



17 Withdraw thy foot from thy neighbour's house; lest he be weary of thee, and so hate thee. 18 A man that beareth false witness against his neighbour is a maul, and a sword, and a sharp arrow. 19 Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is like a broken tooth, and a foot out of joint. 20 As he that taketh away a garment in cold weather, and as vinegar upon nitre, so is he that singeth songs to an heavy heart. 21 If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: 22 For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee. 23 The north wind driveth away rain: so doth an angry countenance a backbiting tongue. 24 It is better to dwell in the corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman and in a wide house. 25 As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country. 26 A righteous man falling down before the wicked is as a troubled fountain, and a corrupt spring. 27 It is not good to eat much honey: so for men to search their own glory is not glory. 28 He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls. (Proverbs 25:17-28)

In our modern day, common courtesies and etiquette seem to have fallen victim to complacency and a cavalier disregard for the feelings of those around us. Vulgar and profane words, so commonly spoken in public places today with impunity, would have landed the speaker in jail only a short few decades ago. Our present dilemma of gross disregard for all others and all values may stem from the secular indoctrination that has pervaded all levels of society and, particularly, public education since the US Supreme Court suddenly discovered that the practice of prayer and Bible reading in school was unconstitutional after 200 years of its practice. But the Holy Bible does take note of even the most minute of personal matters relating to our treatment of others. As a sixteen year old lad, George Washington composed 110 rules of etiquette which reflected the value he placed upon the courtesy due to others. It would never occur to us today to write such a book, and if we did, we might be committed to an insane asylum so much have our values retreated into decadence.

#### WHAT NOT TO DO:

(The Intruder) 17 "Withdraw thy foot from thy neighbour's house; lest he be weary of thee, and so hate thee." An iron-clad rule of my mother's was that we avoid visiting our friends so much that we "wore out our welcome." It was a good rule that

expressed the biblical principle contained in this opening verse of today's text. On the Seal of the State of Georgia appears the motto: "Wisdom, Justice, Moderation." This is a very commendable motto though it has often been relegated to historical application only; but all three virtues mentioned are also biblical virtues. The one virtue most often ignored is that of "MODERATION." Too much wine, too much meat, too much physical exertion - even too much water - can either kill or seriously injure of health. By the way, in some cases, too much wealth can also destroy lives. So the Proverb under consideration counsels against an over-familiarity with our neighbors by constant and incessant visitation.

(The Slanderer) 18 "*A man that beareth false witness against his neighbour is a maul, and a sword, and a sharp arrow.*" When I was young my father had a business principle that had served him well through the years of the depression and those immediately following the Second World War - a man's word and his handshake was better than any written contract. As the increasing effects of socialist policies in American government began to take effect, my father realized that such a principle could no longer be sustained. As it turns out, neither handshake NOR contract can insure decency in business transactions. A false testimony is a deadly weapon against its victim. We must be honest in our dealings and avoid gossip that, even if true, may unnecessarily wound.

(The Faithless) 19 "*Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is like a broken tooth, and a foot out of joint.*" There is no greater hurt to our hearts than the betrayal of a trusted friend - ask Julius Caesar how he feels about the traitor, Brutus. There were more than one sword that mortally wounded Caesar, but the most hurtful was wielded by his friend. We must cultivate our confidences in men by the little things they say and do. Sly men are too clever to give their hand away by big circumstances of character; so we watch for the small inconsistencies in their life to point to graver shortcomings of character that will arise in time of trouble when loyalty is most essential. General George S. Patton had a rule that served him well: "*If you have a luke-warm friend, make an enemy out of him as soon as possible. That way, you will know where he stands.*" I'm not sure how well that principle fits into our devotion, but I do know that confidence in an unfaithful man is not that different from having a luke-warm friend.

(The Unjust) 20 "*As he that taketh away a garment in cold weather, and as vinegar upon nitre, so is he that singeth songs to an heavy heart.*" Three traits of the injudicious man is brought to light here: 1) depriving another of physical essentials at a time of spiritual or emotional crisis, i.e., the foreclosure of a home one day following the death of the father of the house. 2) speaking of things, or taking actions, that do even greater damage to the souls of the hurting - i.e. "Well, you are sad now at the death of your wife, but there is always the coming summer for vacation!" How crude and hurtful to one who has just lost the love of his life; 3) acting speaking in ways that do not match the gravity of the moment. When a drowning victim has been drawn ashore, the singing of "Shall we Gather at the River" might be a tad out of place. Be considerate of the feelings of others. How do we know what to say or do? We do NOT always know; however, if we exercise the compassion of placing ourselves in the shoes of the despondent, we might have a better idea of how to act or speak.

