



Proverbs - Chapter Twenty Nine

VI Proverbs 25:1-29:27 - Further Wise Sayings of Solomon (continues/concludes)

Summary of Chapter Twenty Nine

By justice a king builds up the land. Whether a fool rages or laughs, there is no peace. Correct your son and he will give you rest.

Introduction to Proverbs 28:28-29:2 (continued)

Like Proverbs 21:20-22:1 and 28:2-12, this short passage has an inclusio or literary bookends on how a society thrives or suffers when, respectively, success comes to the righteous or to the wicked (v.28 and 29:2). Also, v.28 ends with the righteous increase and 29:2 begins with when the righteous increase, indicating that the latter verse complements the former. Only one proverb (29:1) is between these two; it obviously means that people who obstinately refuse to turn from evil and folly will be ruined. Why is it placed here? It may serve to reassure the reader that eventually the wicked will fall. Or, the man who is often reprov'd, yet stiffens his neck may stand for Israelite society as a whole; the whole population can be warned to repent and can suffer for not doing so.

- ¹ One who is often reprov'd, yet remains stubborn,
will suddenly be broken beyond healing.

Proverbs 29:1

One who is often reprov'd, yet remains stubborn, will suddenly be broken beyond healing. As in many places in the Bible, stubborn, literally a stiff neck, is used as a figure of speech to speak of the stubborn attitude that resists and disobeys God: <<*The Lord said to Moses, 'I have seen this people, how stiff-necked they are'*>> (Exodus 32:9), and: <<*You stiff-necked people,*

uncircumcised in heart and ears, you are for ever opposing the Holy Spirit, just as your ancestors used to do>> (Acts 7:51). This proverb speaks about the person who is often rebuked but does not listen to the rebuke; instead he remains stubborn. This stubborn, rebellious person continues in their disobedience for a long time, until they are suddenly destroyed - and there will be no hope for them - they are broken beyond healing: *<<but they kept mocking the messengers of God, despising his words, and scoffing at his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord against his people became so great that there was no remedy>>* (2 Chronicles 36:16). This describes the kind of person who thinks little of God's merciful patience and assumes judgement will never come for their continual rejection of wisdom and stubborn heart against God. Of course, the apostle Paul knew differently: *<<For all of us must appear before the judgement seat of Christ, so that each may receive recompense for what has been done in the body, whether good or evil>>* (2 Corinthians 5:10).

- ² When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice;
but when the wicked rule, the people groan.

Proverbs 29:2

When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice. It is to the benefit of the community or nation when godly people govern or rule. This shows that when the righteous govern, it should be for the benefit of the entire community, and not only for their own interests.

When the wicked rule, the people groan. The community or the nation suffers when the wicked rule: *<<There is an evil that I have seen under the sun, as great an error as if it proceeded from the ruler: folly is set in many high places, and the rich sit in a low place>>* (Ecclesiastes 10:5-6). Lawlessness increases and freedoms diminish. The rule of the wicked is bad for both the righteous and the wicked in the community or the nation.

Introduction to Proverbs 29:3-4

Verse 3 describes how a son may squander his inheritance, and v.4 describes how a king can squander the kingdom that he has inherited. The ruler who exacts gifts fosters a system of bribes and corruption, and so destroys the nation. The alternative meaning in the ESV footnote, 'who taxes heavily,' has a similar sense; in either case the ruler demands large amounts of money, putting their own interests ahead of the good of the nation, with ruinous results.

- ³ A child who loves wisdom makes a parent glad,
but to keep company with prostitutes is to squander one's substance.

Proverbs 29:3

A child who loves wisdom makes a parent glad. Children of any age bring happiness to their parents when they love and live wisdom: <<*My child, if your heart is wise, my heart too will be glad. My soul will rejoice when your lips speak what is right*>> (Proverbs 23:15-16). It gives the parents a justified pride in their children and gives peace about their children's future.

