

(Proverbs) ch.10:12 - 11:12

by Zac Poonen

The book of Proverbs teaches us how to be wise and avoid being fools by controlling our words, being willing to be corrected and instructed, and using our money and resources wisely.

Duration: 1:00:56

Scripture: Proverbs 10:26, Proverbs 25:13, Proverbs 26:4

Topics: "Righteous Living", "Godly Wisdom"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes that riches will not help anyone on judgment day, only righteousness will matter. It is not about Bible knowledge or religious activities, but about living a righteous life. The speaker also highlights that God disciplines us through various circumstances to help us gain wisdom and understanding. Additionally, the sermon emphasizes the importance of controlling one's tongue and not being lazy, as these are marks of a wise person. The overall message is that true value lies in righteousness and wisdom, not in wealth or poverty.

Transcript

In chapter 10, in our last study we finished at chapter 10 verse 12. You may want to pick up the thread there. I was reading that verse in the Living Bible where it says, hatred stirs old quarrels but love overlooks insults.

And there we know whether we are children of God or children of the devil. Because God is love and the devil is a murderer. And the children of God are identified by the love of God in their hearts towards one another.

And the children of the devil are identified by hatred. And it's very easy to find out which quality we have in our heart when we speak about what we speak with our tongue. That of course everybody about love.

Out there in the world they speak about love too. But there is a test. If you are a person who stirs up old quarrels, that means you bring up the remembrance of something that happened in the past towards another person when you have a disagreement with that person.

However much we may speak about love, we have hatred according to the word of God. Love never brings up old quarrels. That is hatred.

It is hatred that stirs up old quarrels. They are not forgotten. But love covers a multitude of sins.

Like we considered that verse, it draws a veil over all the sins. So that's a very good verse by which we can find out whether we have love or hatred in our hearts so that we don't deceive ourselves. The mark of a person who's got hatred is that he's always ready to pick up a quarrel.

Pick up a quarrel with his brother, pick up a quarrel with his sister, pick up a quarrel with your marriage partner. That is a clear mark of a person. Whatever he may call himself, whatever religious language he speaks, he has got hatred in his heart.

And it's good that he faces up to it and realizes what the condition of his heart is, lest he wake up in eternity and discover that he was deceiving himself concerning his Christianity all through his life. And it says here, stirs up, which means it sort of brings it up from the bottom. Here is something which is sinking to the bottom, but hatred stirs it all up and brings it right up to the top and says, you did this and you did that.

And that time you said this. And the other thing, that's a mark of a man who's full of hatred. There also we can find out whether we have love in our hearts, that when we see something, it draws a veil over it.

Love covers a multitude of sins, can also be looked at in another way, that when a person commits a sin, love seeks to cover it in this sense, that love seeks to put a good motive, say, yeah, that maybe, maybe I thought that he said that, or maybe he said or did that with a good intention or a good motive. Of course, it turned out badly, but love seeks to cover the possibility of sin there. If sin is there, let God expose it.

But our attitude is to put a good construction to that action and to put a good intention behind that. And that is the mark of the fact that we've been delivered from the kingdom of darkness. Because in our olden days, when we were children of Adam, we were specialists in putting the worst possible motive on everything that other people said and did.

We were experts at that. And if we have not been cured of that habit, that shows we have not been working out our salvation with fear and trembling in this area. I believe it's one of the greatest areas where we need to work out our salvation.

And it comes up from the heart. It's from the heart that this evil comes up. And therefore, if we don't work out our salvation there, we'll never be free.

The book of Proverbs speaks about wisdom, and wisdom begins in cleansing our heart of all hatred through working out our own salvation. You see, wisdom is happy when everything is done in love. It may not be done perfectly, but if it is done in love, there can be a growth to perfection.

Because even what we do in love, we can do foolishly. But at least it is done in love, so there's a possibility of growth towards perfection. But if we haven't even got that far, that we're still doing things with hatred, then there is absolutely no possibility of growth in wisdom.

And this is why so many Christians never seem to make progress in their whole life, because they've never cleansed out all this hatred and wrong attitudes towards others in their heart. And then it tells us in verse 13, on the lips of the discerning, wisdom is found. That means not quarrels, but wisdom.

But a rod is for the back of him who lacks understanding. A rod is for the back of him who lacks understanding means that this is the way God seeks to give us wisdom. And if I say, Lord, I'm one of those people who lack wisdom.

And I say, yeah, I qualify for that, Lord. I need a rod on my back to teach me. It's just like a little child.

It says foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction will drive out that foolishness. But I need to see that spiritually, I'm in the same condition. I do all types of things with selfishness and I stir up old quarrels and do all types of things which in God's eyes are much worse than that child spilling the milk or breaking something in the house.

A million times worse in God's eyes. What do I need? I need a rod. And that teaches me that it is through chastening that we get wisdom.

It is impossible to get God's wisdom without God disciplining us. And that is why it says, every son whom the Lord receives and whom he loves, he disciplines. He allows circumstances, sicknesses, financial difficulties, trials, people to oppress us, difficult neighbors.

