



21 He that followeth after righteousness and mercy findeth life, righteousness, and honour. 22 A wise man scaleth the city of the mighty, and casteth down the strength of the confidence thereof. 23 Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles. 24 Proud and haughty scorner is his name, who dealeth in proud wrath. 25 The desire of the slothful killeth him; for his hands refuse to labour. 26 He coveteth greedily all the day long: but the righteous giveth and spareth not. 27 The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination: how much more, when he bringeth it with a wicked mind? 28 A false witness shall perish: but the man that heareth speaketh constantly. 29 A wicked man hardeneth his face: but as for the upright, he directeth his way. 30 There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the LORD. 31 The horse is prepared against the day of battle: but safety is of the LORD. (Proverbs 21:21-31 (KJV)

I have always been struck with the profound meaning, simplicity, and clarity of this counsel of Jesus: "***But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*** (Matt 6:33) You may ask, "What things?" The answer of course, is found in the preceding verses - those things essential for life - both physical and spiritual: "***Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.***" (Matt 6:30-32) Our prayers are mostly centered in the concrete things of life - the physical. Little thought is often given to those things which God sends our way that may at first seem bad but later prove a blessing. If we seek righteousness first, we need not fret about good or bad for all will proved good for us. "***And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose***" (Romans 8:28) If we do not KNOW this, perhaps we need to work on our

faith a bit.

To the cattle of the low marshes, how can a bee sting, or the bite of a horsefly, be a blessing? Surely, the cow that is stung or bitten will not consider it a blessing, but it certainly is. In hot climates, the cattle, being as lazy as humankind, love to remain in the low-lying marshes to graze. If they linger long there, they will become weak and sickly due to the fevers and parasitic organisms that inhabit the marshes. So the sting of a bee, or the bite of the horsefly, persuades them to flee to the highlands surrounding the marshes where insects are not so prevalent thereby saving their lives and strengthening their health. This is true in the life of a Christian. When I look back on seeming tragedies of my life, I realize that those were blessings driving me to the higher ground of God. **"21 He that followeth after righteousness and mercy findeth life, righteousness, and honour."** Do not be discouraged by the sting of life's bees and hornets. Simply move to the higher ground of righteousness.

One of the greatest field commanders of the modern era was General George S. Patton. Patton gave no space at all to the argument of DEFENSE - he believed the best defense was a swift and overwhelming offense. When the intricate walls and fortified defense works of the German Army were used to justify caution, General Patton said: "Any obstacle or barrier raised by man can be overcome by man." His success on the battlefield proved his conviction. **"22 A wise man scaleth the city of the mighty, and casteth down the strength of the confidence thereof."** Though the wicked labor long and drudgingly to construct the walls of defense to their errors, the wise will scale the walls in a day and reveal the vulnerability of the inhabitants who languish without the sure defense of God.

What is the one endowment of the body over which man has the greatest challenge in controlling? Is it not the tongue? How often would we have benefitted had we kept this organ under control? **"23 Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles."** James, the Apostle, articulates best the power of the tongue and the difficulty in controlling it: **"For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body. Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison."** (James 3:2-8) A serious slogan of World War II was this: "Loose lips sink ships."

The mentality that attempts to win every argument, regardless of logic, through anger and wrath is motivated by unGodly pride. **"24 Proud and haughty scorner is his name, who dealeth in proud wrath."** Since those whose names are not written in the Book of Life have no name in Hell, they may be burdened with the unbecoming label of 'Proud and Haughty Scorners.' This seems to me a fair label for the religious fanatics in Islam who, without reason, are proud of their religion of hate and their Allah of mercilessness. They are unable to accept the fact that their god of beheadings may be wrong. But wait, am I being politically incorrect? You bet your bottom dollar I am. I prefer to be politically incorrect than scripturally incorrect. I know no religion of greater wickedness than that of Islam - not because of their written book, but because of their

living testimony of wickedness and murder of innocents.

The great Shakespeare wrote, "*A coward dies a thousand deaths, but the valiant taste death but once.*" Act 1, Scene 2, Julius Caesar. The same may be said of the slothful. **25 The desire of the slothful killeth him; for his hands refuse to labour.** Desire for unmerited comforts and pleasures eat away at the heart of the slothful. Not satisfying the rightful products of an idle mind, their lusts can only be satisfied through debauchery and over-indulgence. Such a lifestyle leads to death of the body even as the soul has been dead from the start.

Covetousness is the daughter of greed. It is an obsession of the slothful. Not occupying their hands and minds with productive labor, they are left to their wicked imaginations to conceive ways and means of gaining their desires in ways that are destructive, dishonest, and unGodly. **26 He coveteth greedily all the day long: but the righteous giveth and spareth not.** The open hand of the righteous in giving and sharing is very much like a Fountain of Living Waters whose source is never exhausted.

27 The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination: how much more, when he bringeth it with a wicked mind? Here we see another reiteration of the biblical principle that a wicked heart can do NO GOOD DEED! Remember how this principle was earlier expressed in this same chapter? "*An high look, and a proud heart, and the plowing of the wicked, is sin.*" (Prov 21:4) It might be worth noting that PRIDE precedes the unfruitful plowing of the wicked - pride being the father of all sins. I may give the last penny of my savings to help the poor, but if I do so to receive the praise and acclaim of men, I am benefitted nothing. Many in church give large sums of money out of much larger depositories of wealth, but they do so to be seen of men. What difference between these and the proud Pharisees and the wealthy of Jerusalem who cast large-ringing coins into the horns of the offertory at the gate of the Temple. I prefer the reward of the widow who cast in her all (two mites) out of her great need.

28 A false witness shall perish: but the man that heareth speaketh constantly. Do we honestly believe that our lies shall withstand the fiery test of God's judgment? Can the Maker of the Universe be deceived? "*Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.*" (1 Cor 3:12-15) We were reminded of this truth earlier in this Book: "*The lip of truth shall be established for ever: but a lying tongue is but for a moment.*" (Prov 12:19) The righteous who speak truth do not need to worry about the tracks they leave behind.

29 A wicked man hardeneth his face: but as for the upright, he directeth his way. The wicked man is stubborn and obstinate. He listens to no other counsel but that of his demented mind. The upright, on the other hand, consider reason and logic offered by other counselors and determine the right way to proceed.

30 There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the LORD. Do we really need to address this proverb in ways more simple and articulate? It is not wise to oppose the Lord of Heaven in even the smallest of particulars. God is Sovereign of all. Though we may not understand all of His counsel, His counsel is **ALWAYS** right. "*For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou*

mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged."
(Romans 3:3-4)

"31 The horse is prepared against the day of battle: but safety is of the LORD."
The horse is the strongest and most courageous soldier of battle, but the horse, and every other means we grasp, are nothing against the Lord. Our greatest defense is, and always shall be, in the Lord. *"An horse is a vain thing for safety: neither shall he deliver any by his great strength."* (Psalms 33:17) Let this Psalm be our rule and guide: *"Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God."* (Psalms 20:7)