To keep company with prostitutes is to squander one's substance. This is one example of a foolish life, someone who chooses with promiscuous people and others of low character as their companions: <<*Keep your way far from her, and do not go near the door of her house; or you will give your honour to others, and your years to the merciless, and strangers will take their fill of your wealth, and your labours will go to the house of an alien*>> (Proverbs 5:8-10). This fool wastes their wealth on promiscuity and other similar interests, showing they are the opposite of the one who loves wisdom; refer to 'The Parable of the Prodigal and His Brother' in Luke 15:11-32. Adam Clarke asked a simple question in regard to v.3: "Has there ever been a single case to the contrary?"

⁴ By justice a king gives stability to the land,
but one who makes heavy exactions ruins it.

Proverbs 29:4

By justice a king gives stability to the land. A nation can only expect strength and progress when it is ruled with justice. When a community or nation sees evildoers punished and restrained, fairness in the legal system, and agreements honoured, there will be justice and a foundation for growth and blessing as they are ordained by God: <<*By me kings reign, and rulers decree what is just; by me rulers rule, and nobles, all who govern rightly*>> (Proverbs 8:15-16).

But one who makes heavy exactions ruins it. There are many ways that justice can be abused, but this one of the worst ways. Bribes destroy the foundations of fairness and equality before the law. It means that the rich and devious prosper. Clarke observed, "This was notoriously the case in this kingdom, before the passing of the Magna Charta, or great charter of liberties. I have met with cases in our ancient records where, in order to get his right, a man was obliged almost to ruin himself in presents to the king, queen, and their favourites, to get the case decided in his favour."

Introduction to Proverbs 29:5-6

The metaphor of the net and of ensnaring someone binds these two proverbs together. Each proverb is clear by itself; together they suggest that the man who seeks to ensnare others eventually ensnares himself: <<*For in vain is the net*

baited while the bird is looking on; yet they lie in wait – to kill themselves! and set an ambush – for their own lives! Such is the end of all who are greedy for gain; it takes away the life of its possessors>> (Proverbs 1:17-19).

- ⁵ Whoever flatters a neighbour
is spreading a net for the neighbour's feet.

Proverbs 29:5

Whoever flatters a neighbour is spreading a net for the neighbour's feet. In this sense, to flatter is to excessively praise or give attention to a neighbour with the hope of gaining influence or status: <<*A lying tongue hates its victims, and a flattering mouth works ruin*>> (Proverbs 26:28). Such flattery is a trap. It is a trap that the wise man knows how to avoid, and that catches the fool. Clarke warned, "Beware of a flatterer; he does not flatter merely to please you, but to deceive you and profit himself."

The righteous do not choose this path: <<*I will not show partiality to any person or use flattery towards anyone*>> (Job 32:21).

- ⁶ In the transgression of the evil there is a snare,
but the righteous sing and rejoice.

Proverbs 29:6

In the transgression of the evil there is a snare. A person may be evil in their character, yet it is their actual acts of transgression that ruin them. Most evil people think they are celebrating life and freedom through their transgression, but it will be a trap and a snare to them: <<*He takes the wise in their own craftiness; and the schemes of the wily are brought to a quick end*>> (Job 5:13), <<*Whoever digs a pit will fall into it, and a stone will come back on the one who starts it rolling*>> (Proverbs 26:27), and: <<*For no one can anticipate the time of disaster. Like fish taken in a cruel net, and like birds caught in a snare, so mortals are snared at a time of calamity, when it suddenly falls upon them*>> (Ecclesiastes 9:12).

The righteous sing and rejoice. If transgression belongs to the evil person, then singing and rejoicing belong to the righteous. The singing and rejoicing is an expression of what is inside them, just as much as the transgression is an expression of what is inside the evil person. Derek Kidner commented, "Knox supplies the implicit comparison: 'innocence goes singing and rejoicing on its way.'"

- 7 The righteous know the rights of the poor;
the wicked have no such understanding.