There's so many ways in which God disciplines us. Disciplines us. And the purpose is that we might get wisdom because we lack understanding.

And then verse 14. It says here, wise men store up knowledge, but with the mouth of the fools ruin is at hand. Let me read that in the living Bible.

It says a wise man holds his tongue. In the midst of a bunch of people who are babbling and babbling and babbling, it's very easy to find out who is wise. The one who knows how to control his tongue and keep quiet.

The wise man holds his tongue. Only a fool blurts out everything he knows and that only leads to sorrow and trouble. Now that verse teaches us that if we are wise, we will not blurt out everything we know.

There are some people who have this foolish idea that the only way to have fellowship is to be absolutely honest with one another, tell each other everything that we know. That is, you never find a verse like that in scripture. That's what the psychiatrists say.

And it's a mark of folly in scripture. It says the wise man knows how to hold his tongue. It's only the fool who blurts out everything he knows.

And he thinks he's being honest, but it does not lead to fellowship. It leads to sorrow and trouble. Whereas the wise man knows how to be quiet.

Then verse 15. Notice here that these are all proverbs. There's no connection in one sense between one verse and the next, except this connection that runs right through the book.

And that is the book of Proverbs teaches us how to be wise. And also it teaches us the marks of a fool. The rich man's wealth is his fortress.

The ruin of the poor is their poverty. Or as the living Bible says, the rich man's wealth is his only strength. He doesn't have any other strength.

His only strength is the money. And when that's gone, everything's finished. And the poor man's poverty is his only curse.

There he's trying to tell us how wealth and poverty on this earth really don't have much value. And there's a verse in Proverbs 18, verse 11, which amplifies this a little more, and we'll understand it a little better. It says in Proverbs 18, 11, a rich man's wealth is his strong city and like a high wall in his own imagination.

It's in his own imagination that he thinks that my riches are a fortress to protect me. And we find the world is full of such people. And the sad thing is a lot of believers like that too, who think their fortress and their security from problems and from want and difficulty is their money.

That's the mark of a fool. It's a mark of a fool. He may be rich, but his wealth is his fortress in his imagination, and that's the mark of a fool.

And if a man is poor, well, on the earth he may have difficulties, that's true. But he can still be wise, even though he is poor. We know that Jesus himself did not have a place to lay his head for the last three and a half years of his life, but he was the wisest man that walked on the earth.

Verse 16, the wages of the righteous is life and the income of the wicked is punishment. Or as it says in the living Bible, the good man's earnings advance the cause of righteousness, and the evil man squanders his on sin. And under sin we could say in selfishness as well.

You see, the way we use our money is also another indication of whether we are wise or fools. The good man's earnings advance the cause of righteousness. This is a contrast to the previous verse.

The previous verse was this rich man who doesn't use his money to advance the cause of righteousness, but tries to build a fortress for himself with all his money and thinks that he is safe, but he is really foolish. But the righteous man, the contrast between the rich man and the righteous man is what we see here. His earnings, he doesn't try to build a fortress for himself with it, he uses it for advancing the cause of righteousness.

That's wisdom. And he uses his wages for advancing the cause of righteousness and that leads to life, whereas the evil man squanders his on sin. Verse 17, he is on the path of life who heeds correction, or anyone willing to be corrected is on the way to life.

This is what we considered earlier about chasming, that if we are willing to be corrected, that is a mark that we are on the path to life. Now, it's amazing how much the book of Proverbs says about correction. Not only parents correcting their children, there is no book in the Bible that speaks so much about parents correcting their children as the book of Proverbs, but also about foolish people becoming wise through one simple habit, the willingness to be corrected.

And I tell you brothers and sisters, that is a test of whether we even desire to be wise. How do you feel when somebody corrects you? We've seen that before. Flattery is the mark of Babylon, and all those who love flattery, even if they talk about the new and living way, are actually Babylonian in spirit.

If what I love is other people coming and telling me, you're a wholehearted brother, we really appreciate you brother, you're wonderful, you're zealous. Whatever theology or doctrine I may believe, my spirit is Babylonian. But, if my spirit is one which recognizes that, Lord, I lack wisdom tremendously, and I'm just longing to be corrected, to be instructed, I'm not interested in the flattery of people coming and saying I'm a wholehearted brother, their opinion is fit to be thrown in the garbage bin.

I want correction, I want instruction. If we don't learn anything else from the book of Proverbs, I'd encourage you to learn this, particularly young people, and even older people. It's a sad thing if we become old and we don't know how to take correction.

And we can think, yeah, yeah, I'm willing to take correction until somebody actually comes and corrects us or rebukes us, and then we get so offended. We think about it, we can't sleep over it, we get hurt with that brother or that sister. That shows what absolute idiots and fools we are, even though we talk about so much high-sounding spiritual stuff.

