



## Proverbs - Chapter Ten

### Summary of Chapter Ten

Here begins the second major section of the book, Proverbs 10:1-22:16, which, along with Proverbs 22:16-25:28, contains series of proverbs whose sense is complete in one or two verses, and which, having no logical connection, make full analysis difficult. The parallelisms of Proverbs 10:1-15:33 are mostly antithetic; and those of Proverbs 16:1-22:16, synthetic. The evidence of art in the structure is very clear and indicates, probably, a purpose of facilitating the labour of memorising.

### III Proverbs 10:1-22:16 - Wise Sayings of Solomon

Here begins what may be called the 'proverbs proper,' individual maxims or aphorisms, after the longer wisdom poems of Chapters 1-9. Often, however, individual proverbs are grouped together into small collections which, taken together, give the reader a more complete understanding of a given topic.

#### Introduction to Proverbs 10:1-5

The purpose of these proverbs is to encourage the pursuit of one's labours in righteousness, which excludes acquiring gain by unjust means (v.2a) or squandering it by sloth (vv.4-5). At the centre of these verses is the reason: The Lord does not let the righteous go hungry. It is the Lord who provides (v.3), and through righteousness he delivers not only from hunger but also from death (v.2b).

The encouragement of the whole section to walk in righteousness is framed by the appeal to be a son who is wise (v.1a) or prudent (v.5a) rather than foolish (v.1b) or shameful (v.5b). To see vv.1-5 as a paragraph should prevent taking any of its verses out of context.

- <sup>1</sup> The proverbs of Solomon.  
A wise child makes a glad father,  
but a foolish child is a mother's grief.

## Proverbs 10:1

The proverbs of Solomon. As stated above, Chapter 10 begins a new section of the book. In some sense the first nine chapters have been an introduction. It can be said that the collection of Solomon's proverbs begins here as a series of two-phrase single verse wisdom sayings. This arrangement continues through to Proverbs 22:16. From the start of Proverbs 10:1 through to at least Proverbs 22:16, this commentary will treat each proverb individually. The fact that Solomon wrote proverbs is recorded in: <<**He composed three thousand proverbs, and his songs numbered a thousand and five**>> (1 Kings 4:32).

Some kind of arrangement is sensed in these proverbs; they may be sometimes grouped in sets of two, three, or four proverbs linked by a theme. For example, v.4 and v.5 may have been arranged next to each other because both deal with the theme of hard work. Yet understanding the manner and nature of the arrangement is difficult, if not impossible, and different commentators often see different arrangements. In this look at Proverbs any such connections between individual proverbs are left to the reader to make, and each verse will be treated as its own proverb.

This verse opens Proverbs 10:1-22:16 by echoing the previous chapters' appeals of a father and mother (Proverbs 1:8) to be a wise child, literally a wise son. Thus it stands as a signpost to the reader that the instruction of Proverbs 1:1-9:18 is essential for a proper understanding and appropriation of the proverbs that follow.

A wise child. Solomon himself was the ultimate wise son, receiving and valuing wisdom above all other things; refer to 1 Kings Chapter 3. When King David saw this heart in his son, it no doubt made him a glad father: <<**A wise child makes a glad father**>> (Proverbs 15:20a).

A foolish child. Many of the proverbs work on the principle of contrast. This proverb contrasts the foolish son with the wise son. Ironically, it could be said that Solomon ultimately turned out to be a foolish son according to 1 Kings Chapter 11, although this was long after the death of his mother.

A mother's grief. A person's wisdom or folly affects more than themselves. Wisdom benefits more than the individual; and folly grieves more than the individual, especially those that are in a close relationship. It also shows the other side of the relationship: <<**but the foolish despise their mothers**>> (Proverbs 15:20b).

<sup>2</sup> Treasures gained by wickedness do not profit,  
but righteousness delivers from death.

