

Proverbs Lesson 21

Proverbs Chapter 21

Distributed by: KJV Bible Studies

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Introduction: The section of verse 1 began in the previous chapter and continues—warnings and instruction for God’s people. Contained herein is further godly wisdom for the Christian life.

I. Kings Heart in in God’s Hand

Pro 21:1 The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.

Pro 21:2 Every way of a man is right in his own eyes: but the LORD pondereth the hearts.

Verse 1 verse speaks of the providential working of God in the affairs of men. God uses men, especially those in leadership, to guide human affairs for His sovereign will. For example, God used men such as David to fulfill His purposes. He also used ungodly kings such as Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar to accomplish His will.

The greater point is that God can turn a man’s heart when He chooses to do so. We ought to pray for those who are lost that God will work in their hearts.

Sinful mankind is inherently self-righteous as verse 2 points out.. (See Proverbs 16:2 and 25).

Pro 16:2 All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the LORD weigheth the spirits.

Pro 16:25 There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.

We all tend to think we are right. However, regardless of what we think, it is God who is the judge of what is right. He weighs our intentions and actions in His balances of justice.

Pro 21:3 To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice.

Pro 21:4 An high look, and a proud heart, and the plowing of the wicked, is sin.

The combined principles of righteousness and judgment are at hand. The word translated as justice derives from the basic Hebrew word for righteousness and refers to righteousness as a principle. The word translated as judgment has the sense of 'just decisions' or 'right judgment.'

The greater thought at hand is how that righteousness and just decisions are more important to God than sacrifice. Recall when Saul offered sacrifice rather than obey God in I Samuel 15:22. See also Mark 12:33.

1Sa 15:22 And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.

God is more interested in true righteousness than religious ceremony and outward worship.

Regarding a high look and a proud heart, John Gill said, "The former is a sign of the latter, and commonly go together, and are both abominable to the Lord." (See Psalms 101:5 and Proverbs 6:16-19).

Pro 6:16 These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him:

Pro 6:17 A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood,

Pro 6:18 An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief,

Pro 6:19 A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.

God detests arrogance and self-assumed superiority. God is not impressed with snobs. Even such a common activity as plowing the ground, when done by a wicked man is displeasing to God. God has nothing in common with the wicked.

Pro 21:5 The thoughts of the diligent tend only to plenteousness; but of every one that is hasty only to want.

Pro 21:6 The getting of treasures by a lying tongue is a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death.

The very thought in life of those who are diligent (i.e., the disciplined, faithful, and hardworking) leads to prosperity. The contrast is with one whose illusion is getting rich quick. The diligent man works long and faithfully and is rewarded with prosperity.

The get-rich fellow winds up being impoverished. Hard work, dependability, and diligence are profitable.

Verse 6 teaches that wealth obtained by deception is unstable and may bring an

untimely death. Deviousness may bring immediate gain, but the long term prospects are bleak. Financial and positional gain from deception does not last long.

II. Wicked are Destroyed Due to Lack of Judgment

Pro 21:7 The robbery of the wicked shall destroy them; because they refuse to do judgment.

Pro 21:8 The way of man is froward and strange: but as for the pure, his work is right.

The robbery of the wicked shall destroy them; because they refuse to do judgment. The thought parallels the preceding verse. Gain from theft eventually snares the thief and leads to ruin. The foundational reason is that they refuse to do what is right.

The word translated as judgment once again refers to right decisions or right discernment. A person not anchored in righteousness will make wrong decisions which lead to ruin in life.

The thought once again pertains to human nature in verse 8. The idea is of the 'natural man', more specifically the sinful nature of mankind. It is crooked and naturally inclined to do evil. However, for the one whose heart has been made pure by God (a born-again Christian committed to serving God), his work is upright. From holiness within the heart comes right actions.

The natural man (the carnal man as well) is inclined to sin. The spiritual man (one born again and surrendered to God) is inclined to do what is right. See Ephesians 4:22-24.

Eph 4:22 That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;

Eph 4:23 And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;

Eph 4:24 And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

Pro 21:9 It is better to dwell in a corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman in a wide house.

Pro 21:10 The soul of the wicked desireth evil: his neighbour findeth no favour in his eyes.

Houses in ancient Israel often had flat roofs with a parapet wall around the edge. Solomon's point is that it was better to camp out on the roof of one's house than live in a mansion with an arguing, nagging, and contentious wife. Solomon no doubt wrote from experience. With all the wives which he had, he certainly had some who were difficult with which to live. An angry and contentious wife has

driven more than one man to desperate measures.

An evil person is interested in more evil it says in verse 10. In fact, he (or she) has no regard for even a neighbor. Implicit is the self-centered perspective of ungodly and unspiritual individuals.

