



1 When thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before thee: 2 And put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite. 3 Be not desirous of his dainties: for they are deceitful meat. 4 Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom. 5 Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven. 6 Eat thou not the bread of him that hath an evil eye, neither desire thou his dainty meats: 7 For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee. 8 The morsel which thou hast eaten shalt thou vomit up, and lose thy sweet words. 9 Speak not in the ears of a fool: for he will despise the wisdom of thy words. 10 Remove not the old landmark; and enter not into the fields of the fatherless: 11 For their redeemer is mighty; he shall plead their cause with thee. 12 Apply thine heart unto instruction, and thine ears to the words of knowledge. 13 Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. 14 Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell. 15 My son, if thine heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine. 16 Yea, my reins shall rejoice, when thy lips speak right things.
(Proverbs 23:1-16)

These latter Proverbs are becoming more related one to the other rather than simply each verse being expressed as an independent principle. The opening verse reveals the age old hypocrisy and duplicity of political rulers - even if the problem has grown more abjectly acute in recent years in America. The Proverbs are full of beauty and truth - even those truths that we find convict us should be a joy to discover. A human mind is much comparable to a home - it should be furnished with many lovely paintings on the wall; and the paintings of the mind are beautiful truths gleaned from God's Word and Wisdom. Our home and its furnishings must constantly be guarded against invasion and compromise. Profane and vulgar language enter into our mind's home as abstract and ugly art that corrupts, mars, and ridicules the beauty of God's Creation. We must also guard against the subtle influences of power from high and important places to blind our eyes to truth. That is the leading point of this chapter in Proverbs.

1 "When thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before thee: 2 And put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite. 3 Be not desirous of his dainties: for they are deceitful meat." It is a Godly virtue to show respect and deference to dignitaries, but it is not a Godly characteristic to have one's heart swayed by their scepter. Remember the courage of Daniel in opening his windows to pray to our God against the ordinance of the King; and the three lads, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego who refused to bow down to the golden image erected by the King. Note the

courteous, but uncompromising answer they gave to an outraged Nebuchadnezzar: "*Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.*" (Dan 3:16-18) God DID save the three with His personal Presence through the fires of the furnace. How easily modern man bows down to the god of government. What lack of outrage was heard from the churches of American when school prayer (a privilege and responsibility practiced since our founding) was ruled "unConstitutional" by a panel of robed servants of the Prince of the Air! Once Satan's foot is allowed in the door, he will gain access to the whole house. Do not overindulge the ruler's dainties by being led down and down the road of welfarism and dependence. Why does the National Park Service post signs discouraging tourists from feeding the bears - for they will become dependent on the food given them and forget how to fend for themselves. ". . . *this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.*" (2 Thess 3:10)

4" *Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom.* 5 "*Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven.*" Do not cause wealth to be your main focus in life. There is a wealth of the body that leads to a poverty of the soul. There is no evil associated with wealth itself, but the evil comes in the manner in which we exalt wealth above every other consideration. It is better to enter the gates of Heaven penniless, than to be cast into the pits of Hell with pockets full of gold. How much of our wealth shall we take with us, and what shall we leave behind? We shall leave it ALL behind! The only treasures we take from this life are golden memories and spiritual treasures on deposit in the First Bank of Heaven. *But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*" (1 Tim 6:9-10) When we have passed through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, what will our eyes behold when we open them again - our wealth, or our fulfilled promises in God? Our wealth shall fly away as an eagle to heaven - well beyond the reach of a covetous sinner.

6 "*Eat thou not the bread of him that hath an evil eye, neither desire thou his dainty meats:*" 7 "*For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee.*" 8 "*The morsel which thou hast eaten shalt thou vomit up, and lose thy sweet words.*" Avoid foolish obligations. This applies even to nations - as George Washington wisely counseled, "*avoid foreign entangling aliances.*" How can the meaning be more clearly rendered than by Christ Himself: "*A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.*" (Matt 12:35-37) ". . . *those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.*" (Matt 15:18-20)

May I ask a shamelessly personal question of you, Reader? How many good treasures of your heart have you brought forth this very day? Our hearts and minds are not different from the memory of the computer. Whatsoever the computer is

programmed to do, it will do. It has no access to viruses and damaging hackers until it is placed online of the world. If we fill our minds with the trash of adultery, alcoholism, cursings, and murder that are available on the line of television access or common society - those things become depositories in our hearts. But if we read and study God's Word, and practice that Word faithfully, our hearts will be full of untold treasures of beauty.