## Proverbs 10:2

Treasures gained by wickedness do not profit. The Christian reader may be reminded of the parable Jesus told of the rich fool in Luke 12:16-21. The rich fool in the parable gathered great wealth but was not rich towards God.

But righteousness delivers from death. Being in a right relationship with God and acting in righteousness before him brings a benefit that money cannot buy: <<Riches do not profit in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death>> (Proverbs 11:4). This is also in line with the teaching of Jesus: <<*Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, 'You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me'*>> (Mark 10:21), and: <<*Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions, and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also*>> (Luke 12:32-34).

<sup>3</sup> The Lord does not let the righteous go hungry,  
but he thwarts the craving of the wicked.

## Proverbs 10:3

The Lord does not let the righteous go hungry. This is one of the blessings that money cannot buy that might be thought of from the previous verse. Significantly, the principle is directed to the soul, as given in many other translations. The soul can flourish even when the body is afflicted; refer to Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 6:25-34.

He thwarts the craving of the wicked. Ultimately, to be wicked and in opposition to God is to have desire frustrated and daily needs not met: <<*The righteous have enough to satisfy their appetite, but the belly of the wicked is empty*>> (Proverbs 13:25). To be righteous and to inherit eternal life is to have desire fulfilled: <<*And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. 'For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life*>> (John 3:14-16).

<sup>4</sup> A slack hand causes poverty,  
but the hand of the diligent makes rich.

## Proverbs 10:4

A slack hand. This describes the lazy man or woman, who does not put forth their hand energetically to do their work. Everything that a Christian does they should undertake enthusiastically as unto the Lord: <<*Whatever your task, put*

*yourselves into it, as done for the Lord and not for your masters>>* (Colossians 3:23). Paul also wrote of those who refuse to work for a living: *<<For even when we were with you, we gave you this command: Anyone unwilling to work should not eat>>* (2 Thessalonians 3:10).

The hand of the diligent makes rich. Hard work is normally rewarded, and prosperity often comes to those who work for it as also shown in v.22a. The diligent is another name applied to the wise and the righteous; refer also to Introduction: Character Types in Proverbs.

The paragraph context from v.3 indicates that the diligence the Lord instils in the righteous is his means to provide for their material needs. The contrasts of vv.6-32 further indicate that the diligence referred to is grounded in *<<the fear of the Lord>>* (v.27a), and has more than simply physical needs in view (vv.16-17). In a culture like ancient Israel, based on subsistence agriculture, wealth means good crops, a well-fed family, and a stable farm to pass on to one's children, rather than the luxurious wealth a modern reader may think of. Further, Proverbs has a clear set of priorities in which wisdom is far better than wealth, and righteousness with few possessions is better than wealth without knowing the Lord and without walking in righteousness; refer to examples in Proverbs 3:13-15, 8:19, 15:16-17, 16:8, 16:16 and 17:1.

<sup>5</sup> A child who gathers in summer is prudent,  
but a child who sleeps in harvest brings shame.

### Proverbs 10:5

A child who gathers in summer is prudent. The ant was previously presented as an example of hard work in the summer: *<<Go to the ant, you lazybones; consider its ways, and be wise. Without having any chief or officer or ruler, it prepares its food in summer, and gathers its sustenance in harvest>>* (Proverbs 6:6-8). The idea here is of a wise son who shows his wisdom by working hard, gathering in the harvest and storing up food for the long winter months.

A child who sleeps in harvest brings shame. To sleep when there is work to be done is laziness and folly, and causes shame to self and to others. Adam Clarke commented, "All the work of the field should be done in the season suitable to it. If summer and harvest be neglected, in vain does a man expect the fruits of autumn."

