



Proverbs - Chapter Nineteen

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

Summary of Chapter Nineteen

Wealth makes friends. A false witness will not go unpunished. A good wife is from the Lord. Whoever helps the poor lends to the Lord.

Introduction to Proverbs 18:22-20:4 (continued)

A number of proverbs in this section of the book are so similar to each other that they appear to serve as markers, setting boundaries for separate proverb collections. Proverbs 18:22 and 19:14 both assert that a good wife is from the Lord; while 19:15, 19:24, and 20:4 concern laziness. Proverbs 19:11-12 deals first with patience and then with the king's anger, and 20:2-3 deals first with the king's anger and then with patience. Between these markers, Proverbs 18:23-19:10 concerns misfortune, while 19:16-23 can be described as an inventory of the essential elements of a good life. Over against 19:16-23, the proverbs in 19:25-20:1 present the antithesis of the good life, the life of the mocker.

Introduction to Proverbs 18:23-19:4 (continued)

These proverbs observe misfortune from various angles. The poor are reduced to begging and taking abuse (18:23), but a few friends stick by a man even in his worst times (18:24). The great majority of one's companions, however, only stay close by so long as one's fortunes are good; in bad times, they disappear (19:4).

Poverty with integrity is better than immorality (19:1), but hunger, such as is produced by poverty, can lead to thoughtless, hasty acts of folly (refer to 19:2 and the associated comment). People often blame God for their misfortune when they should be blaming themselves (19:3).

- 1 Better the poor walking in integrity
than one perverse of speech who is a fool.

Proverbs 19:1

Better the poor walking in integrity. Previous proverbs have been critical of the poor, but here Solomon recognised that not all poverty is caused by moral failure or weakness. There are definitely poor people who walk in their integrity, and it is: <<*Better to be poor and walk in integrity than to be crooked in one's ways even though rich*>> (Proverbs 28:6).

Than one perverse of speech who is a fool. The Book of Proverbs is honest about the disadvantages of poverty. Yet it also recognises that poor is in no way the worst thing a person can be. It is far worse to be a fool who speaks twisted, perverse things.

- 2 Desire without knowledge is not good,
and one who moves too hurriedly misses the way.

Proverbs 19:2

Desire without knowledge is not good. When a person has no wisdom, i.e. is without knowledge, it is never good. It may be common, but it is not good: <<*And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight to help you to determine what is best, so that on the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God*>> (Philippians 1:9-11).

One who moves too hurriedly misses the way. Solomon listed a second thing that was not good - the one who rushes toward sin (moves too hurriedly). On this side of eternity believers will also struggle with sin, but they do not have to run towards it. Christians should be those who battle against sin, not run towards it.

One who moves too hurriedly is literally 'Whoever makes haste with his feet,' referring to a person hurrying to sin in contrast with the one walking in integrity in v.1. It may also refer to an impulsive person who unwisely acts before thinking or planning the right way. He has a 'desire' to get somewhere but he does not have sufficient knowledge to reach his goal: <<*Because you have said, "We have made a covenant with death, and with Sheol we have an agreement, when the overwhelming whip passes through it will not come to us, for we have made lies our refuge, and in falsehood we have taken shelter"; therefore thus says the Lord God, "Behold, I am the one who has laid as a foundation in Zion, a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation: 'Whoever believes will not be in haste'"*>> (Isaiah 28:16 ESV).

- 3 One's own folly leads to ruin,
yet the heart rages against the Lord.

Proverbs 19:3

One's own folly leads to ruin. It is true that a fool is foolish because they are twisted or crooked. Yet it also true that the foolish man finds his way more and more twisted. Foolishness leads to more twistedness: <<*Fools say in their hearts, 'There is no God.' They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds; there is no one who does good*>> (Psalm 14:1), <<*The devising of folly is sin*>> (Proverbs 24:9a), and: <<*For fools speak folly, and their minds plot iniquity: to practise ungodliness, to utter error concerning the Lord, to leave the craving of the hungry unsatisfied, and to deprive the thirsty of drink*>> (Isaiah 32:6).

