

CbC to Mar 21

March 15 Su Reading B74 — Prov. 14 — The Way That Seems Right

Audio: [Prov. 14 \(ESV\)](#)

Hinders or Helps — One theme that is woven throughout this chapter is that God advances those who are striving to follow His way, but He hinders the efforts of those who oppose Him. It begins with this proverb: “*A scoffer seeks wisdom in vain, but knowledge is easy for a man of understanding*” (v. 6). God hinders one and helps the other. A similar statement is that “*The simple inherit folly, but the prudent are crowned with knowledge*” (v. 18). Another is that “*The crown of the wise is their wealth, but the folly of fools brings folly*” (v. 24). Folly multiplies folly. Having a quick temper is also connected to this two-directional progression: “*Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who has a hasty temper exalts folly*” (v. 29). How do we steer away from foolishness? By turning toward God. Do you have a problem with anger? Spend more time meditating on the good character of God! Fill your mind with the benefits of righteous living! God will accomplish the needed change in your heart.

March 16 M Reading B75 — Prov. 15 — God’s All-Seeing Eye

Audio: [Prov. 15 \(ESV\)](#)

Living Honestly and Graciously — We discover three more things in this chapter that are “*an abomination to the LORD.*” One is the “*sacrifice of the wicked*” (v. 8). God hates this because it is someone’s attempt to please Him with worship, while not being willing to stop sinning. He is acting religious without being righteous. In fact, his desire to continue sinning is the second thing that God says is outrageous to Him: “*The way of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD*” (v. 9). That is a picture of hypocrisy, trying to appear righteous without backing it up with obedience. The third thing the Lord hates goes even one step further, right into one’s own mind and motives: “*The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the LORD...*” (v. 26a). God is not fooled by our hypocrisy; He looks into the very depths of who we are. We must deal with God honestly. The second half of verse 26 is a contrast that leads into another subject, that of kind words: “*...but gracious words are pure*” (v. 26b). That subject involves the things we say to others. Here are some other examples: “*A soft answer turns away wrath...*” (v. 1); “*A gentle tongue is a tree of life...*” (v. 4); “*To make an apt answer is a joy to a man, and a word in season, how good it is!*” (v. 23); and “*The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer*” (v. 28). The lesson is that we must deal honestly with God and graciously with people.

March 17 Tu Reading B76 — Prov. 16 — Pride Before Destruction

Audio: [Prov. 16 \(ESV\)](#)

Straight and Narrow Way — As we saw in chapter 14, there are also several proverbs in this chapter about what seems right to humans but not necessarily to God (cf. 16:2-3, 9, 25, and 33). Two other proverbs stood out to me from today’s reading, however, about turning from evil. Verse 6 says that “*... by the fear of the LORD one turns away from evil.*” This tells us *how* we can turn away from evil. It has to do with our attitude toward God. The expression, “*the fear of the LORD,*” is used 13 times in Proverbs, half of all the places it appears in all the Bible. It can sometimes include being afraid of God’s discipline, but it is normally used in the sense of great respect for the character and power of God. When we have a high respect for God, we want to please Him by our attitudes and actions. It involves obedience out of gratitude. Our ability to turn away from evil has much to do with our attitude toward our Creator and Savior. The second similar proverb in this chapter says, “*The highway of the upright turns aside from evil; whoever guards his way preserves his life*” (v. 17). This suggests that when we personally walk in godliness, we are walking on the same road that the collective Body of Christ walks. It is the “*highway*” of the godly, and that “*highway ... turns aside from evil*” (v. 17). My responsibility is to stay on the highway, to “*guard my way*” in order to “*preserve my*

life.” Individually, we stay on the straight and narrow way by greatly respecting God, and we walk with Christians of similar heart and mind who are following the way of righteousness laid out for us.