### Introduction to Proverbs 10:6-32

Although set in clusters, vv.6-32 as a whole act to contrast the righteous and the wicked in order to illustrate that righteousness (v.2) is the path for a wise son. The phrase *<<the mouth of the wicked>>* opens (v.6 and v.11) and closes (v.32) the section, which also includes other terms for the same idea, e.g. lips in v.13a, v.18a, v.21a and v.32a; a babbling fool is literally 'foolish of lips,' v.8b, v10b in

Hebrew and v.14b. The recurring terms relating to the mouth, i.e. lips, tongue, etc. are connected to their relation to both hunger or desire and speech: what people desire and how they attain it are both indicators of the path they walk.

### Introduction to Proverbs 10:6-11

Neither the blessings on the head of the righteous nor the violence that is hidden by the mouth of the wicked are necessarily obvious to an observer who sees only external facts (v.6). However, the one who is wise of heart (v.8a) walks securely (v.9a), whereas the fool (v.8b and v.10) who follows the wrong path (v.9b) will come to ruin (v.8b and v.10b). Thus, the mouth of the righteous manifests what is good for the speaker and for others for it is a fountain of life (v.11a), whereas the mouth of the wicked conceals what is harmful both for others and finally for the fool himself leading to violence (v.11b).

- <sup>6</sup> Blessings are on the head of the righteous,  
but the mouth of the wicked conceals violence.

### Proverbs 10:6

Blessings are on the head of the righteous. This was especially true in the context of the old or Mosaic covenant, where God promised to bless obedience and curse disobedience; refer to Deuteronomy Chapters 27-28.

The mouth of the wicked conceals violence. Instead of blessing, violence will come to the wicked. Derek Kidner commented, “But it is simpler to take it as the man’s evil, written, as we say, all over his face.”

- <sup>7</sup> The memory of the righteous is a blessing,  
but the name of the wicked will rot.

### Proverbs 10:7

The memory of the righteous is a blessing. The heroes of faith in Hebrews Chapter 11 are good examples of righteous men and women whose memory is blessed because of the way they lived their lives before the Lord.

The name of the wicked will rot. If the wicked are remembered at all, it will be as a stinking, rotten thing. The present path of righteous or wicked chosen by the individual will end either in blessedness or rottenness, each answering according to their path. Every man and woman can choose if they will be remembered to praise or remembered to shame: <<*But Israel is saved by the Lord with everlasting salvation; you shall not be put to shame or confounded to all eternity*>> (Isaiah 45:17), <<*And I will bring upon you everlasting disgrace and perpetual shame, which shall not be forgotten*>> (Jeremiah 23:40), <<*Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt*>> (Daniel 12:2), and: <<*Do not be*

*astonished at this; for the hour is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and will come out – those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation>>* (John 5:28-29). Clarke observed, “The very name of the wicked is as offensive as putrid carrion.”

<sup>8</sup> The wise of heart will heed commandments,  
but a babbling fool will come to ruin.

### Proverbs 10:8

The wise of heart will heed commandments. Wisdom gives the humility to be instructed and to receive commands from God and those in rightful authority: <<*He said to them, ‘Then give to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s, and to God the things that are God’s’>>* (Luke 20:25), and: <<*Let every person be subject to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God>>* (Romans 13:1).

A babbling fool will come to ruin. Here, the fool is the opposite of the wise in heart. In their disobedience they will fall. In the Hebrew he is called ‘a fool of lips,’ either because he discovers the folly of his heart by his lips, and thereby exposes himself to the mischief here following; or because he is without sense, as is said of Ephraim in Hosea 7:11, or his heart is little worth, as is said here; or because he speaks rashly, without any consideration.

<sup>9</sup> Whoever walks in integrity walks securely,  
but whoever follows perverse ways will be found out.

### Proverbs 10:9

Whoever walks in integrity walks securely. The man or woman who lives with nothing to hide, with no double life, can walk with integrity: <<*May integrity and uprightness preserve me, for I wait for you>>* (Psalm 25:21), and: <<*One who walks in integrity will be safe>>* (Proverbs 28:18a). There is no anxiety from the fear of having sin and compromise discovered.

