

Proverbs 18:1 ¶ Through desire a man, having separated himself, seeketh *and* intermeddleth with all wisdom.

After looking at the Hebrew, I think the NIV is clearer: “*An unfriendly man pursues selfish ends; he defies all sound judgment.*” I think the key is that he separates himself because of selfish desires. He is intent on doing whatever it takes to get what he wants.

As I started looking at the commentaries, I found that some of the older commentators interpret it in a positive way. They posit that the man separates himself from the wisdom of the world to seek true wisdom. Most of the translations I checked, see it in the negative.

Proverbs 18:2 ¶ A fool hath no delight in understanding, but that his heart may discover itself.

My paraphrase: A fool is only interested in sharing his own thoughts and opinions; he doesn't care what anyone else thinks.

Ironside: “Nothing is more characteristic of the fool than his contempt for instruction and his lack of desire to understand.”

Proverbs 18:3 ¶ When the wicked cometh, *then* cometh also contempt, and with ignominy reproach.

My paraphrase: A wicked or ungodly person is always accompanied by dishonor, disrespect, and shame. This has two applications: 1) They show dishonor, disrespect and shameful behavior towards others. 2) They are identified as dishonorable, disrespectful and shameful by those that are godly.

Proverbs 18:4 ¶ The words of a man's mouth *are as* deep waters, *and* the wellspring of wisdom *as* a flowing brook.

I think Solomon is saying that our words have power. Deep water and flowing water are sources of power. Water is also a source of refreshment and is necessary to life. When we use our words wisely, they are a source of refreshment to others and promote good health.

Clarke: “The wise sayings of a wise man are like deep waters; howsoever much you pump or draw off, you do not appear to lessen them.”

Proverbs 18:5 ¶ *It is not good to accept the person of the wicked, to overthrow the righteous in judgment.*

Again, I can read this two ways. 1) It is wrong to rule in favor of a guilty person at the expense of an innocent person. 2) It is wrong to pardon or spare (from the Hebrew for “accept”) a guilty person, and it is just as wrong to declare an innocent person guilty.

Henry: “The merits of the cause must be regarded, not the person.”

Clarke: “We must not, in judicial cases, pay any attention to a man's riches, influence, friends, offices, etc., but judge the case according to its own merits.”

**Proverbs 18:6 ¶ *A fool's lips enter into contention, and his mouth calleth for strokes.*
Proverbs 18:7 *A fool's mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul.***

The ungodly, foolish man's speech causes controversy and fights. It will eventually lead to his eternal ruin and destruction—unless he turns to God in faith and repentance.

Acts 20:20–21 “I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house, Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Proverbs 18:8 ¶ *The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.*

The words of a gossip are like wounds that rankle (from Hebrew for “wounds”); they fester and inflame as they are absorbed by the hearer. Gossip hurts not only the one being talked about, but also the one who listens to it.

Several translations describe the words of the gossip as dainty morsels, e.g., the NIV: “*The words of a gossip are like choice morsels....*” — something tempting to the appetite of the listener.

Henry: “The words of the tale-bearer wound him of whom they are spoken, his credit and interest, and him to whom they are spoken, his love and charity.”

Words of warning from Guzik: “When we receive the words of a talebearer, they normally have an effect on us. The words go down into us and often change the way we think and feel about people, even if what the talebearer says isn't true or isn't confirmed.”

Proverbs 18:9 ¶ He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster.

A person that is lazy and slack in his work is like the person that causes ruin and destruction.

EBC Abridged: “The one who is slack may look for shortcuts and may make things that fall apart. His destruction may be indirect and slow in coming, but it is just as problematic.”

Guzik: “If a person is given management over a large estate and ruins it through vandalism and outright destruction, it is easy to see them as a great destroyer. Yet if the same person allows it to fall into disrepair and uselessness through neglect and laziness, they also are a great destroyer – they just did it another way. *Laziness destroys.*”

Proverbs 18:10 ¶ The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.