Proverbs 29:7

The righteous know the rights of the poor. One mark of the righteous man or woman is that they care for the poor. It is more than the response of feelings of pity; they consider the cause of the poor. It is thoughtful compassion in action: <<*What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? 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? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead*>> (James 2:14-17).

The wicked have no such understanding because he is not truly concerned for the poor, but for himself, and any professions of concern for the poor probably have ulterior motives: <<*The evil do not understand justice, but those who seek the Lord understand it completely*>> (Proverbs 28:5). Those who are wicked, rebellious against God and his wisdom, cannot even understand such compassion. Since it does not directly serve their self-interest, they cannot understand it.

Introduction to Proverbs 29:8-11

These four proverbs describe the rage, havoc, and violence that accompany evil and folly. Such people set a city aflame (v.8), are abusive and rude in a dispute (v.9), hate people of integrity (v.10), and give full vent to every passion they feel (v.11). The ESV footnote for v.10b, 'but the upright seek his soul,' means that the upright are concerned to vindicate the hated blameless person.

- 8 Scoffers set a city aflame,
but the wise turn away wrath.

Proverbs 29:8

Scoffers set a city aflame. In the family of fools, the scoffers are some of the worst offenders. They are so settled in their combative, cynical rejection of God and his wisdom that they may bring the judgement of God and fury of man against their own city: <<*For you, brothers and sisters, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judæa, for you suffered the same things from your own compatriots as they did from the Jews, who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out; they displease God and oppose everyone by hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved. Thus they have constantly been filling up the measure of their sins; but God's wrath has overtaken them at last*>> (1 Thessalonians 2:14-16).

The wise turn away wrath. The opposite of the scoffer is the wise person. Collectively, wise people have the understanding, character, and righteousness that may turn away God's wrath.

- ⁹ If the wise go to law with fools,
there is ranting and ridicule without relief.

Proverbs 29:9

If the wise go to law with fools, there is ranting and ridicule without relief. Solomon considered some kind of argument or dispute between the wise and the foolish, likely set in a court of law. Since the two have different foundations and principles for living, it is not a surprise that they would contend with each other. When two such different people contend, normally there will be no peace. The fool will respond with either anger or mocking, but neither will lead to peace. This should teach the wise person to be cautious about contending with the fool: <<***Do not answer fools according to their folly, or you will be a fool yourself***>> (Proverbs 26:4).

- ¹⁰ The bloodthirsty hate the blameless,
and they seek the life of the upright.

Proverbs 29:10

The bloodthirsty hate the blameless. There is a fundamental opposition between the bloodthirsty and the blameless. Those given to violence and brutality, i.e. the bloodthirsty, simply hate the blameless, both because the life and message of the blameless convicts the bloodthirsty and because the bloodthirsty hate all that the blameless stand for. This has been the case since the beginning of time: <<***We must not be like Cain who was from the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous***>> (1 John 3:12).

They seek the life of the upright. The upright men or women seek and care for the wellbeing of the blameless. This is a great contrast to the bloodthirsty.

- ¹¹ A fool gives full vent to anger,
but the wise quietly holds it back.

Proverbs 29:11

A fool gives full vent to anger. It is the nature of a fool to think that everyone is interested in all their feelings and that they have some obligation to inflict all their feelings on others. This is a foolish offense to self-respect, self-restraint, and courtesy towards others: <<***You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge***>>

against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbour as yourself: I am the Lord>> (Leviticus 19:18).

The wise quietly holds it back. The wise person knows that there is a time and place to vent their feelings, but they should never imitate the fool in exposing all their feelings. Kidner commented on holds it back, “The verb (used in Psalm 89:9 of the stilling of a storm) speaks of anger overcome, not merely checked.”

Introduction to Proverbs 29:12-14

A king’s administration will fall apart if he gives heed to corrupt counsellors (v.12), but it will thrive if he is just to even the weakest in his kingdom (v.14). The Davidic king should be the protector of his people and the paradigm of integrity. Between these two verses, v.13 asserts that all men are equal before God and thus implies that God will judge even the king without any favouritism.