Brothers and sisters, the mark of a man who's really longing to be wise is that he not just accepts correction, but he longs for it. I'm longing to be corrected because I'm so stupid, I do so many foolish things. And so we see, the one who is willing to be corrected is on the pathway to life, and anyone refusing correction goes astray.

And that's how so many believers have gone astray. Many have gone astray without even knowing it, just because of one simple thing, that when they were corrected, and God doesn't usually correct us Himself always, sometimes He does that, sometimes He corrects us through another brother, and then it's more difficult to accept. People get offended, and they go astray, and they ruin their life.

It's impossible to walk the new and living way if we are unwilling to receive correction without being offended. Next verse, verse 18. He who conceals hatred has lying lips, and he who spreads slander is a fool.

There are two things mentioned here, that to hide hatred and to pretend to love, such a person is a liar. That's why in the New Testament, Romans 12, it says, let love be without hypocrisy. Why does it say that? Because it's so easy for love to be with hypocrisy.

Just a nice smile and words, and pretending that, and inside, we speak evil against the other person, and we've got something bitter against that person, but on the outside, a smile. There's nothing wrong with the other person. The whole problem is with me.

The Word of God says, I'm a liar. I'm a liar. I'm just pretending to show love, and inside, I've got some hatred, I've got some bitterness, I've got something against that person.

What am I? A liar! Any mistake he may have made is nothing compared to my mistake of being an absolute downright liar. Yeah, that's, God's Word is strong. And he who spreads slander, that means one who doesn't keep it in his heart, he goes one step further, and spreads slander.

One mark of a fool. There are many marks of a fool in the Book of Proverbs. One who speaks evil about others, and goes to another home and speaks evil about that person, is a fool.

Whatever his knowledge may be, whatever his doctrine may be, and in the New Testament, we considered that once when we studied one of the verses in the New Testament, in the Book of Timothy, the word slanderer, in the Greek language, is a word called diabolos, from which we get the English word diabolical, which means satanic. Diabolos is translated in the New Testament in two ways. One, Satan.

The other is slanderer. Never forget that. That the word diabolos means Satan, and it means one who goes around speaking evil about others.

In other words, all those who speak evil about others are actually Satans. They are Satans. Mini-Satans.

Because that's what Satan does. He's the accuser of the brethren. And those who speak evil about others behind their back, are hand in hand with Satan, doing his job.

So the next time I sit with somebody, and I speak evil about someone, let me remember, here am I, a little diabolos, holding hands with my master, Satan, speaking about the new and living way in the meetings, but holding hands with the devil, and a slanderer, a gossip, who will one day be exposed for the evil hypocrite that I am at the judgment seat of Christ. Let me never forget that. The word of God is very strong against slander and speaking evil, and I'm sorry to say that most Christians have never, never seen the satanic, diabolical, evil nature of this filthy sin.

It's not adultery which is called diabolical in the New Testament, it is slander, speaking evil. Further, it says here, in verse 19, where there are many words, transgression is unavoidable, or as the Good News Bible says, the more you talk, the more likely you are to sin. It's true.

The more you talk, the more likely you are to sin. If you are wise, you will keep quiet. The Living Bible paraphrases it like this, don't talk so much, you keep putting your foot in your mouth, be sensible and turn off the flow.

And that's a very good thing to do, to be sensible and turn off the flow. It's flowing quite a lot, just turn the tap and close it a bit. That's exactly what a lot of people need to do.

Now that's the opposite of out in the world. Out in the world, if you keep quiet, you know what they call you? They don't call you wise, they call you unsociable. Oh, he's a quiet type, unsociable.

You know what the word of God calls such a person? Wise. That's not surprising, the world's ideas are exactly the opposite of God's ideas. The sad thing is when believers get more influenced by the ideas of the world than the ideas of God.

It says here, the more you talk, the more likely you are to sin. If you're wise, you'll keep quiet. That doesn't mean we just never say anything, you can go to an extreme on that.

It doesn't mean the wise person never says anything, it means he's got a control. He doesn't keep on jabbering, jabbering, chattering, chattering, chattering all the time, talking, talking, talking, talking, talking like... And I feel that particularly women have a greater temptation here, because particularly when they visit one another, the word of God says very clearly in Timothy, this is a danger particularly for sisters, and I believe that's the verse particularly that sisters need to take more seriously than anything else, that in the multitude of words, sin is unavoidable. And you can see that.

That's why John Wesley, when he gave instructions to those who were converted through his ministry, he said, when you visit one another, it's not wise to spend more than one hour in anybody's home. Beyond that, you will sin. It's the basis of this verse.

You have to be... It's not impossible, you can sit for two, three hours in somebody's home without sinning, but you have to be tremendously godly. Word of God doesn't say one hour is the limit, but you have to be tremendously godly to speak for two, three hours with a person and not sin. The average believer, after 45 minutes, begins to start talking some evil, some gossip about some other person, and begins to sin.

That's true. And one who is really wholehearted about this will say, I don't want to waste my time, ruin my life by speaking evil. If you are godly, by all means, spend any amount of time, but when you find you have moved off from talking about neutral things and good things and spiritual things, you have begun to talk evil things about people, you know that it's time to say goodbye and go home.

