



*1 Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise. 2 The fear of a king is as the roaring of a lion: whoso provoketh him to anger sinneth against his own soul. 3 It is an honour for a man to cease from strife: but every fool will be meddling. 4 The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing. 5 Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water; but a man of understanding will draw it out. 6 Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness: but a faithful man who can find? 7 The just man walketh in his integrity: his children are blessed after him. 8 A king that sitteth in the throne of judgment scattereth away all evil with his eyes. 9 Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin? 10 Divers weights, and divers measures, both of them are alike abomination to the LORD. (Prov 20:1-10)*

There is a new subject introduced in this Proverb regarding a danger not previously emphasized in Scripture so strongly. Can you identify that subject of behavior? It is drunkenness! We have suggestions of the undesirable results of drunkenness in the case of Noah (Genesis 9:20-25). And strong drink was the grounds for a very immoral act of Lot. (Genesis 19:34-38) This Proverb emphasizes the destructive nature of wine and strong drink in terms not previously used. Why could this be? I am not sure; however, I believe it may have been due to the relatively rare occasions of drunkenness by the early fathers. ***"1 Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise."*** A man may be endowed with excellent mental facilities, and wise in many things, but the one susceptibility to alcohol can render that man an idiot and a role model for fools. There is nothing evil about wine and strong drink in and of themselves, but the wrong use of these drinks can make a fool of the best of persons. A single glass of wine, or a cordial in the evening, may bring rest and comfort to a weary body, but over-indulgence can destroy the walls that protect the soul, and open the floodgates of indiscretion. Inhibitions to sin are breached by the flood waters of alcohol. This causes a man to behave in a manner that he would find reprehensible when sober.

***"2 The fear of a king is as the roaring of a lion: whoso provoketh him to anger sinneth against his own soul."*** What terror is struck in the hearts of villagers in Africa or the subcontinent of Asia at the roaring of a lion at midnight! They take note of every means of safety and are alert to all dangers. No single soul will hurry out into the jungle to find and destroy the lion unless he is insane. A mere man is no match for a lion, and a mere man is no match for the power of a king who has the power and resources of

government at his beck and call. It would be foolish to provoke a king to anger just as it would be foolish to provoke an angry lion. Those who do so may expect injury or destruction of their souls.

"3 It is an honour for a man to cease from strife: but every fool will be meddling." Some of us remember the old western movies in which the hero is challenged by a fool. But the hero is hero because, being stronger and perhaps much more adept at the draw, walks away rather than use his superior marksmanship on a fool. Honor is a Godly characteristic that should be evidenced in the lives of every Christian. "Men are ordinarily governed by the law of honor, the law of the land, and the law of God. It is the object of religious institutions and instruction to uphold the last of these as the supreme and universal rule. In doing this, it is sometimes necessary to bring the other two into a comparison with it, as standards of duty and right." H. Ware, D.D. In matters of worldly honor, there should be no line of division in that honor which is paid to the Lord. All men are due respect and honor unless they prove themselves unworthy of it. But the fool does not know of honor, nor does he care for its value. Rather than observe the common rules of discretion, he delves headlong into the private affairs of others as if he were the Town Crier. He gossips to destroy men who are his better.

"4 The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing." If it is not the cold that prevents his labor, it will be the rain or the heat. The sluggard will always readily find an excuse to forego his duty. But the present prelude to the future; and the future will always reveal the character demonstrated in the past. This is a definitely a principle from the operation of which none can escape. Life stands in the same relation to eternity as the time of ploughing does to the harvest. If this life is spent in neglect of the soul, there will be eternal poverty. There really is not very much of the present moment for once we mention it, it is already in the past. So the Past is the foundation for the future. Present sacrifices will always lead to future rewards. A man who takes the pains of surveying the landscape for a rock foundation for his house will not suffer the loss of the sluggard who builds upon the nearer sand.

"5 Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water; but a man of understanding will draw it out." You will recall the Prodigal Son and his wearisome predicament in the pig sty in a far country. He had, in his heart, the wisdom to rise above his condition, but, so far, he had failed to call upon that reservoir of wisdom hidden deep within the lower chambers of his heart. His mind was tormented with sin and had neglected the well-springs of wisdom and understanding of his heart. He was, in a word, not in his right mind. No sinner is in his right mind. But see what happened: *"And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants."* (Luke 15:17-19) It may be that our rope is too short (memory) to recall the wisdom in our hearts, but when the severe draught assails us, we shall go to whatever lengths are necessary to procure the rope sufficient to draw out that wisdom.

"6 Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness: but a faithful man who can find?" Yes, evil wicked men will boast of their presumed goodness. But rare is the man who proves his goodness by his example of work and sacrifice. Rich men do not boast of their wealth, but no one questions it because of the proofs of life which point to that wealth. It is the man of modest means that is more apt to brag of his wealth which is only a show of cars and houses that are mortgaged to the gills.

"7 The just man walketh in his integrity: his children are blessed after him."

Though honor and integrity may not be in the DNA, they can certainly be learned behavior. "Like father, like son." The father who is just and of good reputation bequeaths the same to his sons and daughters. The children are blessed by the wealth of good will, honesty, and kindness that the father has placed on deposit in their names. Watching their father, they have learned that "honesty is the best policy" and to ***do unto others as you would have others to do unto you.***"

***"8 A king that sitteth in the throne of judgment scattereth away all evil with his eyes."*** How innocent is every criminal brought before the bar of justice. Each has a completely reasonable and sane excuse for his innocence – if it were only true. How the eyes of the guilty are averted at the stare of the judge! A child, guilty of some misdemeanor, will shrink before the inquisitor's eye, and so will the wicked wither before an absolute justice proven by evidence.

***"9 Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?"*** This is not a question aimed at some John Doe of Solomon's day, but is a direct question to the reader and hearer of these words to you and to me, friend! Is there any who can claim innocence before the Lord? Can any make their hearts clean and free of sin? Absolutely not – not anyone! The only cleansing of sin is derived from the blood of Christ and His imputed righteousness! I have heard men say, "I am not ready to accept Christ because I have sins in my life that I must first deal with!" Really! Can a man deal with his sins without the efficacious cleansing of the blood of Christ? Come now. Come as you are! Come with your sin burden and allow Christ to lift that unbecoming yoke from off your shoulders and onto His broad shoulders. Do not wait until the burden crushes you. Come now! ***"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."*** (Matt 11:28-30)

***"10 Divers weights, and divers measures, both of them are alike abomination to the LORD."*** Untrue balances, measures of good that are not as advertised, and manipulation of the books for fraud are an abomination to the Lord. Even greater abomination would be the magistrate who is charged with keeping justice but profanes justice. ***"A false balance is abomination to the LORD: but a just weight is his delight."*** (Prov 11:1).

