

Day 377 - FRIDAY: March 1st

Proverbs 14

Proverbs 14:1-35 NKJV

The wise woman builds her house, But the foolish pulls it down with her hands. He who walks in his uprightness fears the LORD, But he who is perverse in his ways despises Him. In the mouth of a fool is a rod of pride, But the lips of the wise will preserve them. Where no oxen are, the trough is clean; But much increase comes by the strength of an ox. A faithful witness does not lie, But a false witness will utter lies. A scoffer seeks wisdom and does not find it, But knowledge is easy to him who understands. Go from the presence of a foolish man, When you do not perceive in him the lips of knowledge. The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way, But the folly of fools is deceit. Fools mock at sin, But among the upright there is favor. The heart knows its own bitterness, And a stranger does not share its joy. The house of the wicked will be overthrown, But the tent of the upright will flourish. There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death. Even in laughter the heart may sorrow, And the end of mirth may be grief. The backslider in heart will be filled with his own ways, But a good man will be satisfied from above. The simple believes every word, But the prudent considers well his steps. A wise man fears and departs from evil, But a fool rages and is self-confident. A quick-tempered man acts foolishly, And a man of wicked intentions is hated. The simple inherit folly, But the prudent are crowned with knowledge. The evil will bow before the good, And the wicked at the gates of the righteous. The poor man is hated even by his own neighbor, But the rich has many friends. He who despises his neighbor sins; But he who has mercy on the

poor, happy is he. Do they not go astray who devise evil? But mercy and truth belong to those who devise good. In all labor there is profit, But idle chatter leads only to poverty. The crown of the wise is their riches, But the foolishness of fools is folly. A true witness delivers souls, But a deceitful witness speaks lies. In the fear of the LORD there is strong confidence, And His children will have a place of refuge. The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, To turn one away from the snares of death. In a multitude of people is a king's honor, But in the lack of people is the downfall of a prince. He who is slow to wrath has great understanding, But he who is impulsive exalts folly. A sound heart is life to the body, But envy is rottenness to the bones. He who oppresses the poor reproaches his Maker, But he who honors Him has mercy on the needy. The wicked is banished in his wickedness, But the righteous has a refuge in his death. Wisdom rests in the heart of him who has understanding, But what is in the heart of fools is made known. Righteousness exalts a nation, But sin is a reproach to any people. The king's favor is toward a wise servant, But his wrath is against him who causes shame.

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading program states: "**23. Self-Protective and Self-Destructive Behavior (Proverbs 14:1-3)**

"TYPE: INCLUSIO" (*The New American Commentary*). "Verses 1 and 3 go together as signaled by the repetition of 'wise' and 'fool/foolish'; the difference between the two [types of people] is explained in verse 2" (*The NIV Application Commentary*, note on verses 1-7). Verses 1 and 3 show that the wise will ultimately benefit from their right choices but the foolish ultimately hurt themselves and those close to them. Verse 2 shows that what

makes the difference is one's attitude toward God. It also makes clear that how one lives shows whether one properly reveres God or not.

Verse 1 is paraphrased in the New Century Version (NCV) as: "A wise woman strengthens her family, but a foolish woman destroys hers by what she does."

In the NIV, verse 3 opens with the words, "A fool's talk brings a rod to his back...." The NCV has "Fools will be punished for their proud words...." However, the Jewish *Soncino Commentary* points out: "The word [translated 'rod'] is found again only in Isaiah [11:]1, where it signifies a new branch growing from the trunk of a tree. If rod was intended, as a symbol of punishment, another Hebrew word, *shebet*, would have been more appropriate. It is better, therefore, to translate: 'a branch (producing) pride.' From the fool's mouth issues haughty speech which has the effect of getting him into trouble" (note on verse 3). In either case, the implication is that the emergence of pride is ultimately self-destructive—especially given the contrast in the verse in which the wise are preserved by their own carefully chosen words.

24. A Worthwhile Investment (Proverbs 14:4)

"TYPE: SINGLE BICOLON PROVERB" (NAC). Where the KJV has "crib," the NIV has "manger" and the NKJV has "trough"—the object here being the feed-trough for oxen. *Soncino* comments: "This animal was employed for ploughing and threshing the corn [i.e., grain] (Deuteronomy [22:]20, [25:]4). The point of the verse is neither the importance of agricultural work...nor the value of work as opposed to slothfulness.... As sometimes happens with a proverb, the abstract thought is presented by means of a concrete example. So here, the ox is used as an illustration. Having no ox

is, from one point of view, an advantage because a man is then freed from attending to its care; but as against that there is the great advantage of having an ox for the provision of essential food. Consequently, the disadvantage of having to look after the animal is far outweighed by the benefits which accrue from its employment in the field" (note on verse 4).

The New American Commentary takes it a step further: "The point is that one must make an investment (obtain and feed the oxen) to get a large return" (note on verse 4).

25. Look Who's Talking (Proverbs 14:5-7)

"TYPE: THEMATIC....One should evaluate what a person says on the basis of his or her overall credibility (v. 5). Similarly, one should not expect to get sound advice from a person who shows no respect for the precepts of wisdom (vv. 6-7). In short, the character of the speaker serves as a warning about whether his words are true or wise" (NAC).

