



## Proverbs - Chapter Eleven

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

#### Summary of Chapter Eleven

The Lord hates dishonest scales and the wicked earn false wages. Whoever gives water will get water; whoever trusts in riches will fall.

#### Introduction to Proverbs 11:1-4

The riches of the wicked that will not save them (v.4) and the false balance whereby a wicked man increases his income (v.1) are contrasted with the just weight (v.1) and righteousness (v.4). Similarly, the pride (v.2) and crookedness (v.3) that lead people to ruin are contrasted with the humble attitude (v.2) and integrity (v.3) that guides people through the troubles of life. Thus these verses form a unit, with v.1 and v.4 answering each other as v.2 and v.3 parallel each other, indicating that compromising just standards is not worth the immediate gain it may offer.

- <sup>1</sup> A false balance is an abomination to the Lord,  
but an accurate weight is his delight.

#### Proverbs 11:1

A false balance refers to deception by altering the standard of either the scale or the weight used to measure the quantity of an item being bought or sold. The Pentateuch instructs against such practice as out of accord with what the Lord desires; refer to Leviticus 19:35-36 and Deuteronomy 25:13-16. The Mosaic Law also calls it an abomination to the Lord, and the prophets condemn it as an intolerable injustice among the Lord's people: *<<Thus says the Lord God: Enough, O princes of Israel! Put away violence and oppression, and do what is just and right. Cease your evictions of my people, says the Lord God. You shall have honest balances, an honest ephah, and an honest bath. The ephah*

*and the bath shall be of the same measure, the bath containing one-tenth of a homer, and the ephah one-tenth of a homer; the homer shall be the standard measure. The shekel shall be twenty gerahs. Twenty shekels, twenty-five shekels, and fifteen shekels shall make a mina for you>> (Ezekiel 45:9-12), <<Hear this, you that trample on the needy, and bring to ruin the poor of the land, saying, 'When will the new moon be over so that we may sell grain; and the sabbath, so that we may offer wheat for sale? We will make the ephah small and the shekel great, and practise deceit with false balances, buying the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals, and selling the sweepings of the wheat'>> (Amos 8:4-6), and: <<Can I tolerate wicked scales and a bag of dishonest weights?>> (Micah 6:11). Compare also the further statements on this subject in Proverbs 16:11, 20:10, and 20:23.*

The term abomination was reserved for terrible, horrific things. This shows just how deeply God cares about simple honesty and fairness. He regards dishonest scales as an abomination in just the same way as he considers the desecration of his temple by the antichrist: <<*He shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall make sacrifice and offering cease; and in their place shall be an abomination that desolates, until the decreed end is poured out upon the desolator*>> (Daniel 9:27).

An accurate weight is his delight. To the degree that God condemns the dishonest who defraud, to the same degree he has delight in just and fair business practices.

<sup>2</sup> When pride comes, then comes disgrace;  
but wisdom is with the humble.

### Proverbs 11:2

When pride comes, then comes disgrace or shame. The proud man or woman fears shame. Ironically, they cultivate shame and disgrace for themselves. One significant reason for this is that God resists the proud as quoted in both James 4:6 and 1 Peter 5:5.

But wisdom is with the humble. There is great wisdom in humility because it recognises the truth about God and the truth about self, especially in relation to others. This humility is an important foundation for true wisdom. Derek Kidner commented, "Lowly (AV, RV) is a rare word, found only here and (as a verb) in Micah 6:8 ('walk humbly with thy God'), where it suggests the biddable spirit that is the opposite of the insubordination just considered." Adam Clarke added, "The humble man looks for nothing but justice; has the meanest opinion of himself; expects nothing in the way of commendation or praise; and can never be disappointed but in receiving praise, which he neither expects nor desires."

- <sup>3</sup> The integrity of the upright guides them,  
but the crookedness of the treacherous destroys them.

### Proverbs 11:3

The integrity of the upright guides them. The man or woman who lives with integrity - a trustworthy life lived without shame or secrets - is recognised as upright and will have their integrity to guide them.

The crookedness of the treacherous destroys them. The false and crooked ways of the unfaithful will bring those who practice them to destruction: <<*Righteousness guards one whose way is upright, but sin overthrows the wicked*>> (Proverbs 13:6).

