

CHAPTER 18

Proverbs 18:1 Through desire a man, having separated himself, seeketh and intermeddleth with all wisdom.

Wisdom Is Only Acquired By Dedicated Effort!

Only a few men have the desire or make the effort to pursue and acquire it.

The Holy Spirit through Solomon commends the studious man or woman willing to separate themselves from life's distractions and seek wisdom.

Most men will live and breathe and die in ignorant folly, even those who were plainly offered wisdom. Their lives and those of their children will demonstrate and bear the pain.

The next verse confirms this distinction among men. Fools have no delight in learning. Fools are totally occupied with their own thoughts and fantasies of life (***Proverbs 18:2; 17:16***).

Reader, would the Author and writer of this Proverb commend your desire and efforts for acquiring wisdom?

Would God and Solomon praise your pursuit of learning? Do you seek wisdom from God's Word until you are approved by God?

2Timothy 2:15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

When a man desires wisdom, he must make sacrifices. He will avoid distractions, that misdirect his soul. He will separate from friends and pleasures that do not serve, the goal.

When a man desires wisdom, he will reject the popular ambitions of riches, education, recreation, or bodily exercise.

When a man desires wisdom, he will be consistently faithful in a Church of Spirit guided saints. Even then he will only find few choosing the same course (***Luke 8:14; 1Corinthians 9:24-26; 1John 2:15-17***).

Like the man of God, he must limit committed obligations, in this life (***2Timothy 2:4; 1Timothy 6:6-12***).

This pursuit of wisdom, will weary his already wearied flesh (***Ecclesiastes 12:12***).

The ignorant ravings of the world are an influence he must avoid (***Proverbs 9:6; 13:20; 1Corinthians 15:33; 2Corinthians 6:14-18***).

For the pursuit of wisdom, he will desire the sweetest moments of fellowship and instruction of His heavenly Father (***Psalms 4:4; 63:5-6; Matthew 6:6; Job 33:14-18***).

He knows that examining his soul and pondering the path of his feet requires separation from all the influences and activity of others (***Proverbs 4:26; Psalms 26:2; 77:6; 139:23-24***).

God chose, the dark night for Abraham (***Genesis 15:5***).

God chose, the back of the desert for Moses (***Exodus 3:1***).

God chose, the plain for Ezekiel (***Ezekiel 3:22***).

God chose, the wilderness for John (***Luke 1:80***).

And God chose, Arabia for Paul (***Galatians 1:17***).

Our Lord rose exceedingly early to meet alone with His Father (***Mark 1:35***).

Our Lord would spend the night alone with Him (***Luke 6:12***).

With great ease of travel, telephones, email, and all sort of communication devices in our homes, offices, and cars, we are cursed with a curse!

Solitude has become a much greater difficulty and not well understood. The hours farmers had with an ox and God have been stolen away by progress!

Writing psalms while watching sheep is a luxury our perverted generation cannot comprehend!

We even move the clocks to force more activity into a day, when the sun is crying, "Be still!"

Rebekah would still be single, if she waited for a meditating man in a field today (***Genesis 24:62-67***)!

Lord Help Me Find The Meditating Solitude!

Having separated from the diversions that deceive, distract, and destroy most men, the good man seeks and intermeddles (gets deeply involved, concerned, and occupied) with all facets of wisdom.

The good man, dives into the study and contemplation of all aspects of creation and revelation.

The good man, with the Holy Spirit, the Scriptures, and the man of God as guides. His pursuit is an intense and

thorough search (*Proverbs 2:1-11; 2Timothy 2:15; 1Timothy 4:13-16*).

Even the ostrich and horse deserve your careful attention and consideration (*Job 39:13-25*)!

How will you remember, meditate, and muse on all of God's works in a few minutes (*Psalms 143:5*)!

Can you in a few minutes comprehend the dimensions of a Savior's love (*Ephesians 3:14-19*)?

With the fullness of God, as your personal reward, does it not deserve more investment? When did you last break forth in praise for a single thought (*Romans 11:33*)?

How will you read, let alone consider and meditate upon, the 31,102 verses in your King James Bible?

Yet *Psalms 119*, the longest chapter in the Bible, commends the careful meditation of every verse! Only a man with great desire, who separates himself from other distractions, will make any progress in this extensive and valuable project.

Some with weak desire, will say there is not enough time. But you can buy time by giving up other activities. So our apostle told us to redeem time for wisdom (*Ephesians 5:15-17*).

There are 168 hours in a week, only half of which you work and sleep. There is much time squandered and wasted in foolish pursuits and slothful management.

The Word of God tells of dedicated seekers of wisdom. David and Daniel prayed three times daily (*Psalms 55:17; Daniel 6:10*).

Our Lord at twelve was intermeddling in all wisdom, while his peers played (*Luke 12:41-52*).

The disciples left all to follow Wisdom in the flesh (*Mark 1:16-20*).

Paul counted anything else as dung (*Philippians 3:7-14*).

Paul chose one thing to do, because he knew double mindedness was folly (*Philippians 3:13; James 1:8*).

The Bereans, heard Paul's preaching with ready minds and searched the Scriptures daily (*Acts 17:11*)!

Reader, what have you done this week to pursue wisdom? How many minutes have you read the Word of God? How many minutes have you prayed? How long have you studied a Proverb?

Have you reviewed the last sermon you heard? How long have you contemplated or discussed spiritual matters of significance?

Parents, what have you done to plant these desires in your children? Hannah trained Samuel so well he worshipped the Lord after his weaning (*1Samuel 1:20-28*)!

Lois and Eunice trained Timothy thoroughly in faith and the Scriptures (*2Timothy 1:5; 3:15*)!

It is the duty of fathers to train their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (*Ephesians 6:4*).

Our Lord taught that the kingdom of heaven is like hid treasure, for which a man would joyfully sell all he had to buy the field and dig for it (*Matthew 13:44*).

Or it was like a wonderful pearl, for which he would sell all that he had to purchase it (*Matthew 13:45-46*).

Does your life reflect this holy zeal? What sacrifice will you make today to seek wisdom?

Few will understand this Proverb, and fewer yet will live it.

The way of ignorance and folly, which leads to hell here and hereafter, is very wide with many travelers are headed that way.

The way of wisdom, which leads to life here and in glory, is very narrow with only a few that find it. Let not any of those who name the name of Christ be found in the wide way!

Reader, can you not spare a few minutes of your 168 hours in a week to seek wisdom?

Why will you die foolish, with your life an example of great waste of time, and your children cursed to repeat your ignorance and suffer its consequences?

Angels desire to look into these things that involve us (*1Peter 1:12*), but we are too busy?

Proverbs 18:2 A fool hath no delight in understanding, but that his heart may discover itself.

Wisdom and truth are not that important to a fool; he is more interested in his own thoughts.

When understanding and a fool's opinions collide, he always follows his heart.

A fool loves his own thoughts and desires, and he wants to tell and promote them as widely as possible.

Here is the basic error of the fool: He values his opinions and preferences more than truth.

A fool is in love with himself, obsessively. He is always seeking an audience to share his thoughts.

This folly is widely promoted today (the perilous times of the last days) when men love their own selves and reject sound doctrine. (*2Timothy 3:1-2; 4:2-4*).

They also will not embrace the truth of the Word of God! *Isaiah 59:14* *And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter.*

All men are subject to this disease, and the conflict between wisdom and the heart is the important point: between, a wise man and a fool, the truth and lies, and life and death.

A fool does not want to listen; He wants to talk. He does not want instruction; he wants expression.

A fool does not want to learn; he wants to teach.

A fool's depraved heart will turn him away from wisdom and take him down the path to hell.

Delight Is Having Great Joy Or Pleasure In Something.

Delight in the Word of God is a learned behavior!

A fool does not have great joy or pleasure in understanding, which is obtaining wisdom, truth, and knowledge.

A fool has no heart for it (*Proverbs 17:16*).

A fool rather despises and scorns it (*Proverbs 1:7, 22*).

A fool's great delight is in telling others about his thoughts and opinions, which he believes should receive praise.

Contrast this with the wise man, who delights in the law of the Lord more than anything else (*Psalms 1:2; 19:10; 40:8; 119:16, 24, 35, 47, 70, 77, 174*).

The wise man wants to be corrected, rebuked, and taught (*Proverbs 1:5; 9:9; Ps 141:5*).

The wise man fears his own heart (*Psalms 19:12-14; 51:10; 119:36; 141:4*).

To discover something is to expose, disclose, reveal, or show it: a fool takes great joy and pleasure in exposing, disclosing, revealing, and showing what is in his own heart.

Telling his thoughts and opinions is his great delight, and he will gladly spend his whole life doing it. He finds no joy or pleasure in learning wisdom or getting understanding.

A fool is most content with his own thoughts, and he thinks the rest of the world should listen.

Imagine, a human soul enters life without even the understanding to keep from dirtying itself in its own excrement, yet he quickly finds great delight in boldly telling its opinions to others. What depravity, the human heart is!

And these opinions are exalted today! Children are interviewed at colleges and universities for their opinions. Actors and athletes are solicited for their opinions on political and moral matters.

Polls are taken to promote the most popular opinion of the human heart on many subjects. This is insanity!

Historians, philosophers, educators, and sociologists tell us we are the world's most enlightened generation. Yet the lunacy and madness of heart-worship is promoted on every side.

Mankind Has Truly Sunk Into Moral Hell Ahead Of Their Eternal Appointment!

These profane and vain babblings are now considered to be noble, acceptable statements:

- I just had to be true to my heart.
- I wasn't being honest with myself.
- My heart told me he was the one.
- It felt so good; it just had to be right.
- My heart just wasn't in it anymore.
- Follow your heart, young man.
- I just knew in my heart it was the truth.

Reader, just consider these statements in light of our Proverb.

All these sentences are the insane drivel of a spoiled people obsessed with loving themselves without regard for truth or right. Humanity has gone to hell, willingly and arrogantly.

Our depraved educators have turned things upside down. Teachers no longer say, "This is truth," or "This is right," or "I want to teach you something today."

Teachers just ask, "LaJon, what do you think?" and "Barbie, what would you do?"

Classroom discussion, is a pile of selfish hearts all wanting to discover themselves, and it is exalted as a learning tool! "Class, let's share our thoughts on this subject, and let's respect each other's opinions."

A typical little girl at college is overheard saying, "I just adore Dr. Freud; he thinks just like I do on this subject. He even suggested I teach the next two classes. Isn't that cool?" This is worse than the blind leading the blind; this is the depraved leading the depraved.

What do we have from this "sharing of ideas"?

- Spotted owls is more important than unborn children.
- Sodomy is an acceptable lifestyle.
- Saving a tree in Venezuela is more important than saving a marriage.
- Children have rights, but landlords don't.
- Hate is wrong, unless it's against Bible believers.
- Rap music and pornography are art.
- Islam is a peace-loving religion.
- Children can make their own choices, even to divorce parents.
- The greatest love of all is loving yourself!

This is not education; this is not instruction or training. This is feeding high-growth fertilizer to the most dangerous weed in the universe, the human heart.

Isn't anyone going to say something? The emperor has no clothes! He is stark naked, and he's ugly!

Moral absolutes are gone; truth has vanished (*Psalm 12:1-2; Isaiah 59:12-15; Hosea 4:1-2*).

In situational ethics and personal preferences rule, do whatever you want; just be honest with your own heart. (*Jeremiah 5:1; Ezekiel 22:30*).

It would be far more intelligent to worship the moon, for the lunar idolater is at least looking for something higher than himself and the rest of his ignorant race!

