

**Proverbs 20:1 ¶ Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.**

Solomon is teaching his sons that wine (made from grapes) leads to an uncontrolled tongue and strong drink (made from grains) leads to anger and trouble. Anyone that thinks differently is not wise. He goes on to add further warnings in later chapters.

*Proverbs 23:20–21 “Be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh: For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags.”*

*Proverbs 23:29–32 “Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine. Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.”*

*Proverbs 31:4–7 “It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink: Lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted. Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts. Let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more.”*

Ironside: “Wine has its place. Scripture recognizes its medicinal virtue and a lawful use of it when needed. But how easily it becomes a snare that destroys the will and wrecks the life.”

*1 Timothy 5:23 “Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach’s sake and thine often infirmities.”*

**Proverbs 20:2 ¶ The fear of a king is as the roaring of a lion: whoso provoketh him to anger sinneth against his own soul.**

I like the NLT: “The king’s fury is like a lion’s roar; to rouse his anger is to risk your life.”

Technically, it is not wise to anger anyone in authority over you. Not everyone has the authority to take your life, but they can sure make life miserable for you.

Henry: “Those princes that rule by wisdom and love rule like God himself, and bear his image; but those that rule merely by terror, and with a high hand, do but rule like a lion in the forest, with a brutal power.”

**Proverbs 20:3 ¶ *It is an honour for a man to cease from strife: but every fool will be meddling.***

Again, I like the NLT: *“Avoiding a fight is a mark of honor; only fools insist on quarreling.”*

There are always times in life when following this principle is easier than at other times. Personally, I have a much harder time controlling anger when it involves perceived wrongdoing or injustice to those I love.

**Proverbs 20:4 ¶ *The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing.***

The sluggard is reference to one who is lazy. One who is lazy will latch on to any excuse not to work—even if such choice affects his well being negatively. In this instance, the lazy person refuses to plant because it is a bit cold; therefore, he will have no harvest to reap.

MacDonald: “Plowing time in Israel is in November and December, when the wind commonly blows from the North.” (the time when one should be plowing in preparation for planting)

**Proverbs 20:5 ¶ *Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water; but a man of understanding will draw it out.***

The Hebrew for “counsel” makes reference to advice, plans and purpose. “Deep water” seems to be comparing such counsel to a spring of water from the ground. It seems to be saying that there is an abundant supply. Implication seems to be that the wise man is hoping to help someone by drawing out and identifying the motives and intents in his heart. It could also make reference to one who seeks wisdom from one who is reticent to share without being specifically sought out.

**Proverbs 20:6 ¶ *Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness: but a faithful man who can find?***

My paraphrase: Men are often quick to identify themselves as kind and merciful, but not many live up to that identity.

It is truly a special blessing in this life to have one or two truly faithful (trustworthy) friends.

Guzik: "A faithful man doesn't want or need to proclaim his own goodness. The quiet satisfaction of faithfulness to God and man is enough."

MacDonald: "There is a difference between what men are, and what they want others to think they are. It is the difference between 'Person' and 'Personality.'"

**Proverbs 20:7 ¶ The just *man* walketh in his integrity: his children *are* blessed after him.**

Integrity makes reference to moral innocence and honesty; the just person is one that lives his life accordingly. The children of such a person is blessed by the example of his wisdom and the blessings that are the fruit of such a lifestyle.

We inherit things from our parents due to genetics, but we also inherit much from their example.

**Proverbs 20:8 ¶ A king that sitteth in the throne of judgment scattereth away all evil with his eyes.**

Again, I like the NLT: "*When a king judges, he carefully weighs all the evidence, distinguishing the bad from the good.*"

Obviously, this would reference a good king, a king that wants to honor God. How sad it is that so many in the world today with the authority to judge others do not use wise discernment because they do not honor God.

**Proverbs 20:9 ¶ Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?**

This verse is basically a rhetorical question. Scripture is clear that there is no one without sin.