Some people move into that in 15 minutes, some people a little later. But wherever our limit is, we need to start and say, now, beyond this, I feel that sin is unavoidable, it's time for me to get up and go home. Remember that, particularly sisters, those who have years to hear, the rest will go astray.

Verse 20, the tongue of the righteous is as choice silver. This is another thing that there's no book in the Bible which speaks as much about the tongue and about our speech as the book of Proverbs. It's amazing to see how many things are emphasized in the book of Proverbs repeatedly.

Correction, the use of the tongue, the use of money, these are some of the ways in which God seeks to lead us to wisdom. The tongue of the righteous is like silver, and the heart of the wicked is worthless. That is, it's rubbish.

In fact, one translation says that, that the words of the wicked, the heart of the wicked is worth little, it's just like rubbish. His ideas are all rubbish. Because he's a wicked man, he may be intelligent, but his ideas, as far as godliness are concerned, are absolute rubbish, because he has not understood to live in purity.

But a righteous man, his words are like choice silver. You see, when it comes to hearing somebody expounding the word of God, I would rather listen to an unintelligent righteous man than to a highly intelligent man who is living a defeated life. A great Bible scholar who hasn't got victory over sin, this word says, all his sermons are worth nothing.

You might as well throw it in the garbage bin, and you've got to be an idiot to sit one hour listening to that type of trash. But the few words that a person speaks who's got victory over sin in his life, it's like silver. So brothers and sisters, what is it that's going to give value to the words that we speak? It's not how much knowledge we have and how much we can say.

It's a question of how much righteousness there is in our life. The more righteousness there is, the more value there is to the words that we speak. That's what this verse says.

Verse 21, the lips of the righteous, with these words which are like silver, feed many. And the word there, feed, is like a shepherd feeding his flock. Feed many.

The lips of the righteous, like a shepherd feeding his flock, feed many. But the fools, they die for lack of understanding. In other words, you can kill yourself with stupidity.

Verse 22, the Lord's blessing makes us rich. It's the Lord's blessing that makes us wealthy. And in that blessing, he adds no sorrow to it.

Now this is a verse that we need to contrast with a New Testament verse. Because the word riches and sorrow come together in only, as far as I can recollect, only two verses in scripture in this context. One is Proverbs 10, 22, where it says the blessing of the Lord makes you rich and there is no sorrow in it.

And the other is 1 Timothy 6, verse 10, where it says the love of money is the root of all evil, and some by longing for money and material things have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with

many a sorrow. So you can get riches with sorrow or riches without sorrow. Riches with sorrow is by loving it, longing for it, scheming, planning, aiming for it, and finally getting it.

That's the way all businessmen and a lot of other people in the world get it. And along with it comes sorrow. There's another way, and that's described in Proverbs 10, 22, where it says the blessing of the Lord also can make you rich.

It may not make you a millionaire. In fact, that's also a blessing that you don't become a millionaire. But, because it protects you from a lot of other things that will harm you, the blessing of the Lord makes you rich, rich enough to meet all your needs.

My God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. That's a tremendous promise. He has not promised all that I want, but He's promised all that I need.

And the blessing of the Lord can make us rich and there is no sorrow in it. That's the wonderful part about the blessing of the Lord. There's no sorrow in it.

Or another translation puts it like this, that hard work cannot make you any richer. It's not by hard work alone. There are some people who think by slogging, slogging, slogging, I'll make money.

No, hard work is emphasized in the book of Proverbs, but it's the blessing of the Lord ultimately that meets our needs. Verse 23, doing wickedness is like sport to a fool. In other words, foolish people enjoy hurting others.

Read it like that. A fool enjoys hurting other people. Now, we all lack wisdom and sometimes we may say something that may hurt someone and afterwards we don't realize it.

Oh, I feel so bad. I mean, I didn't mean to hurt him, but in my folly, I said something and he got hurt. He's not talking about such people.

He's talking about those who enjoy saying something that will hurt somebody. You find that in schools and colleges, how children and teenage boys and girls like to tease another person and make fun in a way that will hurt that person. And they grow up, they develop that sense of, that perverted sense of humor gets sharpened to say something funny that will hurt other people.

And that's a mark of a fool. That's a mark of a spiritual idiot. He loves to hurt others.

It may not be with humor. It may be with other words. They scheme and plan.

I'll say this because I know if I say this, it'll really hurt him or really hurt her. That's a mark of a spiritual idiot. It's like sport.

It's a joke to him to hurt. But to a man of understanding, a man of understanding takes pleasure in wisdom, in wisdom. And that is in saying something good.

Of course, the living Bible says a fool's fun is in being bad to other people. And a wise man's fun is in being wise and being good. And we want to find our humor and our fun in being wise and good in what we say to others.

In the next verse, verse 24, it says here in the living Bible, the wicked man's fears will all come true. What the wicked fears will come upon him. But the good man, he has hopes, not fears, but hopes.

