



*11 Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right. 12 The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the LORD hath made even both of them. 13 Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty; open thine eyes, and thou shalt be satisfied with bread. 14 It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer: but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth. 15 There is gold, and a multitude of rubies: but the lips of knowledge are a precious jewel. 16 Take his garment that is surety for a stranger: and take a pledge of him for a strange woman. 17 Bread of deceit is sweet to a man; but afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel. 18 Every purpose is established by counsel: and with good advice make war. 19 He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips. 20 Whoso curseth his father or his mother, his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness. (Prov 20:11-20)*

The keeper of the orchard is focused more upon the development of the young trees than he is the maintenance of the older ones. Why is this so? It is because the old tree has matured and grown to its fullest. It will not easily change in its fruitfulness or its stature; but a young tree is yet tender and will be affected greatly by weather phenomena such as winds and water erosion. It will also be more susceptible to parasitic infection. But if the wind blows the young twig so much that it is no longer vertical, that bend in its character will remain throughout its growth if not quickly corrected by the keeper of the orchard. Sometimes, too, a young tree will put forth what the keeper of the orchard calls a 'runner'. This is a secondary growth that emerges near the host and from the same root of the host tree. If allowed to remain, the runner will produce no fruit, but it will deprive the fruitful parent of needed sap to produce its fruit. The young man or woman needs prompt correction when the winds of social depravity blow against their tender branches. If some secondary interest develops (as a runner) which will not profit them but rather lead to a fruitless life, it must be removed from the living root. ***"11 Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right."*** Early in life, a child exhibits traits and characteristics that will mark their adult character later in life. If some behavior appears that is undesirable, it is

much easier to address that unwanted behavior early and thoroughly. If left to grow, it may sap the strength from the young person and result in their becoming moral runts. But once a child, or a tree, has grown to maturity, there is no question or doubt as to their nature to either produce good fruit, or no fruit at all. If no fruit is produced, the orchard keeper will cut it down.

***"12 The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the LORD hath made even both of them."***

It is true that these two organs of the senses are the most beneficial of all for learning. But suppose the ear does not hear, or the eye does not see? That would be an unfortunate tragedy. Unfortunately, many ears are dumb by choice of the owner to the things of God; and many eyes are blind to the wonders of His creation and truth. ***"Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not?"*** (Mark 8:18) Of what purpose is a piano that doesn't play and a light that does not shine? The most important purpose for which the ear can be employed is in hearing the Word of God. ***"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."*** (Romans 10:17) How can we fully appreciate the majesty and beauty of God without seeing His righteousness outlined in His Law? ***Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law."*** (Psalms 119:18) Should we not be at least as alert to God as the pagan prophet, Balaam: ***"And when Balaam saw that it pleased the LORD to bless Israel, he went not, as at other times, to seek for enchantments, but he set his face toward the wilderness. And Balaam lifted up his eyes, and he saw Israel abiding in his tents according to their tribes; and the spirit of God came upon him. And he took up his parable, and said, Balaam the son of Beor hath said, and the man whose eyes are open hath said: He hath said, which heard the words of God, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open."*** (Numbers 24:1-4)

Many men's ears and eyes are open to that which is outwardly rewarding in the way of morality and decency, but completely deaf and blind to the greater needs of the soul spoken through the Voice of Mercy and Grace. They are like spiritual statues.

***"13 Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty; open thine eyes, and thou shalt be satisfied with bread."*** Sleep is a pleasure and a necessity that must be balanced for good effect. Eight hours of sleep seems to be a happy norm though many can only endure 4 hours per night (Napoleon, for example). But those who exceed 8 hours sleep often discover that they are drowsier throughout the day than after nights of less sleep. Laziness is infectious. There is a spiritual as well as physical application of this verse. If we open our eyes and ears to God's Word in diligent study, and to prove all things thereby, it will become the very Bread of Heaven to our hearts and souls. There is a necessary and Godly rest, but also a slovenly sleep that is excessive. The sleep God gives should be spent as money – not wasted. ***"It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep."*** (Psalms 127:2)

***"14 It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer: but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth."*** We are ready and willing to lie to get a bargain and, then, more than willing to brag of our clever dealings with the seller. I was once invited to a dinner party in Esfahan, Iran, by a friend whose wife was Iranian. Another American guest inquired about a lamp the hostess had on a night stand. He commented that he had purchased an identical lamp with cut-glass shade at the bazaar only yesterday. He boasted of his knowledge of the Iranian custom of bargaining. The merchant wanted 2500 rial (about \$40) for the lamp. But he lingered with the merchant over tea and pita bread. He left the merchant and returned again after 30 minutes. He was finally able to get the merchant to come down on his price to 1500 rial. He commented that the merchant "had tears in his eyes" when the guest had purchased the lamp at such a

bargain. He then asked the Iranian hostess what she had paid for her lamp? His face changed a bit when she responded, "300 rial!"