The heart rages against the Lord. God intended humankind to be at peace with him, but because of rebellion (both inherited and chosen), they are in many ways against the Lord. The foolish man or woman has no peace in God; their heart frets against the Lord. They are angry and perhaps bitter against God because of their twisted way, which will ultimately lead to their doom: <<*The fourth angel poured his bowl on the sun, and it was allowed to scorch people with fire; they were scorched by the fierce heat, but they cursed the name of God, who had authority over these plagues, and they did not repent and give him glory. The fifth angel poured his bowl on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom was plunged into darkness; people gnawed their tongues in agony, and cursed the God of heaven because of their pains and sores, and they did not repent of their deeds*>> (Revelation 16:8-11).

- 4 Wealth brings many friends,
but the poor are left friendless.

Proverbs 19:4

Wealth brings many friends. When a person is wealthy, it draws many people to them in friendship. Yet these friendships may not be sincere or meaningful: <<*The poor are disliked even by their neighbours, but the rich have many friends*>> (Proverbs 14:20).

The poor are left friendless. The wealthy man has advantages and draws many friends, but the poor man does not have these advantages. Their would-be friends and even family find it easy to separate from them: <<*He has put my family far from me, and my acquaintances are wholly estranged from me. My relatives and my close friends have failed me; the guests in my house have forgotten me; my serving-girls count me as a stranger; I have become an alien in their eyes. I call to my servant, but he gives me no answer; I must myself plead with*>>

him. My breath is repulsive to my wife; I am loathsome to my own family>>
(Job 19:13-17).

Introduction to Proverbs 19:5-9

Verses 5 and 9 are virtually identical and frame this section. Of itself, v.5 is a general proverb on the importance of honest testimony; for further implications of and warnings against being a false witness refer to Proverbs 6:19, 12:17 and 14:5.

In this context, dominated by the idea of poverty and misfortune, 'false witness' could relate either to those who exploit the poor in the courts or to poor people who will perjure themselves for a little money. Verses 6-7 return to the idea mentioned in v.4, that the prosperous seem to have many friends but the poor man has no friends at all. Verse 8 picks up on the teaching of vv.1-2, that even in misfortune one must seek wisdom.

⁵ A false witness will not go unpunished,
and a liar will not escape.

Proverbs 19:5

A false witness will not go unpunished. The first idea in this proverb is probably that of the law court, and in the court it is essential that the false witness be punished. God's law forbids false testimony: <<*You shall not spread a false report. You shall not join hands with the wicked to act as a malicious witness*>> (Exodus 23:1). Justice depends upon it. This principle extends beyond the court of law into daily life. God loves the truth and wants his people to speak the truth: <<*When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come*>> (John 16:13), <<*Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth*>> (John 17:17), and: <<*Pilate asked him, 'So you are a king?' Jesus answered, 'You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice'*>> (John 18:37).

A liar will not escape. Among men, sometimes the false witness and liars escape the discovery and penalty of their sin. With God, a person who speaks lies will not escape. Jesus said every word would be held to account: <<*I tell you, on the day of judgement you will have to give an account for every careless word you utter*>> (Matthew 12:36).

⁶ Many seek the favour of the generous,
and everyone is a friend to a giver of gifts.

Proverbs 19:6

Many seek the favour of the generous. When someone is of high status and importance in their community, especially those in authority, many people want their favour. There are advantages in having the favour of influential people. The ruler they should truly seek is the Lord: <<*Many seek the favour of a ruler, but it is from the Lord that one gets justice*>> (Proverbs 29:26).

Everyone is a friend to a giver of gifts. Many people who offer friendship do so out of selfish motives. They want the benefit of the favour of the influential and the gifts that others may offer. By the grace of God there is a free gift whom all can receive: <<*For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord*>> (Romans 6:23).

7 If the poor are hated even by their kin,
how much more are they shunned by their friends!
When they call after them, they are not there.

Proverbs 19:7

If the poor are hated even by their kin, how much more are they shunned by their friends! To be poor is often to be rejected by men, even by brothers and friends. What a contrast to Jesus, who himself became poor to draw near to humankind in their poverty and need: <<*For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich*>> (2 Corinthians 8:9).

When they call after them, they are not there. By nature, people run from the poor person, even when he/she tries to persuade and pursue them with words. In contrast, God pursues the poor and needy. He calls on those who choose to follow him to do the same: <<*If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill', and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that?*>> (James 2:15-16), and: <<*How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help? Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action*>> (1 John 3:17-18).

8 To get wisdom is to love oneself;
to keep understanding is to prosper.

Proverbs 19:8

To get wisdom is to love oneself. The possession and pursuit of wisdom is so good and helpful that people can and should get wisdom simply out of self-interest. In so doing a person can learn to love their own soul, their own life in Christ.

