



*1 The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will. 2 Every way of a man is right in his own eyes: but the LORD pondereth the hearts. 3 To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice. 4 An high look, and a proud heart, and the plowing of the wicked, is sin. 5 The thoughts of the diligent tend only to plenteousness; but of every one that is hasty only to want. 6 The getting of treasures by a lying tongue is a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death. 7 The robbery of the wicked shall destroy them; because they refuse to do judgment. 8 The way of man is froward and strange: but as for the pure, his work is right. 9 It is better to dwell in a corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman in a wide house. 10 The soul of the wicked desireth evil: his neighbour findeth no favour in his eyes.*

(Proverbs 21:1-10)

The 'rivers of water' referred to in verse 1 are those brooks and streams that the gardener devises so that every plant and vine receives the water of life." *1 The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.* The waters of a stream always seek the lowest bed into which to flow. Water, especially the Water of Life, flows always from a higher to a lower place - from the highest Throne in Heaven to the lowest creature in the dust of the earth. The streams of the king are winding and searching - seeking out the heart of the despondent as well as of the joyful. No matter the earthly majesty of the king, his heart is in the hand of the Lord to winnow and route according to His Will as the Gardener. King Cyrus was a mighty king of the Persians, but God named him 200 years before he was born and called him out to be his anointed in rebuilding the Temple at Jerusalem." *That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.*" (Isaiah 44:28) Unwittingly, the king's heart responds to the tether in the Hand of the Lord to perform His will.

Even a desperate criminal justifies his atrocious crimes in his own heart. You will find few criminals behind bars that have not been unfairly tried and convicted - they all aver their innocence. "*2 Every way of a man is right in his own eyes: but the LORD pondereth the hearts.*" Did not Cain do the same when the blood of Abel cried unto the Lord from the dust of the earth? A child, even, will always have an excuse for his disobedience; or may even deny the theft while cookie crumbs around his lips reveal his secret. The Lord does not judge our hearts by our pleasing appearance in dress or adornment - He looks upon, and inside, the heart. "*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the LORD search the heart, I try*

*the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.* (Jer 17:9-10)

How great an emphasis we hear from the pulpits of America on so-called "sacrificial giving!" If the redeeming Blood of the Lamb is forgotten in the sermon, you can be sure that the offering plate will not be. What can a man give the King of the Universe whose hands formed him? Of course, God desires that we are generous to good works, but what is generosity if it is accompanied by injustice. What is any sacrifice without love, or any justice apart from mercy. Justice without mercy will gain a ready admittance of all of us to the domain of Hell. "3 To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice." What of the adulterers and drunkards that faithfully give their tithes into the church every Sunday? What does it profit them if they have not the knowledge of the Lord or share the mercy that has been showered upon them? "*For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.*" (Hosea 6:6) Certainly, however, the Lord will favor those who give out of a heart of mercy and justice.

Next comes a verse whose meaning so many fail to grasp - especially those who seek to gain heaven by their good works: "4 An high look, and a proud heart, and the plowing of the wicked, is sin." In what deed or accomplishment can any man take pride? Where did he acquire the body in which his soul must dwell, or the strength to move and think? Is not God the First Cause, and the Constant Cause? Whatever good results from our labors and planning can only be attributable to God who has endowed us with such marvelous faculties of mind and body. So, if we are very adept at sports, at public speaking, at law, medicine, the arts, or whatever other endeavor the Lord has allowed us to accomplish, let us not take pride in the accomplishment of our arms of flesh, for it is the Lord's doing. He has endowed us with many talents. Though He expects us to invest and capitalize upon those talents, yet it is His principle that earns the increase. Whatever seemingly good we accomplish, if we do not give the honor and glory to God in the doing of them, it is truly sin. A heart that is not redeemed of God can do nothing that is good - even the plowing of a field. Are good works evil? Not at all! But those good works can only have their origin in the heart of God because only God is righteous.