***"15 There is gold, and a multitude of rubies: but the lips of knowledge are a precious jewel."*** The thoughts of man are not the thoughts of God. ***"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD."*** (Isaiah 55:8) Though the lips of knowledge are accounted the choice currency in heaven, in the world they are not valued at all in comparison with gold and rubies. Men are eager to deceive and defraud to gain the currency the world values to the detriment of their souls. *"Augustine mentions a somewhat ludicrous, but significant, story. A mountebank published in the full theatre, that in the next entertainment he would show to every man present what was in his heart. An immense concourse attended, and the man redeemed his pledge to the vast assembly by a single sentence—'Vili vultis emere, et caro vendere'—'You all wish to buy cheap, and to sell dear'—a sentence generally applauded: everyone, even the most trifling (as Augustine observes) finding the confirming witness in their own conscience."* De Trin. Lib. xiii. c. 111. If the conscience has not been ***"seared as with a hot iron"*** it will be always a silent witness to the voice of God within our souls. Unfortunately, we often file that Voice so remotely that it is not easily evoked.

***"16 Take his garment that is surety for a stranger: and take a pledge of him for a strange woman."*** It is not wise to lend to a stranger without collateral property. And a man who is prone to immoral living must pledge his freedom to get money to finance that life-style. We should be aware that *"the love of our neighbor does not involve the forgetting of our own security that wisdom has taught us. The path of godly prudence is the safest for all parties. It never can be wise to assist, where kindness only gives advantage to hurry on to ruin. The refusal may be an exercise of self-denial. It is well that it should be so. Let it be clearly seen to be the sacrifice, not the indulgence, of self-prudence, not selfishness. This grace is one of the combined perfections of Immanuel. Let it not be wanting in the profession of his people. It is necessary to the completeness of the Christian profession, and to avoid many occasions of offence to the Gospel."* Charles Bridges.

***"17 Bread of deceit is sweet to a man; but afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel."*** The most convenient place of separating the chaff from the wheat may not be the most profitable to taste. The platform must be clean and smooth. If the winnowing is conducted on a sandy or gravelly surface, the bread product may have a sweet taste, but the gravel will break the teeth. The devil makes his counterfeit look delicious, but its constitution is not good for the soul of man. For every profound truth of God, Satan has a profound counterfeit. So, how can you tell the difference? You do so by studying the genuine – not the counterfeit. Being perfectly familiar with the true currency of God's Word, you will immediately detect the counterfeit.

***"18 Every purpose is established by counsel: and with good advice make war."*** When making important decisions, do not rely upon your own limited knowledge. The rope is stronger that has many cords twisted together. Seek advice from all friends who may have had some different experience in the matter. Certainly, nations should not go to war without considering every possible aspect of the necessity and outcome. Hitler made a great miscalculation in following the Napoleonic example of the invasion of Russia. History is prologue.

The Overture of 1812, by Peter Tchaikovsky, was written to celebrate the consecration of St Katherine's Cathedral in St. Petersburg in 1879 (I believe). The lilting opening notes suggest a mixture of the French Marseilles intermixed with the Holy Russian anthem, "Save us O God." The Russians were ill-trained and poorly equipped

to resist such a formidable army as that of Napoleon – numbering more than half a million. So they could only depend upon God for their salvation. After a dearly purchased victory at Borodino (outside the perimeter of Moscow) Napoleon proudly marched into the city to take possession. It was the bleak cold of a Russian winter and Napoleon needed the resources he would gain in the city to feed his troops and war horses. Unfortunately, all provender and shelter had been burned or evacuated. Napoleon was stuck in a cold, desolate Moscow with no hope of staying. Not only did he need to withdraw back across the vast and frozen Russian frontier for practical reasons, but to save himself. In the Overture, it is at the point of Napoleon's retreat that the Church Bells are wrung in celebration and the live cannon fire is introduced to convey the total victory of Russia (with God's help) over a tyrannical invader. Napoleon arrived back in France with only 10,000 of his 500,000 man army. Napoleon did not consider the diligence of the Russian people nor their reliance upon a merciful and just God. "...*with good advice make war.*" There is no better advice than that which comes through the wisdom of God's Word. The spiritual war is far more intense than the physical. Satan never withdraws completely from the field. But the Captain of our line is Christ and He never loses. "*Blessed be the Lord, my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight!*" (Ps. 144:1)

"19 He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips." If we will remember that all interactions in life with others must be based in love, we will be better people. Even the rebuke of Christ to the Pharisees was out of a greater love of their souls than any regard for their outward appearance. One person you may always depend upon as being shallow and unreliable is the flatterer. His flatteries and devotion are always to the stronger hand or the most opportune climate. Those who carry rumors and gossip about your enemy will also carry tales about you to that enemy. The gossip knows no loyalties. His whole body is subjugated to a lying tongue.

"20 Whoso curseth his father or his mother, his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness." If the punishment for such behavior is darkness, perhaps darkness is also the cause of his sin. Nature itself offers strong counsel against such ingratitude of a sibling against a parent who has been the author and preserver of his existence. Any offense at all against a parent is a curse. If we owe such reverence for them when they are dead, how much more so while they are living? The sons of the Rechabites set the standard for the honor due parents even in death: "*And I set before the sons of the house of the Rechabites pots full of wine, and cups, and I said unto them, Drink ye wine. But they said, We will drink no wine: for Jonadab the son of Rechab our father commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye, nor your sons for ever: Neither shall ye build house, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have any: but all your days ye shall dwell in tents; that ye may live many days in the land where ye be strangers. Thus have we obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab our father in all that he hath charged us, to drink no wine all our days, we, our wives, our sons, nor our daughters; Nor to build houses for us to dwell in: neither have we vineyard, nor field, nor seed: But we have dwelt in tents, and have obeyed, and done according to all that Jonadab our father commanded us.*" (Jer 35:5-10) Do thou likewise.