quite similar to grace and truth found in our Lord. See John 1:14.

Joh 1:14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

Pro 20:29 The glory of young men is their strength: and the beauty of old men is the gray head.

Pro 20:30 The blueness of a wound cleanseth away evil: so do stripes the inward parts of the belly.

The value of youth is strength. The value of age is wisdom. Though there is virtue in both, the value of wisdom is greater. I believe all great churches, all great companies, and all great sports teams have that mixture of youth and experience. Both are needed.

The subject in verse 30 is the virtue of corporal punishment. The world, in pseudo compassion, claims such is cruel and abusive punishment. However, the Bible clearly teaches that properly applied physical punishment can be a great deterrent to wrongdoing. It teaches lessons which are not soon forgotten—more so than lecturing or other less direct ways.

I remember the whippings that I received long after the lectures and non-physical measures have been forgotten. A properly inflicted spanking is a God ordained method for dealing with wrongdoing. Blueness here refers to bruises. Stripes refer to welts. Both come from being spanked on the backside.

If we disobey our heavenly father, don't be surprised if you get a spiritual spanking. God loves us and wants us to stay on that pure path of total righteousness to Christ's honor and glory.

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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.

