



21 *An inheritance may be gotten hastily at the beginning; but the end thereof shall not be blessed.* 22 *Say not thou, I will recompense evil; but wait on the LORD, and he shall save thee.* 23 *Divers weights are an abomination unto the LORD; and a false balance is not good.* 24 *Man's goings are of the LORD; how can a man then understand his own way?* 25 *It is a snare to the man who devoureth that which is holy, and after vows to make enquiry.* 26 *A wise king scattereth the wicked, and bringeth the wheel over them.* 27 *The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly.* 28 *Mercy and truth preserve the king: and his throne is upholden by mercy.* 29 *The glory of young men is their strength: and the beauty of old men is the gray head.* 30 *The blueness of a wound cleanseth away evil: so do stripes the inward parts of the belly.* (Prov 20:21-30)

The wisdom contained in the example Jesus gave of the Prodigal Son is so full that its application keeps appearing throughout other writings of God's Word. ***"21 An inheritance may be gotten hastily at the beginning; but the end thereof shall not be blessed."*** The Prodigal Son desired his inheritance long before it was due. ***"A certain man had two sons: And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.*** (Luke 15:11-14) It turned out to be a curse to him for several reasons, two of which were: 1) he asked for his inheritance before it was proper for him to receive it according to law; 2) he asked for his inheritance out of an immature desire to spend it on the wrong things. To receive any good thing out of season will never profit. We pray our prayers as if God were a waiter standing by for our order. We expect prompt answers. When God does not grant our petitions according to our time table, we are dismayed and disappointed. But God has a perfect timing for all things, and He will often withhold our prayer requests until the very perfect moment to grant them. ***"His ways are not OUR ways."***

While it is true that every good Christian disciple must oppose wickedness at every turn and stanch the flow of the evil fountain, such active opposition must not deter us from the focus on righteousness and doing good in obedience to God. The fight itself must not become an obsession that shuts out the "still, small Voice of God." ***"22 Say not thou, I will recompense evil; but wait on the LORD, and he shall save thee."*** When the battle against evil becomes an obsession, our warfare becomes as unGodly as that of the enemy. Love for enemy is not a submission to him, but an act of restraint of action tempered by a strong desire to redeem him to the righteous cause. The Lord will always conclude the matter with righteousness, and He will always be there beside you to protect and defend. ***"Vengeance is mine saith the Lord."*** He acts out of perfect righteousness while our actions are often tinged with emotion and wrong motives.

"23 Divers weights are an abomination unto the LORD; and a false balance is

not good. See how God teaches us as little children, or as a loving mother the child whose mind must be taught with frequent repetition of purpose and meaning! God has made this point more than once throughout Scripture, and He reinforces the same principle three times in this very chapter of Proverbs. (see also verses 10 and 14). God repeats Himself to drive a serious point home. Unlike my mother who used to say, "Jerry, don't make me repeat myself. Do as I asked you now!" God does repeat Himself for our own edification and learning. Governments that adopt dishonest monetary policies in wholesale printing of banknotes are prime examples in our day of the ruin that is fostered by breaking this principle. Skimming money from another's bank account, or claiming false charges on an income tax return are 'divers and false weights.' Failing to reveal a hidden deficiency in a home or automobile we are selling is the same. Gods hates this behavior.

"24 Man's goings are of the LORD; how can a man then understand his own way?" The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord; however, man must take those steps in obedience to God. Do not question and query every commandment of God – simply obey. You may have fished all night with no success, but when the Lord orders you to cast your net just a few feet away from the previous casting "***on the other side***" what amazing results that obedience will garner. A young military recruit is trained vigorously to obey orders immediately and without question. This is designed to instill a discipline of obedience that comes from higher command that truly does know the situation on the battle field far better than the common soldier whose vision is reduced to a few yards in his front. When we walk by faith and truth, we shall never go into the ditch with the blind.