*Psalm 14:3 "...there is none that doeth good, no, not one."*

*Ecclesiastes 7:20 "For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not."*

*Romans 3:10 & 23 "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one....For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God...."*

Only Jesus lived as the sinless, spotless Lamb of God.

*Hebrews 4:14–15 “Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.”*

*1 Peter 2:21–22 “Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth....”*

Only the blood of Jesus can make us clean and righteous before God.

*1 John 1:7 “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.”*

**Proverbs 20:10 ¶ Divers weights, and divers measures, both of them are alike abomination to the LORD.**

Just and consistent weights and measures were and are essential to conducting honest business. The LORD hates the use of false weights and measures. No person that truly honors God would employ such a practice in their business. In fact, no person that truly honors God would use dishonest business practices of any kind.

**Proverbs 20:11 ¶ Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right.**

Principle: Our actions prove our character. Every person’s character, be it child or adult, is evidenced by his/her actions. To be pure is to be morally clean. To be right is to be straight and righteous, to be in alignment with God’s law.

**Proverbs 20:12 ¶ The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the LORD hath made even both of them.**

This seems like such an obvious statement for Solomon to make. I think he is trying to impress upon his sons that since the LORD made our ears to hear and our eyes to see, we should use them to honor Him and learn the truth of His word as we seek wisdom concerning how to navigate life. We should use our ears to listen with the purpose of learning obedience and our eyes to help us be discerning and appreciate the beauty of creation.

**Proverbs 20:13 ¶ Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty; open thine eyes, and thou shalt be satisfied with bread.**

I think Solomon is equating the person who loves sleep with one who is lazy. Such a person will end up in poverty because of his laziness. I think he is equating the person who is ready to get up and face the day with one who will not lack what he needs because he is willing to work for it.

Clarke: "Sleep, indescribable in its nature, is an indescribable blessing; but how often is it turned into a curse! It is like food; a certain measure of it restores and invigorates exhausted nature; more than that oppresses and destroys life."

**Proverbs 20:14 ¶ *It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer: but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth.***

I think the NLT expresses it well: "*The buyer haggles over the price, saying, 'It's worthless,' then brags about getting a bargain!*"

Guzik: "This proverb reminds us that what people say isn't always what they believe, and people will speak falsehood for their own advantage."

EBC Abridged: "This may simply reflect normal procedure in a world where haggling for prices was common, but it may also be a warning to the inexperienced on how things are done; it possibly also evaluates this procedure as a questionable business practice. Shrewdness is one thing, but deceitful misrepresentation in order to buy under value becomes unethical."

**Proverbs 20:15 ¶ *There is gold, and a multitude of rubies: but the lips of knowledge are a precious jewel.***

Solomon seems to be saying that a person that speaks with knowledge and truth is much rarer and more valuable than precious metal and gemstones. I am reminded of how common silver was and how abundant gold was in the days of Solomon.

*1 Kings 10:21 & 23 "And all king Solomon's drinking vessels were of gold, and all the vessels of the house of the forest of Lebanon were of pure gold; none were of silver: it was nothing accounted of in the days of Solomon....So king Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth for riches and for wisdom."*

**Proverbs 20:16 ¶ *Take his garment that is surety for a stranger: and take a pledge of him for a strange woman.***

The garment being referenced was like an earnest payment for what was yet due. The law declared that you were not to keep the garment of a man to which you had made a loan.

*Exodus 22:26–27 “If thou at all take thy neighbour’s raiment to pledge, thou shalt deliver it unto him by that the sun goeth down: For that is his covering only, it is his raiment for his skin: wherein shall he sleep?”*

It seems that this law did not apply to one who had chosen to borrow money to lend to a “strange woman,” a reference to an adulterous woman or a foreigner (someone whose character was unknown).

**Proverbs 20:17 ¶ Bread of deceit is sweet to a man; but afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel.**

Stolen bread may taste sweet at first, but it will soon leave a terrible aftertaste. This is true of anything that is stolen.