Whoever follows perverse ways will be found out. The man or woman who walks a crooked life will have it revealed. Jesus said: <<*So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known>>* (Matthew 10:26).

<sup>10</sup> Whoever winks the eye causes trouble,  
but the one who rebukes boldly makes peace.

## Proverbs 10:10

Whoever winks the eye probably describes a person giving a concealed signal that he is lying. The idea of winks here is of one who does not take wickedness and folly seriously.

The one who rebukes boldly makes peace. Christians especially should accept wise council when their errors are pointed out by another, even though it may hurt to hear the truth. There should be peace between the parties and inner peace for both as well. Those bold and loving enough to give such advice will be blessed by God as Jesus confirms: <<***Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God***>> (Matthew 5:9).

Verse 10b is taken from the Greek in the Septuagint. The Hebrew translates to 'but a babbling fool will come to ruin.'

<sup>11</sup> The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life,  
but the mouth of the wicked conceals violence.

## Proverbs 10:11

The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life. A righteous man or woman speaks life-giving words, most often to others and sometimes to one's self: <<***The teaching of the wise is a fountain of life, so that one may avoid the snares of death***>> (Proverbs 13:14). Ultimately, though, life comes from God: <<***For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light***>> (Psalm 36:9)

The mouth of the wicked conceals violence. The wicked man or woman brings harm and hurt with their words. They cause pain and take away life.

## Introduction to Proverbs 10:12-18

These verses constitute a paragraph, with both v.12 and v.18 mentioning hatred and both using the word covers or conceals, Hebrew *kasah*; the individual verses relate to this overall theme. At the centre of the section is a statement about wealth and poverty (v.15) that requires careful attention. Although wealth can represent strength, and poverty can lead to ruin, the verses that precede and follow v.15, i.e. vv.12-14 and vv.16-18, reinforce the call to recognise that what people pursue and how they pursue it are more important than what they possess; refer also to Proverbs 28:6 and 28:20. Deception conceals a hatred (v.18a) that causes contention among others (v.12a) and ruin for the person who deals in it (v.14b and v.16b). Seeking wisdom (v.13a, v.14a and v.17a) through obedience, by contrast, fosters a love that can make peace with others (v.12b); such a path leads to life (v.16a and v.17a).

<sup>12</sup> Hatred stirs up strife,  
but love covers all offences.

## Proverbs 10:12

Hatred stirs up strife. Where the wicked are described as concealing violence (v.6b and v.11b) or hatred (v.12a and v.18a), and thus deceiving others for their own sinful purposes, the one who is wise seeks the good of others even when he or she is the offended party: love covers, (the same Hebrew verb, *kasah*, is translated as conceal in v.6b, v.11b and v.18a), all offences. This is confirmed by the similar instruction in the NT: <<*But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you*>> (Matthew 5:44), <<*you should know that whoever brings back a sinner from wandering will save the sinner's soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins*>> (James 5:20), and: <<*Above all, maintain constant love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins*>> (1 Peter 4:8).

- 13 On the lips of one who has understanding wisdom is found,  
but a rod is for the back of one who lacks sense.

## Proverbs 10:13

On the lips of one who has understanding wisdom is found. When a person has wisdom, it will be found on their lips. The words they speak reveal the wisdom they possess, as Jesus said: <<*For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks*>> (Matthew 12:34b).

A rod is for the back of one who lacks sense. The ones who lack wisdom must be corrected by pain, represented by a rod used to strike those who misbehave. Clarke observed, "He that can learn, and will not learn, should be made to learn. The rod is a most powerful instrument of knowledge. Judiciously applied, there is a lesson of profound wisdom in every twig."

- 14 The wise lay up knowledge,  
but the babbling of a fool brings ruin near.

## Proverbs 10:14

The wise lay up knowledge. Wisdom takes knowledge and makes it accessible for the future. This can be done in many ways - memorisation, note taking, and the use of modern digital technology.