What wise men want is absolute truth from the highest authority, and God gave us such in His Word. What a privilege to hear preaching of sound doctrine from the Word of God!

**What God Says On A Subject
Is What We Should Crave
And Seek With Our Whole Heart!**

What the fool, quickly sells truth for, is a teacher that will give him fables agreeable to his own depraved heart and itching ears (*Isaiah 30:10; 2Timothy 4:3-4*).

One of the noblest bumper stickers today says, "Attend the church of your choice this Sunday." Yes, church attendance is good. But **If** church is to worship God, isn't God's choice of a church, more important?

These deluded souls even go further and say, "I feel comfortable here; I didn't like the spirit at my old church. The preacher was always telling us what to do. My heart is at peace here." Now isn't that deep and meaningful analysis?

Your heart is the most deceitful thing you will ever meet (*Jeremiah 17:9*).

Your heart lies to you every day, many times. Your only safety is the Word of God, which you must obey regardless of what your heart thinks (*Deuteronomy 29:29; Psalm 119:128; Isaiah 8:20; 1Timothy 6:3-5; 2Timothy 3:16-17*).

The LORD dares you to compare His Word to men's dreams (*Jeremiah 23:28-29*).

A modern father might courageously ask his daughter, "Barbie, what do you like about LaJon?" What is her brainwashed answer? She says, "LaJon understands me more than anyone I've ever met." That is soul-damning deceit! Barbie doesn't understand herself, and LaJon certainly doesn't understand her.

Fools delight not in understanding! They are simply happy satisfying each other's lusts, emotional, mental, sexual, or other.

It is the duty of Christian parents to teach their children the poisonous danger of their own hearts. Children must be taught to reject their thoughts and to love God's law instead (*Psalm 119:113*).

Parents who encourage their children to express opinions are playing with the fire of hell, and it will come back to burn them.

Children should be taught, kindly, that their opinions are less than worthless and that only God's opinion counts.

Children must be taught what to think, not simply to think or how to think.

Children should be taught to delight in God's perfect and infallible Word on every subject, as interpreted by those God put over them, parents and pastors (*Psalm 119:128; Ephesians 6:1; Hebrews 13:7*).

This is training a child in the fear of the Lord, the absolute faith that Word of God alone is truth.

Free expression of opinions by children reduces your family to the lowest common denominator of the human race (the depraved human heart), at its most ignorant state.

You will give place to the devil, and you will have the devil to pay to keep family peace, for hell is present in the depraved heart of every child of Adam (*James 3:14-16; 4:1-5*).

There are two other practical lessons we can learn from this Proverb.

1. We must hate our own thoughts (*Job 42:1-6; Psalms 43:1-5; 73:1-22; 131:1*). Stop thinking; start praying!

2. We should reject the fools we meet that love their own thoughts (*Proverbs 14:7; Matthew 7:6; 1Corinthians 15:33*).

The wise reader, will respond to this Proverb by praying, "Lord, search me and know my heart. See if there be any wicked way in me. Save me from my foolish heart."

"Create in me a clean heart. Open my heart, as you did the heart of Lydia, to you and your Word. Turn my heart unto Thee. Let not any sin have dominion over me. Give me your understanding. Teach me thy statutes. Lead me in right paths. Amen."

Proverbs 18:3 When the wicked cometh, then cometh also contempt, and with ignominy reproach.

Sinners bring contempt! In a home, a church, or a nation, when they accept a wicked persons, contempt of that home, church, or nation will follow. Consider the contempt many have for the USA!

Ignominy: dishonor and disgrace, brings reproach!

If infamous or shameful conduct is not repudiated, reproach will soon follow.

The cure for contempt and reproach is to get rid of sinners. See the comments on *Proverbs 14:34*.

This Proverb is not the simplest to grasp. Many perceive, the contempt and reproach, to be the action of the wicked against good men.

In their view, the wicked person brings his contemptuous insults and ignominious reproaches against good men and righteous practices.

But when Solomon wanted to warn against the contempt and reproach of scorners, he stated it clearly (*Proverbs 9:7-8; 22:10; 23:9*).

So there is a better interpretation. When a wicked person arrives, contempt will also come.

Contempt is the result and consequence of allowing wickedness. Men will despise the presence of a wicked person.

When ignominy, dishonor and disgrace, occurs, reproach will also come, because reproach is the consequence and result of allowing such conduct.

Ignominy, or a shameful situation, is not doing the reproaching, but rather being the cause of reproach.

Israel was the glory of all nations, when she obeyed the Holy and Righteous Laws of God (*Deuteronomy 4:6; 1Kings 10:6-9; Zechariah 8:23; Malachi 3:12*).

But God promised she would become a contemptuous and reproachful byword, **If** she allowed sin in the nation (*Deuteronomy 28:37; 29:22-28; 1Kings 9:6-9; Psalm 44:13-14; Isaiah 52:5; Jeremiah 24:9; Lamentations 2:15-16; Joel 2:17; Romans 2:24*). Again consider the USA!

Wisdom and righteousness bring glory and honor to men and nations (*Proverbs 1:9; 3:16, 22, 35; 4:8-9; 8:12-21; 16:31; 21:21; 22:4*).

But folly and wickedness bring contempt, reproach, and shame (*Proverbs 3:35; 11:2; 13:5, 18; 24:9; 25:8-10; 28:12*).

Godly men despise vile men (*Psalm 15:4*).

God despises vile men as well (*Proverbs 3:32; 11:20; 15:26; Psalm 18:25-27*).

A gracious woman, one always speaking and acting with grace and wisdom, is perpetually honored, for there is nothing to corrupt her pleasant aroma (*Proverbs 11:16; Ecclesiastes 10:1*).

But the odious woman is contemptuously despised and reproached by all, for her froward speech and actions cannot be hid (*Proverbs 11:22; 27:15-16; 30:21-23*).

Paul severely rebuked the church at Corinth for protecting a fornicator in their midst (*1Corinthians 5:1-13*).

The church at Corinth, should have mourned and eliminated this reproach on the name of Jesus Christ, for wickedness, should not be named once among the saints (*Ephesians 5:3-7*).

It is the church or the nation, that is free from evildoers, that will be honored and prospered (*Psalm 144:9-15*).

Solomon was a king, and he trained his son to be a good king.

If wicked men or ignominy are allowed to exist in government or society, it will bring contempt and reproach on the nation (*Proverbs 14:35; 20:8, 26, 28; 29:12*).

God desired for Israel the honor and glory that accompanies righteousness and wisdom (*Proverbs 14:28; 16:10, 12; 25:5; 29:4, 14*).

The lesson of the Proverb is this: wicked conduct brings contempt and reproach on God's name, so wicked doers and wickedness must be repudiated and rejected.

If this is not done in homes, churches, and nations, the name of God will be blasphemed (*2Samuel 12:14; Nehemiah 5:9; 1Timothy 5:14; 6:1; Titus 2:5, 8, 10; 1Peter 2:12; 4:14-16*).

Whether in the home, church, or nation, wicked men and disgraceful conduct must be identified and avoided (*Psalms 101:3-8; 139:21-22; Romans 13:1-7; 16:17-18; Ephesians 5:11; 2Thessalonians 3:6; 1Timothy 6:5; 2Timothy 3:5; Titus 3:10-11*).

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

How deep and flowing are you? A wise man has a deep reservoir of profound wisdom, which produces words of prudent counsel to help others.

A wise man's soul sends forth a steady flow of wisdom, which is a tree of life to many.

This Proverb is not about just any man, but rather it is about a wise man, comparing the two clauses clearly shows this.

Only a wise man's mouth, feeds knowledge to others (*Proverbs 15:7; 16:23; Ecclesiastes 10:12; Psalm 37:30-31*).

The Proverb has two beautiful metaphors. A wise man's words are like deep waters. A wise man's wisdom is deep: it is not just a superficial view of things (*John 7:24; Isaiah 11:1-4*).

What can we learn by this comparison? His wisdom is plentiful: he can help with many different dilemmas (*Job 29:21-25; Matthew 13:52*).

And only understanding men can draw it out, for a wise man is not easily persuaded to speak (*Proverbs 20:5; 17:27*).

The Proverb compares a wise man's words to a wellspring that produces a flowing brook. A wellspring is the source or headspring of a stream, a fountainhead.

As a brook supplies water to prosper the lower lands, so a wise man speaks to prosper those around him.

His mouth is a well of life (*Proverbs 10:11*).

His instruction is a fountain of life (*Proverbs 13:14*).

He feeds many (*Proverbs 10:21*).

He is health and a tree of life to others (*Proverbs 12:18; 15:4*).

Solomon could speak on any subject, including trees. He had largeness of heart and wisdom above all others (*1Kings 4:29-34*).

Men from the courts of all the kings of the earth came to hear his wisdom. But Solomon's Son, Jesus Christ, was greater than Solomon.

When Jesus spoke, people were astonished by both His authority and graciousness (*Matthew 7:28-29; Luke 4:22*).

And Jesus could shut His enemies' mouths at will (*Matthew 22:46*).

How deep and flowing are you? Have you learned the Words of truth in order to give certain answers to those that ask (*Proverbs 22:17-21*)?

Have you meditated on God's Word to be able to answer enemies, teachers, and the ancients (*Psalms 119:98-100*)?

Do you study before answering a new matter (*Proverbs 15:28*)?

Have you learned how to answer every man graciously (*Colossians 4:6*)?

Have you shown your excellent spirit by restraining your speech (*Proverbs 17:27*)?

Have you sanctified the Lord God by exalting Him in your heart, so you can give a sound reason for your hope (*1Peter 3:15*)?

Do you trust Scripture as being sufficient to make the man of God perfect (*2Timothy 3:16-17*)?

Do you love others enough to discover their needs and help them (*1Thessalonians 5:14; Hebrews 3:12-13*)?

Are you spiritual enough to strengthen those who are weak around you (*Galatians 6:1; James 5:19-20*)?

Can you speak about the things of God to others, especially your children and grandchildren or those you influence (*Psalms 71:14-18; 78:1-8; Malachi 3:16*)?

Proverbs 18:5 It is not good to accept the person of the wicked, to overthrow the righteous in judgment.

Personalities, relationships, or gifts must be ignored when providing judgment (*Proverbs 17:15; 24:23; 28:21*).

Solomon gave his son a valuable rule for reigning justly. He had to ignore the persons in a controversy in order to judge rightly.

It is a shame that many allow personalities or relationships to affect their decisions, their standards, and their judgments.

**True Justice And Wisdom
Ignore Everything But The Issue At Hand
In Light Of God's Infallible Words!**

The lesson here is crucial for those in authority (*2Samuel 23:3; Isaiah 59:14*).

Justice must be dispensed, equitably and fairly, in order to maintain the integrity of the ruler and his office.

Whether a man makes judgments, in his home, or an employer in his business, or a leader in government, or a pastor in a church, the only criterion for the decision must be, "Thus saith the Lord." No other influences or factors can be allowed to enter the process.

Moses also taught the lesson to Israel (*Exodus 23:2; Leviticus 19:15; Deuteronomy 1:16-17; 16:19*).

And so did Jehoshaphat (*2Chronicles 19:7*).

Neither rich nor poor were to be protected. Great men were not to be favored. Intimidating men were not to be feared. Bribes were to be rejected. Public opinion was to be ignored.

God's laws were to be applied righteously, without extraneous factors affecting the decision. Israel often failed in the duty (*Micah 7:3*).