True wisdom is found in the word and commandments of God: <<*the fear of the Lord is pure, enduring for ever; the ordinances of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward*>> (Psalm 19:9-11), <<*Whoever gives thought to the word will discover good, and blessed is he who trusts in the Lord*>> (Proverbs 16:20 ESV), and: <<*They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them*>> (John 14:21).

To keep understanding is to prosper. Wisdom is not just something to get; it is also something to keep. Good is found when true understanding is achieved.

⁹ A false witness will not go unpunished,
and the liar will perish.

Proverbs 19:9

A false witness will not go unpunished. The words and idea of this proverb were previously presented in v.5. The repetition is a reminder that this is an important principle. In the law court and in daily life, God wants everyone to be people of the truth and so he promised that a false witness will not go unpunished.

The liar will perish. This speaks to the certainty of God's justice towards those who lie. Revelation 21:8 warns that liars are among those who will have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.

¹⁰ It is not fitting for a fool to live in luxury,
much less for a slave to rule over princes.

Proverbs 19:10

It is not fitting for a fool to live in luxury. The sense is that there are some wisdom-rejecting fools who enjoy luxury, but it does not seem right. It is not fitting for a fool to live in luxury.

Much less for a slave to rule over princes. Solomon spoke according to the wisdom of natural man, which places great trust in nobility and family lineage. This is one of the proverbs that the Gospel and the new covenant turn on its head, where those who would be great should be as servants and not as princes: <<*It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave*>> (Matthew 20:26), and: <<*The greatest among you will be your servant. All who*

exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted>> (Matthew 23:11).

Not fitting for a slave to rule over princes does not mean it is always wrong for a slave to rise to power; otherwise, Joseph's ascent in the Egyptian government would be an example of moral disorder in the world. Rather, it suggests that fortune and misfortune are not always fair: sometimes a fool becomes wealthy without doing anything to merit that wealth, and sometimes a slave rises to power without an ability to rule well.

¹¹ Those with good sense are slow to anger,
and it is their glory to overlook an offence.

Proverbs 19:11

Those with good sense are slow to anger. It is not necessarily weakness or lack of courage that makes a man slow to anger: <<*Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding, but one who has a hasty temper exalts folly*>> (Proverbs 14:29), <<*One who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and one whose temper is controlled than one who captures a city*>> (Proverbs 16:32), and: <<*You must understand this, my beloved: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger*>> (James 1:19). It may be wisdom, here described as discretion.

It is their glory to overlook an offence. A wise man or woman knows that they have been forgiven much, and this shapes how they deal with others. They do not act as if they must hold everyone accountable for every transgression, but know when to overlook a transgression: <<*Then Peter came and said to him, 'Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?' Jesus said to him, 'Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times*>> (Matthew 18:21-22), <<*Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, and be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you. Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children*>> (Ephesians 4:31-5:1), and: <<*As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive*>> (Colossians 3:12-13).

In many cultures, any sign of disrespect to a man is a challenge to his honour, and he can regain it only by fighting whoever insults him. Here, patience and overlooking slights bring honour to a man.

12 A king's anger is like the growling of a lion,
but his favour is like dew on the grass.

Proverbs 19:12

A king's anger is like the growling of a lion. The growling of a lion is frightening and precedes an act of violence; dew is gentle and gives life. The proverb does not say that a king's anger or favour is always right, but that it is powerful: <<*The dread anger of a king is like the growling of a lion; anyone who provokes him to anger forfeits life itself*>> (Proverbs 20:2).

The roar of a lion can be terrifying, not only for the sound itself but also for the understanding that it means destruction may swiftly follow. The same is true for the wrath of a king or any other influential person. It is much truer regarding the wrath of God, or the wrath of the Lion of the Tribe of Judah. Adam Clarke commented, "There is nothing more dreadful than the roaring of this tyrant of the forest. At the sound of it all other animals tremble, flee away, and hide themselves. The king who is above law, and rules without law, and whose will is his own law, is like the lion." Such despots and tyrants still rule in many of the world's states today. They are feared by the majority of their subjects and even by their close supporters, for they are often unstable. It is only right that Christians should call on God to deal with such rulers and ease the suffering of the people they control.