¹² If a ruler listens to falsehood,
all his officials will be wicked.

Proverbs 29:12

If a ruler listens to falsehood, all his officials will be wicked. Anyone in authority will have many who want to use his or her power and position for their own advancement. Some of those may use lies to influence, frighten, manipulate, or simply deceive that ruler. The wise ruler pays no attention to lies. When the servants see that the ruler can be influenced by lies, it encourages them to lie. Deception is rewarded and telling the truth is discouraged. The atmosphere around that ruler and his servants becomes poisonous and incompetent. Eliphaz posed the question: <<*Why does your heart carry you away, and why do your eyes flash, so that you turn your spirit against God, and let such words go out of your mouth?*>> (Job 15:12-13).

¹³ The poor and the oppressor have this in common:
the Lord gives light to the eyes of both.

Proverbs 29:13

The poor and the oppressor have this in common: the Lord gives light to the eyes of both. It is difficult to think of two greater contrasts than the poor man and the oppressor. Despite their great differences, they have something in common. God gives some kind of light, some kind of revelation in creation and conscience, to every person: <<*For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made. So they are without excuse; for though*

they knew God, they did not honour him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their senseless minds were darkened>> (Romans 1:19-21). One may obey or reject God's message in that light, but the Lord gives light to the eyes of both. To give light to the eyes means to give life: <<*The rich and the poor have this in common: the Lord is the maker of them all*>> (Proverbs 22:2).

¹⁴ If a king judges the poor with equity,
his throne will be established for ever.

Proverbs 29:14

If a king judges the poor with equity, his throne will be established for ever. Part of the responsibility of a king or any leader is to make judgements, and sometimes those regarding the poor and disadvantaged. That king or leader must be careful not to show partiality against or for the poor, but to make fair judgement according to the truth. That king who refuses to show partiality and judges the poor according to the truth can expect to have a long reign. Their reign will be blessed by God and received well by the people.

Puritan John Trapp thought of how this pointed to the throne of Jesus the Messiah, established forever: "Lo, such a prince shall sit firm upon his throne; his kingdom shall be bound to him with chains of adamant, as Dionysius dreamt that his was; he shall have the hearts of his subjects, which is the best life-guard, and God for his protection; for he is professedly the poor man's patron, [Psalms 9:18-19] and makes heavy complaints of those that wrong them. [Isaiah 3:13-15; Isaiah 10:1-3; Amos 5:11-12; Amos 8:4-6; Zephaniah 3:12]."

Introduction to Proverbs 29:15-18

Verses 15 and 17 both insist that parents should teach their children, and v.16 and v.18 both describe a society in upheaval. The chaos of a child out of control is comparable to the chaos of a people who have abandoned integrity and revelation. Verse 18 is notable in that it speaks of both prophetic vision and the law. The teachings of wisdom are not opposed to either the prophets or the Torah. As Proverbs endorses the fear of the Lord, so also it endorses divine revelation in the Scriptures.

¹⁵ The rod and reproof give wisdom,
but a mother is disgraced by a neglected child.

Proverbs 29:15

The rod and reproof give wisdom. People learn through correction. Jesus himself learned through suffering: <<*Although he was a Son, he learned obedience*

through what he suffered>> (Hebrews 5:8) so Christians should not despise God's use of either the rod or the rebuke. No one is above learning through appropriate discipline.

A mother is disgraced by a neglected child. The principle of the first line of this proverb is especially true regarding children. Children who are never trained with loving correction often bring shame to their parents. However, it is the neglect of the parent and not the actions of the child that are in view here.

¹⁶ When the wicked are in authority, transgression increases,
but the righteous will look upon their downfall.

Proverbs 29:16

When the wicked are in authority, transgression increases. There is something of a multiplication effect in the advance of wickedness. In some way, when the number of wicked people is doubled, then it seems transgression increases four or five times over.