#### WHAT TO DO:

21 "*If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink;*" There is one major cause that contributes to the animosity of the enemy - misunderstanding. When governments mobilize for war, they always marginalize the enemy's good intentions and magnify his bad habits. The belligerent

armies try to create an emotion of hate for the enemy, hate that is often baseless. But, when opportunity presents, if we feed our hungry enemy, and give him drink, his resolve to do us harm will be reduced or disappears. It is far better to make a friend of a principled enemy than to sustain in trust a faithless friend.

What effect does kindness have on our enemy? 22 "For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee." If we conduct our acts of kindness in sincerity, and not an attempt to BUY the enemy's loyalty, we shall succeed in, at least, confusing him of our intent. But the Lord will not be deceived - He will reward you!

#### THE MISERY CREATED BY AN UNCONTROLLED TONGUE:

23 "The north wind driveth away rain: so doth an angry countenance a backbiting tongue." In most continental land masses, the north wind covers dry land, but the south wind brings the moist air from over the seas and oceans. The north wind, like an angry countenance, drives away rain as that anger does a backbiting tongue. Why so? A backbiter is a coward who is fearful of speaking openly to a man's face; so he slinks in the shadows with his whispered rumors and words of malevolence. But if the man of whom he speaks is a man notable for his anger and retribution, the cowardly gossip will forego speaking behind his back for fear of revenge. The military rule holds true - the best defense is a good offense!

24 "It is better to dwell in the corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman and in a wide house." The reviling tongue, or the gossiping lips are far greater to be dreaded than simple solitude. It is better to live a lonely life than to be daily afflicted by the vicious tongues of the wicked.

#### GOOD NEWS AND RESTRAINT

25 As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country." Good news is not a common experience from abroad, therefore, to receive it from a far country is like raindrops on the parched desert. It is both unexpected and refreshing. 26 "A righteous man falling down before the wicked is as a troubled fountain, and a corrupt spring." There is only greater evil to be had by the wicked in their defeat of a righteous man. Though healing waters flow from the heart of the righteous, if the spring is stifled, the righteous flow ceases with the flood. 27 "It is not good to eat much honey: so for men to search their own glory is not glory."

Our motives and aspiration to do good for others may result in great credit and honor being heaped upon our heads - that is the sweet taste of honey we experience from the knowledge of doing God's will in helping others. But the honey, acquired in profuse amounts, as when we seek after glory, becomes a sickening ache in our stomachs. since we deserve no glory from the start, our souls are emptied in shame when that supposed glory is taken away. As the Roman conqueror returned with his spoils of war, he was welcomed into Rome riding a chariot pulled by six white horses. The crowds cheered wildly at his olive wreathed-head. But there was a maiden standing beside him constantly whispering in his ear, "All glory is fleeting." And so it is.

28" He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls. " I will defy the false notion of separation of church and state by saying something political. Any student of American history will admit that the American Revolution could never have succeeded apart from the voices of the righteous from the pulpits of the Colonies. Our first several decades of Independence was sustained by those righteous voices. The Founding Fathers who wrote our governing documents understood better than the national socialist judges of our day

what they meant by the First Amendment, and one thing is certain: they did not intend to erect a so-called "Wall of Separation" between church and state. The government was inhibited from establishing a state religion in preferring one religion, or one denomination, over another....that is ALL!

The government was not 'protected' from Godly counsel or interference, but the church was to be protected from government interference into things religious. The edifying counsel of Godly virtues were to sustain us in our new walk as a Nation of Liberty among all the nations of the earth. The testimony of EVERY Father of our country confirms this principle, and they each encouraged public prayer in both government and education. What happens when we allow our Godly foundations to erode? We become precisely as this last proverb suggests - a city broken down and without walls. We no longer have the privilege to call upon a God whom we have cast out of our public square unless we turn and repent of our egregious sins. We have become a people subservient to wicked social indoctrination, unable to speak clearly and plainly without fear of restraint on our liberties. What has happened to the eagles that once soared over the fruited plains and amber waves of grain of America. why has our land become an infested swamp of every foul creature? Awake or perish, America! Return to God.