

Day 382 – WEDNESDAY: March 6th

Proverbs 20

Proverbs 20:1-30 NKJV

Wine is a mocker, Strong drink is a brawler, And whoever is led astray by it is not wise. The wrath of a king is like the roaring of a lion; Whoever provokes him to anger sins against his own life. It is honorable for a man to stop striving, Since any fool can start a quarrel. The lazy man will not plow because of winter; He will beg during harvest and have nothing. Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water, But a man of understanding will draw it out. Most men will proclaim each his own goodness, But who can find a faithful man? The righteous man walks in his integrity; His children are blessed after him. A king who sits on the throne of judgment Scatters all evil with his eyes. Who can say, "I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin"? Diverse weights and diverse measures, They are both alike, an abomination to the LORD. Even a child is known by his deeds, Whether what he does is pure and right. The hearing ear and the seeing eye, The LORD has made them both. Do not love sleep, lest you come to poverty; Open your eyes, and you will be satisfied with bread. "It is good for nothing," cries the buyer; But when he has gone his way, then he boasts. There is gold and a multitude of rubies, But the lips of knowledge are a precious jewel. Take the garment of one who is surety for a stranger, And hold it as a pledge when it is for a seductress. Bread gained by deceit is sweet to a man, But afterward his mouth will be filled with gravel. Plans are established by counsel; By wise counsel wage war. He who goes about as a talebearer reveals secrets; Therefore do not associate

with one who flatters with his lips. Whoever curses his father or his mother, His lamp will be put out in deep darkness. An inheritance gained hastily at the beginning Will not be blessed at the end. Do not say, "I will recompense evil"; Wait for the LORD, and He will save you. Diverse weights are an abomination to the LORD, And dishonest scales are not good. A man's steps are of the LORD; How then can a man understand his own way? It is a snare for a man to devote rashly something as holy, And afterward to reconsider his vows. A wise king sifts out the wicked, And brings the threshing wheel over them. The spirit of a man is the lamp of the LORD, Searching all the inner depths of his heart. Mercy and truth preserve the king, And by lovingkindness he upholds his throne. The glory of young men is their strength, And the splendor of old men is their gray head. Blows that hurt cleanse away evil, As do stripes the inner depths of the heart.

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading program states: "As noted in our introduction to the book of Proverbs, chapter 20 contains some principles also found in the Egyptian "Instructions of Anii"—such as avoiding drunkenness and the company of brawlers. In its note on Proverbs 20:1, the *Zondervan NIV Study Bible* says that "those who overindulge become mockers and brawlers (see Hosea 7:5...). Proverbs associates drunkenness with poverty (see Proverbs 23:20-21...), strife (Proverbs 23:29-30) and injustice (Proverbs 31:4-5)."

43. Various Proverbs (Proverbs 20:5–21:8)

"The proverbs of this section for the most part focus on the theme of discriminating between people of good character and people of evil character....the verses of Proverbs 20:5 and Proverbs 21:8

can be read as an envelope. The former articulates the importance of discernment in dealing with people....The latter gives the simplest, most basic guideline in character discernment: the evil are twisted, but the good are upright. By itself Proverbs 21:8 seems like a pointless tautology [i.e., a needless repetition]; but when read as the conclusion to the series of proverbs begun in Proverbs 20:5, it is an apt closure to the whole. Like Jesus' teaching that a tree is judged by its fruit, this text ends by saying that people can be evaluated by their conduct (Matthew 7:17-19; Proverbs 12:33; Luke 6:43-44). Several smaller collections are found in this larger unit...."

- "DISCERNMENT AND INTEGRITY. *Type: A-B Envelope, Thematic (Proverbs 20:5-12)*. This section begins by telling how difficult it is to discern a person's inner [thoughts and] motives and ends by asserting that the ears and eyes, the means of discernment, are made by God. Thus God alone has perfect insight into human character, and he cannot be deceived" (NAC). Verse 8 in the NKJV says that a king sitting as judge "scatters all evil with his eyes." The NIV better renders this "winnows out all evil with his eyes." Compare the first colon of verse 26: "A wise king sifts [or 'winnows,' NIV] out the wicked." The New Living Translation paraphrases verse 8 this way: "When a king judges, he carefully weighs all the evidence, distinguishing the bad from the good."

Verse 9 is a reminder that none of us are perfect, that we have all sinned and that, since we cannot cleanse our own hearts, all of us need mercy. This perspective will keep us humble in regard to our own character and is important to remember in making judgments about others.

As in Proverbs 11:1, Proverbs 20:10 and Proverbs 20:23 both show God's loathing of crooked weights and measures for the purpose of cheating others. There may also be a further figurative meaning here in that God hates any kind of self-serving false pretense.

- "VARIOUS PROVERBS [ON MORAL CHARACTER]. *Type: Individual Proverbs (Proverbs 20:13-21)*. Individual proverbs are various moral proverbs that of themselves do not tie to any particular topic. In this context, however, they may describe aspects of character for which one should be on the alert.... to determine where someone's character, be it his own or someone else's, will lead" (NAC).