Verse 5 is similar to verse 25.

The counsel in verse 7 does not mean we must immediately leave a room if a foolish person is in it. The point is that we should not associate with foolish people as much as is reasonable—and certainly not look to them for guidance. "Once again, the proverbs recognize that the company one keeps will have its influence. Taken together [with related proverbs], one can learn better alone than with the help of a fool" (*NIV Application Commentary*, note on verse 7; compare Proverbs 13:20).

26. Appearance and Reality (Proverbs 14:8-15)

"TYPE: CHIASMUS....Life is often deceptive, and the text here implicitly exhorts readers not to be taken in by appearances [or how things might seem]...This series of proverbs is a carefully balanced chiasmus [or concentric arrangement]:

“A: The prudent and the fools (v. 8)

“B: Making amends for sin (v. 9)

“C: Secrets of the heart (v. 10)

“D: Destruction of the wicked (v. 11)

“D’: The way to death (v. 12)

“C’: Secrets of the heart (v. 13)

“B’: Being repaid for sin (v. 14)

“A’: The simple and the prudent (v. 15)

"The meaning of 'the folly of fools is deception' (v. 8 [NIV]) is not immediately evident, but the parallel in v. 15 implies that the naiveté of fools is in view" (*NAC*). Verse 15 shows that the simple are gullible while the wise proceed cautiously—to borrow from a modern proverb, they look before they leap. On the word in verse 8 translated "deceit" or "deception" (NIV), *Soncino* notes: "The verb from which this noun is derived, means 'to mislead'" (note on verse 8). The NRSV renders the verse this way: "It is the wisdom of the clever to understand where they go, but the folly of fools misleads." The wise know that things are not always as they seem.

"Verses 10, 13 likewise observe that no one knows the inner life of another's heart and that the appearance of happiness can be deceptive" (*NAC*).

Verse 9 is somewhat difficult to translate and the King James and New King James are probably incorrect here. The NIV has a likelier rendering: "Fools mock at making amends for sin, but goodwill is found among the upright." Thus, "verse 9 states that the wicked believe they can avoid making restitution, but v. 14 [in concentric parallel] gives assurance of divine retribution. In other words, the appearance of getting away with a crime is belied by a justice that is not obvious or quick but is certain.

"In vv. 11-12, at the heart of the chiasmus, the apparent success of the wicked is short-lived.... The message of the whole is to avoid a superficial analysis of the lessons of life" (NAC).

Verse 12, repeated in Proverbs 16:25, is crucial to always keep in mind. People the world over often act according to what they personally think is right—but not according to the way of life God reveals in His Word. Thus they all march headlong down the broad road to destruction (compare Matthew 7:13)—in dire need of true education and God's salvation. We must be sure to always look at things through the godly lens of Scripture and not mere human reason, living by faith and not by sight (compare Proverbs 3:5-6; 2 Corinthians 5:7).

27. A Patient Spirit (Proverbs 14:16-17)

"TYPE:...THEMATIC" (NAC). As pointed out in verse 15, a wise man thinks before he acts. Contributing to his reasoned patience is, as verse 16 notes, a healthy fear of the consequences of evil. This contrasts with the foolish self-confidence behind rashness and impulsive anger.

28. A Crown of Wisdom, An Inheritance of Folly (Proverbs 14:18-24)

TYPE: INCLUSIO, CHIASMUS, PARALLEL PROVERBS. "This text promises that the righteous will be crowned with wisdom and see fools bow before them. The passage also gives a few specific guidelines for right behavior, including compassion and personal diligence" (NAC).

Verses 18 and 24 are tied together through the wise receiving a crown or reward and the foolish inheriting only folly. The NIV captures the sense of verse 24: "The wealth of the wise is their crown, but the folly of fools yields folly." This is not a promise of wealth for the godly in this age. It merely expresses the principle

that wealth is gained and sustained through wisdom and prudence, while the foolishness of fools leads to an outcome of more foolishness. Of course, the godly will be richly rewarded in the ages to come.

"Verses 20-23 fall between these verses and are themselves bound together in a complex manner. Verses 20 and 23 both deal with wealth and poverty, and vv. 21-22 both contrast those who are kind with those who plot evil. Viewed in this manner, vv. 20-23 are in a chiasmic pattern. On the other hand, vv. 20-21 both concern the different ways a 'neighbor' is treated, and vv. 22-23 both concern the respective gain or loss that comes to the good/diligent as opposed to the evil/lazy. Viewed in this manner, vv. 20-23 are two sets of parallel proverbs. Both the chiasmus and the parallel pattern may be viewed as follows:

"A1: The crowns [or inheritance] of wisdom and folly (v. 18)

"A2: The evil bow to the wise (v. 19)

 "B1: The poor and rich (treatment of a neighbor) (v. 20)

 "C1: Scheming and benevolence (treatment of a neighbor) (v. 21)

 "C2: Scheming and benevolence (reward for kindness) (v. 22)

 "B'2: Wealth and poverty (reward for diligence) (v. 23)

"A': The crowns [or inheritance] of wisdom and folly (v. 24)

"The full text deals with the recompense that accompanies wisdom or folly. Ethical issues here [that impact the outcome] include concern for the poor, diligence in work, and integrity in dealing with others" (NAC, note on verses 18-24).