- <sup>4</sup> Riches do not profit in the day of wrath,  
but righteousness delivers from death.

### Proverbs 11:4

Riches do not profit in the day of wrath. The Book of Proverbs recognises the benefit of riches, but also their limitations. Earthly wealth is useless in the day of wrath, also referred to by the prophets as the day of the Lord; it is not a day to be anticipated with anything other than reverential fear because it brings judgement: <<*See, the day of the Lord comes, cruel, with wrath and fierce anger, to make the earth a desolation, and to destroy its sinners from it*>> (Isaiah 13:9), <<*That day is the day of the Lord God of hosts, a day of retribution, to gain vindication from his foes. The sword shall devour and be sated, and drink its fill of their blood. For the Lord God of hosts holds a sacrifice in the land of the north by the river Euphrates*>> (Jeremiah 46:10), <<*For a day is near, the day of the Lord is near; it will be a day of clouds, a time of doom for the nations*>> (Ezekiel 30:3), <<*Alas for the day! For the day of the Lord is near, and as destruction from the Almighty it comes*>> (Joel 1:15), <<*Is not the day of the Lord darkness, not light, and gloom with no brightness in it?*>> (Amos 5:20), <<*Is not the day of the Lord darkness, not light, and gloom with no brightness in it?*>> (Obadiah 15), <<*Is not the day of the Lord darkness, not light, and gloom with no brightness in it?*>> (Zephaniah 2:3), <<*Lo, I will send you the prophet Elijah before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes*>> (Malachi 4:5), <<*For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night*>> (1 Thessalonians 5:2), <<*But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed*>> (2 Peter 3:10).

**But righteousness delivers from death.** Present earthly wealth can and should be used to store up treasure in heaven: <<*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 12:33-34), which will bring **profit in the day of wrath:** <<*For we write to you nothing other than what you can read and also understand; I hope you will understand until the end – as you have already understood us in part – that on the day of the Lord Jesus we are your boast even as you are our boast*>> (2 Corinthians 1:13-14), and: <<*As to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we beg you, brothers and sisters, not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as though from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord is already here. Let no one deceive you in any way; for that day will not come unless the rebellion comes first and the lawless one is revealed, the one destined for destruction*>> (2 Thessalonians 2:1-3).

### **Introduction to Proverbs 11:5-6**

These two verses parallel each other and emphasise a common theme of the section: the faithfulness of the righteous guides and delivers them from the fate of the wicked. The repeated phrases in v.1 and v.20 help make explicit that the Lord is the one who brings about the deliverance of those in whom he delights, as well as the fall of those who are an abomination to him.

- <sup>5</sup> The righteousness of the blameless keeps their ways straight,  
but the wicked fall by their own wickedness.

### **Proverbs 11:5**

**The righteousness of the blameless keeps their ways straight.** The blameless man or woman finds some rest in the confidence that God's guiding eye is upon the righteous. During the dedication of the temple, Solomon prayed for God to watch over and hear those who call upon him: <<*When heaven is shut up and there is no rain because they have sinned against you, and then they pray towards this place, confess your name, and turn from their sin, because you punish them, then hear in heaven, and forgive the sin of your servants, your people Israel, when you teach them the good way in which they should walk; and grant rain on your land, which you have given to your people as an inheritance*>> (1 Kings 8:35-36).

**The wicked fall by their own wickedness.** The wicked man or woman has no such confidence. God does not need to specially intervene in the fall of the wicked; he or she can fall by his own wickedness: <<*The violence of the wicked will sweep them away, because they refuse to do what is just*>> (Proverbs 21:7).

- 6 The righteousness of the upright saves them,  
but the treacherous are taken captive by their schemes.

#### Proverbs 11:6

The righteousness of the upright saves them. The upright will have their reward; their righteousness will be blessed and they will be delivered.

The treacherous are taken captive by their schemes. As the upright are delivered, the unfaithful will be caught and caught by their own lust, receiving the penalty of their own unfaithful desires. One such treacherous rogue, Haman, died upon the apparatus of his own wicked scheme: <<*Then Harbona, one of the eunuchs in attendance on the king, said, 'Look, the very gallows that Haman has prepared for Mordecai, whose word saved the king, stands at Haman's house, fifty cubits high.'* And the king said, 'Hang him on that'>> (Esther 7:9).