March 18 W Reading B77 — Prov. 17 — Repeating a Matter

Audio: [Prov. 17 \(ESV\)](#)

Guard Your Mouth — There are four proverbs in this chapter that seem to be about sins that we Christians often tolerate in our own lives. Interestingly, all four of them are connected with our words. The first one is, “*Whoever mocks the poor insults his Maker; he who is glad at calamity will not go unpunished*” (v. 5). We sometimes give up on poor people, blaming them for their condition and considering them to be hopeless in their plight. When some tragedy happens to a group of people, I have sometimes heard Christians say, “They deserved it!” That may be true, but we are not to be their judges. The second proverb is this: “*Whoever covers an offense seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates close friends*” (v. 9). Gossip might be the most common sin committed in the Church. Too many of us gain pleasure through sharing something negative about another person. Here is the third proverb: “*The beginning of strife is like letting out water, so quit before the quarrel breaks out*” (v. 14). Too few of us believers are willing to stop talking when we find ourselves in a tense situation that we know is about to get worse. If the conflict does escalate, it will certainly lead to saying things that we will regret later. The last proverb is related to the previous one: “*Whoever restrains his words has knowledge ... Even a fool who keeps silent is considered wise...*” (vv. 27-28). That reminds me of Mark Twain’s humorous quote, “Never miss an opportunity to shut up.” Of all people, Christians should know how to control their verbal reactions.

March 19 Th Reading B78 — Prov. 18 — Examining Others

Audio: [Prov. 18 \(ESV\)](#)

Brothers to Avoid — I noticed today that of the five times the word “*brother*” is used in Proverbs, three of them are contained in this chapter. That word can refer in the OT to a biological brother, a fellow Jew, or symbolically to a very close relationship. Verse 9 uses it figuratively: “*Whoever is slack in his work is a brother to him who destroys.*” We might call this person a *destroying* brother, which no one would like. On the other hand, it is much more likely that we would tolerate laziness (“*slack in his work*”) in a friend or in our own life. Don’t accept it! It destroys. The second brother is an *offended* brother: “*A brother offended is more unyielding than a strong city, and quarreling is like the bars of a castle*” (v. 19). This person is dangerous because he is likely wanting to get revenge. As with a fool, it is probably better that he be left alone. We might call the third brother, a *deserting* brother: “*A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother*” (v. 24). We might assume that a biological brother would be one’s most supportive friend, but you probably know of families where some of the siblings won’t even talk to each other. In this chapter, all three of these brothers are people that we do not want to be. Instead, we should be people who work hard, are not easily offended, and lovingly stand up with our friend against opposition or trouble.

March 20 F Reading B79 — Prov. 19 — Lending to God

Audio: [Prov. 19 \(ESV\)](#)

Unexpected Responses — There are three proverbs in this chapter that were somewhat unexpected to me. The first one involves blaming God: “*When a man’s folly brings his way to ruin, his heart rages against the LORD*” (v. 3). This reaction seems to come either from someone blaming God for what went wrong, or from thinking that God should always be giving him good regardless of his actions. Recognizing and admitting one’s own faults does not come easily to most people. The second proverb is similar to what we have seen earlier: “*Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense*” (v. 11). In some ancient cultures, the sense of one’s personal

honor was so strong that if someone intentionally offended you, you were obligated to make it right by responding in a duel with swords. The even more ancient Bible presented this far higher standard: Refuse to take offense! It is one's "*glory*," or honor, to overlook it entirely. The third proverb is a surprising view of giving to others: "*Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will repay him for his deed*" (v. 17). Yahweh is a giving God, and when He sees His people giving to those in need, He is pleased and resupplies the willing givers so they can continue giving to others. Hopefully, that insight will help us to be more generous.

March 21 Sa Reading B80 — Prov. 20 — Known by Your Acts

Audio: [Prov. 20 \(ESV\)](#)

The Reins of Revenge — You are what you do. That is the basic message of this proverb: "*Even a child makes himself known by his acts, by whether his conduct is pure and upright*" (v. 11). Your actions reveal the kind of person you are. It is no wonder, then, that we are cautioned against quarreling because that is what fools do: "*It is an honor for a man to keep aloof from strife, but every fool will be quarreling*" (v. 3). Yesterday, we read, "*...it is his glory to overlook an offense*" (19:11). When we get involved in a quarrel, we act like fools. This Hebrew word for "*quarrel*" is used only three times in the OT, all in Proverbs. In 17:14, we are told to "*quit before the quarrel breaks out.*" In 18:1, it says that one who "*pursues selfish ends ... starts quarrels*" (NIV). Let us maintain our "*glory*" and our "*honor*" by refraining from quarreling, especially within our own home. Quarrelling is basically verbal fighting. A later proverb in today's chapter speaks of what might be acted out on a more physical level: "*Do not say, 'I will repay evil'; wait for the LORD, and he will deliver you*" (v. 22). God is much better at both evaluating what *is* evil and in punishing wrongdoing. Revenge is not our right.