



14 The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways: and a good man shall be satisfied from himself. 15 The simple believeth every word: but the prudent man looketh well to his going. 16 A wise man feareth, and departeth from evil: but the fool rageth, and is confident. 17 He that is soon angry dealeth foolishly: and a man of wicked devices is hated. 18 The simple inherit folly: but the prudent are crowned with knowledge. 19 The evil bow before the good; and the wicked at the gates of the righteous. 20 The poor is hated even of his own neighbour: but the rich hath many friends. 21 He that despiseth his neighbour sinneth: but he that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he. (Prov 14:14-21)

The theme of these verses today reflect PERSONALITY patterns of both the wicked and the good. The opening salvo of the text is a blast against the backslider. Backsliding is not a NEW phenomenon among many who have previously born a strong testimony; but backsliding does bring into question the prior salvation of the backslider. The author of "*It is Well with my Soul*," Horatio Spafford, had a seemingly invincible faith, yet ended his life believing that he was the new Messiah. In the late 1800's, an ardent Christian evangelist wrote a pamphlet entitled, *Come to Jesus*. It had immediate and broad success in bringing many souls to Christ; however, in later years, the same evangelist became embroiled in a theological debate with an opponent of his doctrine. The evangelist wrote an article denouncing his opponent in the strongest terms of invective and condemnation. He asked a friend what title he should place on the article, His friend responded, "Call it, '*Go to the Devil*' by the author of '*Come to Jesus*.'" Needless to say, the evangelist repented and did not publish the polemic. **14 The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways: and a good man shall be satisfied from himself.** If we are climbing a slippery slope and grasping a branch along the way, we will backslide if we lose our grip on the branch. The same is true spiritually. Jesus Christ is our Branch. If we let go of Him, we will fall back to a lower place than we were before we came to know Him. When we let go of God and take confidence in self, we have fallen from the grace of God.

A good man, on the other hand, has emptied his heart of self and filled it with Christ - and no evil treasures can exist in a heart occupied by Christ, only good treasures of eternal worth.

15 The simple believeth every word: but the prudent man looketh well to his

going. Are not mobs comprised of the simple-minded whose minds are as weak as the chaff in a hurricane. They are blown about by every wind of doctrine. *That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive* (Eph 4:14) Such simpletons fill their minds with the sensation and the devious words of men to the detriment of faith. They hurry from one great (supposed) revival to another to see the advertised sign from heaven. In fact, there is not but one sign that will suffice: *An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.* (Matt 12:39-40) If our nation is not currently an evil and adulterous generation, then I must say that Sodom, too, should not have been destroyed.

16 A wise man feareth, and departeth from evil: but the fool rageth, and is confident. The wise recognize evil as poison that will deprive them of the life offered in Christ. They will fear evil as a Bedouin fears the wilderness cesspool. If the wise find themselves in the neighborhood of evil, they will immediately depart from that place for it is dangerous. But the foolish one will not recognize the enemy of his soul in the face of the evil he embraces. All that he thinks and does seems the very best in the eyes of the fool. He will rage against the Sovereignty of God and plead the cause of the Devil.

17 He that is soon angry dealeth foolishly: and a man of wicked devices is hated. The mind of the fool is ruled by heated emotion. Such emotions of anger or careless abandon overrides his reason and logic (if he ever had any). There are cultures that have lived far from God who experience many murders and acts of violence for the least cause. Though there may be "honor among thieves," there is not very much of it. Their mutual honor extends only so far as their interests in maintaining it. If the profit is assured, the wicked will stab their best confederate in the back for a block of salt.

18 The simple inherit folly: but the prudent are crowned with knowledge. The inherited folly of the simple is simply the reward handed down to them by the endowment of their investments in folly. How so are the prudent crowned with knowledge? A crown represents 'authority.' Knowledge gives power AND authority. Lack of hidden knowledge has destroyed bridges of steel. Several decades ago, the Shah of Iran desired to modernize his highways and road system. He hired top line German engineers to come to Iran and build strong bridges to replace the ancient earthen bridges of the past. The German engineers were baffled at the lack of logic in the way the old bridges had been constructed. Even over dry river beds (wadis), the Iranians had made a great dip on both sides of the bridge, and then made the bridge to arch over the dry riverbed. Shaking their heads, the German engineers destroyed the old bridges and built perfectly straight bridges across the wadi's. All were very pleased that they had contracted such wizards of engineering to build their beautiful bridges. However, when the snows melted from the Zagros Mountain range and filled the dry wadi's with torrents of water, there was no dip either side of the German bridges, and those beautiful structures were swept away in a tiny percentage of time it took to construct them. Right knowledge is Godly power and authority!

The sons of Jacob sold their young brother, Joseph, into slavery. They meant no good will at all in the act. But Joseph was a shadow and type of Christ. He, too, went down into Egypt as Christ had done. He was treated badly until his wisdom and knowledge were recognized by the Pharaoh. When the famine struck, Jacob sent his

other sons into Egypt to buy grain. These unrighteous sons had to, at last, bow the knee to the wise and righteous Joseph. **19 The evil bow before the good; and the wicked at the gates of the righteous.** Every knee shall bow and every lip confess Christ at the day of His choosing; however, the wicked will bow before the gate of the righteous. What is the gate of the righteous? Is it not the gates of Heaven?

20 The poor is hated even of his own neighbour: but the rich hath many friends. This fact demonstrates the weakness of human nature. Why is it that the wealthy of the church always seem to enjoy greater favor of the pastor than the poor? Is it not wickedness that prompts this reaction? *For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?* (James 2:2-4) The rich, like the Prodigal Son, have a multitude of friends until the riches are exhausted. Then it is time to go to work in the pig sty, is it not?

21 He that despiseth his neighbour sinneth: but he that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he. I am, by no means, wealthy in the things of the world; however, God has blessed me with sufficient resources to satisfy all of my needs and more. There have been times when a poor and needy fellow has come begging relief for his great need. Knowing the man has foolishly squandered his increase in times past, I often feel a wicked reluctance to help him. It is then that I realize that men go begging alms of kings and princes, not of beggars and paupers. The wisdom we have managed in saving for the rainy day is also a gift of God - a gift not easily recognized by the underprivileged. So we must always share our blessings with those in need of food, clothing and shelter - but not of alcohol or drugs. The after-glow of having helped a less fortunate soul is a Godly comfort that only the generous can know. Of course, we will keep in mind that charity is not a function of the state but of the individual.