

Our Lord is good, but He isn't safe. He is not a tame Lion.



*21 There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand. 22 The desire of a man is his kindness: and a poor man is better than a liar. 23 The fear of the LORD tendeth to life: and he that hath it shall abide satisfied; he shall not be visited with evil. 24 A slothful man hideth his hand in his bosom, and will not so much as bring it to his mouth again. 25 Smite a scorner, and the simple will beware: and reprove one that hath understanding, and he will understand knowledge. 26 He that wasteth his father, and chaseth away his mother, is a son that causeth shame, and bringeth reproach. 27 Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge. 28 An ungodly witness scorneth judgment: and the mouth of the wicked devoureth iniquity. 29 Judgments are prepared for scorners, and stripes for the back of fools. (Prov 19:21-29)*

**The Counsel of the Lord shall stand!** Have stronger words ever been spoken? There is not even a necessity to add "forever" to the verse since whatever God decrees is unchanging and immutable. "**21 There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand.**" If you are thinking that the Law (not ordinances of Moses) given in the Old Testament no longer apply, perhaps you might reconsider before 'devices' in your carnal heart lead to your eternal ruin. All that God has ordained to come to pass must do so. ***"For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."*** (Matt 5:18) There is a wonderful cathedral that stands as a symbol of the pride and virtue of the city of Milan, Italy, and whose construction began in 1386 and was not completed until 1887. It is constructed of magnificent, pink Candoglia marble mined from the nearby Ossola Valley. There are three huge gates that lead into the cathedral from the streets of the city. Above one of those gates is a lovely bouquet of flowers with the inscription underneath: "The things that please are temporary." Above a second gate is a cross with these words inscribed beneath: "All that disturbs is temporary." And above the most prominent central gate are written these words: "The things that are important are Eternal!" And so is everything important that God has said - and says!

**"22 The desire of a man is his kindness: and a poor man is better than a liar."**

This relates to the manner in which we perceive the goodness of a man. The cardinal characteristic that distinguishes our perception of a man is his kindness, or the lack thereof, towards others. Many other faults and shortcomings can be dismissed as long as the man is kind and caring toward others. It is better to be a poor man than to be a wealthy liar!

There is a fine little story, I suppose true, about a tall, lanky fellow traveling from Philadelphia to Washington, D.C. in the year 1790. As he arrived at a midway point in Baltimore, he was tired and dirty. His clothes were mud-caked from the atrocious rains and wind he had endured on horseback. Stopping for some cherished rest at one of Baltimore's more prestigious inns of the day, he was surprised that the innkeeper refused to allow such a man of obviously low estate to remain overnight in his inn. The innkeeper claimed that the unkempt appearance of a dirt farmer would bring discredit to his inn. Sadly, the man left seeking room and board elsewhere. But shortly after, the innkeeper discovered that the man was Thomas Jefferson, Vice President of the United States. He sent word apologizing of his indiscretion and inviting Jefferson back to his inn compliments of the innkeeper. Here is Jefferson's response to the messenger: "Tell him (the innkeeper) that I have already engaged a room. I value his good intentions highly but if he has no place for a dirty American farmer, he has none for the Vice President of the United States." Statesmen were a bit different in those days from the politicians of our own day.

**"23 The fear of the LORD tendeth to life: and he that hath it shall abide satisfied; he shall not be visited with evil."** Yes, indeed, the fear of the Lord tendeth to life, but it also may, to the unrepentant, herald eternal damnation. William Gurnall, a 17th century English clergyman, wrote: "We fear men so much because we fear God so little."

David McCullough in his book Mornings On Horseback tells this story about young Teddy Roosevelt: "Mittie (his mother) had found he was so afraid of the Madison Square Church that he refused to set foot inside if alone. He was terrified, she discovered, of something called the "zeal." It was crouched in the dark corners of the church ready to jump at him, he said. When she asked what a zeal might be, he said he was not sure, but thought it was probably a large animal like an alligator or a dragon. He had heard the minister read about it from the Bible. Using a concordance, she read him those passages containing the word ZEAL until suddenly, very excited, he told her to stop. The line was from the Book of John, 2:17: "And his disciples remembered that it was written, 'The ZEAL of thine house hath eaten me up'" People are still justifiably afraid to come near the "zeal" of the Lord, for they are perfectly aware it could "eat them up" if they aren't one of His. Our Lord is good, but He isn't safe."

How is it that the fear of the Lord 'tendeth' to life? If our initial fears of our innate wickedness drives us to the Lord through our fear of judgment, then we have gained life. If not, we simply remain in our deadened state of unremitted sin. 'Fear of falling' causes us to remain clear of high and dangerous places. Fear of electricity causes us to use great caution anytime we repair a wall receptacle. In a word, fear begets respect and reverence for God.

**"24 A slothful man hideth his hand in his bosom, and will not so much as bring it to his mouth again."** "Show your hand!" is a term used to reveal the intentions of another. A hand that is unseen is a hand that is unknown in actions or intentions. The scoundrel has many secrets to keep with good reason. If his intentions were known, he

would be less successful in swindling the elderly, or fleecing the congregation. Since a slothful man is not inclined to honest labor, he gains his living off the labors of others.

*"25 Smite a scorner, and the simple will beware: and reprove one that hath understanding, and he will understand knowledge."* Gentle correction will not suffice for a scorner. He respects no one, or anything. So the only approach to correct is a physical one that brings pain or discomfort. When the innocent see another being harshly punished, they will beware of performing the same mischief in order to avoid a similar fate. Did you ever check your speed when you saw another being ticketed for speeding? The wise will understand reasoned correction and gain understanding from those they respect.

*"26 He that wasteth his father, and chaseth away his mother, is a son that causeth shame, and bringeth reproach. 27 Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge. 28 An ungodly witness scorneth judgment: and the mouth of the wicked devoureth iniquity."* These three verse summarize the admonishment given in many other Proverbs and Psalms. The charge is given in verse 26, and the solution in solution in verse 27. The son that is a continual burden on his father's finances, and repudiates the love of his mother is only fit to bring shame and disgrace upon the family name. The kind of associates a young man or woman choose may either reinforce good manners and a healthy disposition, or the very opposite. Therefore the opening lines of Psalms 1 are quite relevant. *"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."* (Psalms 1:1-3) Sin is a DIRECTION! The blessed man will not WALK with the ungodly and hear their tempting words for, if he does, he will next be spending much time under that ungodly counsel by STANDING with them. And if he hesitates very long in their company, he will next be making himself at home with the ungodly by SITTING with them. It is very much as Lot, who pitched his tent TOWARD the wicked city of Sodom and was next to be found living there and sitting in the gate of the city. In addition, the Prodigal Son remained in his sins as long as he lingered in the far country. But when he came to himself, he returned on the same road (opposite direction) that had taken him AWAY from his father's love. The DIRECTION makes all the difference!

*"29 Judgments are prepared for scorners, and stripes for the back of fools."* A scorner cannot escape the judgments of the magistrate of earth, or of heaven, by subterfuge or flight. The greater the sins in number, the longer grows the tail of the sinner so that he finds himself uncomfortably situated in a room full of rocking chairs. (\*\_\_~) If stripes are prepared already for the fool, how can he escape his due reward? Just as the coward dies a thousand deaths, so the fool suffers a thousand stripes in this life, and worse in the eternity to come.