

Proverbs 17:1 ¶ Better is a dry morsel, and quietness therewith, than an house full of sacrifices *with* strife.

The Hebrew for the word “sacrifice” refers to “a slaughter, i.e, the flesh of an animal—in other words, meat to eat. Solomon is saying that it is better to have a small meal in a quiet, peaceful home than to have an abundance of good food in a home filled with contention.

EBC Abridged: "Abundance often brings a deterioration of moral and ethical standards as well as an increase in envy and strife."

Henry: "Love will sweeten a *dry morsel*, but strife will sour and embitter a *house full of sacrifices*. A little of the leaven of malice will leaven all the enjoyments."

Proverbs 17:2 ¶ A wise servant shall have rule over a son that causeth shame, and shall have part of the inheritance among the brethren.

This proverb is rooted in the accepted customs of Solomon’s day. A wise servant was accorded more respect in the family than a son that brings shame upon the family. It seems he would in fact inherit that which would have belonged to the shameful son.

Proverbs 17:3 ¶ The fining pot *is* for silver, and the furnace for gold: but the LORD trieth the hearts.

The fining pot and the furnace refer to the means by which silver and gold are purified. The metals are heated to separate the pure metal from the impurities associated with its source. Only the LORD is able to distinguish the motives and intents in a person’s heart and provide the refining fires of life (trouble and affliction) needed to produce purity in a person.

We are so blessed as Christians to have the privilege of being clothed in the righteousness of God through the sacrifice of Jesus, His Son. However, in this life He continues to sanctify us through the refining fires of life and the ministry of the Holy Spirit to conform us into the image of His Son.

1 Peter 1:6–7 “Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:”

Romans 8:29 "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren."

Ironsides: "The refiner of silver and the purifier of gold know just what heat is necessary to purge away all dross. They will take care that just the right amount is permitted. So it is with our God and Father. He desires to free us from the base things of earth, and He allows us to pass through the fires of affliction for that end. But it is precious indeed to know that He sits by the fining pot, waiting until His own image is reflected in the soul; and He walks in the furnace with His persecuted children."

Proverbs 17:4 ¶ A wicked doer giveth heed to false lips; and a liar giveth ear to a naughty tongue.

My paraphrase: Those who are wicked, such as liars, follow the lead of other liars and trouble makers.

McDonald: "The kind of talk a man feeds on is a barometer of what he is at heart."

Proverbs 17:5 ¶ Whoso mocketh the poor reproacheth his Maker: and he that is glad at calamities shall not be unpunished.

People that make fun of those that are poor expose themselves as having no respect for their Creator. Those that rejoice in the misfortunes of others will be held accountable (by their Maker is implied).

One way of mocking the poor is to consider them a lower class person just because they are poor. We are all made in the image of God and created for His pleasure, His purpose. A person's worth is not defined by his economic status. I am convinced that some of the greatest in heaven will prove to have been among the outcast poor on earth.

Genesis 1:27 "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them."

Revelation 4:11 "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."

Proverbs 17:6 ¶ Children's children are the crown of old men; and the glory of children are their fathers.

Solomon is basically affirming the truth that children are a heritage of the LORD.

Psalm 127:3 "Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward."

To be able to enjoy one's grandchildren is one of the greatest blessings in life; I can affirm this from personal experience. The honor of a child for his parent should be the norm. Such joy is directly impacted by the honor and reverence parents and offspring have for the LORD. Sadly, much of the culture of our day no longer honors parents with the respect accorded them in times past. They are often looked upon as a burden more than a blessing as they age and become more dependent.

Thoughtful observation from Garrett as quoted by Guzik: "Behind this apparently innocuous proverb is a profound assertion of the psychological interdependence of the generations. Elders derive a sense of pride from their descendants, and children get their self-worth from parents. On the other hand, one generation can cause shame and a sense of worthlessness in another."

Proverbs 17:7 ¶ Excellent speech becometh not a fool: much less do lying lips a prince.

Superiority of speech is as unexpected of a fool as lying lips should be to a prince. I think Solomon is yet again drilling into his sons (princes) the truth that they should be examples of truth and honesty.

It is true that we have expectations of people based on who we think they are. If one is known as a trouble-maker, we expect the worst of him. If one is known as a good student, we expect him to make good grades. If one is known as a Christian, a child of God, we are expected to act in a way that honors Him.

Proverbs 17:8 ¶ A gift is as a precious stone in the eyes of him that hath it: whithersoever it turneth, it prospereth.

I think the NLT sums it up well: "*A bribe seems to work like magic for those who give it; they succeed in all they do.*"

It would seem that the misuse of money and power was just as much an evil in Solomon's day as it is in ours. I think bribery is part and parcel of politics and the judicial system in America and much of the rest of the world today.

Ironsides had a positive take on this verse: "A gift presented as a token of pure affection and respect will be highly valued by its possessor. It will pave the way for a deeper relationship. He who would find love should be a giver not just a receiver."

Proverbs 17:9 ¶ He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth *very* friends.