Augustine (author of *Confessions & City of God*) was born to a devout Christian mother and pagan father in North Africa. Early in life, he abandoned the faith of his mother and went off into 'riotous living.' He played with harlots and by eighteen years of age was keeping a mistress. Having become a teacher of rhetoric in Carthage, Tome, and later Milan, Augustine had lived his life 'his own way.' But something was amiss, and Augustine knew it. He began to search for truth. He listened intently to the preaching of Ambrose and, later his mother came to Milan and prayed for him. Having forsaken the riotous living, Augustine was converted to Christ while reading Paul's Epistle to the Romans. – in the solitude and beauty of a garden place in Milan. Later, a well-liked prostitute of his acquaintance saw Augustine on the streets of Milan. She called to him, but he would not answer her. Finally, she shouted, "Augustine! It is I!" Augustine responded, "Yes, I know, but it is no longer I." When we march to the crispy notes of Christ, we march not unto ourselves, but unto God.

"A deal is a deal," was a governing principle in the mountains of Tennessee when I was a boy. Once struck, there would be no further challenge to the terms. "***25 It is a snare to the man who devoureth that which is holy, and after vows to make enquiry.***" Do we order a filet-mignon at a restaurant and then claimed that it was not properly cooked after we have eaten every crumb? Turning away from the God you once knew brings far greater terror than to have never known God at all. "***For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.***" (2 Peter 2:20-22)

Surely, we remember the old movies of the Roman chariots rushing through the streets scattering the pedestrians and running over some of them. Sounds terrible, doesn't it? But that is exactly what the King of Kings will do to the wicked. **"26 A wise king scattereth the wicked, and bringeth the wheel over them."** The wicked are without names in Hell because they have no prospect for future service. Only those whose names are found in the Lamb's Book of Life shall have a name, and a name well worth mentioning.

God made our spirits. It is the same spirit which He breathed into our souls at conception. Good or bad, that spirit does not belong to man, but to God. It is He who decides how long that spirit will guide and motivate our bodies. It reveals all things about us to the eye of God – even our innermost being. **"27 The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly."** No idea of man, no secretly held thought, no plan of his heart – is hidden from the All-Seeing Eye of God. God uses that spirit to search out our hearts and minds. It is like a GPS chip that informs God, not only of WHERE we are, but WHAT we are. That revealing candle can become a blessing to us if it burns for Christ. If we are the light of the world, we are the REFLECTED Light of the World which is Christ! **"Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."** (Matt 5:14-16)

"28 Mercy and truth preserve the king: and his throne is upholden by mercy." We must cherish these two valuable assets of MERCY and TRUTH! If these two preserve kings, how much more his subjects! It is not LAW that upholds the throne of God, but MERCY. Law is a means of determining obedience and righteousness; but none are righteous apart from the healing sacrifice of a merciful Lord. It is His mercy and sacrifice that enables us to be forgiven and restored to our Lord and Savior. And all is accomplished through the knowledge of the truth – **"the truth shall make you free!"**

A young man, strong in his ways and eager in life, may take many missteps, but is able to jump up and begin anew. He is strong in body and strong in spirit. Many errors may lie in his way, but he always, because of his youth, has opportunity to overcome these in faith and practice. But the old man has lived long and made many mistakes. If he has learned from those mistakes, as did Augustine, he will be wise and righteous before the Lord. It is the Lord and His wisdom that we have followed after forsaking our own. It is His righteousness that we claim and not our own. The gray head will have come to know Christ if he has not gone through life with his eyes closed. **"29 The glory of young men is their strength: and the beauty of old men is the gray head."** Wisdom is beautiful!

When we are struck on our bodies, a blue bruise appears. It is a mechanism of the body to bring blood and healing to the site of hurt. **30 The blueness of a wound cleanseth away evil: so do stripes the inward parts of the belly."** Eventually, the blood will carry the damaged tissue away and cleanse the wound of any damage. When we behave in ways that are not pleasing to God, we are chastised with many stripes. Though the stripes wound the outer body, the inner man is healed and restored to his place in God. Hard trials and challenges strengthen the inner man. Even when all around is in ruins, the inner man, devoted to God, can be an edifice of strength and hope to others. Though the devil may be able to destroy the body, he cannot touch the soul.