**History And Reality Prove That Many
Will Compromise For Little!**

Pilate crucified the Lord of glory against his and his wife's better judgment, because he wanted peace with the Jews and Caesar.

Modern politicians promise whatever will please the present crowd and obtain the needed votes.

Just a few constituents have intimidated a number of them to legitimize marriages of sodomites. They are servants to the whims of popular opinion.

Popular opinion is irrelevant, and following a majority is wrong (*Exodus 23:2; 32:21-24; 1Samuel 15:24*).

Yet modern politicians live by polls, even the opinion of students, the most foolish strata of a society, in order to please the crowd. Democracy is insanity!

God gifted leaders and ordained their offices to save society from the majority! Leaders must choose righteousness, truth, and wisdom for them!

When has the majority, the lowest common denominator of humanity, ever chosen justice over their bellies, fears, or superstitions?

God does not respect persons, and neither should you (*Job 34:19; Psalm 82:1-5*).

Respect of persons is compromise due to affection, preference, relationship, or benefit from a party.

Only the Word of God should determine what is right in your actions and decisions (*Psalm 119:128*).

Paul charged Timothy to discharge his ministry without personal preferences or partiality (*1Timothy 5:21*).

Even church members cannot be preferential to visitors (*James 2:1-13*).

**A Great Goal For A Christian
Is To Have A Reputation
Of Absolute Righteousness!**

That means he always chooses righteousness, ignoring personalities or relationships. This must be practiced at home with children, at work with colleagues or subordinates, in church business and hospitality, and in all your dealings with others.

Though you may have enemies, they should know that you have and would treat them fairly. Can your children come to you confidently, even when they have erred, knowing you will be perfectly fair?

If a man lets personalities or relationships affect his judgment, he has no character or integrity. He would corrupt justice for a piece of bread (*Proverbs 28:21*)!

No matter the excuse, his actions are an abomination to God, an offence to justice, a threat to society, a blot on authority, a hinderer of holiness, a promoter of sin, and an accomplice with the devil!

If a man lets personalities or relationships affect his judgment, he has no right to any position of influence, power, or respect. Good men should despise him (*Psalm 15:4*).

How is your heart in this matter of respecting persons? Do you passionately hate the very thought of corrupting justice and judgment for personal feelings or benefit?

Are you fully committed to think right, speak right, and do right, no matter who the parties are in a controversy?

How is your reputation for fairness and impartiality? Is it perfect and noteworthy before God and men (*1Samuel 18:28-30*)? Anything less stinks (*Ecclesiastes 10:1*)!

You Will Soon Face Jesus Christ.

You may have influenced and manipulated other weaklings like yourself during life. But God has ordained Jesus Christ to judge the world, in righteousness, a day that is rapidly approaching (*Acts 17:29-31*).

The Lord Jesus' judgment, will be in pure equity and righteousness. His sentence will be absolute and final.

You will not be able to sway Him in the least with tears, excuses, threats, comparisons, or pleadings. Humble yourself before Him and beg for mercy before it is too late!

Proverbs 18:6 A fool's lips enter into contention, and his mouth calleth for strokes.

A fool prefers talking to listening, especially when being corrected.

A fool would rather argue and contradict than humble himself to instruction.

A fool lacking respect for authority and others, he speaks out when he ought to be silent.

A fool's rebellious speech leads to fighting, and his inappropriate remarks beg for punishment.

Here is another common theme in Solomon's Proverbs, ruling your speech.

The tongue is a powerful thing; it can be used for good or evil, life or death (*Proverbs 18:21*).

A wise man studies to answer (*Proverbs 15:28*).

A wise man is slow to speak and says no more than necessary (*Proverbs 17:27-28*).

But a fool pours out foolishness, letting everyone know he is a fool.

Fools cannot control their mouths (*Ecclesiastes 10:12-14*).

Fools talk a lot. They talk without thinking; and they talk when they should not.

Fools are disrespectful and irritating. They question things that are not to be questioned; they wrangle about words to no profit. "*A fool's mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul*" (*Proverbs 8:7*).

Fools have no discretion. They do not know that different situations call for different words and tones.

Fools just plow ahead verbally, like the proverbial bull in a china shop.

Fools have a quarrelsome approach to conversation that is offensive and confrontational, resulting in hurt feelings, contention, and strife. They cause fights, and just deserve to be beaten!

Solomon taught that soft answers turn away wrath and end fights (*Proverbs 15:1*).

Consider Gideon's wisdom, as he flattered Ephraim to take away their anger at not being invited to the early stages of the battle (*Judges 8:1-3*).

Wise men know such discretion, but fools can never learn it.

There is only one way to teach a fool, by many stripes from a rod (*Proverbs 26:3*).

Paul commanded saints to always speak with grace (*Colossians 4:6; Ephesians 4:29*).

If any salty correction or debate is needed, only a small amount is to be used. Wide-open debate and wrangling are wrong (*1Tim 6:3-5; Titus 3:9*).

Saints do not argue with extended blustery exchanges about anything!

Once a fool has been corrected, no more air or words should be wasted on him (*Proverbs 26:4-5*).

Let him fall into his ditch (*Matthew 7:6; 15:12-14*).

But fools will always be meddling. They want to question everything. They want to argue any and every point. They want to object. They always want to get their two-cents in.

Fools want to remember past offences. They want to correct details. They want to whisper about others. They are saucy and insolent.

Fools are critical and negative. They are crude and rude. They are fools, they cause contention and fights, they deserve to be beaten severely.

Proverbs 18:7 A fool's mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul.

**Guard Your Speech At Any Cost!
Talk Too Much, Than Cut Your Words In Half!**

If you cannot say something edifying and gracious, say nothing at all!

A fool cannot control his speech. It often gets him in trouble. His speech traps him in sin. Much of the pain in his life is because of words he should not have said.

Training Your Lips Can Save Your Life!

Solomon used simple figures of speech, metonymy in this case, to make a powerful point in a few Words.

Mouth and lips, the means of talking, refer to a fool's speech. "*Destruction*" and "*snare*" are metaphors for pain and trouble he causes himself.

Ruling your speech is important to avoid the fool's destruction (***Proverbs 12:13; 13:3; Ecclesiastes 10:11-14***).

Solomon tried to perfect his son. He knew unguarded speech could ruin his peace, his reputation, or his wealth.

In the context, Solomon opposed contentious words that cause fighting and talebearing that wounds others (***Proverbs 18:6; 18:8***).

Solomon warned elsewhere against the snare of cosigning loans (***Proverbs 6:1-5***).

Words can cause life or death, depending on their use (***Proverbs 18:21***).

Tongues often cause mischief to others; but this Proverb shows mischief to the speaker himself.

Saul and Herod brought snares on their own souls by foolish words (***1Samuel 14:24-46; Mark 6:21-29***).

Gideon whipped the men of Succoth with thorns for their speech, and Elisha cursed 42 children for theirs.

The slander of Daniel's peers cost them their own lives, and So did the prepared speeches of Ananias and Sapphira.

Reader, do you grasp the warning? Have you spoken harshly, and then regretted it? Have you committed to do something, and then wished you had not?

Have you lied to protect yourself, only to find you had grievously complicated matters? Have you been disrespectful and wished you could get your words back?

Sin multiplies with the number of words spoken (***Proverbs 10:19***).

And you will give an account of every idle word (***Matthew 12:36***).

How can you save your life from destruction? Cut your words in half (***Proverbs 17:27-28***).

Listen eagerly; speak reluctantly. Be quick to hear, but slow to speak (***James 1:19***).

Say only kind and positive things about others (***Ephesians 4:29***).

Let your speech be always with grace, and use critical speech only as seasoning (***Colossians 4:6***).

Replace foolish talking and jesting with giving thanks (***Ephesians 5:4***).

Never speak evil of those in authority (***Deuteronomy 27:16; Jude 1:8***).

Ask God for help. David prayed, "*Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips*" (***Psalms 141:3***).

And again David said, "*Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer*" (***Psalms 19:14***).

Proverbs 18:8 The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.

Talebearing Is Spreading News About Someone Else!

Talebearing hurts the reputation of whom it is told, and the man hearing it loses esteem from his friend. It does not matter that the information is true. It is still talebearing.

Talebearing is a common sin, and the effects are very damaging with deep, long lasting consequences. The pain occurs in the most inner parts, the heart and soul (***Proverbs 20:27, 30***).

Here is another sin of many but now forgotten in our generation. Passing on news about someone is commonplace.

Our nation no longer condemns gossip and tattling, synonyms for the sin in our Proverb, which our nation did just a few decades ago.

This Proverb has a twin for emphasis (***Proverbs 26:22***). And see the comments on ***Proverbs 11:13***.

Talebearing is the same as backbiting and whispering in the Bible, all three of which are condemned as great sins.

God commanded Israel, "*Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people*" (***Leviticus 19:16***).

The damage of spreading secrets is deep and painful. It will often be almost impossible to correct your sin.

If you are a talebearer, you have wounded the character and reputation of another. How will you repair it?

This sin is the rape of a man's name and person, which can last a lifetime, so the Bible warns against it often (*Proverbs 12:18; 16:28; 26:20-22; Psalm 64:3-4; Romans 1:29-30*).

Telling personal information about others has become well accepted. It is honored as excellence in news reporting by the media.

There are radio and television programs and Internet sites dedicated to spreading rumors and news about people, especially those in authority.

This is one of the chief signs, of a degenerate condition, of our generation.

A talebearer tells secrets (*Proverbs 20:19*).

Talebearers cannot keep the news to themselves. They want to spread secrets to damage the character and standing of another person or to foolishly gratify curiosity and be perceived as an informed person.

Both motives are from hell! **If** you have a problem with something being done, tell it to them alone (*Proverbs 25:9; Matthew 18:15*).

If two in the office often have lunch together, that is between them and God! He will judge. It is none of your business, and to whisper about it, is to be guilty of this sin.

What do you do, when you hear things like these: a neighbor gets a divorce, a secretary in purchasing might be a lesbian, a church member gets a speeding ticket, a cousin is pregnant out of wedlock, or there is suspicion the former mayor committed suicide?

This Proverb does not prevent talking to authorities. Calling the police about suspicious activities is not talebearing.

Reporting a crime is not talebearing. Those in authority have a need for the information. Every sincere reader knows, we are dealing with a common sin.

Christian reader, it is your calling to put on Christ Jesus in your thoughts toward your brother or neighbor (*Colossians 3:12-17*).

Your love for them, their name, their position, and their friendship should put a guard on your tongue. Your goal should be to build them up, not tear them down.

Proverbs 18:9 He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster.

Men fail financially for two major reasons.

1. Some are lazy: they do not apply themselves with passionate zeal and diligence to their professions.

They never make much. See the comments on *Proverbs 6:11*.

2. Some waste the higher income they make by hard work.

They risk it in foolish ventures and spend it for pleasures. See the comments on *Proverbs 6:7* and *Proverbs 12:27*.

Lazy men, who may take care of their few assets, often despise the waste of hardworking men. And diligent men, who may be wasteful in squandering their income, often despise the slothfulness of men more careful than themselves.

But these men are brothers! Both faults are sins; both faults bring financial ruin; both faults deserve great shame.

There is no virtue in diligence, **If** a diligent man wastes his greater productivity by foolish risk-taking and overspending.

And there is no virtue in careful financial management, **If** the cautious man is too lazy to produce as much as he could.

These men are brothers! They come from the same family, financial and professional ruin!

What is your temptation? Under-working? Overspending? Or both? Either of these two financial errors will ruin you.