A true friend, one that loves you, will seek to cover your sin; he will not gossip about it to others. He will, however, rebuke you in love and encourage you to do what is right concerning your sin.

Ironsides: "God alone can safely hear the sad story of a brother's shame. Into His ear it can all be poured, coupled with earnest prayer for the restoration of the one who has gone astray. To persist in repeating accounts of evil-doing to fellow saints only distresses and injures those who are persuaded to listen. Few indeed are the men who will take a brother's wrongdoing to heart and make it an occasion for self-judgment and confession of their own sin to the Lord."

Proverbs 17:10 ¶ A reproof entereth more into a wise man than an hundred stripes into a fool.

My paraphrase: A word of reproof is more effective in producing change in the life of a wise man than severe punishment is to the fool. That is true because the wise man's conscience has not been seared; it is tender before the LORD. The foolish man has a hard, stubborn heart and is not bothered by his conscience.

Proverbs 17:11 ¶ An evil *man* seeketh only rebellion: therefore a cruel messenger shall be sent against him.

Evil men are always stirring up others to join with them in their rebellion against the LORD. The Hebrew for messenger refers to "a deputy; a messenger; specifically, of God, i.e. an angel (also a prophet, priest or teacher)..." So I think Solomon is saying that the LORD will eventually rebuke him and make him accountable.

Guzik: "Repeated rebellion invites cruel retaliation. The evil man should not be surprised when it comes."

Proverbs 17:12 ¶ Let a bear robbed of her whelps meet a man, rather than a fool in his folly.

This is a pretty extreme statement. Solomon is saying that it is better to face an angry mama bear robbed of her cubs than to face a man intent on evil.

Guzik quoting Ross: "The human, who is supposed to be intelligent and rational, in such folly becomes more dangerous than the beast that in this case acts with good reason."

Proverbs 17:13 ¶ Whoso rewardeth evil for good, evil shall not depart from his house.

Solomon is basically saying that you curse your own family when you act in evil against one who has shown you goodness and kindness.

Trapp: "To render good for evil is divine, good for good is human, evil for evil is brutish, evil for good is devilish."

Proverbs 17:14 ¶ The beginning of strife *is as* when one letteth out water: therefore leave off contention, before it be meddled with.

I like the NLT: "*Beginning a quarrel is like opening a floodgate, so drop the matter before a dispute breaks out.*"

I grew up hearing the old saying, "It takes two to tango." In other words, you make a choice when you engage in an argument or dispute. Most of the time, in retrospect, you will realize that the trouble that followed wasn't worth it. It is much better to exercise self-discipline and just let it go.

Proverbs 17:15 ¶ He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both *are* abomination to the LORD.

Solomon identifies two things that disgusts the LORD: 1) declaring what or who is wrong to be right and 2) declaring what or who is innocent and right to be wrong. In the court of law it refers to declaring the guilty to be innocent and the innocent to be guilty. Obviously, this truth is predicated on the truth that God's word is the basis for determining what is morally right and wrong, good and evil.

Sadly, both are on great public display in society today. Paul warned Timothy that such would be the case in end times.

*1 Timothy 4:1–2 “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; **Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron....”***

*2 Timothy 3:1–3 “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, **false accusers**, incontinent, fierce, **despisers of those that are good....”***

Yes, there have always been people with these characteristics; but in these last times, such behaviors are becoming the norm rather than the exception.

Proverbs 17:16 ¶ Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it?

I like the NLT: *“It is senseless to pay tuition to educate a fool who has no heart for wisdom.”*

Many parents ignore this truth when sending their kids to college. Many kids go to college focused more on socializing than on getting an education. The money invested in their education is basically wasted. A student has to want to learn, to benefit from his education, for the time and money invested in it to be worthwhile.

Proverbs 17:17 ¶ A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.

The Hebrew for “friend” references a close companion or family member. Solomon is saying that such a friend or brother will love you at all times—in good times and bad, especially in times of trouble and affliction. You can count on their love, support and encouragement.

MacDonald: *“A quaint note from D. L. Moody’s bible says, “A true friend is like ivy—the greater the ruin, the closer he clings.”*

Henry: *“Those that are fanciful or selfish in their friendship will love no longer than their humour is pleased and their interest served, and therefore their affections turn with the wind and change with the weather. Swallow-friends, that fly to you in summer, but are gone in winter....”*

Ironsides: *“In reading this verse the Christian’s heart involuntarily turns to the one Friend whose love the many waters of judgment could not quench, neither could the*

floods of wrath drown it. Our Lord Jesus Christ is that Friend. His love does not change, and He is preeminently a Brother born for adversity."

Proverbs 17:18 ¶ A man void of understanding striketh hands, *and* becometh surety in the presence of his friend.

Solomon is saying that it is not wise to co-sign a loan, making yourself responsible for someone else's debt. This is true as a general rule. Relationship, financial well-being, and the need for such a loan can influence one's decision. As Ironsides notes: "It is not wise to pledge security for another unless one is quite prepared to lose and can well afford it. Paul pledged the security for Onesimus, as Judah did for Benjamin; but each had counted the cost and was ready to pay to the last penny."