Verse 13 does not mean that we should derive no enjoyment from taking a needed nap or getting a good night's sleep. Rather, loving sleep here refers to excess—sleeping too much as part of habitual laziness (compare Proverbs 6:6-11). Avoiding the personal productivity necessary to making a living and properly managing one's affairs can lead to poverty. On a higher level, avoidance of spiritual responsibilities because of laziness and sleeping the day away will lead to spiritual impoverishment—and even ultimate destruction if not turned around.

Regarding Proverbs 20:16, the Israelites were not to hold overnight as collateral the outer garment of a debtor who might need it to keep warm (Exodus 22:25-27)—the law prohibiting creditor's from depriving poor debtors of their belongings needed for survival. In the ironic tone of this proverb, a situation is described in which a lender had better go ahead and hold a debtor's garment—where someone has foolishly "fallen into financial trouble by putting up security for a stranger—especially if he did it for an alluring woman. The message is that one should

be wary of dealing with people who lack sound judgment" (*New American Commentary*, note on Proverbs 20:16). This proverb does not contravene the intent with which the law was given, as the law was not meant to protect foolish, impulsive venturers or schemers that might take advantage of lenders. Also the proverb says nothing about the predicament in which the loss of collateral would place the debtor in this case. All factors must be weighed in such dealings.

Verse 17 speaks of deceitful gain as initially sweet but afterward rather unpleasant and hard to swallow. "The Scriptures do not say that there is no pleasure in sinning, only that the reward doesn't last (Proverbs 9:17-18)" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on Proverbs 20:17). Hebrews 11:25 mentions the "passing pleasures of sin." On the other hand, choosing God's way may sometimes be difficult and perhaps even unpleasant for the moment, but it yields lasting happiness in the end.

- "DEALING WITH THE KING AND WITH THE LORD. *Type: Thematic (Proverbs 20:22–21:3)*. These verses concern dealings with the two arbiters of justice, namely, the king and Yahweh. Proverbs 20:22-25, Proverbs 20:27 and Proverbs 21:2-3 concern Yahweh, while Proverbs 20:26, Proverbs 20:28, and Proverbs 20:30 concern the king. Proverbs 21:1 draws the two together and asserts the superior power of Yahweh over the king; only Proverbs 20:29 does not clearly fit in this context" (*NAC*).

Verse 22 says that it is not our place to get even or dole out vigilante justice. *The Nelson Study Bible* comments: "Because of our limited understanding and imperfection, we are not qualified to *recompense evil*. Instead we must commit our cause to God, whose vengeance is certain and perfectly just. God says, 'Vengeance is mine; I will repay' (see Matthew 5:38-39;

Romans 12:17, Romans 12:19; 1 Thessalonians 5:15; 1 Peter 3:9)" (note on Proverbs 20:22).

Verse 24 (like Proverbs 16:9) shows that God is ultimately in control of directing what happens in a person's life. The second colon asks, "How then can a man understand his own way?" In an overall sense he can't—so he must rely on God and God's instructions for wisdom and direction. "The juxtaposition of human plans and intentions with God's sovereign action in human affairs is not meant to discourage planning or activity but rather to guide it. The wise do well to seek counsel about this plan (Proverbs 20:18), listening instead of making rash or hurtful statements (Proverbs 20:19-20)" (*NIV Application Commentary*, note on verse 24). Of course, in our planning we must make allowance for God unexpectedly redirecting circumstances (see James 4:13-16).

Proverbs 20:25 warns against rash vows, calling to mind the costly mistake of Jephthah (see Judges 11:30-40). If we do make a vow to God, even a rash one—that is, a legitimate vow that does not contradict His law in other respects—then we are duty-bound to follow through (compare also Ecclesiastes 5:1-7).

Proverbs 20:27 in the New King James Version says, "The spirit of a man is the lamp of the LORD, /searching all the inner depths of his heart." The ending phrase here, as the NKJV margin notes, is "literally *the rooms of the belly*"—as either the figurative seat of human emotion or representing the inner, hidden person. The NIV here has "inmost being." The same phrase is used in verse 30. On the opening colon of verse 27, the NIV rearranges the translation to another that is possible: "The lamp of the LORD searches the spirit of a man." If this is correct, the Lord's lamp here would connote "perhaps his eyes (cf. Proverbs 5:21;

Proverbs 15:3...) or word (see Proverbs 6:23 [Psalm 119:105]... cf. Hebrews 4:12-13)" (*Zondervan NIV Study Bible*, note on Proverbs 20:27). On the other hand, *The Bible Reader's Companion* says that the NKJV translation, as footnoted in the NIV, is the preferred rendering, so that the human spirit is God's lamp: "The rabbis understood this to mean that God's image so shines in the human spirit that man is set apart from the animals. It's this reflection of God which endows us with human abilities and witnesses to His existence through each of our unique capacities" (note on verse 27). Or perhaps the meaning is simply that God is able to look into the human spirit which, though dark and mysterious to human beings, is as bright as a lamp to God—revealing everything about the person." [END]

Verse 1 – Adam Clarke states regarding “strong drink”: any strong fermented liquor, whether of the vine, date, or palm species. Over drinking, as personified here, can lead a person to behave in ways they shouldn't. Alcohol can be a blessing when used appropriately, and a curse when consumed beyond moderation.

Verse 3 – We've likely all been in a situation that started to heat up. I like how this verse talks about the honor in someone seeing the situation and bringing it to a stop.