And his hopes will also come through. And we find how much of that is there in our life. We all have fears and hopes as we think in terms of the future.

But this verse teaches us that it is our character that determines what we're going to get in the future. It depends on whether we are wicked or righteous. Let me read it to you in the Good News Bible.

The righteous get what they want, but the wicked get what they fear most, and what they want. And further, we see here in the next verse, verse 25, when the world wind passes, the wicked is no more, but the righteous has an everlasting foundation. And that teaches us, that reminds us rather, about the foolish and the wise builders that Jesus spoke about.

The man who built his house on the rock and the man who built his house on sand, a wise person. There it is. And Jesus read through the book of Proverbs, and no doubt he based what he said on this, that when the storm and the wind come by, the wicked is no more, but the righteous has an everlasting foundation.

And Jesus explained that in Matthew chapter 7, that everlasting foundation is those who hear these words of mine and do them. When we hear the words of Jesus and obey them, we become wise. You know, God's wisdom is such a massive thing.

It's like an ocean. Think of an ocean. God's wisdom is like an ocean, and I cannot receive all of it, but I can receive it drop by drop by drop by drop.

And the whole ocean can be reduced to a number of drops. And we can say those drops are God's commandments. I take one commandment and I obey it.

Then I take another one and I obey it. I take another one and I obey it. And little by little, drop by drop, I'm accumulating in my vessel, what? The ocean of God's wisdom.

That's a wise man who built his house on the rock, little by little, through obedience. That's why it takes time to become wise. And that's why he's a real fool who does not understand obedience.

Verse 26, verse 25, it says, when the whirlwind has passed, the righteous still stands, which means any type of disaster will never shake the righteous. Verse 26, like vinegar to the teeth that set our teeth on edge and smoke to the eyes that make us blink our eyes and we are unable to see. So is the lazy one to do to those who send him.

The good news Bible has it like this, never get a lazy man to do something for you. He'll be as irritating as vinegar on your teeth or smoke in your eyes. And God, therefore, never picks up lazy people for his ministry.

You find in the Gospels that Jesus, whenever he called a man to be an apostle, there were always people who were working hard in their place of work, whether it was out there in the fishing, in the fishing boat or Matthew sitting in his tax collecting office. He always called people who were working hard in their secular job. You never find Elijah, for example, Elijah called him when he was working hard plowing the field.

You never find anywhere in the scripture God calling one lazy person to his ministry. Never. You never find that from Genesis to Revelation and you won't find it even today.

It's one of the important things because such a person will be like vinegar in God's teeth and smoke in his eyes. God doesn't want that. Therefore, we find that the word of God, particularly the book of Proverbs, has got a lot to say about diligence.

Now, I just want you to turn to a verse in Proverbs 25 and verse 13 and you see the contrast. The opposite of this is in Proverbs 25, 13. Like the cold of snow in the time of harvest, which is a good thing, is a faithful messenger to those who send him, for he refreshes the soul of his masters.

This is the opposite of the lazy one to those who send him in Proverbs 10, 26. Faithfulness. Now we go to verse 27.

Let me read that to you in the living, in the Good News Bible. Obey the Lord and you will live longer. The wicked die before their time.

It is possible to die before one's time. There are people who get drunk, who are drunkards, who die long before God intended them to die because they are drunkards. I mean, that's a very obvious case.

But a person can kill himself with bitterness and hatred and envy. That also shortens life. But through obedience to God's commandments, we can live longer.

And the wicked die before their time because of their wickedness. Because God has made us in such a way that even our physical life is affected by wrong attitudes, by sin in the heart. Verse 28.

The hope of the righteous is gladness, but the expectation of the wicked perishes. In other words, the hopes of good men lead to joy, but a wicked person can really look forward to nothing. Verse 29.

The way of the Lord is a stronghold to the upright, but ruin to the workers of iniquity. The same way is a strength to one and destruction for another. The way of the Lord for the upright, it is their stronghold.

You see the contrast with verse 15, where it says the rich man thinks his wealth is his stronghold, but for the upright person, his fortress is what? That to the best of his knowledge, according to the light he has in his conscience, he is seeking to walk the way of the Lord. But that same way is a ruin to the workers of iniquity, to those who seek to be hypocrites in seeking to talk about this way and not walking it. Verse 30.

The righteous will never be shaken, or in other words, the righteous people will always have security. That's a wonderful translation. The righteous will always have security, but the wicked, they will not survive in the land.

Or the good shall never lose God's blessing, but the wicked shall lose everything. Verse 31. The mouth of the righteous flows with wisdom, but the perverted tongue will be stopped or cut out.

It's a beautiful word here, flows. Think of a tap that's flowing. Think, brothers and sisters, that we can so live in the fear of the Lord, for the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, the whole day long.

That the whole day, because we live in the fear of God, whenever we open our mouth, what flows out is wisdom. Good, clean water. We don't open the tap always, like all the fools who are dishing out all the rubbish from their hearts.

