

Day 383 - THURSDAY: March 7th

Proverbs 21

Proverbs 21:1-31 NKJV

The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, Like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes. Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, But the LORD weighs the hearts. To do righteousness and justice Is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice. A haughty look, a proud heart, And the plowing of the wicked are sin. The plans of the diligent lead surely to plenty, But those of everyone who is hasty, surely to poverty. Getting treasures by a lying tongue Is the fleeting fantasy of those who seek death. The violence of the wicked will destroy them, Because they refuse to do justice. The way of a guilty man is perverse; But as for the pure, his work is right. Better to dwell in a corner of a housetop, Than in a house shared with a contentious woman. The soul of the wicked desires evil; His neighbor finds no favor in his eyes. When the scoffer is punished, the simple is made wise; But when the wise is instructed, he receives knowledge. The righteous God wisely considers the house of the wicked, Overthrowing the wicked for their wickedness. Whoever shuts his ears to the cry of the poor Will also cry himself and not be heard. A gift in secret pacifies anger, And a bribe behind the back, strong wrath. It is a joy for the just to do justice, But destruction will come to the workers of iniquity. A man who wanders from the way of understanding Will rest in the assembly of the dead. He who loves pleasure will be a poor man; He who loves wine and oil will not be rich. The wicked shall be a ransom for the righteous, And the unfaithful for the upright. Better to dwell in the wilderness, Than with a contentious and angry woman.

There is desirable treasure, And oil in the dwelling of the wise, But a foolish man squanders it. He who follows righteousness and mercy Finds life, righteousness and honor. A wise man scales the city of the mighty, And brings down the trusted stronghold. Whoever guards his mouth and tongue Keeps his soul from troubles. A proud and haughty man—"Scoffer" is his name; He acts with arrogant pride. The desire of the lazy man kills him, For his hands refuse to labor. He covets greedily all day long, But the righteous gives and does not spare. The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination; How much more when he brings it with wicked intent! A false witness shall perish, But the man who hears him will speak endlessly. A wicked man hardens his face, But as for the upright, he establishes his way. There is no wisdom or understanding Or counsel against the LORD. The horse is prepared for the day of battle, But deliverance is of the LORD.

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading program states: "Proverbs 21:1 shows God's sovereignty even over rulers. The river illustration is not entirely clear. Some suggest the following meaning: that just as people sometimes redirect rivers through dams and irrigation canals, so can God redirect the thoughts and actions of kings to accomplish His purposes. Of course the latter is not so difficult for God as the former is for human beings. Another possible meaning is that just as God had the power to lay out the courses of all the world's rivers, so He is easily able to direct the course of a king.

- "THE DEVICES AND THE DECLINE OF THE WICKED. *Type: Thematic (Proverbs 21:4-8)*. These five verses focus upon the losses incurred by those who live wrongfully" (NAC).

The Jewish *Soncino Commentary* regards the plowing of the wicked in verse 4 metaphorically as their schemings.

44. Final Outcomes and Judgments (Proverbs 21:9-19)

TYPE: INCLUSIO. "Proverbs about consequences and judgments are collected between the frame of similar proverbs on the 'quarrelsome wife'" (*NIV Application Commentary*, note on verses 9-19). Verse 9, repeated in Proverbs 25:24, mentions dwelling in a corner of a housetop. A roof of that time was flat. The reference is either to sleeping out in the open or in a small makeshift room set up there (see 2 Kings 4:10). Taken together, the frame verses (i.e., Proverbs 21:9, Proverbs 21:19) illustrate that it's better for a man to dwell all alone in discomfort than to live with a contentious wife.

- *"Lessons from the Merciless (Proverbs 21:10-13)....* These verses concern merciless behavior, and vv. 11-12 describe how one can learn a lesson by observing the punishment that befalls the evil. These four verses thus form a chiasmus [of *a-b-b-a*]" (*NAC*).
- *"Reconciliation and Justice (Proverbs 21:14-15)."* Verse 14 should not be understood as sanctioning bribery to subvert justice. Some see the verse as merely observing, without moral comment, a practice that works. But what would be the purpose of that here? Others take the verse as counseling the appropriateness of gifts in some cases to appease an offended party (compare Proverbs 17:8). Yet what of the fact that the gift is "in secret"? The idea could perhaps be to allow the offended party to save face and not be embarrassed by the public knowing he is accepting a gift. Some see the meaning as privately settling a litigation issue out of court. It may have been to deter misreading Proverbs 21:14 as condoning bribery undermining the justice

system that verse 15 was placed immediately after it—contrasting the end results of justice and lawlessness.