This is one of the songs we sing in worship, and it declares a beautiful truth. The LORD (represented by His name) is a place of strength and refuge, of protection and safety to those that look to Him in faith. This is a characteristic that no “false god” can claim; they are totally impotent before the LORD.

Ironsides: “All that perplexes and oppresses the human spirit can be poured into God’s ear. Then the soul can leave all burdens with Him and can confide in His love. Thus the heart will be at peace, protected as in a garrisoned tower, however the enemy may rage.”

I really liked Guzik’s thoughts: “Because the name of Yahweh represents His character in all its aspects, the believer can think about the aspects of God’s character and find a strong, safe refuge in them. It can be as simple as this:

- Lord, You are a God of love – so I find refuge in your love.
- Lord, You are a God of mercy – so I find refuge in your mercy.
- Lord, You are a God of strength – so I find refuge in your strength.
- Lord, You are a God of righteousness – so I find refuge in your righteousness.”

Proverbs 18:11 ¶ The rich man’s wealth is his strong city, and as an high wall in his own conceit.

I think the NLT gets at the heart of it: *“The rich think of their wealth as an impregnable defense; they imagine it is a high wall of safety.”*

So many people look to wealth as security for their future. They don’t stop to consider how quickly wealth can be lost—just look at Venezuela today (2019) or think back to when the stock market crashed in 1929 and ushered in the great depression. God is the only true source to which one can look for strength and protection. It may not always manifest according to our expectations, but He is faithful and strong on behalf of those that trust in Him.

Guzik quoting Garrett: “Wealth does afford a measure of protection, but the danger of wealth is precisely that it gives its possessor the illusion of greater security than it can provide.”

Proverbs 18:12 ¶ Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, and before honour is humility.

The first part of this verse basically mirrors a verse in chapter 16.

Proverbs 16:18 “Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.”

Haughtiness and pride lead to destruction, while humbleness and meekness lead to honor. This may not always prove true before men, but it is always true before God—our eternal judge.

Proverbs 18:13 ¶ He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.

I liked the CJB translation: *“To answer someone before hearing him out is both stupid and embarrassing.”* That is pretty self-explanatory.

Proverbs 18:14 ¶ The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?

I think Solomon is saying that a healthy emotional state can help a person endure physical illness, but it’s hard to endure a depressed or oppressed mental state.

EBC Abridged: “In physical sickness one can fall back on the will to live; but in depression the will to live may be gone, and there is no reserve for physical strength.”

Proverbs 18:15 ¶ The heart of the prudent getteth knowledge; and the ear of the wise seeketh knowledge.

Prudence is pretty much interchangeable with discernment, wisdom and understanding. So, the prudent person is ever eager to increase his knowledge base. The heart represents the place of desire; and the ear, I think, represents the willingness to be taught.

Proverbs 18:16 ¶ A man's gift maketh room for him, and bringeth him before great men.

Everyone likes to receive gifts—even the rich and powerful, who already have more than they need. Giving someone a gift is a sure way of currying their favor if you are trying to make their acquaintance. After looking at the Hebrew, I am looking at this from a positive viewpoint. However, there is latitude in the definition to consider the negative side. A gift could also refer to a bribe made to gain a person's influence for whatever personal reasons.

Proverbs 18:17 ¶ He that is first in his own cause seemeth just; but his neighbour cometh and searcheth him.

It is true that the first person that gets to tell his version of events usually makes a believable presentation. Subsequent questioning, however, may reveal another version of events that contradict his testimony. Both sides of a story must be told before making a judgment based on the evidence.

Ironside: "Most men can make out a good case for themselves if left alone; it has been natural for fallen man to justify himself since the day that Adam sought to throw the blame of his sin back on God. Therefore, to decide a case on one-sided testimony is almost certain to result in a miscarriage of justice."

Proverbs 18:18 ¶ The lot causeth contentions to cease, and parteth between the mighty.

I liked the NLT: "Casting lots can end arguments and settle disputes between powerful opponents." Reminder, in Israel the casting of lots was an accepted form of determining God's will.