We open it only once in a while, but when it is open, it is clean water that's flowing out, because it's coming from a heart that is living the whole day in the fear of the Lord. The mouth of the righteous flows with

wisdom. That's something we need to covet, really covet.

Think if we have a church where every brother and sister has come to this life, that they'll only open their mouth to flow with wisdom. What a church that'll be, I tell you. The gates of hell will never prevail against that.

And then verse 32. Let me read it in the Good News Bible. Verse 32.

Righteous people know the kind thing to say, but the wicked people are always saying things that hurt. Here we know whether we are righteous or wicked. Righteous people know the kind thing to say.

That means they think, they say, if I say it like that, that'll hurt him. So they don't say it, because they know the kind thing to say, because they live in the fear of God. But the wicked, who couldn't care less for the fear of God, who do not believe that every idle word they'll give an account in the day of judgment, who couldn't care less for the judgment seat of Christ or any such thing, they are always, not just once in a while, are always saying things that hurt others.

It's quite a standard the Word of God lays down in the Book of Proverbs that shows us whether we are righteous or wicked. I'm reminded of the Apostle John when I read these verses in the Book of Proverbs. They're cut and dry things he said.

He said, the children of God are like this, and the children of the devil are like this. If you do righteousness, you're a child of God. If you don't do righteousness, whatever you talk about, you're a child of the devil.

If you don't love your brothers, you're a child of the devil. If you love your brothers wholeheartedly, you're a child of God. It's cut and dry.

If you're a righteous person, you know the kind thing to say. If you are saying things that hurt, you're a wicked person. That's how the Holy Spirit is in the Book of Proverbs and in 1 John.

The same Spirit. We need to see that. Now we come to Proverbs 11.

Proverbs 11, verse 1. We just noticed in the last verse of 10 that the tongue is the test of our character. That comes out in James chapter 3 as well. The tongue is the test of our character.

Never forget that, because out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. And you know what's in a man's heart by listening to what comes forth from his tongue. Chapter 11, verse 1. A false balance is an abomination to the Lord, but a just weight is His delight.

Now, in the Old Testament, there was a law. It was part of the law that God had given through Moses. Let me just read it to you in Deuteronomy 25 and verses 13 to 15.

He said, You shall not have in your bag different types of weights, a large and a small. That means when you want to go and buy something, you take out the large weight. And when you want to sell something to someone, you take out the small one.

Always working in terms of your profit. No, that was those who, you must have a just weight, a full measure, so that your days may be prolonged in the land which the Lord your God gives you. In your house, you must not have different measures, one big, one small.

No, there must be righteousness in business matters. Absolute righteousness in buying and selling. There's a tremendous amount of sin.

There was a wise man called Joshua, the son of Sirach, who compiled the sayings of Sirach. And it says there in that book that as a nail sticks fast between two stones, so sin sticks there between buying and selling. Such a lot of sin in buying and selling.

Such a lot of unrighteousness. You know that illustration that we've heard before of the righteous man who sells fish? That a righteous man who sells fish in the market will sell it like this. He'll have three boxes.

One for today's fish, another for yesterday's fish, and the third for still older fish. Almost impossible to find anyone who'll be so righteous. But that's the mark of a righteous man.

He doesn't try to fool people. It's not a question of weight. It may be a question of fish.

It may be a question of something else. But the thing is that when we sell something particularly, that we are absolutely honest. There is no cheating.

If somebody gives you back a little more change, maybe in a shop, then to be diligent to give it back as soon as possible. Not to postpone it to tomorrow or the next day, but to return it. To be righteous in this area.

The Lord hates cheating. Then you can imagine how He hates a lot of it when He sees it in people who call themselves His children. In their dealings with one another.

But He delights in honesty. He delights in people who are absolutely honest even though it means loss for them. What do we gain by making a little extra money and the Lord hates us? That's not a gain.

That's a fantastic loss. No. Let's learn to get the Lord's delight on us by honesty in all business matters.

Verse 2. When pride comes, then comes dishonor, but with the humble is wisdom. That teaches us that wisdom is given to the humble people. There we find, this is almost like a New Covenant book, that wisdom is found among humble people.

And if you want wisdom mixed with humble people, you'll never get wisdom by mixing with proud people. A proud person can never be wise. Even if he's a Bible scholar.

You meet a man who's a Bible scholar and there's a haughtiness about him. Yeah, you can be sure there's not much wisdom there. Don't waste your time hanging around with such people.

Don't waste your time mingling with believers who diffuse an air of pride and haughtiness. Any type of pride. And the most stinking of the lot is spiritual pride.

That's the worst type of pride there is. But wisdom is with the humble. And the more wisdom a man gets, you can be sure the more humble he is.

The humblest man is the wisest man. Jesus was the humblest and he was the wisest. He was poor.

He wasn't accepted by the world, but he was wise. Because wisdom is with the humble. And the humbler we are, the more we have wisdom.