- "*Rewards for Doing Wrong (Proverbs 21:16-18)*.... These three proverbs all follow the theme of the ultimate fate of those who do wrong" (NAC)—in contrast to the rewards for doing right in the next section (verses 20-22).

Verse 17 does not mean that it is wrong to enjoy pleasure and luxuries. The point is that those who set their hearts on these things to the point of overindulging and expending resources in pursuit of them will store up no wealth. They will end up with less of what they want. Compare verse 20, which shows that the wise have luxuries, evidently as a result of diligence and restraint, in contrast to fools who squander what they have.

Verse 18 says that the wicked will be a ransom for the righteous. This could simply mean that the lives of the wicked will be given up to destruction in exchange for the peaceful and happy existence of the righteous thereafter. Put another way, the ultimate destruction of the wicked will release the righteous from evil's tyranny over their lives.

45. Rewards for Doing Right (Proverbs 21:20-22)

"TYPE: THEMATIC....These verses closely correspond to vv. 16-18" (NAC)—contrasting with them.

46. A Mouth in and out of Control (Proverbs 21:23-24)

"TYPE: THEMATIC" (NAC).

47. The Sluggard's Craving (Proverbs 21:25-26)

"TYPE: CATCHWORD, THEMATIC" (NAC). It's interesting that many who covet things are too lazy to work for those things.

48. Trying to Fool God (Proverbs 21:27)

"TYPE: INDIVIDUAL PROVERB" (NAC). The first colon here is the same as in Proverbs 15:8.

49: The False Witness (Proverbs 21:28-29)

"TYPE: THEMATIC These two verses should be read together" (NAC). The first colon of verse 28 recalls Proverbs 19, verses 5 and 9. The translation of the second colon of Proverbs 21:28 is disputed. Some see it as giving credence to the false witness earning punishment (compare NIV, although the Hebrew text is altered in this translation). Others understand a person listening well to a false witness so as to counter with cross-examination. Still others read the verse to say that though a false witness perishes, those who hear his lies will pass them on even long afterward—that is, a liar's lies persist after he is gone. Yet another way to read the verse is as follows: "A false witness shall perish, / But the man who hears [i.e., heeds] *this* [i.e., the law or proverb, not *him*] will speak without end." Verse 29 seems to parallel this, though a direct parallel is not essential to the thematic relationship between the two verses here. Where the NKJV in verse 29 says the wicked "hardens his face," the NIV says "puts up a bold front." This may mark a bald-faced liar giving testimony. He firmly sets his face, but the righteous person who will not give false testimony firmly sets *his way*—which, as the previous verse implies, will last forever.

50: Counterwisdom (Proverbs 21:30-31)

"TYPE: THEMATIC." The book of Proverbs normally uses the term "wisdom" in a positive sense—as based on the fear of the Lord. "Here, however, it speaks of a kind of human 'wisdom' that seeks understanding without first submitting to Yahweh and declares that such efforts are futile. Verse 31 gives a concrete example, from a military setting of what v. 30 describes abstractly" (NAC). Human preparation, for war in this case, is important but carries only so far (compare Proverbs 20:18). We

must not place ultimate trust in such preparation. For the outcome of circumstances is in God's hands. Note elsewhere God's cautions against trusting in horses, representing military strength (Psalm 20:7; Psalm 33:17; Hosea 1:7).” [END]

Verse 2 – I’ve seen evil things that go against God’s word done by men I have loved and respected. We all tend to be able to justify and believe our actions are right, even when they are wrong. Our conscience must be fine tuned to God’s Word constantly and ask God to reveal where we are blind.

Verse 26 – John Gill states “not gives to the slothful, which does not restrain his desire, as Aben Ezra interprets it; but to the poor and necessitous, to proper objects; a good man will work with his hands, that he may have a sufficiency for himself and his family, and may have something to give to others that are in want; and "he spares not", or withholds not his hands, neither from working nor from giving.”