

Proverbs Lesson 22

Proverbs Chapter 22

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Introduction: The God inspired writer continues with wisdom and godly advice for the Christian life. At verse 17, the format of the book changes. From there through chapter 24, there is a listing of imperatives, warning, or giving instructions for the Christian life.

I. Working Brings Reward

Pro 22:1 A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold.

Pro 22:2 The rich and poor meet together: the LORD is the maker of them all.

Two related gems of wisdom are at hand. A good reputation is better than winning the lottery. It is far better to have a good name than affluence and a poor reputation.

Loving favour refers to having acceptance. The thought parallels the first. It is better to be acceptable to others than to have large sums of money. One's reputation and being well thought of is better than wealth.

Verse 2 shows that before God there is no difference between rich and poor. In Christ there is neither rich nor poor. The ground is level at the foot of the cross. Moreover, God will make no distinction between rich and poor at the judgment.

Though the rich of this world are often class conscious, looking down on those of modest means, there will be no distinction when they meet their Maker. God is Creator of all and will be Judge of all.

Pro 22:3 A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished.

Pro 22:4 By humility and the fear of the LORD are riches, and honour, and life.

Prudence enables man to take a long look. It thinks ahead and foresees potential problems or trouble. A prudent man will take steps now to avoid coming trouble. In contrast, fools lack wisdom and act without thinking. They selfishly live for today with no thought of consequences tomorrow, should tomorrow come.

A prudent sailor reads the skies and foresees a coming storm. The foolish boater ignores the warning signs, keeps on partying, and gets caught out in the storm.

Twin virtues in verse 4 are humility of mind and the fear of the Lord. When both are operative, they bring riches, honor, and life— both in quantity and quality. In short, those who are humble and live in the fear of the Lord will be blessed richly.

Pro 22:5 Thorns and snares are in the way of the froward: he that doth keep his soul shall be far from them.

Pro 22:6 Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

Thorns and snares are figurative for trouble in life. The word translated as froward (vqe 'iqqesh) refers to one who is crooked and perverse. One who is dishonest and corrupt will find nothing but trouble in life. In contrast, one who guards his life (i.e., is careful and prudent) will be far from the troubles of the corrupt. The greater truth is that unrighteousness brings trouble and that prudence will prevent trouble.

Verse 6 gives great advice on training children. Train up a child in the way of the commandment (of God).' That certainly is the way he should go. The word translated as he should go (hp peh) is also rendered as 'commandment. The promise is that when he is old, he will not depart therefrom.

Where Christian parents frequently fail in training their children is inconsistency. They train them partially in the way they should go, but are inconsistent therein. They often don't practice what they preach. They tell their children that God is most important in life, but then skip church to go fishing. They teach their children to do what is right, but then fight with each other.

They teach their children that the world is evil, but then flirt with the world's entertainment. They teach their children to be faithful to the things of God, but then are not consistent in faithfulness themselves. When Christian parents train their children to do right consistently and then live what they have taught consistently before them, their children will not depart from the way they were taught. If they do stray, what is most important remains in the heart and serves as a means to return to where they belong.

Pro 22:7 The rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender.

Pro 22:8 He that soweth iniquity shall reap vanity: and the rod of his anger shall fail.

Two truths in life are at hand. Those who are wealthy will have influence over the poor and not the other way around. Those who are prosperous usually have become so through discipline of life, education, and hard work. Many who are relatively poor are undisciplined, lack ambition to get an education, and avoid unnecessary work.

The employer often works 80 hours a week. The employee complains about the 40 hours that he must work. But that is why the employee is where he is at. Those who discipline themselves to receive an education and work long hours will be the boss. Those content to work 40 hours with no desire to move up the ladder get passed by.

Truly, the borrower is servant to the lender. The lender dictates the terms of a loan, whether it is for a mortgage or for a credit card. The borrower obligates himself to pay back the loan regardless. There is great wisdom in avoiding borrowing. Much of the financial trouble of which people find themselves is a result of foolish borrowing.

Consumer-credit spending such as by credit card is absolute folly. Unless one disciplines himself to pay off his credit card statement each and every month, carrying a zero balance, he is foolish.