"5 The thoughts of the diligent tend only to plenteousness; but of every one that is hasty only to want." To none of life's mighty challenges there are no quick solutions. To the wise, diligence is the watchword: diligent in study, diligence in obedience, diligence in love and service, and diligence in all that our hands find to do. "*I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times. I call to remembrance my song in the night: I commune with mine own heart: and my spirit made diligent search.*" (Psalms 77:5-6) The thing most diligently safeguarded should be the one possession of greatest value - a man's soul. "*Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*" (2 Peter 1:10-11) How many projects have you had to scrap and begin anew because you failed to first read the instructions? God has given us an excellent Operator's Manual for our lives - the Holy Bible. Read it!

"6 The getting of treasures by a lying tongue is a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death." This truth applies to nations as well as persons. The world economies of today, and especially that of the United States, are drifting inexorably toward an unnatural Keynesian economy in which labor is not the measure of income. Personal finances, or national ones, cannot be sustained by lies and subterfuge. *During World War*

*I, the German treasury was low in gold. Her budget unbalanced. Inflation went sky high. In 1919, the German mark was worth 25 US cents. Within four years, it declined in value until 4 TRILLION marks were needed to equal \$1.00 in buying power. The value of every pension was wiped out. All security was gone. Then the people were ready to listen to anyone who could voice out their bitterness. Enter Adolf Hitler.*

*"Someday, the Antichrist will exploit the world's shaky economic conditions and turn all social and economic turmoil to his political advantage." Resource Bi-Monthly.*

**"7 The robbery of the wicked shall destroy them; because they refuse to do judgment."** To what is referred here as 'judgment?' It is the Justice of the Law of God - right and just actions. The wicked who live by robbing are actually living off their own perishable blood. Wolves steal and kill livestock and even babies. The Eskimos have a cruel and ingenious solution to that evil creature. Knowing that the wolf loves blood, the Eskimo buries a sharp knife - blade facing upward - in the snow and ice. He sprinkles just enough blood around the knife that the wolf will be attracted by the scent. When the wolf sees the blood, he begins to lick at it. As he licks, he is gradually exposing the sharp edge of the blade. The blade cuts his freezing tongue, but the wolf cannot feel it - he only tastes the fresh blood. He will continue to lick the sharp blade until he bleeds to death. So with all who make their living on robbery and lies.

**"8 The way of man is froward and strange: but as for the pure, his work is right."** Aren't the 'pure' also men and women? Not exactly. Man, in his natural disposition, is stubborn and contrary to all righteousness. It is not the natural state God intended but has become the new natural for man since Adam's sin. What of the man or woman of pure heart - how is it that their work is right? It is because, for the Christian, it is not the works of righteousness of their own persons that they perform, but it is Christ working in them. All of the good and loving acts of the Christian must be attributed to God and not man. All of our shortcomings and failures we can take credit for. In whose Name do you declare your works of righteousness? If not that of Christ, it is not righteousness. Thus we have an eternal Sabbath. Christ is our new Sabbath for we rest our labors in Him and He performs the works.

**"9 It is better to dwell in a corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman in a wide house."** This verse brings a happy and humorous memory. Once in the bush country of Kenya, I was visiting a lonely mountain church along with our National Secretary. At the beginning of the welcoming service, we were seated at the front of the church - I was on the left, and the Secretary on the right side of the chancel. Children came forward with a little skit. They danced around in a circle to recorded music. When the music stopped, one of the children would step out, introduce themselves, and quote (in perfect English) a Bible verse from the King James Bible. After two or three such verses, a precious little girl stepped out of the circle with her Bible verse which was the one under consideration. On the final phrase regarding a "brawling woman", the little girl pointed directly to our Secretary who was aghast. This drew a great deal of laughter and we continued with the ceremony. Truly it is better to conduct private prayers than to attend the House of God that has been taken over by contentious and froward men. Whether church, society, or politics, it is better to remain apart from the stubborn and callous designs of men and walk with God.

**"10 The soul of the wicked desireth evil: his neighbour findeth no favour in his eyes."** I believe this verse reduces our souls to the lowest common denominator. The key word here on the worth of the soul is not what it DOES, but what it DESIRES. It is a natural desire of the wicked to thirst for evil. The wicked find no good quality in any

person. When that 'free will' desire is surrendered and replaced by God's Will, then its object also changes to a desire for righteousness. How many good and devout Christians possess a Holy indignation at the sins of the present generation? I believe ALL who truly trust in God.