The babbling of a fool brings ruin near. The foolish man is a contrast to the wise man, and his rejection of knowledge puts him near to destruction: <<*For the sin of their mouths, the words of their lips, let them be trapped in their pride*>> (Psalm 59:12a), <<*The talk of fools is a rod for their backs*>> (Proverbs 14:3a), and: <<*for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned*>> (Matthew 12:37).

- 15 The wealth of the rich is their fortress;  
the poverty of the poor is their ruin.

### Proverbs 10:15

The point of this proverb is to invite reflection on the benefit of wealth vs. the ruinous effect of poverty. Whereas wealth can be like a **strong city** or a **fortress**, providing safety, resources, and protection against misfortune, poverty leads only to ruin and thus should not be embraced out of laziness or romanticism. Although there are benefits from wealth, it is a mistake, as shown elsewhere in Proverbs, to place one's trust in wealth rather than in 'the name of the Lord' for: <<*The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run into it and are safe. The wealth of the rich is their strong city; in their imagination it is like a high wall*>> (Proverbs 18:10-11), for <<*treasures gained by wickedness do not profit*>> (v.2a).

There is nothing wrong with being wealthy as such. It depends on a person's motivation towards gaining wealth and their reliance upon wealth that brings the problems. Paul wrote: <<*For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains*>> (1 Timothy 6:10), and Jesus warned of the effect that wealth can have on the individual who is reliant upon it and fearful of letting go of what they have: <<*It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God*>> (Mark 10:25).

- 16 The wage of the righteous leads to life,  
the gain of the wicked to sin.

### Proverbs 10:16

The wage earned by the righteous brings positive benefits, because it leads to life, but when the wicked gain wealth, they use it in sinful ways, so their gain leads to sin: <<*Whoever is steadfast in righteousness will live, but whoever pursues evil will die*>> (Proverbs 11:19).

- 17 Whoever heeds instruction is on the path to life,  
but one who rejects a rebuke goes astray.

### Proverbs 10:17

Whoever heeds instruction is on the path to life. Wisdom and instruction must not only be gained, but also kept. That keeping will bring one in the way of life: <<*For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching a light, and the reproofs of discipline are the way of life*>> (Proverbs 6:23).

But one who rejects a rebuke goes astray. To refuse correction is the opposite of keeping instruction. It is to reject instruction, and will lead on to go astray: <<*For you hate discipline, and you cast my words behind you*>> (Psalm 50:17).

<sup>18</sup> Lying lips conceal hatred,  
and whoever utters slander is a fool.

### Proverbs 10:18

Lying lips conceal hatred. It is common for those who are motivated by hatred to hide their motivation and therefore lie by doing so. In modern day life very few people will ever admit to the sin of hatred. Clarke noted, “This is a common case. How many, when full of resentment, and deadly hatred, meditating revenge and cruelty, and sometimes even murder, have pretended that they thought nothing of the injury they had sustained; had passed by the insult, &c.! Thus lying lips covered the malevolence of a wicked heart.”

Whoever utters slander is a fool. This explains one way that someone filled with hatred lies. They do it by spreading slander, false and unsupported accusations against others. That person is a fool, because God knows all and will judge righteously: <<*The Lord within it is righteous; he does no wrong. Every morning he renders his judgement, each dawn without fail; but the unjust knows no shame*>> (Zephaniah 3:5), and: <<*While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead*>> (Acts 17:30-31).

### Introduction to Proverbs 10:19-21

These three proverbs contrast the prudent and productive character of righteous speech with the revealed emptiness of what is concealed in foolish speech.

<sup>19</sup> When words are many, transgression is not lacking,  
but the prudent are restrained in speech.

### Proverbs 10:19

When words are many, transgression is not lacking. For many people, the more they talk the more they will sin. There is much more potential sin in talking than in listening.