Stop and consider your folly today! Rather than justify yourself by despising the man with the other fault, despise yourself by admiring the man without your fault! Make a change! Work harder! Or waste less! Or do both!

Diligent men work hard. They apply themselves with effort and persistence.

Diligent men rise rapidly in their professions; their income levels are high.

But diligent men often complain about the high cost of living, though the real problem is the cost of high living.

Diligent men squander their income by excessive spending (*Proverbs 12:27; 21:17, 20; 23:20-21*).

Diligent men lose their assets by foolish speculation (*Proverbs 6:1-5; 28:19-20, 22*).

Solomon condemned both kinds of waste.

Diligent men are prudent. They will pinch a dime. They avoid most investments, for they trust nothing. They look for bargains; they live frugally.

Careful men are prudent. They do not take risks; they are content with little; they stretch a dollar. But they often have little, for they do not grasp the reward of hard labor (*Proverbs 10:4; 12:11, 27; 13:4; 20:4, 13; 22:29*).

Careful men apply the same stingy mentality in work habits, they pace themselves and work without passion.

These two errors steal success from men. Are you slothful in your business? Or do you waste the increase from your labor? Or are you guilty of both?

Hate both faults, for they are equally foolish sins. Be diligent and zealous in your efforts; and be conservative in your spending. Waste nothing. And remember that both rules apply to your soul as well.

Proverbs 18:10 The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.

When you are afraid, what kind of a tower do you want for protection and safety?

The LORD is a strong tower in fearful times. You can run into it and be safe, whenever you need it. Nothing can breach it. His name is the LORD, and there is no other place for protection from danger.

Lay hold of this Proverb by faith reader; it will save your life. It is not merely the LORD's name that is a strong tower, for His name has no magical properties for wicked men.

It is the God by whose name we know Him that is meant here. It is the LORD Himself, with all His glorious attributes and perfections, that is meant here.

He is the living and true God, Creator of heaven and earth, Father of the fatherless, and Judge of the widow. Yes, it is that God. His name is the LORD.

What is His name? What is that LORD with all capital letters? Is it a quaint anachronism of the King James translators?

Consider this carefully, you who love the LORD. Those four capital letters stand for the sacred tetragrammaton of Israel. God revealed Himself to Moses as I AM THAT I AM.

The Jews regarded this name unspeakable. They wrote it as a tetragram of four consonants, JHVH.

It is pointed out with vowels from other Hebrew names of God, Elohim and Adonai, to be written and pronounced as Jehovah! The capitalized LORD means Jehovah, which is I AM THAT I AM.

Is this God a strong tower? There is no other God but Him! The gods of the nations are the devilish imaginations of ignorant pagans. They are stumps wood, stones, animals, and insects. They must be carried about from place to place.

Jehovah ridicules them repeatedly, and He considers those who worship them to be just as ignorant.

How strong is the tower? Trust ye in the LORD forever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength (*Isaiah 26:3-4*)!

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob knew Him as the Almighty God. He revealed Himself further to Moses (*Exodus 6:3*).

Hagar named Him, "*Thou God seest me*" (*Genesis 16:13*).

None have ever been lost who put their trust in Him! "*A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation*" (*Psalms 68:5*).

Let David be your example. Call upon the LORD in your troubles, and let Him rescue you (*Psalms 18:1-6*).

He was David's rock, fortress, deliverer, God, strength, buckler, horn, and high tower (*Proverbs 18:2*).

David said, "*I will love thee, O LORD, my strength*" (*Proverbs 18:1*).

He rescues the righteous like this: "*Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because he was wrath. There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it. He bowed the heavens also, and came down: and darkness was under his feet. And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly: yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind. He made darkness his secret place; his pavilion round about him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies*" (*Psalms 18:7-11*).

Do you think Allah can do such things? Or the Great Spirit of the Plains Indians? Or the sacred dog of the Egyptians? Or the water bug from heaven of the Ethiopians?

If you don't like making fun of the ridiculous false gods of the heathen, then either you need to read the Bible or find a new religion, for Jehovah takes pleasure in ridiculing the pitiful pretenders of pagan religion.

None compare to Him! Check out: **1Kings 18:27; Psalms 115:1-8; 135:15-18; Isaiah 40:18-20; 44:9-20; 46:1-9; Jeremiah 10:1-5.**

Habakkuk 2:18-20 "Woe unto him that saith to the wood, Awake; to the dumb stone, Arise, it shall teach! Behold, it is laid over with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all in the midst of it. But the LORD is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him."

Having tired of manmade idols of wood and stone, the world's pagans have outdone themselves with new inventions.

The Muslims worship Allah, the moon god of the Arabians (note the crescent moon on top of every mosque).

The Hindus have narrowed down their million gods to the unholy trinity of Shiva (destroyer), Brahma (creator), and Vishnu (preserver). None of these know the LORD at all.

Rejecting the ridiculous pagan deities of the Muslims and Hindus, the Russian Communists worshipped a skinny man named Vladimir Lenin; and the Chinese Communists worshipped a fat man named Mao Tse Tung. The devils know all these imposters from Mao to Allah, and they laugh all the way to hell!

But there is one Man the devils fear more than all gods, angels, and men combined. And it isn't Joseph Smith, Muhammed, or the Pope. **It is the Man Jesus of Nazareth.**

When He was on earth in a state of great humility, they ran and worshipped Him repeatedly; and they begged Him not to torment them before their appointed time of final judgment.

Now exalted at the right hand of God, He is far above all of them, preparing to use them as a footstool and consign them to an eternity in the Lake of Fire.

Nor do we stoop to Babylonian and Roman superstition and pray to Mary. She is neither a tower nor strong.

She could not even help herself. Mary needed a Savior as much as any woman, as she told her cousin Elizabeth (**Luke 1:46-49**).

She knew she was a lowly handmaiden and the object of blessing, not a giver of blessings. Jesus said His mother was no more important than any believer (**Luke 11:27-28; Matthew 12:46-50**).

Nor do we pray to saints, for they are dead and buried to this day. They cannot help. They are no tower of safety. Forget their names.

The Catholics invent them as fast as the Hindus invent new gods. The names of both are worthless. Mother Theresa? She couldn't climb 20 feet of rope, if her life depended on it. Call on the LORD!

Your parents, pastor, pope, or priest are no better. They cannot help you. They need a strong tower as much or more than you.

There is only one name by which we must be saved; there is only one name that is above every name; there is only one name that is a strong tower. It is the name of Jesus, before which every knee shall bow (**Philippians 2:9-11**).

When you close your prayers to God "in Jesus name," you invoke the highest name in the universe (**Philippians 2:9-11**).

For you are using the name that means the LORD Jehovah is salvation (**Matthew 1:21**).

Now that is a strong tower! You will be safe in it!

Let it be known forever that Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah of Israel, the Christ of God, is Jehovah Himself, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, the Blessed and Only Potentate, Immanuel, the Word of God! He is LORD; and He is Lord of all!

Dear Christian reader, **If** you know the LORD. He is your strong tower. He will save you from any and every danger. "*Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us. Selah*" (**Psalms 62:8**).

"The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them" (**Psalms 34:7**).

Run to Him! There is no help anywhere else! But do not run to Him with un-confessed sin, for He will not hear (**Proverbs 15:8, 29; 28:9; Psalm 66:18; Isaiah 1:15; James 4:3**).

God is not mocked by such profane prayers or worship; **If** you have rejected His warnings, He may laugh at your calamity (**Proverbs 1:20-32**).

No matter what your fears or troubles, in time or eternity, the LORD is your strong tower, and He will save you. "*Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved*" (**Acts 4:12**).

"And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death" (**Revelation 1:17-18**).

"And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS" (Revelation 19:11-16).

"If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you" (1Corinthians 16:22-23).

Proverbs 18:11 The rich man's wealth is his strong city, and as an high wall in his own conceit.

Rich men trust their money for safety.

Rich men think they can buy their way out of trouble. Their conceit deceives them!

Rich men cannot postpone death; they cannot take a cent with them; and the Judge of all the earth will soon meet them and God cannot be bribed!

The rich think themselves secure from all enemies, as if in a strong city; they imagine the city has a high wall to repulse even the most aggressive attackers. But it is the deceitfulness, of this conceited thinking, that destroys them!

Cancer has no regard for money; neither does Father Time. Trouble will breach the wall; death will storm the city; and the final judgment of God will sweep it all away!

We will not fully appreciate this Proverb, without reading the one before it. There we read, *"The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe" (Proverbs 18:10).*

What a difference between the righteous and rich! The righteous seek safety in the LORD, while the rich look to their money for protection. See the comments on ***Proverbs 18:10.***

Can the rich buy themselves safety? They can hire a crop duster to spray their property for mosquitoes! They can post bond for a prodigal son!

The rich can buy politicians to get laws helping their businesses! They can pay the best doctors for a nearly perfect facelift!

The rich might even be able to pay the ransom to get a young child back from kidnappers!

The Rich Man Lives The Arrogant Of A Conqueror

Rich men eat at the best restaurants, flies first class, and has a chauffeur.

Rich man doesn't worry about unemployment, braces for the children, his failing parents, paying the mortgage off, getting the kids through school, or anything else.

The rich man thinks he has it made, until he dies and wakes up naked in the blinding light of the Judge of all flesh, who has no regard for rich men!

David wrote about these men and their insane thinking (*Psalm 49:6-14*).

They cannot buy off death for any in their family. They presume death will not strike them like others.

The rich see great estates settled when rich men die, but they ignore the warnings and continue in arrogance.

The rich name buildings and parks after themselves to promote their honor. They die like hyenas and rot in the grave, but their beneficiaries approve their lifestyle! Fools!

Jesus described a haughty rich man, who had more abundance than he could store. He conceitedly boasted he would build bigger barns to hold it all, and he would then begin his luxurious retirement in total security for many years. But our Lord said to him, *"Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" (Luke 12:20).*

Wise reader, reject any confidence in riches that come your way (*Psalm 62:10; 1Timothy 6:17*).

Do not seek them, as they have damned many souls before you (*1Timothy 6:6-10*).

Choose wise Agur's prayer as your own, and be content with food convenient for your needs (*Proverbs 30:8*).

Wise reader, build instead, your confidence in the LORD by good works (*Proverbs 18:10; 1Timothy 6:19*).

Proverbs 18:12 Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, and before honour is humility.

**Destruction Or Honor
Is A Choice.**

**Pride Guarantees Destruction
Humility Brings Honor.**

This is no mere philosophical speculation about the dangers of arrogance and pride. This is inspired wisdom of the certain consequences of not humbling yourself before God.

This law here is more certain than gravity. **If** you think highly of yourself, you are headed for trouble (***Proverbs 16:18***).

If you think lowly of yourself, you will be raised up (***Proverbs 15:33***).

Do not deceive yourself! You cannot stop this rule from affecting your life.

If you are arrogant, haughty, or proud, personal destruction is in your future.

If you choose to humble yourself before God, you will be honored. The truth is certain.

If you think you can avoid these consequences, your pride is already pushing you rebelliously toward destruction.

There are three forces at work to guarantee this two-sided law.

First, there is the divine force of God's jealousy and justice. The Lord will not allow a man to think too highly of himself. God hates pride (***Proverbs 6:16-17***).

God especially hates pride in sinful men. He will supernaturally bring a proud man down, or He will lift a humble man up.

Pharaoh said, "*Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go*" (***Exodus 5:2***).