But the righteous will look upon their downfall. This is welcome assurance when it seems that transgression increases. The righteous must not despair; God is still in control: <<*I have said this to you, so that in me you may have peace. In the world you face persecution. But take courage; I have conquered the world!*>> (John 16:33). Although the wicked are multiplied, God will not allow them to triumph in the end and they will fall.

¹⁷ Discipline your children, and they will give you rest;
they will give delight to your heart.

Proverbs 29:17

Discipline your children, and they will give you rest. Many proverbs speak of the importance of correcting and training children, including: <<*Those who spare the rod hate their children, but those who love them are diligent to discipline them*>> (Proverbs 13:24), <<*Discipline your children while there is hope; do not set your heart on their destruction*>> (Proverbs 19:18), <<*Folly is bound up in the heart of a boy, but the rod of discipline drives it far away*>> (Proverbs 22:15), and: <<*Do not withhold discipline from your children; if you beat them with a rod, they will not die. If you beat them with the rod, you will save their lives from Sheol*>> (Proverbs 23:13-14). If they are left to themselves, to their peers, or to the culture around them and their parents fail to correct them, they will be an ongoing source of trouble and strife, giving their parents no rest.

Thankfully, most countries in modern western culture have turned away from physical punishment. However, the rationale behind sound discipline still applies.

They will give delight to your heart. Every parent wants this delight of soul. There is a sense in which God appeals to one's own self-interest. If a parent will not correct their son because it is good for him, then they should do it because it is good for them!

¹⁸ Where there is no prophecy, the people cast off restraint,
but happy are those who keep the law.

Proverbs 29:18

Where there is no prophecy. The revelation in mind here is not the spontaneous word from a purported prophet. It is God's great revelation, his revealed word through the Hebrew prophets and later the apostles and prophets who gave the NT. When God's word is unavailable or rejected, the people cast off restraint. They no longer have a standard greater than they own feelings or current opinions. Clarke commented, "Where Divine revelation, and the faithful preaching of the sacred testimonies, are neither revered nor attended, the ruin of that land is at no great distance."

The people cast off restraint. This principle was lived out in Israel's history. Judges 17:6, 21:25 and 1 Samuel 3:1 all describe such times when God's word was abandoned and the people lived with no restraint.

Happy are those who keep the law. In contrast, there is happiness and contentment for the one who keeps the law. In this sense, the Bible is something like a guide given to humankind by their owner and creator, telling them how to live a wise and blessed life. It is within restraint, but not in an oppressive sense. Only a fool thinks that all restraint is oppressive.

Happy in the Psalms and Proverbs is often translated as blessed: <<*Happy are those whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Happy are those to whom the Lord imputes no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit*>> (Psalm 32:1-2).

Introduction to Proverbs 29:19-22

Verses 19 and 21 both advise maintaining discipline with those under authority, not through mere words, but also through negative and positive incentives of various kinds.

¹⁹ By mere words servants are not disciplined,
for though they understand, they will not give heed.

Proverbs 29:19

By mere words servants are not disciplined. The idea is not of someone who has an honourable, servant like heart. The idea is of someone of menial service who has slave-like mentality that cannot be lifted above his or her present misery. That person is unlikely to be corrected by mere words. Tough life experience and discipline will be more likely to teach them.

For though they understand, they will not give heed. This shows that the problem with such a one is not mental or intellectual. They understand well enough; the problem is that they will take no notice and will not respond: <<*I call to my servant, but he gives me no answer; I must myself plead with him*>> (Job 19:16); Jesus makes the relationship very clear: <<*Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them*>> (John 13:16). It will take more than words to get him or her to respond and learn wisdom.

²⁰ Do you see someone who is hasty in speech?

There is more hope for a fool than for anyone like that.

Proverbs 29:20

Do you see someone who is hasty in speech? Proverbs often teaches that a mark of a fool is that they do not have control over what they say. They are hasty in their words.