His favour is like dew on the grass. This means the king's favour is refreshing and life giving: <<*May he live while the sun endures, and as long as the moon, throughout all generations. May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass, like showers that water the earth*>> (Psalm 72:5-6), and: <<*It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion. For there the Lord ordained his blessing, life for evermore*>> (Psalm 133:3); it also means that it is fleeting, as the dew on the grass. The favour of God is certainly refreshing and life giving, but it is not fleeting, as if God were an impossible to please tyrant.

Introduction to Proverbs 19:13-14

Verse 13 gives balance to v.14 in the recognition that family life can be painful and some wives are a great burden to their husbands. Of course, some husbands are a great burden to their wives; the wise should look to themselves to determine what part their own behaviour has led to the quarrels. The continual dripping brings to mind a leaking roof. This is not a minor irritation but a source of structural damage that can make a house uninhabitable. The point is that such a woman or man ruins their relationship. Verse 14 implies not only that a prudent wife is a gift from the Lord, but also that she manages the household so well that she increases its assets.

13 A stupid child is ruin to a father,
and a wife's quarrelling is a continual dripping of rain.

Proverbs 19:13

A stupid child is ruin to a father. It is grieving to any parent to have a foolish son or daughter. This grief destroys the father's health and life as the father ruins himself to rescue the foolish child. It applies to the mother at least equally: <<***A wise child makes a glad father, but a foolish child is a mother's grief***>> (Proverbs 10:1b).

A wife's quarrelling is a continual dripping of rain. This proverb of sympathy for a man's problems as a father now looks at a man's potential problem as a husband: <<***A continual dripping on a rainy day and a contentious wife are alike***>> (Proverbs 27:15). This can equally be applied as a problem to the wife of a contentious husband. A wife who often contends with her husband is like a continual dripping in at least three ways:

- It is an ever-present annoyance and trouble.
- It wastes and destroys, eroding good and valuable things.
- It points to some underlying, more basic problem.

Clarke stated, "The man who has got such a wife is like a tenant who has got a cottage with a bad roof, through every part of which the rain either drops or pours. He can neither sit, stand, work nor sleep without being exposed to these droppings. God help the man who is in such a case, with house or wife!"

Derek Kidner gives further insight, "Delitzsch passes on an Arab proverb told him by Wetzstein, which runs (in Toy's more compact summary): 'Three things make a house intolerable: tak (the leaking through of rain), nak (a wife's nagging) and bak (bugs).'"

14 House and wealth are inherited from parents,
but a prudent wife is from the Lord.

Proverbs 19:14

House and wealth are inherited from parents. There are good things a man may receive as an inheritance, including material things such as houses and wealth. Paul also applies this principle to spiritual inheritance, placing himself in the role of the spiritual parent: <<***Here I am, ready to come to you this third time. And I will not be a burden, because I do not want what is yours but you; for children ought not to lay up for their parents, but parents for their children***>> (2 Corinthians 12:14). A man is blessed to have such things. House and wealth

come in the ordinary course of things, in contrast to the prudent wife, who is a sign of special favour.

A prudent wife is from the Lord. A gift beyond the inheritance one may receive from parents is this gift from God - a prudent wife. A wife of wisdom, self-control, and appropriate living is a greater gift than houses and riches: <<***He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favour from the Lord***>> (Proverbs 18:22). A wife who is not prudent may waste whatever wealth a man has. Every man with a prudent, wise wife should give thanks to the Lord: <<***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).

¹⁵ Laziness brings on deep sleep;
an idle person will suffer hunger.

Proverbs 19:15

Laziness brings on deep sleep. There are many problems with laziness, and one of them is that it leads to even more laziness, sending the lazy man into a deep sleep. There is no work to be done from a deep sleep. The lazy person is always too tired to work. Then his laziness becomes more and more severe until he is in dire poverty.

The prophet warned Israel of their spiritual slumber: <<***Israel's sentinels are blind, they are all without knowledge; they are all silent dogs that cannot bark; dreaming, lying down, loving to slumber***>> (Isaiah 56:10). **A similar warning goes out to the church, and to those not yet in the church:** <<***Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armour of light***>> (Romans 13:11-12), and: <<***For it is shameful even to mention what such people do secretly; but everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for everything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, 'Sleeper, awake! Rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you'***>> (Ephesians 5:12-14).

