



1 Whoso loveth instruction loveth knowledge: but he that hateth reproof is brutish. 2 A good man obtaineth favour of the LORD: but a man of wicked devices will he condemn. 3 A man shall not be established by wickedness: but the root of the righteous shall not be moved. 4 A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband: but she that maketh ashamed is as rottenness in his bones. 5 The thoughts of the righteous are right: but the counsels of the wicked are deceit. 6 The words of the wicked are to lie in wait for blood: but the mouth of the upright shall deliver them. 7 The wicked are overthrown, and are not: but the house of the righteous shall stand. 8 A man shall be commended according to his wisdom: but he that is of a perverse heart shall be despised. 9 He that is despised, and hath a servant, is better than he that honoureth himself, and lacketh bread. 10 A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast: but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel. 11 He that tilleth his land shall be satisfied with bread: but he that followeth vain persons is void of understanding. 12 The wicked desireth the net of evil men: but the root of the righteous yieldeth fruit. 13 The wicked is snared by the transgression of his lips: but the just shall come out of trouble. 14 A man shall be satisfied with good by the fruit of his mouth: and the recompence of a man's hands shall be rendered unto him. (Prov 12:1-14)



The foremost point of today's passage is "Character matters." Character matters for individuals, but for nations as well. The history of the first Pilgrims at Plymouth Rock, the infancy of a nation they engendered by faith, and the struggle of the Revolutionary War was a history of a collective character whose Sovereign was the Lord. Our early statesmen were men of high character who placed a regard for God above every other consideration. And so, America became one of the most delightful and blessed nations of the powers of the earth. As the glorious history of our nation fades into the mist of America Past, we have seen a new and disturbing mentality emerge – a mentality centered on self and greed. Instead of hearing the name of God Almighty invoked by the elected officials of our nation, that name has become

anathema to government and public discourse. How far have we fallen from that grace that ennobled our character and made our Liberty such a treasured possession! The heart of America was formed abroad under the heavy religious persecution of the kings of Europe. Men desired religious freedom more than any other blessing, so they sought shelter in a far land beyond the sea. Appealing to God Almighty for His Providential protection, these pilgrims first planted a cross at Plymouth heralding a new world in which all other freedoms and liberties would accrue from that foremost freedom of worship for which they braved the Ocean Sea. Yes, friends, character matters! It matters for nations, and it matters for the individual. Character is molded by faith, honor, and labor – and these were a trademark of early America.

There are two kinds of character described in today's text: the character engendered in those who love knowledge and instruction; and the character (or lack thereof) of those who hate knowledge and correction. If I am to depart on a great sea voyage, I will seek the most seasoned sea pilot and the most able vessel my money can afford. This is simply common sense, isn't it? But the greater numbers of souls who have launched out on the stormy seas of life have done so under their own frail navigation skills and in the most unseaworthy of vessels. God is the Author and Giver of Life. If I am to have a pilot that knows most of that sea of life, and who has created the most certain of all means of transport (Christ), that Pilot must be the Master of the Seas Himself. ***1 Whoso loveth instruction loveth knowledge: but he that hateth reproof is brutish.*** According to Merriam-Webster's 11th Collegiate Dictionary, the word 'brute' derives from 'beast'. A person who is brutish is unreasonable just as a beast of the field. Correcting a beast by any means other than the forceful whip is almost impossible – so are the ways of the wicked sinner. He has his own way, and that way is always AWAY from God.

The righteous man or woman seeks God early, and determines to follow His Holy Counsel to the greatest extent possible. They know of no better Friend or Guide. Nothing that we do out of a love and reverence for God goes unnoticed by our King. ***2 A good man obtaineth favour of the LORD: but a man of wicked devices will he condemn.*** We fail of righteousness often enough even in living as holy as we are able to do, so why would we dispense with our best Friend who knows every secret of our heart (and the Universe) in seeking the way that we should go? All works of the wicked (even plowing) is sin, and no good thing can come of the labors of the wicked. Their fruit is bitter and rotten to the core.

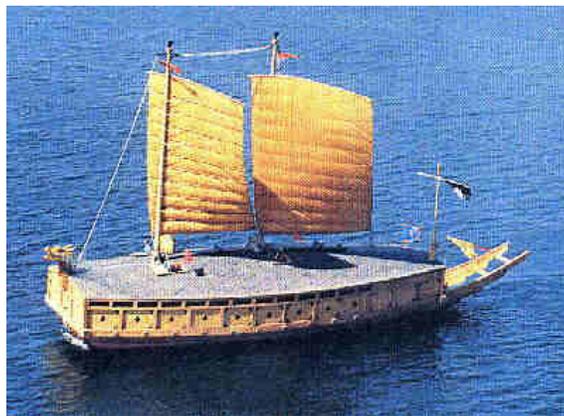
3 A man shall not be established by wickedness: but the root of the righteous shall not be moved. A marriage institution with Christ at the helm is a permanent and joyful marriage just as a Church which rightfully places Christ in the midst shall flourish before the Lord. Shall we of America once more become a "People of the Book," or shall we slink and slither beneath the stones and putrid composts of faded glory and fallen grace? I hope and pray that each Reader of this devotion will be as that "*Tree planted by the rivers of water*" and that "*He shall not be moved*" from the righteousness of God. Being such a man or nation, "*all that he doeth shall prosper*". (Psalms 1) The greatest benefit of all is to have one's name written in the Book of Life of the Lamb. Being recorded there, His name shall not be moved, but the wicked have no such favor of God. They shall have no names at all in the fires of Hell.