#### Introduction to Proverbs 11:7-8

The expectation and hope represented in wealth, with the likely implication that it is unjustly accumulated, will be in vain when the wicked die. Proverbs contrasts this with the hope of the righteous to warn against being fooled by the apparent security in dishonest gain and to assure those who fear the Lord that their hope, manifested in seeking the path of wisdom, will not be in vain.

- 7 When the wicked die, their hope perishes,  
and the expectation of the godless comes to nothing.

#### Proverbs 11:7

When the wicked die, their hope perishes. The wicked man or woman often expects blessing and goodness, but that expectation will perish when they die: <<*Such are the paths of all who forget God; the hope of the godless shall perish*>> (Job 8:13), and face the judgement to come to all men and women: <<*And just as it is appointed for mortals to die once, and after that the judgement, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin, but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him*>> (Hebrews 9:27-28).

The expectation of the godless comes to nothing. The hopes of the wicked end up only being wishes and wishes that are bitterly disappointed. Clarke observed, "Hope was not made for the wicked; and yet they are the very persons that most abound in it! They hope to be saved, and get at last to the kingdom of God; though they have their face towards perdition, and refuse to turn. But their hope goes no farther than the grave."

- <sup>8</sup> The righteous are delivered from trouble,  
and the wicked get into it instead.

### Proverbs 11:8

The righteous are delivered from trouble. God promises deliverance to his righteous ones: <<*The wicked is a ransom for the righteous, and the faithless for the upright*>> (Proverbs 21:18). Whatever trouble they experience in this life is only temporary, and they will see his deliverance in this life and especially in the life to come.

The wicked get into it instead. For the righteous, this life is the worst trouble they will ever experience. For the wicked, their greatest trouble is yet to come.

### Introduction to Proverbs 11:9-12

These verses are framed by reference to imprudent speech relating to others: the godless man slanders his neighbour (v.9), and one who belittles his neighbour lacks sense (v.12). Verses 10-11 parallel each other and broaden the focus beyond the individual to a city. The city benefits or suffers respectively from the presence of the righteous or the wicked, and the attitude of the city toward each type of character is appropriate. In contrast to the typical modern city, the city described in these verses is a small community where people know each other well and where all would suffer from the person who slanders his neighbours.

- <sup>9</sup> With their mouths the godless would destroy their neighbours,  
but by knowledge the righteous are delivered.

### Proverbs 11:9

With their mouths the godless would destroy their neighbours. One of the identifying marks of the hypocrite is that they destroy people with their words. Sincere love looks to build others up, not to destroy them: <<*But now, dear lady, I ask you, not as though I were writing you a new commandment, but one we have had from the beginning, let us love one another. And this is love, that we walk according to his commandments; this is the commandment just as you have heard it from the beginning – you must walk in it*>> (2 John 5-6), and: <<*Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you do for the friends, even though they are strangers to you; they have testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on in a manner worthy of God; for they began their journey for the sake of Christ, accepting no support from non-believers*>> (3 John 5-7).

By knowledge the righteous are delivered. God's deliverance comes to the righteous through their knowledge, both in the sense of wisdom and in the sense of

a personal relationship with God. Some understand knowledge as specifically knowledge of the true facts regarding the situation in which the godless man seeks to destroy his neighbour with slander, and this is possible. Yet in Proverbs, knowledge is more commonly knowledge of God and of his will, so the saying may well be making the point that, even when slandered, the idealised righteous person knows how to conduct himself uprightly.

<sup>10</sup> When it goes well with the righteous, the city rejoices;  
and when the wicked perish, there is jubilation.

#### Proverbs 11:10

When it goes well with the righteous, the city rejoices. God gives favour among men with his righteous ones: <<*So you will find favour and good repute in the sight of God and of people*>> (Proverbs 3:4), and the community rejoices when they are blessed.

When the wicked perish, there is jubilation. As much as the community rejoices over the blessing of the righteous, they also celebrate the calamity and end of the wicked. Wicked men and women are not missed when they pass.

<sup>11</sup> By the blessing of the upright a city is exalted,  
but it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked.