An idle person will suffer hunger. There is a great price to be paid from laziness; one of those prices is the hunger one suffers as their needs are not met through hard work. The lazy man or woman puts themselves in a trap cycle of sleep and hunger: <<***A slack hand causes poverty, but the hand of the diligent makes rich***>> (Proverbs 10:4), and: <<***Do not love sleep, or else you will come to poverty; open your eyes, and you will have plenty of bread***>> (Proverbs 20:13).

Introduction to Proverbs 19:16-23

These verses lay out some essential features of a good life, which can be summarised as shown in the chart below.

Listen to instruction	v.16, v.20
Be kind to the poor	v.17
Be involved in your children's lives and discipline them	v.18
Avoid friendships with those who lack self-control	v.19
Acknowledge the rule of God	v.21
Understand that love and integrity are what bring real happiness	v.22
Fear the Lord	v.23

Some Essential Features of a Good Life

This list moves from basic principles of wisdom to the significance of love and then finally to fearing God as the supreme principle of life.

- ¹⁶ Those who keep the commandment will live;
those who are heedless of their ways will die.

Proverbs 19:16

Those who keep the commandment will live. Obedience to the word and commandment of God is of real, practical benefit. Obedience guards and keeps the life, the soul of the wise man or woman who lives according to God's word: <<*The highway of the upright avoids evil; those who guard their way preserve their lives*>> (Proverbs 16:17), and: <<*Moses writes concerning the righteousness that comes from the law, that 'the person who does these things will live by them'*>> (Romans 10:5).

Those who are heedless of their ways will die. To abandon wisdom and live in careless ways is to invite death. God gave his commandment to give each person life and to keep them from death: <<*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly*>> (John 10:10), and: <<*Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. Those who*

believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?'>> (John 11:25-26).

¹⁷ Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the Lord,
and will be repaid in full.

Proverbs 19:17

Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the Lord. When a person gives to the poor, expressing their love and empathy towards them, they are not wasting their money. It is like lending money to the Lord himself and the words of Jesus ring true again: *<<Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also>>* (Matthew 6:19-21).

Will be repaid in full. God will never be in debt to any man. He will never be in a position where he owes anything as a matter of debt. Therefore, to lend to the Lord is to ensure blessing in return. God will certainly pay back what is given in compassion to the poor. God promises that people will never be the loser for generous and compassionate giving: *<<Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in my house, and thus put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts; see if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you an overflowing blessing>>* (Malachi 3:10).

Paul offered to repay the debt of Onesimus to Philemon, money that had been stolen from him: *<<If he has wronged you in any way, or owes you anything, charge that to my account. I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand: I will repay it. I say nothing about your owing me even your own self. Yes, brother, let me have this benefit from you in the Lord! Refresh my heart in Christ>>* (Philemon 18-20). In doing so, he made it clear that forgiveness and reconciliation are what is important in Christian relationships.

¹⁸ Discipline your children while there is hope;
do not set your heart on their destruction.

Proverbs 19:18

Discipline your children while there is hope. There is not an endless window of opportunity to chasten and wisely discipline children. Age and circumstances limit the opportunity for effective training, so it must be done while there is hope: *<<Endure trials for the sake of discipline. God is treating you as children; for what child is there whom a parent does not discipline? If you do not have that discipline in which all children share, then you are illegitimate and not his*

children. Moreover, we had human parents to discipline us, and we respected them. Should we not be even more willing to be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share his holiness>> (Hebrews 12:7-10). There may come the time when a human parent wishes they had done much more to discipline their son or daughter.

Do not set your heart on their destruction. To fail to discipline your children in the opportune season is to actually work for their destruction. Many parents bring much destruction to their children through neglect, not outright abuse. Paul also gives warning: *<<Fathers, do not provoke your children, or they may lose heart>>* (Colossians 3:21).

¹⁹ A violent-tempered person will pay the penalty;
if you effect a rescue, you will only have to do it again.

Proverbs 19:19

A violent-tempered person will pay the penalty. Out of control anger brings many problems and costs. Among the fruit of the spirit is self-control: *<<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 wisdom does not lead a person to be of great wrath.

If you effect a rescue, you will only have to do it again. The person who cannot control their anger will run into trouble again and again. To rescue them once is not enough, because the problem is more in them than in the circumstances that they blame for their anger. It is better for them to face the consequences of their action and hope they learn something from it. Kidner observed, "An ungovernable temper will repeatedly land its owner in fresh trouble."

²⁰ Listen to advice and accept instruction,
that you may gain wisdom for the future.

