

Proverbs of Solomon – Proverbs 29:18

There are three powerful, often quoted, verses in **chapter 29**. For example there is **verse 1** – *“He, that being often reproveth hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.”* That is a scripture worthy of memorization and regular repetition – even we need to be reminded. I hope you have **verse 25** stored away in your heart – *“The fear of man bringeth a snare; but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe.”* We’ll come back to that in a minute, as well as **verse 18** – *“Where there is no vision the people perish.”*

After these three there weren’t really any of these Proverbs which jumped out at me, demanding our attention. I was looking for something which might be appropriate for the season, but I didn’t see any. So I have only a few passing remarks before we take prayer requests and go to God’s throne of grace.

Verse 18 is an interesting scripture sandwiched within a common theme.

“Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul.” A servant will not be corrected by words: for though he understand he will not answer.” The verbs in **verses 17** and **19** are the same Hebrew word – *“correct.”* But more often than *“correct”* the word is translated *“instruct,”* so we could place that word in there to see if our understanding changes at all. *“INSTRUCT thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul.” A servant will NOT be INSTRUCTED by words: for though he understand he will not properly respond.”*

Solomon’s meaning doesn’t change at all with the switch.

But that Hebrew word is three times more often translated *“chastise”* as it is *“correct.”* And when we make that replacement, the character of the correction changes. This is not necessarily kindly instruction, but takes on the idea of a more harsh rebuke – perhaps verbal, but perhaps more physical. For the son, it might be that instruction is sufficient, but for the servant not even rebuke is heard.

For me, this takes us into the New Testament and the words of the Lord Jesus. What is our relationship to the Lord? What are we to God the Father and to God the Son? We are children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. We are sons and daughters, not only born into God’s family but legally adopted as well. So we are brethren to one another and brothers and sisters of God’s beloved Son. And the Lord Jesus once added, *“Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends.”*

We are both brethren and friends of Christ – we know what our Lord does and what He wants. Without any human intention, one of our themes over the last two weeks has been characteristics of the Christian – including the fruit of the Spirit. One characteristic is that God’s children listen to correction and instruction, and then in obedience they give the Lord *“rest”* or shall we say, *“glory,” “pleasure”* and *“delight.”*

Despite what Jesus said in **John 15:15**, *“Henceforth I call you not servants,”* there are plenty of scriptures which continue to teach that we are servants of God. But if I might say, *“there are servants and there are servants.”* There are children who willingly and lovingly serve their father or their parents, and there are people who are nothing but slaves, and they serve that way. That kind of *“servant will not be corrected by words: for though he understand he will not answer.”* He may understand the command, but his attitude and behavior don’t reflect the will of the master. For you and me, professed believers and children of God, we can make a choice between **verse 17** and **verse 19**. We can behave like loving children, or we can be obstinate servants who only grudgingly obey the Lord. Our willingness and attitude may be far more important in pleasing the Lord and glorifying His name than the mere completion of the task He gives us.

Sandwiched between those verses is:

“Where there is no vision, the people perish, but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.” As far as I can remember I have never witnessed this, but I have heard that some ignorant preachers abuse Solomon’s intention here. I have been told that some preachers have used this verse to urge their people forward toward accomplishing that preacher’s agenda. *“I have a vision; I have a goal.”* I said things like that last Sunday night. But I didn’t use this verse, *“Where there is no vision, no goal, no objective, there will be no success.”* That was not Solomon’s message. Using the last part of the verse to illuminate first, we see that *“Where there is no message from God, the people perish, but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.”* We are absolutely dependent upon God’s revelation before we can know the really important things of life. We cannot know our origins by studying the rocks or our DNA; we need the **Book of Genesis**. There is no way to know about the holiness of God, if He didn’t reveal Himself to us in His Word. We cannot understand how sinful we are and how alienated we are, without the vision God has given to us. I believe that the *“vision”* to which Solomon refers is God’s revelation – God’s Word, the Bible.

And we cannot have true happiness in this world, when we are living in disobedience to His will – the law. *“Where there is no vision, the people perish, but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.”* There is no long term happiness in a

bottle – whether filled with firewater or pills. There is no perfect happiness in any human relationship, no matter how perfect that relationship is. Psychiatrists and psychologists can't provide us with happiness, nor can good government or good jobs or good investments. Only the person who has a proper vision of the Lord, and keeps his eyes on the will of the Lord can be truly happy.

As I was preparing this yesterday, I asked myself – What are some of the ingredients of happiness? If babies can be happy, and if they could talk, they'd say happiness requires full tummies and empty diapers. The pet poodle is happy only when his owner is playing with him. Mom is happy when she is loved and feels appreciated. The despot is happy when he is obeyed. All of these are partially true, because human happiness depends on our circumstances.

But doesn't verse 25 add another ingredient to our definition of happiness?

"The fear of man bringeth a snare; but who putteth this trust in the Lord shall be safe." I know that Solomon doesn't say this, but can't I paraphrase this to say.... *"The fear of man creates uneasiness; but whoso putteth this trust in the Lord shall have peace. And in that peace there is joy and happiness.....?"*

Some people, and we'll include some professing Christians... Some people love their horror movies; they enjoy being scared out of their wits. Take a little bit of truth, mix in some fiction, and stir it up with hysteria, and people run with it. Horror is a part of the entertainment industry. But sadly it is also a part of general life.

What is going to happen to America if the President is expelled from office? Some people are frightened. What will happen to the dollar and the markets; how will that embolden our nation's enemies? Will other people lose their jobs if the President loses his? There will be even more political chaos than there is now? Will life as we know will crumble? "Ba humbug" someone says. Not at all. The real problem is global warming and the melting of the ice caps. The oceans will swell so much over the next few years that the only major city left in the United States will be Denver. Average temperatures will rise 20 degrees and there won't be enough hydro-power to run our air conditioners. We are going to die because there are too many people driving too many gasoline powered cars. But then some other scientist comes along telling us we don't have to worry about green house gases because super-strains of ebola, or measles, or influenza are going wipe away half the population of the world anyway. There even comets and huge meteors with our name on them, headed toward earth. Some people can't sleep well out of fear of the Koreans, the Chinese and Muslim terrorists. Some Christians fear the coming Tribulation.

How can we stay happy when there is so much doom and gloom in the news? Answer: God's saints can say calm, peaceful and happy because there is so much promise in the good news. *"The fear of man bringeth a snare; but who putteth this trust in the Lord shall be safe."* We will be in no more danger with a Democrat in the White House than we have been with a Republican. Satan has no more power today than he has ever had, and in 6,000 years he has not overthrown the Lord. Global warming is no more going to defeat God's promise than the changing of the seasons. *"And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And the LORD smelled a sweet savour; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done. While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease."*

"The fear of man bringeth a snare; but who putteth this trust in the Lord shall be safe." The Lord Jesus put it a little differently in **Matthew 10:28** – *"Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."* And remember, the fear which the saint has of God, is not one of terror but of reverence. *"The fear of man bringeth a snare; but who putteth this trust in the Lord shall be SAFE."*