#### Proverbs 11:11

By the blessing of the upright a city is exalted. When good comes to the upright, it is good for the entire community. Their blessing and prosperity extends beyond themselves. Such exaltation was seen in the days when the Jews won a great victory over their enemies in the Persian Empire: <<*Then Mordecai went out from the presence of the king, wearing royal robes of blue and white, with a great golden crown and a mantle of fine linen and purple, while the city of Susa shouted and rejoiced*>> (Esther 8:15).

But it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked. The words of the wicked can even destroy a city, leading to its overthrow.

<sup>12</sup> Whoever belittles another lacks sense,  
but an intelligent person remains silent.

#### Proverbs 11:12

Whoever belittles another lacks sense. The way of wisdom is also the way of love and respect. When one despises their neighbour, it is not evidence of superior wisdom and discernment, but a failure of true wisdom.

An intelligent person remains silent rather than spreading harmful information that they might know about their neighbour because of living so close to them. Intelligent men and women of wisdom recognise there is a time and place to hold back one's outrage. They know when love and respect would compel them to hold their peace, as Paul would later teach: <<*If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all*>> (Romans 12:18).

When asked which was the greatest commandment: <<*Jesus answered, 'The first is, "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength." The second is this, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." There is no other commandment greater than these'*>> (Mark 12:29-31).

<sup>13</sup> A gossip goes about telling secrets,  
but one who is trustworthy in spirit keeps a confidence.

#### Proverbs 11:13

A gossip goes about telling secrets. This is an afterword to vv.9-12. The unfaithful gossip, the uncontrolled talker (a gossip) loves the power and intrigue of revealing secrets. For them, such secrets are a form of power that they use for their own advancement. The person who slanders cannot be trusted with private matters. In contrast, one who is trustworthy in spirit knows when to keep things in confidence: <<*The wise lay up knowledge, but the babbling of a fool brings ruin near*>> (Proverbs 10:14). One should be prudent regarding the people with whom one chooses to share confidential matters. The man or woman of wisdom - those of a faithful spirit - knows there is an appropriate time to conceal a matter. There are times when love and wisdom guide to privacy.

<sup>14</sup> Where there is no guidance, a nation falls,  
but in an abundance of counsellors there is safety.

#### Proverbs 11:14

Where there is no guidance, a nation falls. People need leadership and guidance. God has given systems and structures of authority, and those in leadership need to be able to give wise counsel, for: <<*Without counsel, plans go wrong, but with many advisers they succeed*>> (Proverbs 15:22). The same applies to other institutions as well, especially the church.

But in an abundance of counsellors there is safety. There is great value and safety in receiving opinion and input from the multitude of counsellors. No man or woman has all gifts and wisdom, and a multitude of counsellors may work well to bring greater wisdom and safety in decision making.

The role of counsellors is to aid a person in making wise decisions, again: <<*Without counsel, plans go wrong, but with many advisers they succeed*>> (Proverbs 15:22), and: <<*for by wise guidance you can wage your war, and in abundance of counsellors there is victory*>> (Proverbs 24:6). While this is particularly important for those who lead a people, Proverbs also stresses its broader application to people's decision making in all sorts of situations – v.5b and the contrasting description of how the wicked falls <<*by their own wickedness*>>.

- <sup>15</sup> To guarantee loans for a stranger brings trouble,  
but there is safety in refusing to do so.

### Proverbs 11:15

To guarantee loans for a stranger brings trouble. To promise to pay the debts of a stranger is to invite trouble. It is never a surprise when one suffers because of such a foolish promise. To put up guarantee is equivalent to co-signing a loan (refer to the comment made on Proverbs 6:1-5), and to do so on behalf of a stranger is certainly ill-advised. However, Solomon also warns of the folly of accepting such a pledge for a neighbour: <<*It is senseless to give a pledge, to become surety for a neighbour*>> (Proverbs 17:18).

There is safety in refusing to do so. There is security in being responsible only for one's own debts, for the things that they have control over.

### Introduction to Proverbs 11:16-21

There are three pairs of proverbs here (vv.16-17, vv.18-19 and vv.20-21), all relating to a common theme. The gracious woman of v.16 and the man who is kind in v.17 contrast with violent men in v.16 and the cruel man of v.17. By itself, v.16 might suggest that there is wisdom in pursuing violence, since one can get rich by that means. However, in the larger context of vv.16-21, it is clear that their wealth brings the violent no true happiness, and that it comes at a high price. The idea of striving to gain something governs vv.18-19. Verse 18 speaks of labouring, i.e. earn and sow, whether it be for deceptive wages for the evil or for a sure reward for the good. Verse 19, similarly, speaks of pursuing righteousness or evil and of the results that follow.