Of course, those were his famous last words, as God destroyed his nation, assets, firstborn, the army of chariots, and then him! God irresistibly imposed His will on that man and brought him down to destruction.

But consider another king. Solomon said, "*And now, O LORD my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father: and I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in*" (***1Kings 3:7***).

Here is great humility, as the young king freely admitted his ignorance. God gave him wisdom, riches, peace, and long life for this humble prayer!

Second, there is the human force of man's judgment. Even natural men cannot stand an arrogant man, a haughty or proud man.

Men will do what they can to avoid him, reject him, or take him down. They are angered by his pompous attitude and cocky spirit. But they are quite happy to promote and reward a man who humbly confesses he is nothing.

Third, there is the personal force of self-deceit. A haughty man cannot see clearly. His excessive confidence causes him to make bad decisions.

He rushes ahead in hasty zeal only to find that his pride caused him to miss a serious danger. But a humble man, not trusting himself, will analyze matters thoroughly before acting.

Pride was the sin of the devil (***1Timothy 3:6***).

Because of his pride, God reserved the lowest place in the universe for him, the depths of hell! Satan will suffer eternal destruction and the most frightful torments forever!

Humility was the glorious character of Jesus of Nazareth, Whom God has highly exalted above everything forever (***Philippians 2:5-11***).

Examine yourself reader! Hate any lofty thought! Tell the Lord and any who will hear, that you are nothing and probably less than nothing, and do it sincerely!

Tell the Lord you are a little child needing His help for the simplest tasks. Get off your high horse and get down, with those the world despises as lower class (***Romans 12:16***).

Stop protecting yourself and sheltering yourself! Become humble, and He will raise you up! Lift yourself up, and He will crush you!

And "*God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time*" (***1Peter 5:5-6***).

Proverbs 18:13 He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.

Wisdom listens carefully, and answers slowly.

A hasty response is neither intelligent nor wise, it is foolish and shameful.

Comprehending accurately and answering rightly is far more important than answering quickly.

You have two ears to hear, but only one mouth to speak; let these proportions dictate your emphasis.

Be swift to hear, and slow to speak. Make sure you know every situation fully before making a judgment or giving an answer.

Reader, are you a good listener? Wisdom listens well, because: It must gather all the facts forming an explanation or impacting a situation. It must sort through and discard the details not affecting the matter and focus only on those that are important.

The man already thinking about his answer or worse yet, already talking, has foolishly cut short his gathering of information. He is a fool. You will meet many of them. Make sure you are not one!

Are you a slow speaker? Wisdom is careful, guarded, and reserved in giving of opinions.

Wisdom knows that haste makes waste, especially in thinking and speaking.

Wisdom knows that prudent analysis to circumspectly consider, all angles is very important, before speaking.

Wisdom knows that the first thoughts may not be the best thoughts.

Wisdom knows that wise men study to answer, but the mouths of wicked men pour out foolishness without studying (*Proverbs 15:28*).

Ahasuerus and Darius hastily approved wicked proposals. The first agreed to exterminate a people before knowing his wife was among them; the second condemned his most faithful aide to lions for the mere envy of his colleagues. And foolish Haman, if he had asked what Ahasuerus was reading, he might have toned down the parade to kill Mordecai!

**Righteous Judgment
Not Judging By Appearance
But By Substance
(John 7:24).**

Only foolish men rush to judgment without all the facts, with merely suppositional evidence.

Even the Jews and Romans, as quick and severe as their systems of justice were, allowed a man to speak for himself before judgment was passed (*John 7:51; Acts 25:16; 26:1*).

The man (or woman) who talks immediately, or who talks almost constantly, is a fool. You can find them easily. Listen to any conversation. The one answering before a matter is fully told, or answering without due

deliberation, or answering frivolously or emotionally, is a fool. They say it plainly. Make sure you are not like them. (*Ecclesiastes 5:3; 10:3*).

Fewer words are better. Others will esteem you wise, even if you are not (*Proverbs 17:27-28*).

You will save yourself much sin (*Proverbs 10:19; James 3:2*).

Quick speaking, with slow hearing is folly (*Proverbs 14:29; 29:20*).

Quick hearing, with slow speaking is wisdom (*James 1:19-20*).

Proverbs 18:14 The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?

**Your Spirit
Is A Two-Edged Sword!**

Your spirit can cut away life's troubles and leave you happy on top of the world. Or it can bleed your soul to where your pain cannot be described.

A wounded spirit is much more painful than a wounded body, as the spirit is more vital to our existence than the body.

If you allow any difficulty or sorrow to gain the victory over your spirit, the pain can be intolerable. Fools will seek the comfort of death!

**Your Spirit Ruled And Directed By Wisdom
Can Help You Survive Any Difficulty!**

Your spirit allowed to rule you when wounded, it is unbearable to you and others.

However, ruled and directed by the Spirit of God, you can be cheerful in any adversity. Allowed to run free, it can and will drive even sober and wise men to suicide. Are you ruling your spirit today?

Natural men have done incredible things under horrible stress, pain, danger, and difficulty by a strong and courageous spirit.

Their exploits are wonderful to read, but a Christian can do better! For the knowledge of present reality and future expectations, and the sustaining help of the Spirit of Christ, are things the wicked know nothing about.

Ruling your spirit is the best evidence of Christian maturity.

Fighting heretics or troubles on the outside is easy. Ruling a melancholy spirit on the inside is much more difficult.

Growing in grace and bearing the Spirit's fruit will result in the wise rule of your spirit.

**Will A Godly Man Please Stand Up!
Will A Virtuous Woman Please Stand Up!**

Nothing you do in life is as important as ruling your spirit. **If** you let it rule, you lose (*Proverbs 25:28*).

If you rule your spirit, you are greater than a man who takes a city himself (*Proverbs 16:32*).

When Job ruled his spirit, he blessed the Lord, though his life was falling to pieces (*Job 1:20-22*).

When Job let his spirit run wild with thoughts about his reversal of fortune, he cursed the day he was born and wished he were dead (*Job 3:1-26*).

What did Job do wrong? What happened between *Job 1:20-22* and *3:1*? He thought too much!

Negative self-reflection is ungodly and unproductive. Self-examination is good, but self-reflection leading to self-pity, anger, and depression is destructive.

Job should have fasted and prayed and asked his friends to join him (*James 5:13*).

Instead, he let melancholy reflection take him straight to folly (*Job 2:11-13*).

When David faced his greatest crisis in running for his life from Saul, when his own friends wanted to stone him, he "*encouraged himself in the Lord his God*" (*1Samuel 30:6*).

And David's true friend, Jonathan, strengthened his hand in God. Here was a true friend, in great contrast to Job's three miserable comforters. (*1Samuel 23:16*).

A man ruling his spirit, in the fear and joy of the Lord has a continual feast, regardless of circumstances; but a man allowing his spirit to be afflicted can find evil in every day (*Proverbs 15:15*)!

Ruling your spirit with joy, brings a cheerful disposition, but unchecked sorrow, breaks the spirit (*Proverbs 15:13*).

What a horrible choice! A merry heart heals the soul, but a broken spirit will dry up your life. See the comments on *Proverbs 17:22*.

It is possible to dance in economic collapse (*Habakkuk 3:17-19*)!

Peter and John, rejoiced to be beaten by the Jews (*Acts 5:40-43*)!

Stephen prayed for his murderers (*Acts 7:60*)!

Paul and Silas sang in a dungeon (*Acts 16:25*)!

Paul had a picnic in a storm at sea (*Acts 27:33-36*)!

The martyrs, from Abel to current persecutions in Muslim nations, have suffered the most horrendous tortures with cheerful, overcoming spirits by keeping their hearts focused on Jesus Christ by His Spirit. The world is not worthy of these great spirits.

Like a spoiled child! King Ahab pouted in bed, with his face to the wall and refused to eat, because he couldn't have Naboth's vineyard (*1Kings 21:4*).

Let no Christian man, act like this toward wife or family, for you mark yourself a very wicked man (*1Kings 21:25*).

Even Elijah was subject to depression after his great victory over the prophets of Baal, when he wished for death (*1Kings 19:4*).

We learn Elijah's passions were normal; yet being cast down and destroyed are two very different things (*2Corinthians 4:8-11; James 5:17*).

A ruled spirit might be discouraged, but it should not turn to sinful melancholy excesses of self-pity.

The early days of World War II, cost the British enormous losses of ships and crews by German U-boats.

Seeking to save lives in the horrific events at sea, they discovered that older, more experienced men had a higher survival rate than younger men more physically fit sailors. More years of life's hardships fortified the spirits of the older men and gave them an advantage over the younger men in survival situations.

The head of this research, Kurt Hahn, applied this knowledge in forming the Outward Bound training program, which increases a person's fortitude by controlled, progressively more difficult challenges.

This principle of building the spirit was revealed much earlier than 1941, for the Lord builds our faith and patience (enduring of difficulties) the same way.

God carefully prepares afflictions and trials to increase our spirit's strength (*James 1:2-4; Romans 5:3-5*).

God makes sure you will not face any temptation today, where you cannot escape and be defeated (*1Corinthians 10:13*).

Paul could face great adversity and personal infirmities by the knowledge that Christ's grace would sustain him (*2Corinthians 12:7-10*).

Cannot we do the same, knowing that all things work together for good to them that love God and are called according to His purpose (*Romans 8:28*)?

We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us (*Romans 8:35-37*)!

The Lord is able to heal our broken hearts and bind up our wounds (*Psalms 147:3*).

Sin will destroy a right spirit, but confession can restore our spirit (*Psalms 51:10*).

David groaned under the Lord's heavy hand of chastening (*Psalms 32:1-5; 38:1-11; 39:11; 51:8*).

But confession and repentance bring refreshment, favor, and joy (*Job 33:19-30*).

Sin not confessed can bring hell this side of eternity that cannot be told. Cain's pain was "greater than he could bear" (*Genesis 4:13*).

Saul's black despair drove him to consult a witch in his great grief (*1Samuel 28:15*).

Ahithophel and Judas chose hanging as the cure for their pain (*2Samuel 17:23; Matthew 27:3-5*).

They tasted only a drop of what hell is like, but the excruciating torture of that punishment was far too much. How much more the full dose of eternity!

Reader, do you rule your spirit? Do your spouse and family know the little setbacks of life, that put you in an irritable mood or silent depression, when you snap at others or ignore them in your selfish withdrawal?

What folly! What childishness! Grow up, today! Your spirit is a pain to have around, and it is a sin when it is not ruled! Rule your spirit today! They and you will benefit.

Saints may experience heaviness through many afflictions and manifold temptations, but the Lord will deliver out of them all (*Psalms 34:19; 1Peter 1:6*).

Joy Will Come In The Morning!

Our Lord faced greater darkness, adversity, and agony in Gethsemane than our little minds can even imagine, with sweat like blood dropping from His brow.

Our Lord found comfort and strength in doing His Father's will (*Luke 22:41-44; Mark 13:43-44*).

Our Lord looked ahead to the joy set before Him, and He endured the calamities (*Psalms 16:8-11; Hebrews 12:1-4*).

Will you crumble today from slow traffic? Too many projects at home? A disappointing career? A bad hair

day? A frustrating day at the office? A few pounds overweight? A disappointing spouse or child? A fiery dart from hell, pointing out that you are a loser?

Let the shame of these questions drive you to joy and strength in the Lord, for the thought of such insignificant things wounding the brothers of Christ is disgusting and ridiculous!

If you have a melancholy spirit bent to inward thinking, take precautions. Stop thinking, and go do what you should be doing, now!