Treatment of the poor (verses 20-21) is revisited in verse 31. In verse 20 the many friends of the rich are not true friends that can be counted on. Thus the New Living Translation rendering: "...the rich have many 'friends.'" These are mostly parasitical, seeking

handouts, personal advancement or notoriety through association.

29. An Honest Witness (Proverbs 14:25)

"TYPE: SINGLE BICOLON PROVERB" (NAC). As earlier noted, this verse is similar to verse 5.

30. The Fear of the Lord (Proverbs 14:26-27)

"TYPE: THEMATIC" (NAC). These proverbs focus on the fear of the Lord—the proper reverence and awe of God in His holiness and power through which the whole book of Proverbs is to be viewed and comprehended (compare Proverbs 1:7). This perspective will protect us and our loved ones we influence, preserving us through various trials and keeping us from falling away to ultimate destruction. We will note more about this when we come to Proverbs 19:23.

31. National Security (Proverbs 14:28-35)

"TYPE: INCLUSIO [POSSIBLE CHIASM]....The health and well-being of a nation depends upon both the ruler and the governed. A ruler must be fair and above all must respect the rights of his people. The people, on the other hand, must have virtue in their lives or they will bring society into chaos. No government can succeed without the people, and no people can thrive if corruption and evil abound. The inclusio here is formed by v. 28, which describes a king's need for a sizable populace, and v. 35, which obliquely asserts a king's need for capable servants" (NAC).

In its note on verses 28-35, *The NIV Application*

Commentary sees a possible chiasm here, based on the terms used:

"A: v. 28 *King's* glory

"B: v. 29 *Exalt* {root *rwm*} folly

"C: v. 30 *Heart* at peace gives life

"D: vv. 31-32 Sayings on treatment and reward

“C’: v. 33 *Heart* a home for wisdom

“B’: v. 34 *Exalt* {root *rwm*} a nation

“A’: v. 35 *King’s* delight”

Verse 31, similar to verse 21, warns the powerful, such as national rulers, from oppressing the poor. To oppress the poor is to reproach God, since He has commanded that the poor be treated well. Those who honor God will obey Him in proper treatment of those in need. There may even be a hint here of Jesus' later teaching that as we treat people, so we treat Him (compare Matthew 25:31-46)—a principle more evident in Proverbs 19:17. See also Proverbs 17:5. Verse 29, which contrasts impulsiveness with patience, is followed by verse 30, which contrasts a sound heart or "a heart at peace" (NIV) with envy. Both verses show reasoned calm to be superior to uncontrolled emotion. In the latter verse, this calm is healthful while negative emotion is actually destructive to the body—facts borne out in modern medical science.

Proverbs 14:32 says that the righteous has a refuge in death. Note again the refuge in the fear of the Lord in verse 26. While the wicked are swept away when calamity comes, the righteous ever have the refuge of God—even in death, showing hope beyond the grave (compare Isaiah 57:1-2). This is true in both an individual and collective sense.

The first colon of Proverbs 14:34 is inscribed above the entrance to a prominent American building—Los Angeles City Hall. That great city, and the nation at large—indeed all the world—would do well to heed this saying on the importance of the citizenry living according to God's standard of righteousness and not descending into sin. Verses 34 and 35 are both linked by the theme of shame among those governed. "A people may wish for good character qualities in their leaders, but they ought to hold themselves to the

same high standards. This may be a jab at the common assumption that honest and forthright character is always a good idea for someone else" (*NIV Application Commentary*, note on verse 35). Indeed, every person's character contributes to the character of the whole community, so we should each take this as a personal responsibility." [END]

Verse 12 – What a great memory verse. One we should always keep close in our hearts and minds.

Verse 28 – The Matthew Henry commentary states: “Here are two maxims in politics, which carry their own evidence with them: - 1. That it is much for the honour of a king to have a populous kingdom; it is a sign that he rules well, since strangers are hereby invited to come and settle under his protection and his own subjects live comfortably; it is a sign that he and his kingdom are under the blessing of God, the effect of which is being fruitful and multiplying. It is his strength, and makes him considerable and formidable; happy is the king, the father of his country, who has his *quiver full of arrows*; he *shall not be ashamed, but shall speak with his enemy in the gate*, [Psa_127:4](#), [Psa_127:5](#). It is therefore the wisdom of princes, by a mild and gentle government, by encouraging trade and husbandry, and by making all easy under them, to promote the increase of their people. And let all that wish well to the kingdom of Christ, and to his honour, do what they can in their places that many may be added to his church. 2. That when the people are lessened the prince is weakened: *In the want of people is the leanness of the prince* (so some read it); trade lies dead, the ground lies untilled, the army wants to be recruited, the navy to be manned, and all because there are not hands sufficient. See how much the honour and safety of kings

depend upon their people, which is a reason why they should rule by love, and not with rigour. Princes are corrected by those judgments which abate the number of the people, as we find, 2Sa_24:13.” [END]