

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown

Bible Study Notes Book of Proverbs—Proverbs 21

10/24/12

Wisdom instructs on integrity, patience, and God's sovereignty.

THEME: Wisdom For All People (Chapters 10-24)

PURPOSE: Solomon wanted to impart wisdom to all people, regardless of their age, sex, or position in society. These short, wise sayings give us practical wisdom for daily living. We should study them diligently and integrate them into our life.

OUTLINE:

- I. GOD WATCHES THE HEART (21:1-8): The Lord examines our heart more than our actions.
- II. IT'S SIMPLER BEING ALONE (21:9-19): It is better than having a contentious wife or simple, wicked companions.
- III. THE WAY OF THE WISE (21:20-29): "Whoever pursues godliness and unfailing love will find life, godliness, and honor."
- IV. "VICTORY BELONGS TO THE LORD" (21:30-31): "Human plans, no matter how wise or well advised, cannot stand against the LORD."

Proverbs 21
(New International Version)

(Verses 1-8) GOD WATCHES THE HEART: The Lord examines our heart more than our actions.

¹In the LORD's hand the king's heart is a stream of water that he channels toward all who please him. ²A person may think their own ways are right, but the LORD weighs the heart. ³To do what is right and just is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice. ⁴Haughty eyes and a proud heart— the unplowed field of the wicked—produce sin. ⁵The plans of the diligent lead to profit as surely as haste leads to poverty. ⁶A fortune made by a lying tongue is a fleeting vapor and a deadly snare. ⁷The violence of the wicked will drag them away, for they refuse to do what is right. ⁸The way of the guilty is devious, but the conduct of the innocent is upright.

PROVERBS 21:1

In Solomon's day, kings possessed absolute authority and were often considered to be like gods. This proverb shows that God has ultimate authority over world rulers.

Although they may not have realized it, the earth's most powerful kings have always been under God's control. (See Isaiah 10:5-8 for an example of a king who was used for God's purposes.)

PROVERBS 21:2

People may mistakenly think they are doing right, but God sees the motives of their hearts. We often have to make choices in areas where the right action is difficult to discern. We can help ourselves make such decisions by trying to identify our motives first and then asking, Would God be pleased with my real reasons for doing this? God is not pleased when we do good deeds only to receive something in return.

PROVERBS 21:3

Sacrifices are not bribes to make God overlook our character faults. If our personal and business dealings are not characterized by justice, no amount of generosity when the offering plate is passed will make up for it.

PROVERBS 21:5

Faithful completion of one's work is a great accomplishment. Being a diligent worker does not come naturally to some people; it is a result of strong character. Don't look for shortcuts that result in inefficiency. Work hard as if in the service of God.

(Verses 9-19) IT'S SIMPLER BEING ALONE: It is better than having a contentious wife or simple, wicked companions.

⁹ Better to live on a corner of the roof than share a house with a quarrelsome wife. ¹⁰ The wicked crave evil; their neighbors get no mercy from them. ¹¹ When a mocker is punished, the simple gain wisdom; by paying attention to the wise they get knowledge. ¹² The Righteous One takes note of the house of the wicked and brings the wicked to ruin. ¹³ Whoever shuts their ears to the cry of the poor will also cry out and not be answered. ¹⁴ A gift given in secret soothes anger, and a bribe concealed in the cloak pacifies great wrath. ¹⁵ When justice is done, it brings joy to the righteous but terror to evildoers. ¹⁶ Whoever strays from the path of prudence comes to rest in the company of the dead. ¹⁷ Whoever loves pleasure will become poor; whoever loves wine and olive oil will never be rich. ¹⁸ The wicked become a ransom for the righteous, and the unfaithful for the upright. ¹⁹ Better to live in a desert than with a quarrelsome and nagging wife.

PROVERBS 21:11, 12

It is usually better to learn from the mistakes of others than from our own. We can do this by listening to their advice. Take counsel from others instead of plunging ahead and learning the hard way.

PROVERBS 21:13

We should work to meet the needs of the poor and protect their rights for someday we may be in need of such services ourselves.

Verses (20–29): THE WAY OF THE WISE “Whoever pursues godliness and unfailing love will find life, godliness, and honor.”

²⁰ The wise store up choice food and olive oil, but fools gulp theirs down. ²¹ Whoever pursues righteousness and love finds life, prosperity and honor. ²² One who is wise can go up against the city of the mighty and pull down the stronghold in which they trust. ²³ Those who guard their mouths and their tongues keep themselves from calamity. ²⁴ The proud and arrogant person—“Mocker” is his name—behaves with insolent fury. ²⁵ The craving of a sluggard will be the death of him, because his hands refuse to work. ²⁶ All day long he craves for more, but the righteous give without sparing. ²⁷ The sacrifice of the wicked is detestable— how much more so when brought with evil intent! ²⁸ A false witness will perish, but a careful listener will testify successfully. ²⁹ The wicked put up a bold front, but the upright give thought to their ways.

PROVERBS 21:20

This proverb is about saving for the future. Easy credit has many people living on the edge of bankruptcy. The desire to keep up appearances and to accumulate more drives them to spend every penny they earn, and they stretch their credit to the limit. But anyone who spends all he has is spending more than he can afford. A wise person puts money aside for hard times. God approves of foresight and restraint. God's people need to examine their life-styles to see whether their spending is God-pleasing or merely self-pleasing.

PROVERBS 21:27

The kind of worship (“sacrifice”) described in this proverb is no better than a bribe. How do people try to bribe God? They may go to church, tithe, or volunteer, not because of their love and devotion to God, but because they hope God will bless them in return. But God has made it very clear that he desires obedience and love more than religious ritual (see 21:3; 1 Samuel 15:22).

God does not want our sacrifices of time, energy, and money alone; he wants our heart—our complete love and devotion. We may be able to bribe people (21:14), but we cannot bribe God.

(Verses 30-31): "VICTORY BELONGS TO THE LORD" "Human plans, no matter how wise or well advised, cannot stand against the LORD."

³⁰ There is no wisdom, no insight, no plan that can succeed against the LORD. ³¹ The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but victory rests with the LORD.

PROVERBS 21:31

This proverb refers to preparing for battle. All our preparation for any task is useless without God. But even with God's help we still must do our part and prepare. His control of the outcome does not negate our responsibilities. God may want you to produce a great book, but you must learn to write. God may want to use you in foreign missions, but you must learn the language. God will accomplish his purposes, and he will be able to use you if you have done your part by being well prepared.