Pro 21:11 When the scorner is punished, the simple is made wise: and when the wise is instructed, he receiveth knowledge.

Pro 21:12 The righteous man wisely considereth the house of the wicked: but God overthroweth the wicked for their wickedness.

When fools are punished, the naive learn a lesson. One virtue in consistent justice is that young and unlearned parties take notice. Others learn when fools are punished. As a parallel thought, when the wise are taught, they receive the instruction. The moral of the lesson is that the naive tend to learn the hard way while the wise will listen to warning.

Verse 12 tells us that a righteous man will recognize the implications of an ungodly man's situation. Many come to God's people and lie in order to get quick money.

A righteous man will understand that the prosperity of the wicked is only temporary and that God, in His perfect time, will judge the wicked for his sin. The righteous will grasp the greater picture. Sin may prosper for a season, but God will judge every action in the end.

Pro 21:13 Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard.

Pro 21:14 A gift in secret pacifieth anger: and a reward in the bosom strong wrath.

When one ignores another's plea for help, he will find the same response in his day of trouble. We reap what we sow. To ignore others in their need will come back upon us. God grants those who are redeemed and serving Him the ability to discern each encounter with those "in need".

A gesture of kindness, such as a thoughtful gift, can dissolve the anger of another. The second phrase essentially reiterates the truth of the first. The natural tendency is to meet anger with anger. However, kindness and softness tend to melt wrath.

A simple illustration is of two dogs. If one is hostile and ready to fight, but the other willing to roll over on its back, there will be no fight. A soft answer turneth away wrath. A gesture of kindness such as a gift will often dissolve hostility. God's way is better than man's way.

Pro 21:15 It is joy to the just to do judgment: but destruction shall be to the workers of iniquity.

Pro 21:16 The man that wandereth out of the way of understanding shall remain in the congregation of the dead.

On the one hand, the just rejoice to make right decisions. On the other hand, those who live in sin and make poor decisions will reap ruin. Sin always has a bitter end. Doing what is right ultimately brings joy.

The immediate thought pertains to those who lack understanding of the issues of life. Such are prone to face an untimely death. There is also a greater spiritual lesson. Those who depart from the truth will remain in a dead church.

Sadly, the landscape abounds with churches which have departed from the truth and are now spiritual mausoleums—inhabited by those who are spiritually dead.

III. Seeking After Pleasure Leads to being Poor

Pro 21:17 He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man: he that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich.

Pro 21:18 The wicked shall be a ransom for the righteous, and the transgressor for the upright.

Those who live for today and the enjoyments of the present will not be rich either materially or spiritually. Those who live for enjoyment, entertainment, recreation, pleasure, and fun often struggle financially. They certainly are impoverished spiritually.

Those who are wise will live for Christ and invest their lives in serving Him. Not only will they be rich spiritually, but God will prosper them in the meantime.

Verse 18 teaches that in the long run, the schemes of the wicked will backfire on them, especially as they plot against the righteous. Witness the fate of Haman when he plotted against Mordecai or the princes of Babylon who schemed against Daniel before Darius. In due season, God will recompense the wicked, especially when they plot against the righteous.

Pro 21:19 It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and an angry woman.

Pro 21:20 There is treasure to be desired and oil in the dwelling of the wise; but a foolish man spendeth it up.

The thought parallels that of Proverbs 21:9. A man very well may find living in a

tent better than living with an angry and a fighting wife. Sadly, many divorces have been the result thereof. No husband is perfect, but God has called the wife to be in submission to her husband. That certainly includes her spirit and attitude.

The point in verse 20 is that a wise man will be very discreet in his spending—conservative and careful. In contrast, a fool tends to blow his money. According to recent studies, 70% of people in America live paycheck to paycheck. No buffer in case of an emergency. No wonder credit card debt has went above 1 Trillion dollars this past year. Look at the number of title loan and payday loan companies there are. These people are charging way more that the 28% that credit card companies are getting.

The reference to oil is that of olive oil, a common, yet valuable commodity in ancient times. The wise save and are financially discreet. Fools spend like there is no tomorrow. The wise remains stable. A fool will dig himself into a hole. Having lived both ways, I can promise you doing it God's way leads to peace and contentment.

Pro 21:21 He that followeth after righteousness and mercy findeth life, righteousness, and honour.

Pro 21:22 A wise man scaleth the city of the mighty, and casteth down the strength of the confidence thereof.

One who pursues righteousness coupled with mercy will reap fullness of life, additional righteousness, and honor. The greater point is that righteousness coupled with mercy brings rich rewards in life. The thought parallels that of grace and truth. Both are needed.

We need to be unbending in righteousness but merciful and kind to those who fall. When both virtues develop within, there comes fullness of life.