The prudent are restrained in speech. Many Christians could bless others and keep themselves from sin simply by speaking less and restraining their lips and their tongue: <<*So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great exploits. How great a forest is set ablaze by a small fire! And the tongue is a fire. The tongue is placed among our members as a world of iniquity; it stains*>>

*the whole body, sets on fire the cycle of nature, and is itself set on fire by hell>> (James 3:5-6).*

<sup>20</sup> The tongue of the righteous is choice silver;  
the mind of the wicked is of little worth.

### Proverbs 10:20

The value of righteous speech reveals that it is wise to seek further the well from which it flows, whereas the speech of the wicked shows that such a pursuit is vain because the mind or heart of such a person is of little worth: <<*If any think they are religious, and do not bridle their tongues but deceive their hearts, their religion is worthless*>> (James 1:26).

<sup>21</sup> The lips of the righteous feed many,  
but fools die for lack of sense.

### Proverbs 10:21

The lips of the righteous feed many. The actions of the righteous produce that which is good not only for himself but also for others. Lips can relate both to speech and to hunger; if the proverb plays on this double reference, then the feeding here may refer to material provision, i.e. what one eats, but probably also signifies speech that leads others in the way of life, the contrast in v.17.

But fools die for lack of sense. The fool's rejection of wisdom will not go unpunished and ultimately leads to death, especially spiritual death: <<*The iniquities of the wicked ensnare them, and they are caught in the toils of their sin. They die for lack of discipline, and because of their great folly they are lost*>> (Proverbs 5:22-23), <<*Therefore my people go into exile without knowledge; their nobles are dying of hunger, and their multitude is parched with thirst*>> (Isaiah 5:13), <<*Then I said, 'These are only the poor, they have no sense; for they do not know the way of the Lord, the law of their God'*>> (Jeremiah 5:4), and: <<*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because you have rejected knowledge, I reject you from being a priest to me. And since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children*>> (Hosea 4:6).

<sup>22</sup> The blessing of the Lord makes rich,  
and he adds no sorrow with it.

### Proverbs 10:22

This verse stands at the centre of vv.12-32 as an important qualification, relating to both the source and the nature of one's wealth. If it is the blessing of the Lord that makes rich (v.4), then how one seeks wealth is necessarily governed by a

commitment to act righteously, and always to manifest a hope that rests not in material things but in the Lord who provides everything. There are many who have been blessed with riches and are wise enough to receive those riches as God's blessing. They understand that: **<<Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change>>** (James 1:17).

**He adds no sorrow with it.** When the Lord gives material blessing, he does not give it grudgingly or with condemnation but freely and with joy. This is greater blessing upon smaller blessing. To receive riches from God is to be blessed; to have riches without the sorrow that often comes with them is an even greater blessing. There are many rich people who are miserable and have great sorrow along with their riches, and there are many wealthy people who have traded in comfort and luxury in this life for condemnation in the next.

### **Introduction to Proverbs 10:23-25**

The contrasting patterns of speech described in vv.19-21 show the state of the heart. The heart of the righteous finds pleasure in wisdom and can hope that such a path leads to being established forever. The heart of the wicked treats doing wrong as a trivial matter yet dreads the inevitable end to which such a path leads.

<sup>23</sup> Doing wrong is like sport to a fool,  
but wise conduct is pleasure to a person of understanding.

### **Proverbs 10:23**

**Doing wrong is like sport to a fool.** The fool regards evil as entertainment, as sport. Not only is it meant for enjoyment, but there is also a competitive aspect to evil among fools, with each trying to outdo the other. Such people need to be avoided at all cost: **<<It will save you from the way of evil, from those who speak perversely, who forsake the paths of uprightness to walk in the ways of darkness, who rejoice in doing evil and delight in the perverseness of evil>>** (Proverbs 2:12-14).

**But wise conduct is pleasure to a person of understanding.** The man or woman of wisdom sees evil for what it is and avoids it at all cost.

<sup>24</sup> What the wicked dread will come upon them,  
but the desire of the righteous will be granted.