Verses 20 and 21 both concern divine judgement, with punishment for the evil and deliverance for the good. The shared structure and vocabulary of v.1 and v.20 draw attention to the character and actions that are either an abomination or a delight to the Lord. The implication is that it is the Lord himself who makes the consequences of v.21 assured, which implies that the consequences of vv.3-9 and vv.18-19 are also brought about by the Lord.

16 A gracious woman gets honour,  
but she who hates virtue is covered with shame.  
The timid become destitute,  
but the aggressive gain riches.

#### Proverbs 11:16

A gracious woman gets honour, but she who hates virtue is covered with shame. A mark of a truly gracious woman is that she carries within herself a sense of honour and dignity: <<*Give her a share in the fruit of her hands, and let her works praise her in the city gates*>> (Proverbs 31:31). Those who promote loose morality will suffer within their community for it dishonours them and their creator.

The timid become destitute, but the aggressive gain riches. Character and honour are important to the gracious woman, but all the ruthless care about are riches. Wealth is their god. Some believe that 'the aggressive' does not have a negative sense in this proverb, and that it simply speaks of the reward that comes to the strong.

17 Those who are kind reward themselves,  
but the cruel do themselves harm.

#### Proverbs 11:17

Those who are kind reward themselves. The one who shows mercy to others will be shown mercy: <<*With the loyal you show yourself loyal; with the blameless you show yourself blameless*>> (2 Samuel 22:26), and this is good for the soul. Kidner commented, "The kindness spoken of is *hesed*, steadfast love, like God's."

The cruel do themselves harm. The one who is unmerciful and cruel to others will find that it troubles himself. They measure they use for others will also be measured to them: <<*For with the judgement you make you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get*>> (Matthew 7:2).

18 The wicked earn no real gain,  
but those who sow righteousness get a true reward.

#### Proverbs 11:18

The wicked earn no real gain. When someone works with deception and dishonesty, it is evidence of wickedness. The wise and honest person knows that work must be done in a way marked by honesty and integrity. Those who do their work in **righteousness** - marked by honesty and integrity - will see the **sure**

reward of their work. Their righteous work is like good seed that has been sown. Ultimately, true righteous work is done by Jesus: <<*He answered, 'The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the weeds are the children of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels'*>> (Matthew 13:37-39).

Those who sow righteousness get a true reward. Those who do their work in righteousness - marked by honesty and integrity - will see the sure reward of their work. Their righteous work is like good seed that has been sown.

<sup>19</sup> Whoever is steadfast in righteousness will live,  
but whoever pursues evil will die.

### Proverbs 11:19

Whoever is steadfast in righteousness will live. For Solomon, this was a self-evident fact. Using the same logic he could have written, "As the sun rises in the east." The path of righteousness is a path to life.

Whoever pursues evil will die. The way of evil is also a path, and it leads to death. Many people sacrifice a lot in their pursuit of the evil way, but their only reward is the destination of death. Paul writes of something similar: <<*Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?*>> (Romans 6:16), and: <<*For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation and brings no regret, but worldly grief produces death*>> (2 Corinthians 7:10).

Once again in wisdom literature, the emphasis is more on the benefits of spiritual life and the cancer of spiritual death that are in view: <<*See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity. If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God that I am commanding you today, by loving the Lord your God, walking in his ways, and observing his commandments, decrees, and ordinances, then you shall live and become numerous, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to possess. But if your heart turns away and you do not hear, but are led astray to bow down to other gods and serve them, I declare to you today that you shall perish; you shall not live long in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess. I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, loving the Lord your God, obeying him, and holding fast to him; for that means life to you and length of days, so that you may live in the land that the Lord swore to*

*give to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob*>> (Deuteronomy 30:15-20).

<sup>20</sup> Crooked minds are an abomination to the Lord,  
but those of blameless ways are his delight.

