



11 He that loveth pureness of heart, for the grace of his lips the king shall be his friend. 12 The eyes of the LORD preserve knowledge, and he overthroweth the words of the transgressor. 13 The slothful man saith, There is a lion without, I shall be slain in the streets. 14 The mouth of strange women is a deep pit: he that is abhorred of the LORD shall fall therein. 15 Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him. 16 He that oppresseth the poor to increase his riches, and he that giveth to the rich, shall surely come to want. 17 Bow down thine ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply thine heart unto my knowledge. 18 For it is a pleasant thing if thou keep them within thee; they shall withal be fitted in thy lips. 19 That thy trust may be in the LORD, I have made known to thee this day, even to thee. 20 Have not I written to thee excellent things in counsels and knowledge, 21 That I might make thee know the certainty of the words of truth; that thou mightest answer the words of truth to them that send unto thee? (Proverbs 22:11-21)

The grace of our words we speak, or lack thereof, are an outward manifestation of the pureness (or impurity) of our inward heart. Remember that out of our mouths come the treasures of our hearts. Since Scripture clearly reveals that Jesus Christ is the WORD, then His Word is of supreme import to His followers who name the name of Christ. What are words to man? They are the very expressions of hidden thoughts, and thoughts cannot be expressed except through the medium of words. Even our thoughts are represented by words in the covert of our minds. God is the eternal THOUGHT behind the True Word. That Thought, given flesh and bones, is Christ. So all that is stored in our hearts should be expressed through a love of that WORD. If our language is profane and vulgar, then our hearts are devoid of the presence of Christ. 11 "He that loveth pureness of heart, for the grace of his lips the king shall be his friend." What a wonderful possession to claim Christ as that "*Friend that sticketh closer than a brother.*"

12 "The eyes of the LORD preserve knowledge, and he overthroweth the words of the transgressor." To preserve knowledge means to guard knowledge against error. Even nature is governed by God's natural law and it always behaves that law. "O Thou, who by the light of nature dost enkindle in us a desire after the light of grace, that by this Thou mayest translate us into the light of glory,—I give Thee thanks, O Lord and Creator, that Thou hast gladdened me by Thy creation when I was enraptured by the work of Thy hands." (Johannes Kepler, great 17th century German scientist who computed the motion of planets) God will bring all things into light, and the works of

the wicked are no exception.

**13 "The slothful man saith, There is a lion without, I shall be slain in the streets."** The repetitive allusion of Scripture to the slothful man and slothfulness reveals God's disgust at such a disposition. The idle mind of the slothful man invents many dangers that are unreal, and many problems that do not exist. In summary, he is a COWARD! He fears to fight the common battles of life and seeks to have others earn his living bread. He hates to work himself and devises every imaginable excuse to avoid lifting a finger either for himself, or for his family. The self-appointed defenders of honor, from the mountains of east Tennessee where I was raised, would have bound such a one to a tree and given him a lashing that would bring a better alertness to his mind. He fears a fictional and unlikely lion on the public street, but his greater danger is indoors with his demented soul. The command of Christ given by Luke will never be taken up by the slothful man: "*If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.*" (Luke, 9. 23) He will be perfectly satisfied to allow his neighbor to carry his cross for him. Such a cross will not avail in the eyes of God - except for the one who presently bears it.

**14 "The mouth of strange women is a deep pit: he that is abhorred of the LORD shall fall therein."** These are not the women strangers that Jesus consoled and forgave such as the Syro-Phoenician woman who begged bread from the Master's Table, or the Samaritan Woman at Jacob's Well whose eyes were opened to the Water of Life, or the trembling and embarrassed woman who was brought to Christ as an adulteress; but these are strange women whose reputations do not recommend them as suitable for discourse. As Paul lovingly counsels his spiritual son in the faith, Timothy: "*Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.*" (2 Tim 2:22) The last half of verse 14 is quite telling: "*... he that is abhorred of the LORD shall fall therein.*" Only the heart that already possesses the disposition to sin against God, and is abhorred by Him, shall fall victim to the strange women referenced. God does not view all alike and with the same love. The world is not to be thought of as the "Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man!" except as that would apply to the physical creation. We are not brothers of unbelievers and God is not Father of those who reject His Son, Jesus. There are but two families: those who belong to their Father God, and those who belong to their father the devil!