He who sows sin will reap an empty future verse 8 teaches. The word translated as vanity (Nwa 'aven) has the sense of 'trouble.' To sow sin is to reap trouble. One's rod was an idiom for strength or authority. In other words, he who sows sin will also find his influence, authority, and strength diminished. Sin is debilitating. It never results in good—never.

II. Those with Bountiful Eye Shall Be Blessed

Pro 22:9 He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed; for he giveth of his bread to the poor.

Pro 22:10 Cast out the scorner, and contention shall go out; yea, strife and reproach shall cease.

A "bountiful eye" is a metaphor of generosity. The moral is that those who are generous to others will be blessed. This is especially true when one gives to help those truly in need. See Luke 6:38 and 14:13-14.

Luk 6:38 Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.

Luk 14:13 But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind:

Luk 14:14 And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.

We find in verse 10 that where there is trouble, there usually is an agitator thereof. This certainly is true in church trouble. The point at hand is to remove the

troublemaker and the trouble will subside. One scornful mouth can do much damage. Therefore, find that one and root him (or her) out.

Pro 22:11 He that loveth pureness of heart, for the grace of his lips the king shall be his friend.

Pro 22:12 The eyes of the LORD preserve knowledge, and he overthroweth the words of the transgressor.

He who loves purity of heart—honesty, truth, righteousness, and honor, and who is gracious in how he speaks, will make friends in high places. Those in authority have respect to those who are just, yet gracious.

The Lord looks favorably upon those with understanding. The word translated preserve (run natsar) can also have the sense to ‘observe’ as a guard would watch over his charge. The word translated as knowledge (ted da`ath) also has the sense of ‘wisdom’ or ‘understanding.’ That likely is the sense here. In short, God watches over those who are wise and understanding. In contrast, however, he overthrows the treacherous comments of the devious.

III. Slothful Man Finds Excuses Not to Work

Pro 22:13 The slothful man saith, There is a lion without, I shall be slain in the streets.

Pro 22:14 The mouth of strange women is a deep pit: he that is abhorred of the LORD shall fall therein.

The key clue to this proverb is found in the word slothful. The slothful or lazy man will make up excuses as to why the job was not accomplished. A lion in the street is as good an excuse as any why not to work.

In verse 14, the seductive comments or perhaps even the kisses of loose women are a trap. God abhors those who allow themselves to be enticed thereby. Sexual immorality is not only wrong, it is stupid!

Pro 22:15 Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.

Pro 22:16 He that oppresseth the poor to increase his riches, and he that giveth to the rich, shall surely come to want.

The Bible clearly teaches corporal punishment—spanking. It will, little by little, remove foolishness from a child. Failure to spank a child will rather allow foolishness to grow in his heart.

One who takes advantage of one poor and weak will eventually face poverty

himself It teaches in verse 16. Likewise, one who tries to curry favor with the rich and powerful through gifts (i.e., bribes) will likewise face poverty. Both are corrupt practices and both will eventually bring emptiness.

Pro 22:17 Bow down thine ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply thine heart unto my knowledge.

Pro 22:18 For it is a pleasant thing if thou keep them within thee; they shall withal be fitted in thy lips.

Pro 22:19 That thy trust may be in the LORD, I have made known to thee this day, even to thee.

Whereas the Book of Proverbs to this point has been instruction of wisdom, now the sacred writer presents imperatives for wisdom. The instruction is apparent. We are to listen to the wise. The word translated as bow down (hjn natah) in its most basic sense means to 'incline.' The greater thought at hand is to perk up our ears to hear wisdom. And, in like fashion, we are instructed to apply thine heart unto my knowledge.

The word translated as apply (tyv shiyth) basically means to 'set.' That is, we are to set our heart to know the knowledge of God. How many have heard the things of God, but their hearts were not really interested? The injunction here is to apply or set our heart to learn the things of God. We are commanded to hearken to wisdom and have a heart willing to learn the things of God.

When we have absorbed godly wisdom and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, it is indeed sweet. Moreover, as we so receive the wisdom and knowledge of God, they will manifest themselves in what we say. The word translated as fitted (Nwk kuwn) in its most basic sense means to be 'established.' When we receive and absorb the wisdom and knowledge of God, they will influence what we say. For out of the heart, the mouth speaketh.