#### Proverbs 11:20

Crooked minds are an abomination to the Lord. There is a sense in which humans are the victims of sin, but another and perhaps greater sense in which they are the willing participants and perpetrators of sin. God is right to regard the perverse heart of man as an abomination before him: <<*But as for those whose heart goes after their detestable things and their abominations, I will bring their deeds upon their own heads, says the Lord God*>> (Ezekiel 11:21), and: <<*So he said to them, 'You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of others; but God knows your hearts; for what is prized by human beings is an abomination in the sight of God*>> (Luke 16:15).

But those of blameless ways are his delight. Men and women can delight God. Especially from a new covenant perspective, it can be seen that the blameless in their ways are those who have been forgiven and declared righteous because of the person and work of Jesus Christ. These are those who are his delight, God delights in them as he delights in his own Son.

<sup>21</sup> Be assured, the wicked will not go unpunished,  
but those who are righteous will escape.

#### Proverbs 11:21

Be assured, the wicked will not go unpunished. Individually, man is not strong enough to resist God; collectively man is also not strong enough to resist God. God judged mankind when they joined forces to resist God in the days of the Tower of Babel; refer to Genesis 11:1-9.

But those who are righteous will escape. God's blessing will be upon his righteous ones and upon their descendants - their posterity.

<sup>22</sup> Like a gold ring in a pig's snout  
is a beautiful woman without good sense.

#### Proverbs 11:22

Like a gold ring in a pig's snout is a beautiful woman without good sense. The attractiveness of a gold ring would be nullified by its strange presence in the snout of a pig. This image turns typical notions of value on their head: the attractiveness

of a beautiful woman is insignificant if there is a lack of discretion in her character: <<*Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised*>> (Proverbs 31:30).

### Introduction to Proverbs 11:23-31

The ultimate destinies of the wicked and the righteous, e.g. v.23 and v.31, are reflected in their actions (v.27) and are prefigured in the response of those affected by such actions (v.26). The particular actions in focus are the way a person relates to provisions and people (vv.24-26 and v.28).

The benefit of the generous life of the righteous for themselves and for others is represented throughout the section in several agricultural images: water (v.25), flourish like green leaves (v.28), fruit and a tree of life (v.30). These images represent a fuller illustration of the statement in v.18b: <<*those who sow righteousness get a true reward*>>.

<sup>23</sup> The desire of the righteous ends only in good;  
the expectation of the wicked in wrath.

### Proverbs 11:23

The desire of the righteous ends only in good. The good character of a righteous man or woman is reflected in their desires. They desire that which is good.

The expectation of the wicked in wrath. The good desires of the righteous will be fulfilled, and that which is due to the wicked will come to them: <<*Look, the storm of the Lord! Wrath has gone forth, a whirling tempest; it will burst upon the head of the wicked*>> (Jeremiah 30:23), and: <<*to those who by patiently doing good seek for glory and honour and immortality, he will give eternal life; while for those who are self-seeking and who obey not the truth but wickedness, there will be wrath and fury*>> (Romans 2:7-8).

<sup>24</sup> Some give freely, yet grow all the richer;  
others withhold what is due, and only suffer want.

### Proverbs 11:24

Some give freely, yet grow all the richer. This refers to the generous man or woman who give freely, yet not in the sense of wasteful distribution. This is Biblical generosity, which is like the scattering of seed, as Paul describes it in 2 Corinthians 9:8-13, that will later bring a great harvest: <<*Isaac sowed seed in that land, and in the same year reaped a hundredfold. The Lord blessed him*>> (Genesis 26:12), and: <<*Other seed fell into good soil and brought forth grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirty and sixty and a hundredfold*>>

(Mark 4:8). People never lose when they give generously unto God and his work through the church or mission.

**Others withhold what is due, and only suffer want.** To be stingy and to hold on to more than is right is to lead to poverty. When people are selfish and ungenerous with what God has given them, they should expect that God would grant less to them - leading eventually to poverty: <<***Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for you reap whatever you sow***>> (Galatians 6:7).

Because there is a God who blesses generosity and withholds blessing from the greedy, this paradoxical proverb makes perfect sense; refer also to the comment made on Proverbs 3:9-10.

<sup>25</sup> A generous person will be enriched,  
and one who gives water will get water.