The metaphor in verse 22 is how that wisdom can overcome great obstacles. A city of the mighty bespeaks a seemingly impregnable fortress. However, godly wisdom can overcome great difficulties.

Pro 21:23 Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles.

Pro 21:24 Proud and haughty scorner is his name, who dealeth in proud wrath.

One who can control his tongue will protect himself from many problems. Our mouth can get us into more trouble than any other part of our being. Those who control their tongues will find life much easier. As I mentioned a few weeks ago, it is wise to engage the brain and think before engaging the tongue.

One given to anger prompted by pride will be known as a proud and arrogant

fool. Pride spins off other ugly characteristics such as loss of temper. Those who allow pride, a short temper, and a quick tongue to rule in their lives are fools. Moreover, that ugly reputation follows them.

IV. Working Brings Reward

*Pro 21:25 The desire of the slothful killeth him; for his hands refuse to labour.
Pro 21:26 He coveteth greedily all the day long: but the righteous giveth and spareth not.*

The unwillingness to work or the lack of desire leads to his demise. Those who are lazy, undisciplined, and slothful not only will be on the short end of life economically, they also often suffer from poor health. The irony is that the lazy, undisciplined, and slothful fellow described above always wants more. The phrase coveteth greedily has the sense of desire upon desire.

Implicit is that the lazy and undisciplined want more but do not have the means to obtain it. In contrast, a righteous person (who by implication is not lazy, undisciplined, or slothful) has the wherewithal to give to others and does so. Clearly implied is that a truly righteous person will be generous and helpful to those in need. However, the greater thought is how that laziness and undisciplined living lead to poverty whereas diligent, disciplined living brings prosperity.

The lazy person becomes consumed with materialism, always wanting more, but not having it. The righteous who becomes prosperous, though having more, is not consumed thereby. He is willing to give to help those in need. There is a clear lesson here of the haves and have-nots in modern society. The latter, more often than not, are the victims of their own lack of character. The former often have risen materially because of a strong work ethic. Moreover, they are not consumed with materialism.

*Pro 21:27 The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination: how much more, when he bringeth it with a wicked mind?
Pro 21:28 A false witness shall perish: but the man that heareth speaketh constantly.*

Wicked men are often religious and piously show up at a house of religion. However, their worship and pretense are an abomination to God. The thought parallels that of Proverbs 15:8.

Pro 15:8 The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD: but the prayer of the upright is his delight.

That certainly was true of the Pharisees in Jesus' day. It was true of backslidden,

apostate Judah in the day of Jeremiah. Though idolaters and adulterers would come with a pretense of righteousness to the Temple of God to offer sacrifices. It was an abomination to God. What is even worse is when such hypocrites come to worship for ulterior motives.

Jesus spoke of such like who showed up at the Temple with great outward piety so that they might receive business or political advantage. (See Mark 7:9-13.)

Mar 7:9 And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition.

Mar 7:10 For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death:

Mar 7:11 But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; he shall be free.

Mar 7:12 And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother;

Mar 7:13 Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye.

In our day, many an ungodly businessman will join a church solely for respectability and business advantage in a community. Corrupt politicians will show up at a church on Sunday morning carrying a Bible knowing full well that TV cameras may show footage of that on the evening news. These all are an abomination to God.

The initial thought is evident in verse 28. Perjurers are eventually found out and dealt with severely. The word translated as constantly (xun netsach) also has the sense of 'strength' or 'endurance.' The latter thought therefore may be that the man who listens before he speaks, will speak with strength before issuing a verdict.

There is great wisdom in hearing both sides of a controversy before making a judgment. A decision made after hearing both sides is a constant or enduring decision.

Pro 21:29 A wicked man hardeneth his face: but as for the upright, he directeth his way.

Another contrast between the wicked and upright is set forth. A wicked man gets angry and scowls. Implied is that his emotions control him. In contrast, an upright man understands or discerns his way. An upright man will understand God's Word and will accordingly direct the way of his life.

Ungodly people bounce around in life reacting in anger and loss of temper to the troubles of life. In contrast, the upright follow a sound course of life, charted from understanding the Word of God. Troubles of life, though aggravating, do not deter them.

They know where they came from, why they are here, and where they are going. Their eye is on the finish line, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.

Pro 21:30 There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the LORD.

Pro 21:31 The horse is prepared against the day of battle: but safety is of the LORD.

No human convention, legislation, policies, or plans made to contravene the Lord will stand. They are doomed to failure. In biblical times, the most powerful weapon of war was a warhorse arrayed for battle. Though the enemy might send his strongest weapon against God's people, their safety is in the Lord.

In the previous verse are human plans. In this verse are human weapons. All of which are futile against the Lord. Though the world may rage, there is refuge in the Lord. He takes care of His people.

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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.