**Proverbs 20:18 ¶ Every purpose is established by counsel: and with good advice make war.**

The CJB makes the connection between the two statements a bit clearer: *“After consultation, plans succeed; so take wise advice when waging war.”*

Guzik: *“Wise counsel is even more important when great matters are involved, such as life and death matters such as war. By spiritual analogy, we can also say that we can only wage the spiritual warfare we must fight as believers with the wise counsel of God’s word and other believers.”*

Clarke: *“Most of the wars that are undertaken are wars of injustice, ambition, aggrandizement, and caprice, which can have had no previous good counsel.”*

Henry: *“It is especially our wisdom to be cautious in making war. Consider, and take advice, whether the war should be begun or no, whether it be just, whether it be prudent, whether we be a match for the enemy, and able to carry it on when it is too late to retreat; and, when it is begun, consider how and by what arts it may be prosecuted, for management is as necessary as courage.”*

**Proverbs 20:19 ¶ He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips.**

A talebearer or gossip is one who reveals secrets. A person that talks a lot to you using flattery is one to be avoided because he/she is likely a gossip.

Guzik: "There are certainly some things that should be revealed (Ephesians 5:11), but many things should be concealed out of love (1Peter 4:8). Wisdom will know which is approach is appropriate in each situation."

*Ephesians 5:11 "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them."*

*1 Peter 4:8 "And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins."*

**Proverbs 20:20 ¶ Whoso curseth his father or his mother, his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness.**

The Hebrew for "curseth" makes reference to treating them with contempt and with light esteem. Solomon is basically saying that one should not dishonor one's parents. To put out one's lamp is a reference death, to put out the light of life. This proverb is basically a restatement of the law God established to govern the Israelites.

*Exodus 21:17 "And he that curseth his father, or his mother, shall surely be put to death."*

*Matthew 15:4 "For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death."*

Obviously, we do not live under the law, but under grace. The law, however, gives us God's heart in the matter as positively stated in the Ten Commandments and repeated in the New Testament.

*Exodus 20:12 "Honour thy father and thy mother...."*

*Mark 10:18-19 "And Jesus said unto him....Thou knowest the commandments...Honour thy father and mother."*

*Ephesians 6:2 "Honour thy father and mother...."*

To disregard this commandment is to dishonor the LORD.

**Proverbs 20:21 ¶ An inheritance *may be gotten* hastily at the beginning; but the end thereof shall not be blessed.**

I have to admit that this one is hard for me. It sounds like Solomon is saying that an inheritance that is given rashly and suddenly may seem like a blessing but will not prove to be so in the end. My mind goes to any person becoming suddenly in possession of more wealth than he/she has the knowledge and discernment to use wisely. A good example—the prodigal son (see Luke 15).

As I begin to look at the commentators, some seem to infer that the inheritance was obtained dishonestly. Ironside makes this comment: “They who set out with the determination to gather wealth at all cost will learn the bitter lesson that they have missed the true and lasting treasure which would have given heart-satisfaction and joy in its possession.”

I liked Garrett’s comment (as quoted by Guzik): “Easy money does not foster financial responsibility. The easily gained money is here not necessarily dishonestly gained, but even so, those who have amassed wealth slowly know better how to keep it.”

**Proverbs 20:22 ¶ Say not thou, I will recompense evil; but wait on the LORD, and he shall save thee.**

Simply put, vengeance belongs to the LORD. The word “save” includes the thought of avenging and getting the victory.

*Romans 12:17-19 “Recompense to no man evil for evil....Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.”*

Ironside: “The person who admits that the Lord has allowed all circumstances for his good, then bows his head and bends before the blast, will find God ever ready to intervene at the needed moment. To look beyond the human instrument of our grief, however vindictive he may be, and to see all the purposes of our Father working out, gives rest and comfort to the sorely-tried soul.”