#### **Proverbs 11:25**

**A generous person will be enriched.** God has promised to bless the generous soul: <<***But those who are noble plan noble things, and by noble things they stand***>> (Isaiah 32:8), and will do so with riches in this world, the next, or both. David acknowledged this generosity shortly before his own death: <<***I know, my God, that you search the heart, and take pleasure in uprightness; in the uprightness of my heart I have freely offered all these things, and now I have seen your people, who are present here, offering freely and joyously to you***>> (1 Chronicles 29:17).

**One who gives water will get water.** The idea here is of the person who gives less than they could or should. When people give, God knows how to give unto them. They cannot water others without being watered themselves. They are never the loser for their God-guided generosity. According to the apostle Paul Jesus taught that it is more blessed to give than to receive; refer to Acts 20:35. Charles Spurgeon commented, "If I want to get water I must give water. Though that seems a strange way of self-serving I pray you try it."

Of course, Jesus does acknowledge that giving water to someone in need is a good deed: <<***For truly I tell you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you bear the name of Christ will by no means lose the reward***>> (Mark 9:41).

<sup>26</sup> The people curse those who hold back grain,  
but a blessing is on the head of those who sell it.

## Proverbs 11:26

The people curse those who hold back grain. This has in mind the seller of grain who refuses to sell hoping to manipulate the market and gain a much higher price later. Such a selfish man or woman will not only be opposed by God, but also cursed by the people. God is a remarkably generous God; selfishness comes from the fallen nature of man. This verse does not establish a regulated price for grain, yet it protects the buyer by warning the seller of the eventual consequences of their action. People will curse him.

Charles Spurgeon thought this spoke to how Christians should regard financial markets and transactions: “Laws which interfere between buyer and seller, master and workman, by any form of law, are blunders and nuisances. Parliaments and princes have hung on to the antiquated absurdity of regulating prices, but the Holy Ghost does nothing of the kind. All the attempts of men to control the price of bread and wheat are sheer folly, as the history of France may well prove. The market goes best when it is left alone, and so in our text, there is no law enacted and no penalty threatened, except that which the nature of things makes inevitable. God knows political economy, whether men do or not, and leaving the coarse machinery of police regulations, he puts the offender under a form of self-acting legislature which is far more efficient.”

A blessing is on the head of those who sell it. The one who does what is right by providing grain and goods for sale will be blessed by the community. This proverb does not refer to someone who gives away grain, but simply to someone who sells it, making it available at a fair and good price.

The principle is spiritual as well as practical. When Christians distribute instead of hoarding, blessing will come. Spurgeon applied this to the ‘distribution’ of the Gospel in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century missionary movement and the blessing that came to churches because of it. “Mark this, from the day when Fuller, Carey, Sutcliffe, and others, met together to send out missionaries to India the sun began to dawn of a gracious revival which is not over yet, for bad as the state of the Churches now is, yet it is marvellously an improvement upon anything before the age of missions. I believe that the neglect of sending the word to the heathen brought a blight and a curse upon the Churches, which is now happily removed.”

<sup>27</sup> Whoever diligently seeks good seeks favour,  
but evil comes to the one who searches for it.

## Proverbs 11:27

Whoever diligently seeks good seeks favour. God honours the one who earnestly seeks good, and that one may be blessed with favour among God and men, as did

Jesus in his fully human state: <<*And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favour*>> (Luke 2:52). This is especially true when the good sought is God himself: <<*From there you will seek the Lord your God, and you will find him if you search after him with all your heart and soul*>> (Deuteronomy 4:29), <<*But Jehoshaphat also said to the king of Israel, "First seek the counsel of the Lord"*>> (2 Chronicles 18:4), <<*But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well*>> (Matthew 6:33 NIV), and: <<*Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you*>> (Matthew 7:7).

But evil comes to the one who searches for it. Seeking what is right in the eyes of the Lord brings favour; but seeking evil brings trouble. The trouble is often simply finding the evil that one seeks.

<sup>28</sup> Those who trust in their riches will wither,  
but the righteous will flourish like green leaves.