But with pride, as far as God is concerned, it's only shame and dishonor that God will bring to the proud. Verse 3. The integrity of the upright will guide them, but the falseness of the treacherous will destroy them. That teaches us that for sincere, integrity means sincerity and honesty.

For those who are sincere and honest, even if they are not very wise, even if they don't have much wisdom in so many things, at least to start with they are sincere. You see, we can't all start with wisdom. Nobody can start with wisdom because we don't have it.

But here's where we must start, with sincerity and honesty. And then it says that sincerity will guide you. The sincerity, the integrity of the upright will guide them into God's perfect will.

The reason why so many people find it difficult to find God's will in different areas is because there's a lack of basic sincerity in their life. There's some hypocrisy. And the more hypocritical we are, the more difficult it is to know God's will, and the greater amount of time we live as fools without wisdom.

So we need to begin with sincerity and honesty. That is what will guide us. But the falseness means the hypocrisy.

The hypocrisy of the deceivers will finally destroy them. And it's very easy, brothers and sisters, to sit in an assembly where people speak about very high-sounding spiritual stuff and to be an absolute hypocrite. I tell you, it's much easier to be a hypocrite sitting in this assembly here than it is to be out there in some Roman Catholic Church.

I might as well tell you that quite honestly. There's a thousand times greater danger of hypocrisy for people sitting here than for someone in the Roman Catholic Church. And if we are wise, we'll be alert to that danger.

Lord, maybe I'm in danger of hypocrisy, speaking things which are so high. And it's not really true. I'm not sincere, not honest.

Then it says I'll go astray, and my hypocrisy will finally destroy me. Further again, verse 4. Let me read that from the Living Bible. Your riches won't help you on Judgment Day.

Only righteousness will count in that day. That's very clear. The first part is easy to understand.

Your riches will not help you on Judgment Day. I think all of us sitting here believe that. You can't impress God with our how much we earn.

But there's a second part to it. Do you know what the second part says? It is only righteousness that will have any value in that day. Not Bible knowledge, not the number of meetings we attended, not how many songs we sang, not how zealous we were in the meetings or any such thing, but righteousness.

That second part. Also, we need to understand that in the Day of Judgment, the only thing that will have value is a man walking in righteousness in his life. That delivers from death.

Verse 5. Let me read this to you. In the Good News Bible, it says, Honesty makes a good man's life easier. But a wicked man will cause his own downfall, or will be trapped in his own greed.

Sorry, that's the next verse. Verse 6. Verses 5 and 6 are really talking together about the same thing. Let me read verse 6 also.

Righteousness rescues the honest man, but someone who can't be trusted is trapped by his own greed. He's speaking there about righteous people whose honesty rescues them, verse 6, and makes their life easier. An honest man's life is easy.

He doesn't have to think of what lies shall I say to protect myself from this, or what lies shall I say to protect myself there, what lies shall I say to gain something here. His life is so easy because he's only got to be honest and to speak the truth. And this righteousness rescues the honest man.

But someone who can't be trusted, a wicked man, will cause his own downfall, his greed will one day trap him. And a lot of people who tell lies because of their greed. There are people who sign false statements in government offices to make a little more money and cheat various people by signing statements that are not true, and their greed one day traps them.

Yeah, that's something we need to keep in mind. Verse 7, I'll read this to you also from the Living Bible, when an evil man dies, his hopes all perish, for they are based upon his earthly life. His hopes perish because all his hopes were based on what he was on this earth.

That's self-explanatory. Verse 8, the righteous is delivered from trouble. God rescues good men from danger.

But he allows the wicked person to take the place of the righteous. You remember, when the Red Sea was opened up, the Israelites came through it, and the Egyptians got drowned in that very same Red Sea. That's an explanation of that verse.

We find another fulfillment of it in Haman and Mordecai in the Book of Esther, where Haman prepared a gallows to hang Mordecai on. Finally, he hung on it himself. The righteous is delivered, and the wicked takes the place of the righteous.

It's a great encouragement to us to read the Book of Proverbs, to see that God rescues good men from danger. And he turns the tables on Satan when Satan seeks to do something to him. He says, if I humble myself and live in righteousness before God, God is able to rescue me from that danger.

The things that evil people may plot against me are schemes. Yeah, it says God rescues good men from danger. Verse 8. I heard a very beautiful story of John Wesley, who preached righteousness and who was hated by many people in England because he led people away from drinking and the alcohol sales went down.

So many things like this, that he was hated by people. He was hated for exposing religious solitary, and there were people who hated him so much that they wanted to kill him. But they wanted to do it without being caught themselves, and John Wesley used to ride all over England in a horse.

And there is a story that they knew that he'd be riding through a particular place one night, and so they tied a strong but fenced rope across two trees, across that path through which John Wesley would come riding on a horse. And it would be night. John Wesley wouldn't be able to see this rope stretched across.

And as he came riding on it, he'd be thrown off the horse and they hoped that he would die. And John Wesley sure enough came riding down, and just a few seconds before he reached this rope, an ant bit him on his foot. And he bent down to scratch his foot, and he passed under the rope and came out the other side.