Proverbs 19:20

Listen to advice and accept instruction. One of the first marks of wisdom is the readiness to receive more wisdom: *<<So teach us to count our days that we may gain a wise heart>>* (Psalm 90:12), and: *<<Listen, children, to a father's instruction, and be attentive, that you may gain insight; for I give you good precepts: do not forsake my teaching>>* (Proverbs 4:1-2). A teachable person, one who will listen to counsel and receive instruction, has already made much progress on the path of wisdom.

That you may gain wisdom for the future. The bad effects of the foolish rejection of wisdom may not be seen for many years. Yet in the latter days of a man or woman's life, it will be clear whether or not they learned wisdom's lessons and if they did listen to counsel: *<<If they were wise, they would understand this; they would discern what the end would be>>* (Deuteronomy 32:29). A person who wants to be wise later in life should start now.

²¹ The human mind may devise many plans,
but it is the purpose of the Lord that will be established.

Proverbs 19:21

The human mind may devise many plans. It is in the nature of men and women to plan and prepare for the future. Some of the plans may be wise and some may be foolish, but there are many plans in a person's heart. Yet: *<<Who can command and have it done, if the Lord has not ordained it?>>* (Lamentations 3:37).

It is the purpose of the Lord that will be established. Humans make plans, and they should. Yet every plan should be made with an appreciation of God's overall wisdom, work, and will. James would later explain this principle this way: *<<Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a town and spend a year there, doing business and making money.' Yet you do not even know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, 'If the Lord wishes, we will live and do this or that'>>* (James 4:13-15).

²² What is desirable in a person is loyalty,
and it is better to be poor than a liar.

Proverbs 19:22

What is desirable in a person is loyalty. It is not that loyalty is the highest or only virtue for the people of God. Yet, in many ways, it is the one most desired by others, especially in a modern world. Mary performed an act of loyalty, love and devotion to her Lord at Bethany: *<<Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, 'Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?' (He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.) Jesus said, 'Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me'>>* (John 12:3-8).

It is better to be poor than a liar. This proverb shows that loyalty, although valuable, is not the only virtue. To be a man or woman of truth - to not be a liar - is also of great value. This proverb a reminder that, although people should pursue and value loyalty, they should not treat it as the only valued virtue among God's people.

Many translate loyalty here as kindness. The same comments apply to this quality in a person as well and it can be applied to many other virtues.

23 The fear of the Lord is life indeed;
filled with it one rests secure
and suffers no harm.

Proverbs 19:23

The fear of the Lord is life indeed. Since the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Psalm 111:10 and Proverbs 1:7), it wonderfully leads to life. If a person wants life, they should begin with this honour, reverent awe and submission to God: <<*Very truly, I tell you, anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life, and does not come under judgement, but has passed from death to life*>> (John 5:24).

Filled with it one rests secure and suffers no harm. When a person has and walks in the fear of the Lord, it leads to a life of satisfaction. The world, the flesh, and the devil want to convince people that a life founded on the fear of the Lord leads to misery, but the opposite is true. It brings satisfaction and keeps a person from a future of evil.

24 The lazy person buries a hand in the dish,
and will not even bring it back to the mouth.

Proverbs 19:24

The lazy person buries a hand in the dish. Solomon pictured a lazy man sitting at his food, with his hand buried in his bowl of food. On the dish Kidner noted, "The same word in 2 Kings 21:13 leaves no doubt of its meaning. The scene is thus a meal, and the example comically extreme."

The lazy person will not even bring it back to the mouth. In this humorous, exaggerated picture, the lazy man has so little energy and initiative that he will not even bring his hand from the bowl to his mouth. This exaggerated picture establishes a principle made elsewhere in proverbs: the lazy man will go hungry: <<*For even when we were with you, we gave you this command: Anyone unwilling to work should not eat*>> (2 Thessalonians 3:10).

In a humorous caricature (echoing v.15), the sluggard here is so foolish and so lazy that he will not even feed himself. Laziness is irrational and leads to poverty and hunger.

Introduction to Proverbs 19:25-20:1

In contrast to the features of a good life described in vv.16-23 is the description in these verses of the scoffer or mocker. This person is a complete reprobate and the quintessential fool. Of such a person it can be said: (1) the only hope for correcting his stubborn attitude lies in beatings, which may or may not have the desired effect (v.25); (2) he has no respect for his parents (v.26); (3) he will not listen to sound teaching (v.27); (4) he rejects all notions of right and wrong (v.28); and (5) again, he gets beaten for his behaviour (v.29). Finally, wine is called a mocker and strong drink a brawler in Proverbs 20:1. That is, excessive drinking leads to picking fights and an abandonment of the principles of right and wrong. It is implied that drunkenness is common among scoffers.