Why are men foolish in their ways? Perhaps it is because they have not grown up in knowledge, truth, and experience. **15 "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him."** Should we be surprised to learn a child is born naturally foolish? He has never before known barriers to his behavior, or even the natural law. If he is not restrained, he may lay his hand on a red-hot stove - but probably only ONCE unless he is an incorrigible fool. Our ways and habits are conditioned by knowledge and experience. Experience can be a brutal teacher, so we had best rely upon prior knowledge of dangers before having to experiencing them first hand. Physical discipline is often the most profitable means to correct a child, or an adult fool. A good rap of the ruler across the hand or head may result in a 'significant emotional event' that burns the experience into his memory. It is common knowledge that the "Dr. Spock approach" has ruined the lives of a generation of children. Foolishness is the common birthright of all since Adam, except One who was born in a stable 2,000 years ago in a village called Bethlehem.

**16 "He that oppressteth the poor to increase his riches, and he that giveth to the rich, shall surely come to want."** Sin is a hard master and pays poor wages. The two cases referred to in this verse seem diametrically opposed, but they have a common

center. Both fall short of the favor of God and will result in want of the greatest form. Any who take from the poor to amass wealth, or any who bribe the rich for monetary advantage, will lose in the summary of all things. When God closes the books, the names of such who do these things shall be in the deficit column and will have no name in the Book of Life.

17 "Bow down thine ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply thine heart unto my knowledge." In order to hear and accept wise counsel, we must subordinate our own stubborn minds to that of more experienced and knowledgeable counselors. Hearing the words of wisdom, we come to know the knowledge of the Lord. In this verse, Solomon departs from the enumeration of independent and proverbial axioms to an approach of personal teaching to us and his hearers. Before learning can take place, the attention of the audience must be gained. That is the purpose of Verse 17.

Solomon, in the following verses, connects a line of reasoning throughout. 18 "For it is a pleasant thing if thou keep them within thee; they shall withal be fitted in thy lips." See how the meaning here is so appropriately conjoined with that of the leading verse of today's devotion? (*He that loveth pureness of heart, for the grace of his lips the king shall be his friend*). Why do we study the Word of God? Is it not for the purpose of digesting that Word so that it becomes a constitutional part of our persons - and the leading part? *"Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee."* (Psalms 119:11) The Word of God is the brick and mortar that defines the heart given over to God. If that Word rules in our hearts, our lips shall follow through with the evidence thereof.

19 "That thy trust may be in the LORD, I have made known to thee this day, even to thee." Solomon speaks to us as a loving father of sons and daughters. Love is the motivating factor in good and wise counsel. You will note that Solomon, who claimed long ago his wisdom from God, never seeks a personal recognition or commendation to himself, but rather he appeals to a trust in God from whence all sure wisdom derives. His point is so clearly expressed, not only to the near audience of 3,000 years ago, but to the extended audience of those who read these words today - "even to thee." 20 "Have not I written to thee excellent things in counsels and knowledge, 21 That I might make thee know the certainty of the words of truth; that thou mightest answer the words of truth to them that send unto thee?" Do we read the Bible in the proper way and attitude. Are they simple words spoken in days of old that have lost their savor? or are they Living Words of Life that are vibrant with meaning for each of us today? Has not Solomon written DIRECTLY to you these words of wisdom given him by the Lord? He has, indeed, written excellent things in wise counsel and knowledge. Why does Solomon do so? "That I might make thee know the certainty of the words of truth; that thou mightest answer the words of truth to them that send unto thee?" A lover of truth cannot keep from expressing that truth to all who will lend an ear. We **lend** our ears to hearing wisdom because they are not ours to give, but belong to God who gave them for just such a purpose. Only a salesman that believes truly in his product can be successful. So it is true that only one who is convinced of the truth can share it with credibility. A preacher can read a sermon all day long without conviction, but true knowledge and wisdom comes from the heart. Solomon loves God. He loves God's Word. He loves, too, all who share that love of God. He desires, above all else., to convince us of the certainty of the truth he preaches of God so that we, too, may become serving vessels of that truth.

I wonder how much the reader of this devotion has hidden the Word of God in his heart? How much does the reader know the veracity of truth contained in that

Word? If we love Truth, and allow God to pour our hearts full from His effulgent Fountain of Living Waters, then the Cup of our Hearts shall overflow and make that truth available to all round about.