You see, God is the God of the ants. Sometimes we wonder why God created ants. We'll discover that they saved the life of a man of God.

And likewise, with all the other mosquitoes and other things, which we sometimes wonder why they exist, we'll discover the judgment seat of Christ, how all these served a function to help somebody or the other, somewhere or the other. God rescues good men from danger, and John Wesley used to say that. He says, I'm a man sent from God, and nobody can kill me till my time is finished.

We must have that faith if we walk in righteousness and humility before God's face. Nothing that other people do or scheme can ever touch us. Impossible.

Impossible. It's God Almighty who's in charge. Verse 9. With his mouth, the godless man destroys his neighbor, but through knowledge, the righteous will be delivered.

There's a connection here between this verse and the previous verse. The meaning here is, the godless man, he may try to kill a man of God in this way, as I just said about John Wesley, but he may also try to destroy a person with words. The godless man tries to destroy you, say, with his words, by slandering you, saying all types of things evil against you, but the righteous will not fall in that trap.

Let me read this to you. Through knowledge, the righteous will be delivered. Through the knowledge of what? The righteous person has knowledge of, for example, Isaiah 54, 17, which says that no weapon that is formed against you will prosper, and every tongue that shall rise up in judgment against you, you shall condemn.

So he's not, he knows that all these words that people speak against me can never harm me. He's delivered. And the righteous is delivered through knowledge means that he knows Romans 8, 28, that all things will work together for my good, to those who love God and were called according to that purpose.

If we have knowledge of that, through that knowledge, we are delivered from all these evil words that people may speak against us. And also, this verse can be translated like this, in the Living Bible, in the margin it says, when a godless man slanders his neighbor, when an evil man slanders you, the charges won't stick on you, because everyone knows your reputation. If you have lived in righteousness through the years, and people know your reputation, whatever evil the devil may try to fling on you through godless people, it won't stick on you, because people know what you are.

So why should you waste your time defending yourself? Leave that to God. Verse 10, a city is happy when honest people have good fortune, and there are joyful shouts when wicked men die. That is when a person is good, the whole city celebrates a good man's success, in the sense that when a man has been good to others, his success is appreciated.

But even more, as it says in verse 11, which is a continuation of that, the influence of godly people causes a city to prosper. By the blessing of the upright, a city is exalted. We believe that the best thing that any city can have is a living church of Jesus Christ in that midst, in their midst.

That is the thing, that is the only unit in that whole city that can bind all the evil spirits and bless that city. It's the blessing of the upright that by which a city is exalted and protected from demons. But by the mouth of the wicked, it is torn down.

Just like in Sodom, if there were 10 righteous people, God said to Abraham, I'll spare that city. But there were not 10 righteous people, and so the city could not be spared. And that teaches us, brothers and sisters, what a tremendous thing it is to be a righteous man, an upright, righteous man.

You may not be famous or a chief minister or have influential contacts or any such thing, but I believe that verse is true, say, for Bangalore, where we live. In the day when we stand before the Lord and we see this whole world's history as God saw it, and we look back, we'll see that Bangalore was blessed the most by the people who lived in the city who were righteous. And God knows who they are, but whoever they are, through their righteousness and their uprightness and their godliness, they brought a blessing on the city with chief ministers and police officials, and the whole Jing Bangalore could never bring.

And we'll see that in eternity. That is the blessing of the upright which exalts the city. That's why God calls us to be upright and righteous and not a bunch of compromisers talking high-sounding religious stuff, but righteous and upright.

Verse 12, it says here, the mark of a fool is that he belittles other people. It is foolish to speak scornfully of others. If you are sensible, you will keep quiet.

When you speak scornfully, about another person, what does it prove? It proves one thing anyway, it proves that you're a fool. That's clear. Whatever else it may not prove, it may or may not prove something about the other person, but one thing it proves very clearly is that the man who speaks like that is a spiritual idiot, who speaks, despises his neighbor.

Whenever we despise someone because of their lack of education, or because they cannot pronounce some words right, or because their face looks a bit funny, or they walk in a funny way, or they do something, and we despise them for it. He may walk in a funny way, that may be true, he may be a bit lame or a bit ugly, but you're a spiritual idiot, that's much worse, and that's what you don't realize when you despise another person for something like that. Never forget this, that it's foolish to speak scornfully about other people and to despise them.

We just don't have any wisdom at all when we despise another person, and it doesn't have to be a believer, even to despise an unbeliever. Leave them alone, brothers and sisters. If there's folly and evil in others, leave them alone.

Don't despise them. A man of understanding keeps silent. That's a wonderful verse.

He keeps on saying about this man of understanding, holding his tongue. It's amazing how right through the one mark of wisdom is that when all the others around you are despising and speaking evil about someone, you sit there and you keep quiet. You're the man of wisdom, because you don't despise others like the people around you despise you.

That's a good word for those who are in schools and colleges and where you find people.

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