#### Proverbs 11:28

Those who trust in their riches will wither. Proverbs teaches the value of money and wealth, but also teaches that trusting in riches never provides an eternal solution and often fails to provide during this earthly life either: <<*If I have made gold my trust, or called fine gold my confidence; if I have rejoiced because my wealth was great, or because my hand had acquired much; if I have looked at the sun when it shone, or the moon moving in splendour, and my heart has been secretly enticed, and my mouth has kissed my hand; this also would be an iniquity to be punished by the judges, for I should have been false to God above*>> (Job 31:24-28), and: <<*Thus says the Lord: Do not let the wise boast in their wisdom, do not let the mighty boast in their might, do not let the wealthy boast in their wealth; but let those who boast boast in this, that they understand and know me, that I am the Lord; I act with steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth, for in these things I delight, says the Lord*>> (Jeremiah 9:23-24). To put trust in riches is to invite ultimate failure.

The righteous will flourish like green leaves. The righteous man or woman does not trust in riches, but in God: <<*Why should I fear in times of trouble, when the iniquity of my persecutors surrounds me, those who trust in their wealth and boast of the abundance of their riches?*>> (Psalm 49:5-6), and: <<*May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world*>> (Galatians 6:14). This leads to a truly flourishing life.

<sup>29</sup> Those who trouble their households will inherit wind,  
and the fool will be servant to the wise.

### Proverbs 11:29

Those who trouble their households will inherit wind. To bring trouble to one's own family is to prepare a future full of storm and difficulty. To inherit the wind is to have a future of storm and trouble.

The fool will be servant to the wise. Because God's blessing is on the wise, God will lift up the wise of heart. The foolish man or woman should expect to end up working for the wise man or woman: <<*The evil bow down before the good, the wicked at the gates of the righteous*>> (Proverbs 14:19).

<sup>30</sup> The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life,  
but violence takes lives away.

### Proverbs 11:30

The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life. A righteous life bears fruit, and it gives life to others. The NT later speaks of the fruit of the Spirit in the life of God's people: <<*By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things*>> (Galatians 5:22-23), and: <<*For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light – for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true*>> (Ephesians 5:8-9). This is fruit like a tree of life to others. It brings shade and sustenance to others. Spurgeon remarked, "The fruit of the righteous – that is to say his life – is not a thing fastened upon him, but it grows out of him. Look to it more and more that your religion is real, true, natural, vital – not artificial, constrained, superficial, a thing of times, days, places, a fungus produced by excitement, a fermentation generated by meetings and stirred by oratory. We all need a religion which can live either in a wilderness, or in a crowd; a religion which will show itself in every walk of life, and in every company."

But violence takes lives away. Violence can lead to death but it is also damaging to the perpetrators of violence as they too lose the value of their own lives.

Many translations provide a more positive view on this line: 'He who wins souls is wise.' One of the greatest exercises of wisdom is to win souls to God and his kingdom. It takes wisdom to love, give, and engaging answer those who have yet to come into God's kingdom:

- The word win is used in romance; to win souls, one must love them.
- The word win is used in war; to win souls is a battle.
- The word win is used in sports; to win souls is a competition for the Devil desires them also.

Spurgeon commented, “God himself wins not souls without wisdom, for the eternal plan of salvation was dictated by an infallible judgement, and in every line of it infinite skill is apparent. There is as much wisdom to be seen in the new creation as in the old. In a sinner saved, there is as much of God to be beheld as in a universe rising out of nothing.” He also wrote, “It is implied in our text that there are souls which need winning. Ah me, all souls of men are lost by nature.”

<sup>31</sup> If the righteous are repaid on earth,  
how much more the wicked and the sinner!

### Proverbs 11:31

First Peter 4:18 cites this verse from the Septuagint.

If the righteous are repaid on earth. Although the earthly consequences of a righteous or wicked life may not appear immediately, over the course of a person’s earthly life such consequences will appear. Like other proverbs, this statement is a general truth about human behaviour, although there may at times be exceptions, such as when evil governments oppress the righteous and reward evildoers, as Proverbs 13:23 recognises, or when some of God’s righteous people endure suffering, as demonstrated in the account of Job. Yet even in these cases, the Lord vindicates his faithful, although that may await the final judgement.

How much more the wicked and the sinner! The righteous will receive their reward, and often on this earth. It is sobering to consider how much more is this true of the ungodly and the sinner: <<*See, I am beginning to bring disaster on the city that is called by my name, and how can you possibly avoid punishment? You shall not go unpunished, for I am summoning a sword against all the inhabitants of the earth, says the Lord of hosts*>> (Jeremiah 25:29), <<*And ‘If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinners?’*>> (1 Peter 4:18).