There is more hope for a fool than for anyone like that. To Solomon, the person **hasty in speech** was a special kind of a fool, a super-fool. Lacking wisdom, their impulsive speech sets them beyond the hope of even the normal fool: <<*Do you see persons wise in their own eyes? There is more hope for fools than for them*>> (Proverbs 26:12).

²¹ A slave pampered from childhood
will come to a bad end.

Proverbs 29:21

A slave pampered from childhood will come to a bad end. The idea is of a person who is overly soft and generous towards their servant. The owner or employer worries too much about making life easy and pleasant for their servant. This is not always in a good sense. The one who pampers their servant will make the servant so attached to them that they will end up with another obligation and another person who expects an inheritance. Clarke noted, "Such persons are generally forgetful of their obligations, assume the rights and privileges of children, and are seldom good for any thing."

22 One given to anger stirs up strife,
and the hothead causes much transgression.

Proverbs 29:22

One given to anger stirs up strife. It is in the nature of the angry person to spread their strife to others. With peace lacking in their own soul, it is easy to put their inner strife upon others.

The hothead causes much transgression. When the angry or furious person spreads their strife, it makes transgression abound. Sin abounds in the atmosphere is marked by a lack of self-control. Clarke observed, “His furious spirit is always carrying him into extremes, and each of these is a transgression.”

Paul noticed that where sin abounds, God’s grace abounds all the more: <<*What then are we to say? Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin go on living in it?>> (Romans 6:1-2).*

23 A person’s pride will bring humiliation,
but one who is lowly in spirit will obtain honour.

Proverbs 29:23

A person’s pride will bring humiliation. Because God resists the proud (James 4:6 and 1 Peter 5:5), pride will naturally bring a man low. Like Satan, the one who hoped to rise higher through his pride will fall: <<*You said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit on the mount of assembly on the heights of Zaphon; I will ascend to the tops of the clouds, I will make myself like the Most High.’ But you are brought down to Sheol, to the depths of the Pit>> (Isaiah 14:13-15).*

One who is lowly in spirit will obtain honour. Just as much as God resists the proud, he also gives grace to the humble (again, James 4:6 and 1 Peter 5:5). God’s gracious blessing to the humble in spirit means they will gain and retain honour.

Paradoxically, pride brings humiliation while humility brings honour.

24 To be a partner of a thief is to hate one’s own life;
one hears the victim’s curse, but discloses nothing.

Proverbs 29:24

To be a partner of a thief is to hate one’s own life. To partner with a thief is to reject wisdom and embrace folly. The one who steals from others will steal from their partner, and perhaps with violence threatening their partner’s own life.

One hears the victim's curse, but discloses nothing. Companions of criminals cannot avoid getting mixed up in their crimes. The curse such a person hears is the call to testify in a criminal proceeding: *<<When any of you sin in that you have heard a public adjuration to testify and – though able to testify as one who has seen or learned of the matter – do not speak up, you are subject to punishment>>* (Leviticus 5:1). However, the partner dare not testify against their criminal friends, and so they bring the force of the curse on their own head.

The partner of a thief is the kind of person who will repeatedly vow to tell the truth, but reveals nothing about their partner's criminal activity. They place, or rather misplace, loyalty to their friend above their loyalty to God.

Introduction to Proverbs 29:25-26

One who acts primarily out of a fear of man shows that they do not trust the Lord to preserve and protect them (v.25). Similarly, one who seeks only the face of the king for justice (v.26) manifests a lack of belief that it is ultimately God who works to bring it about (24:21a), where the order reflects the priority.

²⁵ The fear of others lays a snare,
but one who trusts in the Lord is secure.