Get outside yourself. Blocking out others is foolish: you need them. Use your spouse, family, and brethren for counsel and comfort. Go to the Lord in prayer and find His peace that passes all understanding (*Philippians 4:6-7*).

Keep your heart with all diligence *Proverbs 4:23*.

Rejoice, and again I say, rejoice. Earth has no sorrow that heaven cannot heal. Cross-references: *Proverbs 20:27*

Proverbs 18:15 The heart of the prudent getteth knowledge; and the ear of the wise seeketh knowledge.

Some Have Heart And Ears For Knowledge But They Are Very Rare.

Some men are great and noble men of the earth. Most men have neither a heart nor ears for knowledge. They have no craving for it, and they do not like the work of listening to acquire it. They are fools; and they are easily identified by their disregard for instruction and learning.

Solomon warned about pretenders. He said, "Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it?" (*Proverbs 17:16*).

Pretenders will join a church; they will say they desire knowledge; but they will never put forth the effort or the consistency that mark noble men as true seekers of wisdom (*Proverbs 18:1*). See the comments on *Proverbs 18:1*.

Reader, how important are the assemblies of the saints for you? Do you greedily crave them? Do you carefully prepare for them?

Reader, do you fervently pray for them? Do you come expecting a blessing? Do you joyfully anticipate the opening of the Word of God?

These are the marks of a prudent man's heart, and he will get yet more wisdom. There are many who consider assemblies a burden and nuisance; but they

will hate their wicked hearts in the Day of Judgment, when they are rejected and sent to eternal destruction (**Luke 16:27-31**).

Reader, how well do you listen to preaching? Do you sit near the front and let nothing distract you? Do you focus on every sentence? Do you absorb and consider each one?

Reader, do you apply each warning and rebuke to your own life? Do you commit to changes? Do you review the teaching later? These are marks of a wise man's ear, who seeks knowledge.

Preaching bores many, so they sleep through sermons; but they will rue the day they disregarded what they heard with their wicked ears in the Day of Judgment, when they are rejected (**2Thessalonians 2:9-14**).

There are few Bereans. *"These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so"* (**Acts 17:11**).

Consider their ears. They received Paul's preaching with all readiness, they were eager hearers.

Consider their hearts. They searched the scriptures daily to confirm his Word, they had a fervent passion for learning.

Consider the spirit of these wise and prudent ones. They are not content with their knowledge: they want more! But the fool thinks he already knows it all (**Proverbs 12:15; 18:2; 28:26**)!

A wise man is never content: the more he learns, the more he wants to learn (**Proverbs 1:5; 9:9; 15:14**).

Our Lord grew in wisdom before God and men, because the Lord opened his ear, which heard as the ear of the learned, and He was not disobedient to instruction (**Isaiah 50:4-5**).

Proverbs 18:16 A man's gift maketh room for him, and bringeth him before great men.

Gifts are powerful. Solomon knew their power for good or evil. He warned against bribes to corrupt justice and pervert judgment (**Proverbs 17:8, 23; 19:6**).

Solomon also knew gifts served a noble purpose in obtaining favor and rewarding kindness (**1Kings 5:1-12; 10:1-13**).

The Proverb speaks of a man's gift making room for him, opening doors of opportunity and privilege that were otherwise off limits.

A nice tip to the maitre d' will often get you superior seating or open tables that were closed moments before. No performance is sold out for the right price! Every inn has room when the gift is appropriate!

The Proverb speaks of a man's gift bringing him before great men. A gift gains entrance to the presence of those superior to the giver.

A pharmaceutical salesman can have a few minutes with a physician for a gift to the nurses. The president of a bank will entertain large depositors, and a senator will golf with you for a sizable campaign contribution.

However, the power of gifts can be abused. To give or receive a gift for the purpose of corrupting justice is bribery. It is a terrible sin for both giver and receiver.

God condemned bribes (**Exodus 23:8; Deuteronomy 16:19; Psalm 26:10; Isaiah 5:23; Ezekiel 22:12; Amos 5:12; Micah 7:3**).

Samuel's sons took bribes, but Samuel never did such a thing (**1Samuel 8:3; 12:3**).

Anyone in authority, faces the temptation to compromise his judgment for a gift or favor, given by one needing leniency.

Rulers are constantly offered benefits for promoting the cause of the giver.

Masters (employers) are bribed in various ways for job opportunities.

Pastors are flattered for mercy, and even fathers must overlook the favors of a disobedient child.

Gifts can be used for noble ends (**Proverbs 21:14**).

Abraham's servant found a bride for Isaac with gifts (**Genesis 24:53**).

Jacob used them to appease Esau (**Genesis 32:3-21**).

He also sent gifts for favor in Pharaoh's court (**Genesis 43:11-14**).

Ehud used a potential gift for his errand (**Judges 3:15-23**).

Abigail cooled David's heart with a needed gift for his men (**1Samuel 25:18, 35**).

There are two lessons:

First, gifts for bribes are evil, corrupting the foundations of justice. Gifts must not be given nor received. Men that do either cannot be trusted.

Second, gifts for favor must be judicious, without even an appearance or implication of compromise.

**The True And Living God
Is The Greatest Being In The Universe!**

Knowing God was made possible by the free gift of salvation obtained through Jesus Christ, who has fully and completely opened the way into God's presence (*Ephesians 2:18; Hebrews 4:14-16; 10:19-22*)!

Proverbs 18:17 He that is first in his own cause seemeth just; but his neighbour cometh and searcheth him.

Any man can sound reasonable, when he speaks first, and personally presses for his own cause.

The absence of contrary facts or counter opinions, and the emotional and fervent appeals, can give credence to most any claim.

But all important issues and weighty matters should be vetted by witnesses and knowledgeable opponents to prove their validity.

The Apostle Paul would wisely say, "*Prove all things; hold fast that which is good*" (*1Thessalonians 5:21*).

Politicians are notorious for doctored facts, extravagant claims, and moving sound bites; but their promises of prosperity should be exposed to public debate and the harsh reality of facts.

Trial lawyers make a great living, from exposing the lies of the guilty and false testimony, through contrary witnesses, expert opinions, and validation of evidence.

A rich man's conceit causes him to overstate matters that a wise poor man can often detect (*Proverbs 28:11*).

Reader, are you sure you are right in a dispute? Do you have an idea you want to pursue? Are you sure a proposition is valid? Are you confused by a testimony that doesn't match your experience?

Have you heard arguments you knew were wrong but sounded right? Here is a rule to remember: every cause should be scrutinized hard for validity and truthfulness.

Solomon inspired by the Holy Spirit, wrote this Proverb, to teach his son, wise discretion when judging accusations, declarations, and propositions.

This is wisdom, the power of right judgment! Truth can withstand intense examination, but most causes are not truth at all.

Challenging unsubstantiated claims will often expose them as false and frivolous. "*The simple believeth every word: but the prudent man looketh well to his going*" (*Proverbs 14:15*).

**Wise Men
Prove All Things.**

**Wise Men Are Not Impressed
With One Side Of Any Argument.**

Several expressions imply this Proverb, as a conflict of interests, unemotionally involved, third party involvement, arm's length transaction, cross-examination, devil's advocate, and so forth.

Our legal system is designed to make sure both sides of an argument are heard, and that both sides can cross-examine the other side's witnesses.

Wise men prove all things. The Jews and Romans allowed the accused to defend himself before judgment was passed (*John 7:51; Acts 25:16*).

The Law of Moses required diligent inquisition in all matters of hearsay and it would not accept the testimony of one man in any matter (*Deuteronomy 13:12-18; 17:2-7; 19:15*).

One of the great prerogatives of kings, or any person in authority, is to make such inquisitions (*Proverbs 25:2*).

Agrippa, Felix, and Festus wisely allowed Paul to defend himself against Tertullus and the Jews (*Acts 24-26*).

Wise men prove all things. Paul commended the noble Bereans for checking his preaching by the Scriptures (*Acts 17:11*).

Jesus commanded to judge righteous judgment, and not by just mere appearance (*John 7:24*).

Since every way of a man is right in his own eyes, a multitude of counselors, can save a man, from the deceit of being first in his own cause (*Proverbs 12:15; 15:22*).

Rather than hide from examination, wise men will expose their ideas to the challenges and questions of other knowledgeable men.

**A Little Knowledge To Believe
More Knowledge To Teach
A Great Deal Of Knowledge To Defend.**

Therefore, subjecting a controversy or opinion to careful scrutiny, is the wise way to protect yourself from the danger of your own heart (*Jeremiah 17:9*).

Prudent counselors will quickly determine the validity of your bright idea! If you rush ahead with your bright idea, your neighbor may put you to shame (*Proverbs 25:8*)!

Counselors learn to use only one ear when a spouse complains about their marriage, for they know that

every marriage has two spouses with two perspectives and two sets of facts.

Every man was given two ears, to listen to both sides of every situation! Haste in answering controversial matters after hearing only one side is utter folly (*Proverbs 18:13*).

Any attempt by a religious organization to keep their doctrine from scrutiny is highly dangerous. Hearers must prove all things by the Word of God (*Acts 17:11; 1Thessalonians 5:21*).

Rome did it for 1500 years by keeping the Scriptures from the laity and performing their services in Latin.

Every religious claim must be tried by the Word of God (*Psalms 119:128; Isaiah 8:20; 2Timothy 3:16-17*).

Here is wisdom! Do not be moved by the claims of anyone for anything until it is proven through a wise process of contrary witnesses, diligent inquisition, and cross-examination.

Do not proceed yourself in any controversy or new opinion without exposing it to the challenges and questions of wise counselors or opponents. Let truth reign!

Proverbs 18:18 The lot causeth contentions to cease, and parteth between the mighty.

If Men Cannot Solve A Dilemma God Can!

Men have faced decisions that were totally equal in their minds. In such cases, a faithful use of the lot decided for them.

Men that were not able to resolve disagreements among parties. In such cases, a faithful use of the lot peacefully ended the conflict. In both cases, God settled the confusion.

What is a lot? It is a chance event used to settle a dilemma. In our day, men might flip a coin, roll dice, or draw straws.

The purpose is to let the chance event choose a solution from two or more alternatives. In Bible times, the purpose and use of the lot were the same, though the actual items used for the lot may not have been coins, dice, or straws.

If a solution could not be reached by other means, a lot would end contentions, if all parties submitted to the method and outcome of the lot.

The "mighty" are mentioned, because rich and powerful parties are more prone to contention.

The "mighty" are more fierce and stubborn in it, have greater assets at risk.

The "mighty" are more able to continue lengthy conflicts. If the lot could settle differences of great men, then surely it was sufficient for the poor.

Are There Chance Events In The Universe? Yes, From Man's View! No, From God's View!

When you flip a coin, you cannot predict the result beyond probability mathematics, which is 100% ignorant and uncertain as to any specific outcome.

But God has already purposed the outcome of every lot and all so-called chance events in His secret sovereign will (*Deuteronomy 29:29*).

Just ask Ahab (*1Kings 22:28-37*)!

All lots are entirely disposed by God (*Proverbs 16:33*)!

There is a sovereign God in heaven, and wise men see His choices for their lives in the past and future. He did not ask if you wanted existence, or the conditions of it! And you cannot end it!

Wise men accept God's choices in the past (*Proverbs 22:2; Isaiah 45:9; 1Corinthians 4:7*).

Wise men humbly submit to God's will for the future (*James 4:13-15*).

Wise men tremble before God with such dreadful authority and power (*Job 42:1-6; Romans 9:20-21*).