Proverbs 17:19 ¶ He loveth transgression that loveth strife: *and* he that exalteth his gate seeketh destruction.

A person that desires to rebel against the LORD loves to stir up trouble. He has great pride and is setting himself up for ruin.

Clarke: "...possibly gate is here taken for the mouth; and the exalting of the gate may mean proud boasting and arrogant speaking, such as has a tendency to kindle and maintain strife."

Proverbs 17:20 ¶ He that hath a froward heart findeth no good: and he that hath a perverse tongue falleth into mischief.

The Hebrew defines "froward" as "distorted, false, crooked or perverse." Webster defines "perverse" as "turned away from the right." Solomon is saying that one with a heart that has turned away from what is right before the LORD will end up in ruin. One whose tongue speaks out against the truth declared in God's word will end up in great sorrow and wretchedness. As with so many of Solomon's proverbs, the ultimate application of its truth is to one's spiritual destiny.

Guzik: "The one filled with deceit will only find corruption and deceit in others. Wicked and foolish words not only display the evil of someone's heart, they also lead them into greater evil."

Proverbs 17:21 ¶ He that begetteth a fool *doeth it* to his sorrow: and the father of a fool hath no joy.

Throughout our study of this book, a fool references one who has rejected the LORD and His word; he has no fear or reverence for the LORD. Parents who honor and reverence the LORD experience great sorrow when their children turn out to be fools.

It is so important to begin training one's children from the very beginning to memorize God's word and become familiar with its teachings. It is oh so important that as you teach them God's word, they see you example the truth of what you teach. I truly believe that one of my greatest blessings in life is to know that my children trust in the LORD and seek to honor His word.

Proverbs 17:22 ¶ A merry heart doeth good *like* a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones.

It is so true that one's emotional state greatly affects one's health. A merry heart promotes good health, and a depressed, broken heart leads to sickness.

Ironsides: "The Christian is able in all circumstances to rejoice in the Lord and be lifted above circumstances that would depress and weigh down the soul. Then, in place of showing his happiness in the empty ways of the world, he can sing and make melody in his heart to the source and object of his gladness."

Proverbs 17:23 ¶ A wicked *man* taketh a gift out of the bosom to pervert the ways of judgment.

A wicked person is easily bribed to thwart justice—be it judge or witness. He is not interested in obtaining a fair and honest judgment. "Out of the bosom" seems to reference secrecy; and, of course, no one wants to be openly identified as one who is dishonest and breaks the law.

Sadly, it is no longer a stigma in much of the world today to identify with those who are dishonest and openly disregard the law. Much of the media and many politicians fall into that category. They are determined to achieve their agenda by whatever means, regardless of the illegality or dishonesty required to do it.

Proverbs 17:24 ¶ Wisdom *is* before him that hath understanding; but the eyes of a fool *are* in the ends of the earth.

I think Solomon is saying that a man of intelligence and discernment keeps focused on acting wisely. A foolish man, however, changes his focus to whatever is necessary to get what he wants.

Henry adds another perspective: "He is a fool, and good for nothing, whose eyes are in the ends of the earth, here, and there and every where, any where but where they should be, who cannot fix his thoughts to one subject nor pursue any one purpose with any thing of steadiness."

Proverbs 17:25 ¶ A foolish son *is* a grief to his father, and bitterness to her that bare him.

Yet another statement from Solomon expressing the grief and sorrow that parents suffer because of a foolish son.

Henry: "Wicked children are an affliction to both their parents. They are an occasion of anger to the father (so the word signifies), because they contemn his authority, but of sorrow and bitterness to the mother, because they abuse her tenderness."

Ironsides: "The young man is not the only, nor by any means the greatest, sufferer when he throws discretion to the winds and plunges into foolishness and vice. The poignant grief of his father's heart and the bitter disappointment of his mother are sorrows too deep for words to express. To have brought into the world one who despises their love and disobeys all their authority is terrible indeed. Sadly it little affects the haughty, stubborn heart of the wayward youth who plunges recklessly on, adding grief to grief and heartache to heartache!"

Proverbs 17:26 ¶ Also to punish the just *is* not good, *nor* to strike princes for equity.

It is not good, in fact, it is wicked to punish someone unjustly or to punish someone for trying to uphold what is just and right. As always, the standard for what is good, right and just can only be found in the word of God.

It is just hard for me not to make application to much I see going on around me today. It is becoming ever more acceptable and even encouraged to punish people unjustly or for standing up for what is right and just. This is not surprising, however, since the world as a whole and our nation in particular have rejected God as LORD and His word as truth.

Proverbs 17:27 ¶ He that hath knowledge spareth his words: *and* a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit.

Proverbs 17:28 Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: *and* he that shutteth his lips *is esteemed* a man of understanding.

These two verses affirm the wisdom of being self-disciplined and controlling one's tongue. Even a fool can be perceived as wise and discerning if he just keeps his mouth shut.

Clarke: "A man may be golden-mouthed and silver-tongued in eloquence; but to know when and where to speak and to be silent, is better than diamonds."