9 "Speak not in the ears of a fool: for he will despise the wisdom of thy words." Dear friends, if we are sons and daughters of God (and we ARE), then we are princes and princesses of the King of Kings. Why would a prince or princess waste their time in arguing with the village fool? Is it not a waste of time to argue with those who reject God's Word out of stubborn rebellion. Did Jesus Christ ever beg anyone to follow Him? Neither should we. We may invite strangers to come and hear the Voice of Christ read and preached from our pulpits, but we should not then hound such people henceforth, by force, to come. "*Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.*" (Matt 7:6) A pig places no value whatsoever upon pearls of exquisite beauty, and neither will a godless fool place any value whatsoever over the beauty and truth of God's Word.

10 "Remove not the old landmark; and enter not into the fields of the fatherless": 11 "For their redeemer is mighty; he shall plead their cause with thee." Does this verse 10 sound familiar? If not, perhaps your mind is with the swine (*__~)...it is a reiteration of verse 28 of the last Proverb (22): "*Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set.*" (Prov 22:28) God reinforces His important points by re-emphasizing them. The Word of God is constantly reviewing lessons taught and learned for purposes of retention in our memories. There is, however, a difference in application of the meaning of verses 10 and 22:28. In Proverbs 22:28, the application is the Word and Truth of God given us in the Bible - not to meddle with or distort it; in the present verse 10, the application is toward fair dealings with our fellow man and, especially with widows and orphans who have no man but God to stand on their part. It would be a dreadful suffering to have the Mighty Redeemer pleading the cause of orphans with us for our greed and covetousness.

12 "Apply thine heart unto instruction, and thine ears to the words of knowledge." Are rubies and gold ore found scattered about on the ground of common places? Not so! These elements are valuable because they are scarce and beautiful. They must be sought out by informed minds and labored for in the depths of the earth. What of truth? Do we hear it bantered about among the common rabble of the market place? Not hardly, it must be sought out and committed to heart. Jesus Words immediately following His advice on casting our pearls before swine, tells us: "*Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.*" (Matt 7:7-8) Do not simply READ the Word of God - diligently study and DIGEST that Word. We must store that Word in our hearts, and why? Do you not remember? "*Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.*" (Psalms 119:11)

13 "Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die." 14 "Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell." See, my friends, God has given us yet another reiteration of truth. If God says something once, believe it! If He repeats Himself, take it directly to heart and practice! Where have we heard this truth of verse 13 before? How about the very last chapter of

our devotions (Proverbs 22)? "*Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.*" (Prov 22:6) By repeating, over and over, this principle, God means for us to **UNDERSTAND** its importance! Is it better for a child to have a bruised limb, or a broken and deformed spirit...which? Hear the counsel of Jesus: "*And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.*" (Mark 9:45-48) Disregard the social philosophers who desire to render our children as wimps and disrespectful bigots and apply the wisdom of God to the raising of our precious children.

15 "My son, if thine heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine." 16 "Yea, my reins shall rejoice, when thy lips speak right things." I am well-pleased that Solomon speaks to us as his own dear sons and daughters. He is motivated by fatherly love towards all who will share his Father in Heaven and be adopted into that family of God. How joyous I am when a young heart in my church is changed into a heart prized by God the Father! When their former desires for social acceptance and compromise are turned to a desire to please and obey God, it is an overwhelming joy to me. I feel a fatherly responsibility to every child, and adult, I see to inform them of the benefits of Christ. What remarkable and profound happiness when we see the same fervency to share the Word of God with their peers in young and beautiful hearts!