### **Proverbs 10:24**

**What the wicked dread will come upon them.** The wicked man or woman knows that all is not right and that their day of accountability will come. They therefore live in fear and these fears will one day come upon them.

The desire of the righteous will be granted. The righteous man or woman also has a sense of what is to come, but it is rightly filled with optimism and hope. Their godly desire will be granted: <<*Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart*>> (Psalm 37:4), <<*I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son*>> (John 14:13), <<*You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name*>> (John 15:16), and: <<*On that day you will ask nothing of me. Very truly, I tell you, if you ask anything of the Father in my name, he will give it to you*>> (John 16:23).

<sup>25</sup> When the tempest passes, the wicked are no more,  
but the righteous are established for ever.

### Proverbs 10:25

When the tempest passes, the wicked are no more. As with the previous proverb, this word emphasises the unstable and dangerous place the wicked stand in. Trouble in the form of the tempest comes to all people: <<*for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous*>> (Matthew 5:45b), but the wicked have no foundation to stand when it comes. Clarke commented, “As tornadoes that sweep every thing away before them; so shall the wrath of God sweep away the wicked; it shall leave him neither branch nor root.”

The righteous are established for ever. Like the illustration used of the wise man who built upon the rock in Matthew 7:24-27 and Luke 6:46-49, the righteous man has a firm, everlasting foundation and can withstand the whirlwind but the fool who built his house on sand will fall with it.

<sup>26</sup> Like vinegar to the teeth, and smoke to the eyes,  
so are the lazy to their employers.

### Proverbs 10:26

Vinegar and smoke are major irritants to the teeth and eyes and, according to God through the prophet, to the nose: <<*I held out my hands all day long to a rebellious people, who walk in a way that is not good, following their own devices; a people who provoke me to my face continually, sacrificing in gardens and offering incense on bricks; who sit inside tombs, and spend the night in secret places; who eat swine's flesh, with broth of abominable things in their vessels; who say, 'Keep to yourself, do not come near me, for I am too holy for you.'* These are a smoke in my nostrils, a fire that burns all day long>> (Isaiah 65:1-5). The idea is of constant and extreme irritation, and leads to disappointed expectation. In the same way, shiftless people are irritating because

they can never be relied upon. The one who sends a lazy person to do the work will be irritated by their laziness and lack of concern for hard work. The sense is that the lazy person irritates his managers more than himself.

### Introduction to Proverbs 10:27-30

The hope of the righteous and the expectation of the wicked are set in repeated contrast in these verses. The effect of the comparison is to emphasise the Lord as the one who secures the end of the righteous as well as the one who brings the path of the wicked to futility.

<sup>27</sup> The fear of the Lord prolongs life,  
but the years of the wicked will be short.

### Proverbs 10:27

The fear of the Lord prolongs life as a general rule: <<*Prolong the life of the king; may his years endure to all generations!*>> (Psalm 61:6), and: <<*For by me your days will be multiplied, and years will be added to your life*>> (Proverbs 9:11), because of the Lord's blessing: <<*Honour your father and your mother, as the Lord your God commanded you, so that your days may be long and that it may go well with you in the land that the Lord your God is giving you*>> (Deuteronomy 5:16). The one who fears and honours God will enjoy the blessing of a longer life. Sinful habits, guilt, and ungodly anxiety all take years from one's life.

The years of the wicked will be short is likewise a general rule and can be because the Lord brings about premature death as a judgement or because sinful patterns often destroy both physical health and peace of mind.

<sup>28</sup> The hope of the righteous ends in gladness,  
but the expectation of the wicked comes to nothing.

### Proverbs 10:28

The hope of the righteous ends in gladness. God has a glorious future hope for his righteous people. They have hope in their destiny, if not now then in eternity.