There may be no greater emotional pain than that of guilt and shame. Even an innocent man or woman may be brought to grievous shame through the sins and indiscretions of their marriage partner; but a woman of character is actually the center of power and authority for her husband. She is his crown of respectability and comfort.

4 A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband: but she that maketh ashamed is as rottenness in his bones. She is the crown-jewel of his life and success. A “house”, on the other hand, “*divided against itself cannot stand.*” – not a quote of Abraham Lincoln, but of our Lord Jesus Christ! (Matthew 12:25) If there is great contention within the walls of the king’s castle, how shall he go forth to battle without?

We are governed by two great powers – our **THOUGHTS** and our **WORDS**. Long before God undertook the Creation of the worlds, the concept was born in His Mind. Before He spoke the Word “*Let there be Light!*” God knew Light as His Revealer of Truth and that which exposes lies. Hearing His thoughts, expressed in His Word, we need not stumble in the dark. We have the brilliant and gleaming Light of Truth made available to us in and by the WORD. **5 The thoughts of the righteous are right: but the counsels of the wicked are deceit. 6 The words of the wicked are to lie in wait for blood: but the mouth of the upright shall deliver them.** When we have committed God’s Word to the strong Chambers of our Hearts, we will begin to think the thoughts of God AFTER Him. To deceive such a devoted disciple will not be possible. But the wicked give counsel that always leads to the swamps of the grave. Remember how cunningly Satan waited in the Tree for Eve – how he tempted her with his remarkable voice...how he simply asked a question that was, itself, a lie And finally bluntly refuted the promises of God and caused her fall – and ours? He appealed to her false pride.

7 The wicked are overthrown, and are not: but the house of the righteous shall stand. Why are these two houses so different? Perhaps they look the same. The house of the wicked may even be more opulently furnished than that of the righteous, yet the house of the wicked shall be washed away and that of the righteous shall be left standing. Why is this so? It is because the wicked build on the shifting and miry sands of doubt and unbelief; but the righteous build upon that solid Rock which is Christ. If we have Christ as our sure foundation, we shall NEVER be moved.



In the annals of history of the Korean people, there is an account of a great invasion by General Hideoshi several hundred years ago (1598) with more than 250,000 troops against a Korea that stood defenseless before his mighty force. His troop transports numbered 313 ships. There was an honorable and gallant admiral named Yi Sun Shin who had been forced into retirement from Korea’s Navy by corrupt politicians. He who was called back to duty in desperation. (When the wicked become hopeless in their straits, they will always turn to the man of character to save them) Admiral Yi created a small battle ship called the Kobuki (turtle ship). He only had 13 such vessels to confront the entire Japanese fleet, but he destroyed the Japanese Navy and forced the withdrawal of all ground troops of the Japanese empire from Korea. He is often compared in admiralship to Admiral of the Fleet, Horatio Nelson. **8 A man shall**

be commended according to his wisdom: but he that is of a perverse heart shall be despised. The world still despises a perverse man even while heaping accolades upon them in time of plenty.

9 He that is despised, and hath a servant, is better than he that honoureth himself, and lacketh bread. Every nation has its poor and vagrants, and they will be the same regardless of the country of their residence. Loafers and idlers are not Godly, but rather are ones who do not seek after wisdom, or even use what little wisdom they have. "Respectful mediocrity is better than boastful poverty." ". . . if any would not work, neither should he eat." (2 Thess 3:10)

Kindness is wisdom of love, but cruelty is the blind rage of a Godless idiot! 10 A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast: but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel. It is wise to care for the comfort and well-being of a beast of burden for it shall prosper in health and performance. But the motive is not prosperity, but kindness. The cruel lack even a rudimentary care for the comfort of man or beast. Their perverted minds derive pleasure from the hurt of other creatures. How unlike God who created these creatures! Such brutes would not be happy in a Heaven filled with God's love – a prospect for which they should have little worry!

11 He that tilleth his land shall be satisfied with bread: but he that followeth vain persons is void of understanding. This is a great reminder of the Fable of Aesop regarding the lazy grasshopper and the diligent ants. In times of winter, the ants had plenty while the grasshopper starved. *Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.* (Gal 6:7)

Wicked men will expend far more labor at gaining a dishonest treasure than a righteous man may earn through honorable pursuits. 12 The wicked desireth the net of evil men: but the root of the righteous yieldeth fruit. The wicked are forever seeking a means of trapping the righteous for profit; but the honest laborer produces fruit according to the measure of his labors. This is God's way, and the way of God's Nature.

13 The wicked is snared by the transgression of his lips: but the just shall come out of trouble. Mr. Job describes it best: *If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me: if I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse.* (Job 9:20) and *Thine own mouth condemneth thee* (Job 15:6) Truth is never lost to the heart, but intricate lies are a maze of confusion to the liar. Truth is simple and not contradictory, but lies proliferate and form a tome of deceitful files to be remembered at great effort.

14 A man shall be satisfied with good by the fruit of his mouth: and the recompence of a man's hands shall be rendered unto him. Honestly begotten wealth is a blessing to the laborer and doubly so, for his conscience is cleared while his pantry is being filled. If our words are good, kind, and courteous, we will have a healthy conscience as well as a joyous outlook on life. In a Godly and righteous nation, the earnings of a man's hand shall be his reward. The nature of government swings, as well, from the perverse to the righteous. Let us pray for the righteous to be in authority again in America: *When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn.* (Prov 29:2)