Proverbs 16:33 "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD."

If only that were the case today! Then the courts could not pervert justice and politicians would actually make wise decisions. And in the church, the professing body of believers, doctrine would not be in dispute.

Proverbs 18:19 ¶ A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city: and their contentions are like the bars of a castle.

Solomon is basically saying it is very hard to reconcile with a brother or friend you have offended. We are hurt the worst when the hurt is inflicted by one we love and trust, and it is difficult to reestablish the closeness once enjoyed.

Clarke posits a different view: “Almost all the versions agree in the following reading: ‘A brother assisted by a brother, is like a fortified city; and their decisions are like the bars of a city...’ Unity among brethren makes them invincible; small things grow great by concord.” (Although I checked several translations, I could not affirm his statement concerning “almost all the versions.”)

Ironside’s wise words of warning to the Christian: “Remember, when tempted to perpetuate strife, the dishonor that will accrue to the name of the Lord.”

Proverbs 18:20 ¶ A man’s belly shall be satisfied with the fruit of his mouth; and with the increase of his lips shall he be filled.

Though the wording paints a picture of physical satisfaction, I think the truth of this proverb is related to the words we speak and spiritual satisfaction. It is true that all men eat to satisfy their appetite. It is also true that most people speak to satisfy their spiritual appetites—be they good or bad.

Henry quoting Bishop Patrick: “We ought to take as great care about the words we speak as we do about the fruit of our trees or the increase of the earth, which we are to eat; for, according as they are wholesome or unwholesome, so will the pleasure or the pain be wherewith we shall be filled.”

Proverbs 18:21 ¶ Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.

As we have learned previously, the tongue wields great power—for good or for evil.

James 3:3–5 “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!"

Proverbs 12:25 "Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop: but a good word maketh it glad."

Proverbs 15:1 "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger."

Proverbs 16:24 "Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones."

Proverbs 18:22 ¶ *Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD.*

This is an interesting proverb to come from Solomon, a man with 700 wives and 300 concubines.

1 Kings 11:1–3 "But king Solomon loved many strange women....And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart."

Though he disobeyed God's command, it does not change the truth that he recorded through the inspiration of God's Holy Spirit.

2 Timothy 3:16 "All scripture is given by inspiration of God...."

From the very beginning God intended marriage to be a blessing to both man and woman.

Genesis 2:18-24 "And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him....And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man....Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh."

What he left unsaid, but was surely understood in Israel at that time, was that both parties should be unified in reverencing God through faith and obedience. Paul states that principle clearly in his letter to the Corinthians.

2 Corinthians 6:14 *“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?”*

Proverbs 18:23 ¶ The poor useth intreaties; but the rich answereth roughly.

I think Solomon is saying that most rich people show little mercy or regard for the poor. They are caught up in their own lives, giving little thought for those outside their own circle of friends. Thankfully, there are some among the rich and famous that show charity to the poor—but certainly far less than what they could.

Henry: “Poverty, though many inconveniences to the body attend it, has often a good effect upon the spirit, for it makes men humble and submissive, and mortifies their pride. It teaches them to use entreaties. When necessity forces men to beg it tells them they must not prescribe or demand, but take what is given them and be thankful. At the throne of God's grace we are all poor, and must use entreaties, not answer, but make application...as a pauper.”

Proverbs 18:24 ¶ A man *that hath* friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend *that sticketh* closer than a brother.

The translations certainly are different on this verse, but all generally fall along the lines of the NIV: *“A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.”* This is because the Hebrew for “friendly” states: “...to spoil (literally, by breaking to pieces); figuratively, to make (or be) good for nothing, i.e. bad (physically, socially or morally)....”

It is true that a person can have many so-called “friends” that prove them false when you truly need the support and encouragement of a friend. They are called fair weather friends; friends in it for the good times, but not the bad. They are your friends for what you can do for them. When you no longer can benefit them, they will discard you like trash. I would certainly rather have one or two true friends than a hundred fair weather friends.