The expectation of the wicked comes to nothing. The wicked man or woman faces a future where all desires and expectations for good will be disappointed: <<*Such are the paths of all who forget God; the hope of the godless shall perish*>> (Job 8:13), <<*The wicked see it and are angry; they gnash their teeth and melt away; the desire of the wicked comes to nothing*>> (Psalm 112:10), and: <<*When the wicked die, their hope perishes, and the expectation of the godless comes to nothing*>> (Proverbs 11:7). Clarke commented, "A wicked man is always imposing on himself by the hope of God's mercy and final happiness; and

he continues hoping, till he dies without receiving that mercy which alone would entitle him to that glory.”

- 29 The way of the Lord is a stronghold for the upright,  
but destruction for evildoers.

### Proverbs 10:29

The way of the Lord is a stronghold for the upright, but destruction for evildoers. God’s path is blessing and good for those who are set upon it. When a person is weak, they can ask God for his strength as they walk on the way of the Lord: *<<but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint>>* (Isaiah 40:31). Those who work iniquity will find they have built nothing. Only destruction will come from all their effort.

- 30 The righteous will never be removed,  
but the wicked will not remain in the land.

### Proverbs 10:30

The declarations ‘will never be removed’ and ‘will not remain’ indicate that the land here refers not to the geography of the original recipients, but to the promised end of the righteous path; refer to the comment made on Proverbs 2:21-22. God’s righteous men and women have a wonderful future to look forward to, secure and immovable. Jesus promised that the meek would inherit the earth in Matthew 5:5, but certainly not the wicked: *<<Then I saw the wicked buried; they used to go in and out of the holy place, and were praised in the city where they had done such things. This also is vanity>>* (Ecclesiastes 8:10).

However, it should never be forgotten that repentance can bring even the most evil person back to eternal life with the Lord: *<<Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, says the Lord God, and not rather that they should turn from their ways and live?>>* (Ezekiel 18:23), and: *<<The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance>>* (2 Peter 3:9).

### Introduction to Proverbs 10:31-32

The repetition of the mouth of the righteous and the mouth of the wicked frames vv.6-32 and concludes the chapter by drawing the contrast into focus. The perverse tongue manifests the state of the person’s heart, and the fact that it will be cut off indicates that what the wicked have concealed, i.e. violence in v.6b and v.11b, and hatred v.18a, in their speech has ruined them from the inside out. The mouth and lips of the righteous manifest a heart that brings forth wisdom, which is a blessing to themselves and others.

<sup>31</sup> The mouth of the righteous brings forth wisdom,  
but the perverse tongue will be cut off.

#### Proverbs 10:31

The mouth of the righteous brings forth wisdom. God's righteous men and women are known for the wisdom they speak. A person's heart is often revealed by their words: <<*The tongue of the wise dispenses knowledge*>> (Proverbs 15:2a), and: <<*She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue*>> (Proverbs 31:26).

The perverse tongue will be cut off. Those who speak in a crooked or twisted way can only expect to be left without a word. They misused their ability to speak; God will make sure they are no longer able to use it. Clarke commented, "This probably alludes to the punishment of cutting out the tongue for blasphemy, treasonable speeches, profane swearing, or such like. Were the tongue of every shrew or scold to be extracted, we should soon have much less noise in the world."

<sup>32</sup> The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable,  
but the mouth of the wicked what is perverse.

#### Proverbs 10:32

The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable. God's righteous men and women speak what is right: <<*Words from the mouth of the wise are gracious*>> (Ecclesiastes 10:12a NIV); they also have a sense of discernment in what they say and to whom they say it.

The mouth of the wicked what is perverse. As righteous men and women are skilled in saying what is acceptable, so the wicked have a talent to speak what is crooked or perverse: <<*There they are, bellowing with their mouths, with sharp words on their lips – for 'Who', they think, 'will hear us?'*>> (Psalm 59:7). Clarke observed, "The wicked man knows as well what is perverse, and that he speaks forth. As the love of God is not in his heart, so the law of kindness is not on his lips."