Pagans have used the lot from antiquity. Without Scripture to guide them through life, they needed chance events to solve difficulties!

The Bible shows Persians, Mediterranean sailors, and Romans using the lot (*Esther 3:7; Jonah 1:7; Matthew 27:35*).

Of course, God used each lot to accomplish His own purpose, even though they were ignorant of Him!

Israel used the lot to find God's will for their national life. They used, the lot to select the scapegoat divide Canaan to ten tribes (*Leviticus 16:8; Numbers 33:54; Joshua 14:2; Acts 13:19*).

The lot found out and condemned Achan (*Joshua 7:16-19*).

The lot picked Saul as king, and found out Jonathan guilty (*1Samuel 10:20-24; 1Samuel 14:40-42*).

The lot gave cities to the Levites, settle the courses of the priests, and picked inhabitants for Jerusalem (*1Chronicles 6:63; 24:5, 31; Nehemiah 11:1*).

And the apostles even used a lot to settle on Matthias as the replacement for Judas (*Acts 1:23-26*).

However, there is no use of the lot in the New Testament after Pentecost. With completed Scriptures and the gift of the Holy Ghost, there is clearly less need for a chance event to provide direction.

The Word of God is able to make the man of God perfect (*1Corinthians 13:8-12; 2Timothy 2:15; 3:16-17; 2Peter 1:19*).

The Holy Spirit can direct his mind (*Psalms 143:10; Romans 12:1-2; Ephesians 5:14-17; Philippians 1:9-11; Colossians 1:9-17; 4:12; Hebrews 13:20-21*).

Though the Bible in both testaments endorsed the lot, it cannot be used for matters that wisdom should resolve, for doing so tempts the Lord (*Proverbs 28:9; Matthew 4:5-7*).

It is a dangerous evil of human depravity that men would rather trust a lot, than "*thus saith the Lord*." God has inspired written wisdom for our lives, and we should heed it first (*Psalms 119:128*).

It is weak or devilish faith that, requires, "*a fleece*" to obey what has already been commanded.

Confusion where Jehovah has spoken is to reject the Word of the Lord (*Daniel 3:16-18; Romans 1:20-27; 1Peter 3:6*).

Even in matters the Bible does not address, God will honor His churches and pastors (*Matthew 18:15-18; 1Corinthians 6:1-5; 2Chronicles 19:8-10; Ezekiel 44:23-24; 1Timothy 5:17; Hebrews 13:7*).

Never let the lot replace His ordained means of wisdom. The Lord will direct your steps (*Proverbs 16:9; Ruth 2:1-3; James 4:13-15*).

Bible use of the lot cannot justify games of chance involving money or important matters. Only fools buy lottery tickets or play poker (*Proverbs 1:32; 6:1-5*).

God ordained that men should labor diligently (*Proverbs 12:11; 13:11*), avoid wasting their substance (*Proverbs 12:27; 18:9*), save money (*Proverbs 6:6-8; 21:20*), and be better able and ready to give to others in need (*Ephesians 4:28; 1Timothy 6:17-19*), and reject vain pursuits contrary to these godly goals (*Proverbs 13:23; 28:19*).

Do you recognize and submit to the sovereignty of God in the "chance events" of your life?

God chose your sex, parents, intelligence, nationality, appearance, and opportunities, among many other factors of life (*Psalms 139:16*).

God chose your spouse by arranging the circumstances of your romance, and your job or profession by another set of circumstances.

And God either gifted you for offices among men or not. Are you fully content with His perfect choices, as Israel was with the lot (*Proverbs 16:33*)?

Humble yourself, before God and the lots He has cast in your life, for He alone has done so by infinite wisdom for good and holy purposes (*Isaiah 57:15; 66:1-2*).

Proverbs 18:19 A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city: and their contentions are like the bars of a castle.

This Proverb seems extreme. Is it so difficult to reconcile an offended brother? Is there so little hope of recovery once a close relationship is damaged?

Strong cities are seldom taken; and castle bars are of the strongest sort.

Solomon's inspired wisdom teaches, that once you offend a brother, you are in a near hopeless situation.

What causes the rupture to be so severe? It is a rule of nature, that offending those who love you may create hatred.

Because they gave you their affection, loyalty, service, and trust, the offence strikes deeper in their soul and requires more repair than if done by an acquaintance or stranger.

Small offences can ignite family or marital feuds, though such insignificant things would be easily ignored in other relationships.

It is a disgusting fact of man's perversity that he often shows less mercy to family and friends than to strangers.

Consider offences between brothers in Scripture.

Cain killed Abel for offence at his righteousness.

Esau sought to kill Jacob for obtaining his blessing.

Joseph's envious brothers sold him into slavery.

Absalom plotted two years before killing Amnon for raping his sister.

The tribes of Benjamin and Judah had separate costly feuds with Israel.

Barnabas and Paul had a sharp contention about taking Mark on their second preaching trip (*Acts 15:36-41*).

Paul, the most diligent apostle, could not forget Mark's desertion on their first trip (*Acts 13:13*).

Barnabas, Mark's uncle, was offended by Paul's rejection of his sister's son (*Colossians 4:10*).

Two great saints, who had been close companions, now went their separate ways (*Acts 9:27; 11:25; 13:1-2; 14:14; 15:2, 25, 35*). Lord, have mercy!

The wisdom here is to avoid offences with brethren, especially in the church (*Ephesians 4:3, 16; Romans 14:16-19; James 3:18*).

Since a close relationship is difficult, to recover from offences, it is better to avoid them in the first place.

Use great caution in dealing with friends, lest a line be crossed, that destroys or scars the relationship, especially in the Church.

If you have offended a brother, it is your duty to be reconciled, as quickly as possible (*Matthew 5:23-26*).

If you have been offended, it is your duty to overlook the transgression, or follow an orderly biblical procedure to solve it (*Proverbs 19:11; Matthew 18:15-17; 1Corinthians 6:1-8; 1Peter 4:8*).

The Proverb is a natural law. It does not justify godly men being slow to forgive their offenders. Nor does it justify godly men giving up the pursuit of a wounded brother.

A spiritual man does not live by natural laws. He lives by the Spirit of God, which teaches him to be slow to wrath and quick to forgive (*Colossians 3:12-13; James 1:19*).

Proverbs 18:20 A man's belly shall be satisfied with the fruit of his mouth; and with the increase of his lips shall he be filled.

Do you want to be happy and successful? You can be!

Here is wisdom to find fulfillment and peace in life: learn to talk better (*Proverbs 18:21*).

Lay hold of this wisdom! The Proverb has many figures of speech, but the lesson is simple.

If you will improve your speaking, you will be blessed in many ways by God, by others, and even by your own soul (*Proverbs 14:14*).

Your "belly" here is your inner man, your heart, soul, or spirit (*Proverbs 13:25; 18:8; 20:27, 30*).

Your "belly" here is fulfilled and satisfied, when you speak well (*Proverbs 15:23*).

The fruit of your mouth is the use of gracious and wise words, which is the learned behavior of speaking correctly (*Proverbs 16:13; 22:11; 24:26; 25:11*).

Give Yourself Pleasure By Noble Speech!

Kind and good words help listeners, but they also bring rewards to the speaker (*Proverbs 12:14; 13:2*).

The increase of your lips in this Proverb, is the improvement that you make to your speech, by learning the rules of wisdom, for the tongue and lips (*Proverbs 15:28; 16:23*).

The Holy Spirit has much to say on this subject, and you can increase the sweetness and value, of your speech by ruling your words, for the glory of God and profit of man.

This increase, like the fruit in the first clause, will bring blessing, honor, and richness into your life.

How many times have you said to yourself, "Why did I say that?"

If you have a conscience (all good men have strong consciences), then you have grieved over your foolish or hurtful words, that you let escape from your mouth.

This frustrating pain in life can be eliminated by learning gracious speech. Solomon knew, the chance of sin, increased with much speaking, so he recommended few words (*Proverbs 10:19; 17:27-28; Ecclesiastes 5:1-3*).

This saying is wise: **If** you cannot say anything kind and helpful, then say nothing at all.

How many times have others said, "Why did they say that?" Have you left others bleeding from the piercing of the sword of your mouth (*Proverbs 12:18*)?

Your tongue is for the edifying, health and wealth of others; but you often leave them angered, grieving, or confused. Sometimes they tell you about it; most of the time they just suffer in silence.

When you find out the pain and damage, you have caused, it is a burden on your soul. It is your wisdom and honor to learn words that encourage and instruct others (*Proverbs 10:20-21; 16:24*).

God Gave You A Tongue For More Than Swallowing Food!

God calls the tongue your glory (*Psalms 30:12; 108:1*).

By the tongue's proper use, you can give glory to God and be a glory to others.

You, can be a tree of life, to others by helpful and encouraging speech (*Proverbs 15:4; Ephesians 4:29*).

How can we value the man who graciously teaches truth and wisdom to others (*Nehemiah 8:12; Luke 24:32; Acts 8:26-35*)?

You can by learning the book of Proverbs (*Proverbs 1:1-4; 22:17-21*)!

Is it easy to change your speech habits?

It is easier to train a cobra to sip milk from a bowl and purr on your lap (*James 3:1-12*)!

God gave you Proverbs for this task!

- Guard your speech!
- Cut your words in half!
- Think before you speak!
- Rule your spirit!
- Love graciousness!
- Make every word helpful and kind!
- Despise harshness!
- Hate talebearing!
- Purify your thoughts!
- Reject foolish indiscretions!
- Work harder at listening!

Does your conscience grieve you when you speak foolishly? It should! It does, if you are a good man with an active conscience.

What will you feel in the Day of Judgment, when you must give an account, for every idle word to the Lord of glory (*Matthew 12:34-37*)?

No wonder Isaiah cried out in grief, about his unclean speech in God's presence (*Isaiah 6:1-7*).

You can be rejoicing in yourself, regardless of what others think, by good speech. You can be satisfied and filled by wise and virtuous speech. (*Galatians 6:4*).

Proverbs 18:21 Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.

Your speech will either promote or destroy you (*Proverbs 10:14; 12:14; 13:2-3; 18:6-7, 23*).

If you are older, it already has! Many have ruined their lives by ungoverned mouths. Others have been exalted for their kind and wise tongues.

Your speech will bring either blessing or cursing on you from both God and men, in both time and eternity.

Reader, do you love good speech or bad speech? Your future will be impacted heavily by your choice and habit. A tongue can kill or save lives.

A false witness can cause the death of an innocent man, or a comforter can give life to a dejected man by an uplifting word.

A slanderer, can kill the reputation of a good man, or a wise counselor, can guide a young man through the dangers of youth.

A seducing woman, can ruin a man's life, or a godly mother, can teach her children the truth.

A tongue definitely affects others, but that is not the lesson here. The tongue also affects speakers! The death and life in the power of the tongue are the effects of your speech on yourself!

We know this by the second clause, which teaches that those loving their use of the tongue will eat either the fruit of death or life.

We also know this by the context, for the previous Proverb reads, "*A man's belly shall be satisfied with the fruit of his mouth; and with the increase of his lips shall he be filled*" (*Proverbs 18:20*).

Consider the love of speech, which is a key in this Proverb.

Even evil men, can say good things, when it is to their greedy advantage to do so, and good men slip from time to time and say things they should not (*Proverbs 23:6-8; Ecclesiastes 10:1*).

Good Men Truly Love Good Speech Evil Men Truly Love Evil Speech

The law of the Proverb is based on what kind of speech you love, the speech you commit your heart, mouth, and habits toward.