As we absorb the wisdom and knowledge of God, we also will come to trust Him more. A major byproduct of absorption of the Word of God is faith in God. God thus pronounced this truth through the sacred writer to all who will receive it.

Pro 22:20 Have not I written to thee excellent things in counsels and knowledge,

Pro 22:21 That I might make thee know the certainty of the words of truth; that thou mightest answer the words of truth to them that send unto thee?

Though Solomon was the inspired penman, God Himself is clearly speaking through him. Indeed, our heavenly Father has written to us excellent things in His Word, giving us counsel and knowledge. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! (Romans 11:33).

As God has given us His Word, it enables us to know with certainty the words of truth. Notice the emphasis upon the words of truth. The Bible is verbally inspired. Every Word of God is inspired and none of them shall fail. As we absorb the truth of the Word of God, it will enable us to rightly answer those asking questions regarding the things of God.

Pro 22:22 Rob not the poor, because he is poor: neither oppress the afflicted in the gate:

Pro 22:23 For the LORD will plead their cause, and spoil the soul of those that spoiled them.

In ancient times, those impoverished were often a different character than most of the 'poor' of this age. Then, most of the impoverished people were so because of war, sickness, blindness, and true disadvantage. So many in the present age are impoverished because of sin, immorality, laziness, and a lack of self discipline.

God warns against defrauding one truly poor because he is disadvantaged. At the gates of ancient middle-eastern cities, the impoverished would sit and beg as more prosperous individuals passed by. The clear warning, however, is to not take advantage of the disadvantaged. God will stand up for the truly impoverished—those in need through no fault of their own. God will be their defender. Therefore, the warning is that if one would abuse the truly disadvantaged, he will have to contend with God.

Pro 22:24 Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go:

Pro 22:25 Lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul.

Beware of associating with an angry and infuriated man. He will quickly drag you into his bitterness and anger. Mobs are usually formed by angry people. Once caught up in a mob mentality, all manner of violence and evil takes place. Though a Christian is not a likely participant in a street mob, he can be easily influenced by another rebellious, bitter, and carnal Christian. Church trouble and church splits are usually instigated by a small core of angry and bitter people. Beware of them!

Pro 22:26 Be not thou one of them that strike hands, or of them that are sureties for debts.

Pro 22:27 If thou hast nothing to pay, why should he take away thy bed from under thee?

The thought is of giving a hand (shake) as security for another's debt. In more modern terminology, the warning is of being a co-signer for a loan. If one co-signs, he should be fully prepared to repay the debt of his partner. Rare are the

circumstances in which one should be a co-signer. Not only is it a risky financial venture, it breeds hard feelings between friends if the deal goes sour.

When the day comes to make good for the failed co-signer (and you have nothing with which to repay the debt), you may have your own belongings seized for repayment. The greater point is to beware of co-signing. If your friend does not have any credit, there is a reason for that: he (or she) is not creditworthy. To become a co-signer for him simply shifts the burden of repayment to you.

*Pro 22:28 Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set.
Pro 22:29 Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men.*

The literal application has to do with property markers. Under the law of Moses, tampering with such landmarks was forbidden. See Deuteronomy 19:14.

Deu 19:14 Thou shalt not remove thy neighbour's landmark, which they of old time have set in thine inheritance, which thou shalt inherit in the land that the LORD thy God giveth thee to possess it.

It was a matter of fraud. To this day, it is illegal in most jurisdictions to tamper with a land-survey property marker. A broader application of the truth is to not depart from the ancient truths of our heritage. They have been developed for a reason. A sure indicator of liberalism is discarding the standards and truths of the past. Beware of such!

In verse 29, we find that one diligent (hardworking, prompt, dependable) in his business will rise in prominence. In due season, he will be made known to kings and those in authority. Diligence in work leads to promotion and a good reputation. Presidents, governors, and those in leadership will seek out their advice. Such will rise above obscurity. In contrast, those who are not diligent in life's work will remain in obscurity and mediocrity.

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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.