Clarke: “Wait on the Lord; judgment is his, and his judgments are sure. In the mean time pray for the conversion of your enemy.”

**Proverbs 20:23 ¶ Divers weights are an abomination unto the LORD; and a false balance is not good.**

This is a restatement of truth already presented in verse 10; several truths are repeated throughout the book of Proverbs. Principle: The LORD hates dishonesty in business.

**Proverbs 20:24 ¶ Man's goings are of the LORD; how can a man then understand his own way?**

This verse appears to be saying that man is no more than a robot, and we know that is not the truth. The sovereignty of God and the God-given ability to make our own choices are often hard to reconcile. I believe the key to understanding is directly connected to God's omniscience. Beyond that I claim the truth stated so clearly by Isaiah.

*Isaiah 55:8-9 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."*

**Proverbs 20:25 ¶ It is a snare to the man who devoureth that which is holy, and after vows to make enquiry.**

"devoureth" = "to blurt or utter inconsiderately"

I liked the NLT translation: *"It is dangerous to make a rash promise to God before counting the cost."*

Scripture is clear in stating that God expects us to keep our vows or promises to Him.

*Numbers 30:2 "If a man vow a vow unto the LORD, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond; he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth."*

*Deuteronomy 23:21 "When thou shalt vow a vow unto the LORD thy God, thou shalt not slack to pay it: for the LORD thy God will surely require it of thee; and it would be sin in thee."*

**Proverbs 20:26 ¶ A wise king scattereth the wicked, and bringeth the wheel over them.**

Solomon is basically saying that a wise king will cast away or disperse the evil people in his kingdom. He compares it to crushing grain that has been harvested. I don't think he is saying that the king should kill all the evil people. I think he advocates driving them away and protecting the righteous from them. A strong judicial system with

effective deterrents would also be a part of that process. Sadly, I do not think we will ever see this type of government until Jesus takes the throne in the millennium.

**Proverbs 20:27 ¶ The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly.**

The spirit of a person is the true essence of a person—his intellect, his conscience, his divine connection to the LORD. It is the light of one's true life before God. It is that part of our being that exposes our motives and true character. This reminds me of the truth so clearly stated in Romans that declares every person to be without excuse before God because of the conscience that He has placed in every person.

*Romans 1:19–20 "Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:"*

**Proverbs 20:28 ¶ Mercy and truth preserve the king; and his throne is upholden by mercy.**

Mercy and truth, kindness and trustworthiness protect a king; his throne is strengthened by his goodness because such a king is to be greatly desired.

It is also true that the king is made more secure by the goodness and trustworthiness of those that serve him.

Clarke's comment about mercy and truth: "These are the brightest jewels in the royal crown; and those kings who are most governed by them have the stablest government."

**Proverbs 20:29 ¶ The glory of young men is their strength; and the beauty of old men is the gray head.**

My paraphrase: Young men are admired for their strength; old men are admired for their wisdom and experience.

When both the young and the old respect each other for their respective strengths, much good can be accomplished.

**Proverbs 20:30 ¶ The blueness of a wound cleanseth away evil: so do stripes the inward parts of the belly.**

In this verse, Solomon is explaining the positive effects of physical punishment. It is an effective tool of discipline when administered according to God's word.

*Proverbs 13:24 "He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes." Using the rod with intent to correct and chastise.*

*Ephesians 6:4 "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." It is obvious that discipline is not to be excessive.*

*Hebrews 12:7 & 11 "If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?...Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." The willingness to invest in the discipline of your child is an act of a loving father.*

Ironside: "It would be unwise for a patient to object to the pain caused by the surgeon while he endeavored to free the wound from impurities that might hinder healing and, if unremoved, poison the whole system. So is the saint foolish indeed who complains under a Father's chastening hand and seeks to free himself from the stripes rather than to 'hear... the rod, and [Him] who hath appointed it.'" (Micah 6:9)