When You See A Man Failing In Life He Likely Did Not Rule His Tongue!

You can see the failure in his marriage(s), with his children, and in his profession. Criticism and harshness cost him affection.

Exaggerations and extreme words cost him trust. Complaining and whining cost him influence. Arrogance and disrespect of authority cost him promotions.

Too many words cost him listeners. Backbiting and talebearing cost him respect. Foolishness and jesting cost him honor. Un-kept promises made him a liar. He is dead!

He committed suicide with his tongue! He ate the fruit of death!

He used the power of his tongue to his own destruction. He would not rule his spirit or teach his tongue wisdom (*Proverbs 16:23; 25:28*).

Therefore, both God and men punished him for his verbal folly. He used the power of his tongue to his own destruction and death.

God turned to be his enemy, and men avoided him and cut him out of their friendships and profitable endeavors.

Wise men rise like cream to the top, because they govern their speech. They limit their words (*Proverbs 10:19; 17:27-28*).

Wise men use gentleness rather than bluster (*Proverbs 15:1; 25:15*).

Wise men only speak the certain words of truth (*Proverbs 22:17-21*).

Wise men never speak, against a man not present (*Proverbs 16:28; 26:20-22*).

Wise men study and think before speaking (*Proverbs 15:28*).

Wise men are always thankful. They seldom speak up unless requested (*Proverbs 18:13; 29:11; James 1:19*).

Wise men's gracious speech wins the hearts of men and women, they are soon friends with the king (*Proverbs 16:13; 22:11*).

Wise men are a tree of life to others and to themselves (*Proverbs 10:11; 13:3; 15:4*).

When a woman is a failure, she likely did not rule her tongue. Harsh and critical speech, nagging reminders, snotty retorts, or constant suggestions destroyed her husband's affection, she killed her marriage.

Her children cannot wait to get out of the house, because the overbearing and continual criticism is too much to bear.

She is odious! She has no friends, because everyone despises an odious woman. She committed marital, domestic, and social suicide with her tongue! She ate the fruit of death! She is dead!

The rule is simple and absolute, a woman that rules her tongue will have many friends and a glorious

reputation. A gracious woman is always honored (*Proverbs 11:16*).

A gracious woman has the law of kindness in her mouth, and she only speaks when she has something wise and important to contribute (*Proverbs 31:26*).

A gracious woman never speaks to hear herself talk, to offer trivialities, to correct insignificant details, or to make sure she contributes more than others in a group.

A gracious woman has a meek and quiet spirit, one that despises talking without a noble purpose (*1Peter 3:3-4*).

Young man, learn sound speech before it is too late. Keep company only with gracious and wise men, who rule their mouths.

Young man, reject every man with a foolish and loud mouth.

Young man, learn Solomon's wisdom about teaching your lips (*Proverbs 4:24; 6:12; 8:13; 10:31-32; 15:28; 16:23*).

Young man, you can greatly enhance your future, by learning good speech for all occasions.

Young woman, you should learn and practice the same things. **If** you do not, you will have difficulty finding a man that is willing to ruin his life by marrying you.

An odious woman is a terrifying threat to men, and a young man can discover you with his ears. You must despise idle chatter, giggling, foolish talking, opinionated debate, or other odious traits.

Old man, you are already eating the fruit of your mouth. The only hope you have is to confess the sins of your mouth to God and men, speak only gracious and wise words when asked, and beg God for the wisdom and strength to rule your unruly member.

Old woman, you have likely scarred your husband's heart. And your children, while not telling you, rejoice when they can get away or end a phone conversation.

How many truly crave your presence and pursue conversation with you? **If** the number is low, you have a speech problem. Follow the advice given to the old man and trust God for mercy.

Reader, your words will bring death or life in this world and the next. Jesus said, "*But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned*" (*Matthew 12:36-37*).

Proverbs 18:22 Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD.

Imagine the perfect man's world! Work is easy; you and all things are perfect; there is no sickness, pain, sin, or trouble; great food is everywhere; you have the world to yourself; it doesn't rain; you are very intelligent; the LORD is your friend; and you can live forever!

What is wrong? Adam did not have a wife, a woman of his own. The Lord said his "perfect" situation was not good (*Genesis 2:18*).

Adam needed a perfect companion. So God made a woman from a rib, introduced her to Adam, and arranged the first marriage.

Two are better than one. Regardless of what good is written about the single life, God said it was not good.

Two are better than one for at least five reasons (*Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; 1Corinthians 7:2-5*).

1. They share the results of labor,
2. They help each other through difficulties,
3. They complement each other,
4. They help fight enemies, and
5. They have a regular and committed lover.

If this superiority of marriage were true in perfect Eden, how much more in our sinful world?

But not any wife will do; and the Holy Spirit did not teach any wife will do. He warns against odious women (*Proverbs 30:21-23*).

The Holy Spirit inspired Solomon to know a bad wife is worse than being alone (*Proverbs 19:13; 21:9, 19; 25:24; 27:15-16*).

For though Solomon tried 1000 women (*1Kings 11:3*). He found them all bad and more bitter than death in the pain they caused him (*Ecclesiastes 7:26-29*).

But it does not say "good" wife. How do we know we have an ellipsis? We know by her being a good thing, by God's favor in the matter, by all the teaching of Proverbs, by the use of the adjective and by such ellipses in (*Proverbs 19:14; Proverbs 15:10, 23; 16:10; 29:4; and Ecclesiastes 7:28*).

Solomon intended only a virtuous woman in the Lord (*Proverbs 12:4; 19:14; 1Corinthians 7:39*).

But who can find her (*Proverbs 31:10*)?

She is so rare, Solomon did not find her. Only God's blessing will find her (*Proverbs 19:14*).

So set your heart to seek her, and trust Him to direct your steps (*Proverbs 16:9*).

How should we measure virgins? By the fear of the Lord (*Proverbs 31:30*).

Young man, put away foolish lusts of beauty first (*Proverbs 11:16, 22*).

Listen to Samson's parents (*Judges 14:3*).

Search in the right places, with fervent prayer to God, and trust His providence (*Genesis 24*).

How thankful are you? **If** you have a wife that fears the Lord and fulfils her role, you are a very blessed man.

Does the Lord know your thankfulness? Does she? **If** she is not perfect, it is your fault; for it is your privilege and duty to perfect her (*Ephesians 5:25-29*).

And dear woman, you must ask, am I truly a good thing and a blessing from God? Or a curse?

Proverbs 18:23 The poor useth intreaties; but the rich answereth roughly.

Every man comes into the world just like an ass's colt, but he quickly thinks he can talk harshly to others after just a few natural blessings (*Job 11:12*).

The poor, quickly learn to humbly supplicate and beg, while the rich arrogantly speak against them with hardness. The Proverb is true of natural men, but it should not describe the case of spiritual men.

Financial advantage or disadvantage quickly affects our lives. The rich are conceited, have many friends, and rule over the poor (*Proverbs 14:20; 22:7; 28:11*).

The rich grow up thinking the world moves to their tune.

The rich think themselves independent of God and man, so they speak condescendingly to those with less.

Joseph spoke harshly to his brethren to hide his gentle soul (*Genesis 42:7*).

Nabal did the same to reveal a vile heart (*1Samuel 25:5-11*).

To Discriminate By Economic Level Is Not Christian!

We have been taught by our Savior to avoid any such respect of persons (*James 2:1-4*).

It is the rich who generally persecuted the saints and it is the poor that God has chosen rich, in faith for His kingdom (*James 2:5-7*).

God has chosen the poor of this world to confound the mighty (*1Corinthians 1:26-31*).

There is no difference in Jesus Christ between a bond slave and a free man (*Colossians 3:28*)!

Riches create pride, and this consequence is hard to resist (*Proverbs 18:11; 30:8-9*).

Men who seek riches seek their own destruction (*1Timothy 6:6-10*).

No wonder Jesus said it was harder for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle (*Matthew 19:24*). See the comments on *Proverbs 10:15*.

The rich are not self-made men, as they like to think. The LORD made both the poor and the rich (*Proverbs 22:2*).

Riches come not by speed, strength, wisdom, understanding, or skill; they are by God's control of "time and chance" (*Ecclesiastes 9:11*).

Rich man, why do you glory in your wealth, as if you had earned it by ability, when God gave it to you (*1Corinthians 4:7*)?

Rather than harshness, graciousness should cover all we say and do (*Ecclesiastes 10:12; Colossians 4:6*).

For great grace has been given to us, regardless of how poor we are in this world. Our Lord Jesus the possessor of heaven and earth, came to earth and gently dealt with the poor of all sorts (*Luke 4:18-21; 21:1-4*).

Let the poor rejoice; let the rich mourn their fate (*James 1:9-11*)!

No man can by any means give to God a ransom for his soul (*Psalms 49:6-13*).

Jesus blessed the poor in spirit (*Matthew 5:3*). God the Father promised to bless poor in spirit (*Isaiah 66:2*).

We are all poor at the throne of God; every man, even at his best state, is absolutely destitute (*Psalms 39:5*).

It was the bankrupt publican who went down to his house justified (*Luke 18:9-14*).

Proverbs 18:24 A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.

Here are two simple lessons: Friends require friendliness and great friends are better than family. And here we also see a hint of the Lord Jesus Christ, our eternal Friend.

Friendly people have all the friends they want. To make friends or keep friends, a person has to be friendly.

When there is a shortage of friends, it proves a person is not friendly.

Though they may think and talk of their efforts toward others, they are not truly friendly.

- Friends love at all times, not just in prosperity (*Proverbs 17:17*).
- Friends give more than they take (*1Samuel 18:3-4; 23:16*).
- Friends give hearty counsel, not haughty advice (*Proverbs 27:9*).
- Friends love discreetly with love (*1Corinthians 13:4-7*).
- Friends are always gracious (*Proverbs 22:11*).
- Friends sharpen each other (*Proverbs 27:6, 17*).

- Friends are intimate (*Exodus 33:11; Deuteronomy 13:6*).
- Friends show pity in affliction (*Job 6:14; Psalm 35:14*).
- Friends trust each other (*Psalms 41:9*).
- Friends rejoice in blessings (*Luke 15:6; John 3:29*). Where do you fail?

Friends don't give advice before it is needed, meddle in private matters, presume on time, trivialize matters, remember past faults, have any self-righteousness, or claim rights to affection. Have you ever offended in these ways?

Exceptional friends are rare. **If** they were common, they would not be special. Great friends are better than family, for they will stick closer than any mere blood connection.

Your brothers did not choose you, but true friends chose you for holy and noble reasons.

David and Jonathan were such friends. David valued Jonathan's love more than that of women. So they made a binding covenant together. (*2Samuel 1:26*).

His own brothers disdained him, but Jonathan loved him as his own soul (*1Samuel 16:1-13; 17:28; 18:1-4*).

When you find such a friend, do all you can to keep him. Sometimes this person may be an inherited friend from your father (***Proverbs 27:10***).

When in trouble, you want to use this friend rather than family, for he will always be nearby in affection and be honored to help.

Saints should make the best friends, for blood is thicker than blood; that is, Christ's blood is thicker than any other bond. Consider the love of the Spirit (***Acts 2:42-47; Philippians 1:3-6***).

Our Lord Jesus, the eternal Friend of your soul, did more than any friends do, He laid down his life for you, when you were His enemy (***John 15:13; Romans 5:8***).

What brother would do that for you? Let the Lord Jesus Christ alone be the perfect fulfillment here!