



11 When the scorner is punished, the simple is made wise: and when the wise is instructed, he receiveth knowledge. 12 The righteous man wisely considereth the house of the wicked: but God overthroweth the wicked for their wickedness. 13 Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard. 14 A gift in secret pacifieth anger: and a reward in the bosom strong wrath. 15 It is joy to the just to do judgment: but destruction shall be to the workers of iniquity. 16 The man that wandereth out of the way of understanding shall remain in the congregation of the dead. 17 He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man: he that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich. 18 The wicked shall be a ransom for the righteous, and the transgressor for the upright. 19 It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and an angry woman. 20 There is treasure to be desired and oil in the dwelling of the wise; but a foolish man spendeth it up. (Prov 21:11-20)

Remember the principle of repetition in the retention of knowledge? We find it once more in the first verse of our lesson today: *“11 When the scorner is punished, the simple is made wise: and when the wise is instructed, he receiveth knowledge.”* We need only refer back two chapters to see this verse paraphrased: *“Smite a scorner, and the simple will beware: and reprove one that hath understanding, and he will understand knowledge.”* (Prov 19:25) If the smiting takes place at an early age, the child will grow in knowledge and wisdom, but it is difficult to repair a stunted tree once it has matured. In the philosophy of learning, RETENTION of facts is aided by meaningful REPETITION. I believe the Proverbs accomplish this exceedingly well. We might remember, too, that when the simple have evaluated the plight of the scorner and his punishment, then do they enter the threshold of wisdom. And when he is instructed, he becomes a person of knowledge and how to understand, in wisdom, that knowledge. So the stroke of the Lord reaches two with differing effect – the scorner, and the simple fellow.

“12 The righteous man wisely considereth the house of the wicked: but God overthroweth the wicked for their wickedness.” Even good men are often bewildered at the seeming prosperity of the wicked in this life. If they were able to view, with the Eye of God, the ruined contents of the wicked man’s heart, their impression would be greatly altered. All of the wealth of the wicked is an ill-gotten wealth. They toss and turn in their beds at night and sweat the coming dawn. They are already in a gold-lined Hell of their own making. When viewed with the eye of faith, the wise man will see beyond the silk curtains into the paltry furnishings of the reprobate heart of the wicked.

He wisely considers this plight and opts for a house of righteous labors. If a wise man is patient, he will witness the utter overthrow of the house of the wicked by the very Hand of God.

"13 Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard." The pleadings of the poor may not always be for those things that will lift them from their poverty. To give the poor bread rather than providing them a means of earning it may lead to further ruin and decline. But our ears must be open in compassion that leads to the better good of the poor. Charles Bridges describes it this way in his Commentary on the Proverbs: *"To retain therefore the poor in idleness, however compassionate or self-pleasing the motive, is to encourage, if not to participate in, sin. Considerate discretion, not feeling, should direct our clarity."* Perhaps the Rev Bridges foresaw the coming travesty of the welfare state! You will remember the lesson of the Good Samaritan who, unlike the priest and the Levite, **WENT TO** the hurt man; had Compassion on him; **TREATED** his wounds; and **CARRIED** him to his own inn for further care. He did not stop his ears or his eyes to the cry of the poor, did he?

"14 A gift in secret pacifieth anger: and a reward in the bosom strong wrath." We will be well advised to remember the gifts of Jacob in pacifying his brother Esau whom Jacob had seemingly wronged. A secret, and not showy, gift seems to be multiplied in its effect. Remember the red roses you sent to your sweetheart with no name of the sender. How she must have wondered and dreamed of whom the sender was – knowing full well all of the time. Of course the old Eastern practice of bribery is the oil that spurs enterprise there even today. It is a foul practice and the wicked draws his secret bribe from the hidden folds of his bosom to purchase unfair advantage.

"15 It is joy to the just to do judgment: but destruction shall be to the workers of iniquity." The good man or woman takes much satisfaction and joy for doing the right thing without a bribe; but the wicked, for a time exhilarated by the success of the bribe, lose all when the genuine quality of their work is revealed. A bribe will not cover shoddy work.

"16 The man that wandereth out of the way of understanding shall remain in the congregation of the dead." Were I a vengeful fellow, I might draw a parallel to the modern Episcopal Church here, but I shall forego the comparison. Jury, disregard the last comment..... When we have known the truth and understood, we are twice dead if we depart therefrom. The congregation of the dead is comprised of as many nominal Christians as professed unbelievers. There is a great danger associated with wandering. How would you like to board a flight to Tokyo piloted by a crew that was known to 'wander?' We have seen many Christians who appear to burn brightly but fade as the distant star on the morning horizon. Jude says it best: *"These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever."* (Jude 1:12-13) How much better to be a fixed star in the Canopy of Heaven than a wandering meteor whose final end is a fiery destruction?

"17 He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man: he that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich." Very true. If pleasure is the love and object of our lives, we shall be in penury. If righteousness is the love of our lives, we shall enjoy both righteousness and Godly pleasure. Wine is the robber of families. Some men give all of their earnings to the bartender and their families the crumbs that remain. What is the point of driving a

Mercedes Benz but no money to buy a coke? Luxuries impoverish – both physically and spiritually.

“18 The wicked shall be a ransom for the righteous, and the transgressor for the upright.” Allow me to give a personal example: When I was a boy of 9 years age, I got into a terrific argument with my little brother who was three years my junior. I went and told our mother every bad thing I could remember that my brother ever did. My mother said, “Alright, Jerry. You go outside and find the biggest switch you can find for me.” So I did. I found a particularly thorny switch that was about six feet long. I took it to my mother proudly. She looked at the switch, smiled, and said, “OK, Jerry. You are first!” There was no switch left later for my little brother! The wicked set traps for the righteous, but are lifted on their own petard. Was not the noble Joseph sold into slavery by brothers who later became ransom to him?

“19 It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and an angry woman.” Sorry, ladies, but I am beginning to wonder if the Old Testament women were not regular old ‘hussies’ as my mother would say. This is the second instant of the defamation of contentious women found in the same chapter. (compare Proverbs 21:9) In these two verses the women are referred to as contentious, angry, and brawling. Perhaps the process of time has lifted the hearts of those women referred to here. Of course, this is simply symbolic in its reference to peace and righteousness at home being the mainstay of a man’s heart.

“20 There is treasure to be desired and oil in the dwelling of the wise; but a foolish man spendeth it up.” There are people in my town who go without gas for their cars, or money for everyday expenses who, when the welfare check arrives, go out and spend insanely on things unnecessary until they are reduced to the same poverty the next day as the day before the check arrived. The wise may not live in opulence, but they lack no necessity of life either. Only a small degree of forbearance and deferment of pleasure is required to live well, but the foolish man never learns to forego instant gratification.