Proverbs 29:25

The fear of others lays a snare. Many people of good heart but not enough courage live in bondage to the fear of man. They worry far too much about what other people think, instead of first being concerned about what God and wisdom say, and what integrity would lead them to do. This is a snare that traps many people. King Saul: *<<Saul said to Samuel, 'I have sinned; for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice>>* (1 Samuel 15:24), the high priest Aaron in the making of the Golden Calf: *<<Moses said to Aaron, 'What did this people do to you that you have brought so great a sin upon them?' And Aaron said, 'Do not let the anger of my lord burn hot; you know the people, that they are bent on evil. They said to me, "Make us gods, who shall go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him." So I said to them, "Whoever has gold, take it off"; so they gave it to me, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf!>>* (Exodus 32:21-24), and the apostle Peter who denied Christ in Mark 14:66-72 are examples of men who were stained by the fear of man. Clarke added, "How often has this led weak men, though sincere in their general character, to deny their God, and abjure his people!"

Charles Spurgeon made several comments on this subject: "It was the fear of man that caused Pilate's name to become infamous in the history of the world

and of the Church of God, and it will be infamous to all eternity. The fear of man led him to slay the Saviour; take care that it does not lead you to do something of the same kind,” and, “Why, I have known some who were afraid even to give away a tract; they were as much alarmed as though they had to put their hand into a tiger’s mouth” and, “There is one sin which I believe I have never committed; I think that I have never been afraid of any of you, and I hope, by the grace of God, that I never shall be. If I dare not speak the truth upon all points, and dare not rebuke sin, what is the good of me to you? Yet I have heard sermons which seemed to me to have been made to the order of the congregation. But honest hearers want honest preaching; and if they find that the preacher’s message comes home to them, they thank God that it is so.”

But one who trusts in the Lord is secure. The contrast to the fear of man is the one who trusts in the Lord. That person will be in the safest place imaginable - safe in the care of a loving, powerful God. Spurgeon observed, “It is not, ‘He that trusts in himself;’ not, ‘He that trusts in a priest;’ not, ‘He that performs good works, and trusts in them,’ but, ‘who so puts his trust in the Lord shall be safe.’ The man who is trusting in the blood and righteousness of Jesus may not always be happy, but he is safe; he may not always be singing, but he is safe; he may not always have the joy of full assurance, but he is safe. He may sometimes be distressed, but, he is always safe; he may sometimes question his interest in Christ, but he is always safe.”

²⁶ Many seek the favour of a ruler,
but it is from the Lord that one gets justice.

Proverbs 29:26

Many seek the favour of a ruler. This is presented as a simple fact. There are many who long for the benefit that a ruler may give them. This relates to the fear of man mentioned in the previous verse; those who depend on the ruler’s favour for their security and prosperity must fear and seek the ruler’s favour.

But it is from the Lord that one gets justice. When people depend upon man for their justice, their security, or their prosperity, they will be disappointed. Such justice and its benefits come only from the Lord, not primarily through even the mightiest ruler. If the ruler does give out justice, they do it as God’s agent: <<**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).

²⁷ The unjust are an abomination to the righteous,
but the upright are an abomination to the wicked.

Proverbs 29:27

The unjust are an abomination to the righteous. An unjust man does not please those among God's righteous. They share God's regard of the wicked, seeing them as an abomination for their sins against God and humankind.

The upright are an abomination to the wicked. It works both ways. The upright man or woman is seen as an abomination to the wicked. Their righteous life is an unwelcome rebuke to the wicked.

The Hezekiah collection ends with a simple antithesis: righteousness and evil are detestable to one another. No one can serve both, and no one can be the companion of both righteous and evil people. Those who are faithful to God should not be surprised when they are hated by the wicked without any reason: *<<If the world hates you, be aware that it hated me before it hated you. If you belonged to the world, the world would love you as its own. Because you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world – therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, “Servants are not greater than their master.” If they persecuted me, they will persecute you; if they kept my word, they will keep yours also>> (John 15:18-20), <<It was to fulfil the word that is written in their law, “They hated me without a cause”>> (John 15:25), and: <<We must not be like Cain who was from the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous. Do not be astonished, brothers and sisters, that the world hates you>> (1 John 3:12-13).*