²⁵ Strike a scoffer, and the simple will learn prudence;
reprove the intelligent, and they will gain knowledge.

Proverbs 19:25

Strike a scoffer, and the simple will learn prudence. The simple learn by seeing a beating, but the wise take instruction from a simple word of reproof. Notably, although the simple can learn prudence, no such teachable spirit is attributed to the scoffer.

Reprove the intelligent, and they will gain knowledge. The rebuke of the scoffer seems to do the scoffer no good, although it may benefit the simple. Yet when someone who values wisdom, i.e. one who has understanding, is corrected, he learns. He grows in his ability to discern knowledge. Kidner observed, “Here are three varieties of mind: closed (the scorner, AV, RV; confirmed in verse 29 and Proverbs 9:7-8), empty (the simple – he must be startled into attention), and open (the discerning – he accepts even a painful truth).”

²⁶ Those who do violence to their father and chase away their mother
are children who cause shame and bring reproach.

Proverbs 19:26

Those who do violence to their father and chase away their mother are children who cause shame and bring reproach. The Bible commands: <<*Honour your father and your mother*>> (Exodus 20:12a). This proverb considers the person who does the opposite of Exodus 20:12. One cannot disobey God and the

standards of human society without paying a price. One price to be paid from the mistreatment of parents is to bring shame and reproach upon one's self.

²⁷ Cease straying, my child, from the words of knowledge,
in order that you may hear instruction.

Proverbs 19:27

Cease straying, my child, from the words of knowledge. Solomon continued to give wisdom to his children, and here warned of the danger of ceasing to listen to wise instruction. Worse still would be to listen to falsehoods and unhelpful teaching: *<<Whoever teaches otherwise and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that is in accordance with godliness, is conceited, understanding nothing, and has a morbid craving for controversy and for disputes about words. From these come envy, dissension, slander, base suspicions, and wrangling among those who are depraved in mind and bereft of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain>>* (1 Timothy 6:3-5), *<<But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive opinions. They will even deny the Master who bought them – bringing swift destruction on themselves. Even so, many will follow their licentious ways, and because of these teachers the way of truth will be maligned>>* (2 Peter 2:1-2), and: *<<Do not receive into the house or welcome anyone who comes to you and does not bring this teaching>>* (2 John 10). Jesus commends the church for shunning such teaching: *<<I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance. I know that you cannot tolerate evildoers; you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them to be false>>* (Revelation 2:2).

In order that you may hear instruction. This shows that attention and effort must be given to remain on the path of wisdom. If one does cease listening to instruction, then they will stray from the words of knowledge. One must set themselves on the path of wisdom and, with God's help, determine that they will stay upon in.

²⁸ A worthless witness mocks at justice,
and the mouth of the wicked devours iniquity.

Proverbs 19:28

A worthless witness mocks at justice. The witness who is not committed to truth does not care about the workings of justice. Great harm comes upon society and its legal system where there is no care and promotion of the truth and the disreputable witness is not punished.

The mouth of the wicked devours iniquity. The words of the wicked, coming from the mouth, love iniquity so much that they devour it, as a hungry man devours food. This is the kind of person who scorns justice and tears down society: <<*God puts no trust even in his holy ones, and the heavens are not clean in his sight; how much less one who is abominable and corrupt, one who drinks iniquity like water!*>> (Job 15:15-16).

²⁹ Condemnation is ready for scoffers,
and flogging for the backs of fools.

Proverbs 19:29

Condemnation is ready for scoffers. Those who reject wisdom with hostility, i.e. scoffers, will not escape penalty. Judgements are prepared for them.

Flogging for the backs of fools. Those who disregard wisdom, the fools bound in their folly, will also have their penalty: <<*If the one in the wrong deserves to be flogged, the judge shall make that person lie down and be beaten in his presence with the number of lashes proportionate to the offence*>> (Deuteronomy 25:2). Correction will come to them in its appointed way, and sadly - the correction will do little good for them. Clarke concluded, "Profane and wicked men expose themselves to the punishments denounced against such by just laws. Avoid, therefore, both their company and their end."