

PROVERBS 21

A SWEET RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS

A striking contrast (verse 8)

“The way of man is froward and strange: but as for the pure, his work is right.”

Let us observe the striking contrast between man by nature, and man by grace! Who will say that man is the same now as he was when he first came from his Creator’s hands? How is he born? He is froward, like a wild donkey’s colt. How soon does he develop his sinful nature? “Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child!” “Childhood and youth are vanity.” Do we need to add that this is indeed a “strange” way? Man estranged himself from his God, Who created and loved him! He turned away from God and went his own way. He desires no law except his own lusts, and no rule except his own will. He loves his own liberty, but despises true liberty. He desires to be the sole fountain of his own happiness, and the maker of his own sufficiency. He takes delight in forbidden wisdom, and he intrudes and pries into the hidden counsels of the Lord. Such was the case in the first sin in Eden’s Garden. Man did not desire to know God, which is life eternal; but rather, he endeavored to be equal in knowledge with God, which was prideful in its principle and deadly in its outcome.

On the contrary, however, when God’s grace works in the heart of a person, he is made pure and new! His will is now conformed to the Lord’s, and his actions are regulated by His perfect standard; and now he finds fulfillment in the Lord’s purpose for his life, and he enjoys loving fellowship with His Savior. What a mercy it is when God turns us from our own “froward and strange” way, and puts us into His pure service! Yet sadly, so much still remains of our natural depravity. Therefore, let us pray for grace to be kept humbled and self-abased – always near to our Savior, always washing ourselves in His precious blood, and always covering ourselves in His pure and perfect work of righteousness!

A sweet relationship with Jesus (verse 15)

“It is joy to the just to do judgment.”

This Proverb is not merely stating that those who are just will carry out proper judgment. Conscience itself may dictate this (at least externally), while the true inclination of the heart is still on the side of sin. But the wise man teaches us here that those who are just will *find joy* in carrying out proper judgment. The Godly person has as much delight in doing righteousness, as the soul of the wicked does in doing evil. The mere professor of religion may do things that he knows are right, but he only does them out of a sense of terrible conviction and fear. He only pictures God as a taskmaster and a slave-driver. He has never known him as a Father; and therefore, he has never loved and served Him as a child. It is this kind of loving service that identifies true holiness and happiness, and brings its own rewards with it, just as naturally as fire produces heat. The ways of the Lord bring refreshment, smiles, and happiness to His children.

Why, then, is gloom and sadness charged upon Christianity? Truly, the children of this world have never tasted the blessings of a saving relationship with Jesus. How, then, can they know its sweetness? Dear brother or sister! Look up and be cheerful for the honor of your God and His Gospel! Live as one who has been snatched up from destruction, to be a child of God and an heir of heaven. Show to the world that the “work of righteousness is peace,” and that “the yoke of Christ is easy!” But show them even more! Show them that even the sharpest sacrifices for Him are sweet; and that there is more pleasure in “plucking out the right eye” for Him, than there is in using it for sin or Satan. And then think even further – if this is the happiness that we enjoy, in the midst



of all the clogging hindrances of sin, then what will it be when these hindrances shall be removed and we shall serve the Lord without sin forever in heaven?

Following righteousness and mercy
(verse 21)

“He that followeth after righteousness and mercy findeth life, righteousness, and honor.”

The desirable treasure of righteousness and mercy is to be followed after, with a distinctness of purpose that shows a perception of its true value. This is the Christian standard: “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect. But I follow after!” Heaven is “the prize of our high calling” (Phil. 3:12-14). But righteousness and mercy – a summary of all our obligations to both God and man – are the pathway to and preparation for heaven. Holiness must be our daily habit, as well as our religious service. The true evidence of Divine grace in a person’s heart is its practical influence upon their life and conduct.

He who follows righteousness and mercy will find life. He will be blessed with fellowship with God, the sunshine of His face, and the enjoyment of His love. He will also find righteousness – a blessing from the God of grace. And he will find honor; for “if any man serve me,” says our Divine Master, “him will my Father honor.” “To them that by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will render eternal life” (Rom. 2:7) and “a crown of righteousness” (2 Tim. 4:8). So we see that Godliness gives us faithful and precious promises for both this world and the next! Are they not worth following after? Yet where do we see this strenuous, sustained effort in the real work of the daily cross? We think of a picture of men on the stretch – all energy, and all pursuit; nothing diverting them from their goal; pressing all their might, with constant urgency, in their momentous service. Let us pray for grace to exercise this high standard of perseverance as we journey on our way to heaven!

Lord, we thank You that Your loving grace has made us pure and new, and that You have brought our lives into conformity with Your perfect standard! Amen.