

PROVERBS 10

SOLOMON'S PROVERBS BEGIN

After all the personifications of true Wisdom, King Solomon proceeds to give us advice in short but pithy lines of instruction, which are adapted to every condition of life. In these Proverbs, which fill almost the entire rest of the Book, we will discover the wisdom of ages; and what makes them even better is that they are the inspired words of Divine Wisdom. They are the reflections of sound judgment, and they will improve our understanding. Let us look at them; and as we read each one, let us add a short but fervent prayer: "O God, grant us grace to understand and keep them!" (Ps. 119:5)

Although each one of these Proverbs might form separate matter for a discourse of many pages, yet it would take more space than we have here to note every one of them, and the variety of reflections which they inspire in us in such an elaborate way – especially as they are so simple and self-evident as to be axioms to all the problems of life. Here in these Bible guides, we will select one or two Proverbs from each chapter to enter into deeper study upon.

The Proverbs reveal a great knowledge of men and of the ways of human beings. They set forth the consequences of people's actions in the clearest light, and expose the folly of wickedness. They show the strength of righteousness in such evident beams of glory that – if they are well-studied – they will give us a knowledge of the world, and enlighten us to live above it. Let us examine them and delight in them, for they are the declarations of the most excellent wisdom. And let us endeavor to be found worthy of the bright rewards described in these Proverbs, which – through our Savior's blood – we may attain; for if He had not died for us, we could never have received the instruction of His Holy Scriptures. The older we grow, the more we will discover the excellence of these Proverbs; and whether we study human science, human life and manners, or the depths of learning, we will find these Proverbs to be full of Jesus Christ, the Wisdom of God!

These Proverbs are all very plain to the understanding of one who is taught by God. The way of life is Jesus; for He Himself says that He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:6) – and so he who is in this Way is in Christ. Our Savior has pointed out an infallible method by which all such persons may be recognized. Solomon said that such a one "keepeth instruction." And Jesus

Up to this point, we have been studying the "preface" to the Proverbs; but here they begin. They are short but weighty sentences; most of them are couplets – two sentences in one verse, illustrating each other. But it is seldom that there is any coherence between the verses – much less any thread of discourse. And therefore, in the majority of the rest of the Book, we will not attempt to outline the contents of the chapters into different headings; for the various sentences will appear best in their own places. The theme of them all is to set before us good and evil – the blessing and the curse!

said that “if a man love me, he will keep my words” – and the greatest of all blessings is annexed to this! Turn to John 14:23; and read that sweet Scripture, until the very life of the passage is engraved upon your heart! And we will find similar illustrations, by comparing Scripture with Scripture, which will help to show us how the Proverbs of Solomon are to be read and explained.

The lips and tongue (verses 18-21)

“He that hideth hatred with lying lips, and he that uttereth a slander, is a fool. In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise. The tongue of the just is as choice silver: the heart of the wicked is little worth. The lips of the righteous feed many: but fools die for want of wisdom.”

It is not safe for anyone to open the lips and permit the heart to pour itself forth by that channel, without restraint. The human heart is full of corruption; and from a corrupt fountain, sweet waters cannot flow. So it is the duty of a wise person to set a watch upon his own lips. This is a more profitable exercise (although it may be less pleasant) than to set a watch on the lips of our neighbors. If we fling the doors of our mouth open, and allow our emotions to rush forth as they arise; it is certain that many of our words will be evil, and will do evil. It requires some practice to make a person skillful in the art of holding the tongue, but it will be very profitable in the long run. It is easier and more natural, when we are full of emotions, to open the floodgates and let everything gush forth in an impetuous stream of words. Yes, it is easy; but it is not always right. It is pleasant to our sinful nature; but it is often offensive to God, and hurtful to others.

“The tongue of the just” – that is, the stream of words that flows from it – “is like choice silver.” Silver is bright and pure, and not corrosive. Certain surgical instruments that penetrate the human body, and come in contact with the blood, must be made of silver; for other materials would be liable to contract rust, and thereby inflame the wound. Similarly, when an operation of faithfulness becomes necessary, the tongue of a just person is a safe instrument wherewith to probe the sores of a brother’s soul. Its soft, sweet answer turns away wrath. The truth spoken will perform the needed operation; and since it is spoken in love, it will not leave the seeds of fever behind.

“The lips of the righteous feed many.” Being satisfied themselves from the Lord’s own hand, they will feed others also. Getting much from Him, we will feel the necessity of giving to others; and in giving much to others, we will experience more and more the necessity of continually drawing fresh supplies from the Fountainhead. Those who abide in Christ will experience a sweet necessity of doing good to our fellow human beings; and those who try to do good to others will be compelled to abide in Christ, as a branch abides in the vine.

Lord, we pray for grace to be led by You into all truth, so that we may discover Christ’s Person, work, grace, and favor, sweetly veiled under these Proverbs! Amen.

