



## Proverbs - Chapter Three

### **II Proverbs 1:8-9:18 - A Father's Invitation to Wisdom (continues)**

#### Summary of Chapter Three

The study of truth is commended. God must be feared, honoured, and trusted, and filial submission, under chastisement, exhibited. The excellence of wisdom is urged and illustrated by its place in the divine counsels. Piety is enforced by a contrast of the destiny of the righteous and the wicked.

#### **II.d Proverbs 3:1-12 - Admonition to Trust and Honour God**

The address to 'my child' or 'my son' brackets v.1 and v.11, which consist of six sets of instruction. Each section, or pair of verses, includes a call to act in wisdom and the grounds for doing so. As a whole, the appeal calls for living in light of the fear of the Lord in all respects: cultivation of faithfulness and humility, gratitude that treats the products of one's labours as a gift, and willingness to submit to reproof. Obeying this instruction brings favour and success before God and man so that one lives in light of the Lord's delight.

- <sup>1</sup> My child, do not forget my teaching,  
but let your heart keep my commandments;
- <sup>2</sup> for length of days and years of life  
and abundant welfare they will give you.
- <sup>3</sup> Do not let loyalty and faithfulness forsake you;  
bind them round your neck,  
write them on the tablet of your heart.

4 So you will find favour and good repute  
in the sight of God and of people.

#### Proverbs 3:1-4

My child, do not forget my teaching. ‘My teaching’ is frequently translated as ‘my law.’ Solomon’s advice as a father to his son in this section begins with a warning to never forget God’s word. Solomon did not mean ‘my teaching’ in the sense of his own personal decrees, but as God’s word and commandments that he had internalised and made personal.

But let your heart keep my commandments. Deciding to not forget God’s word is more than a mental exercise of memory. It is also connected to a life of obedience, one that does keep the commandments of God. If a person mentally remembers God’s word yet fails to obey it, it could rightly be said that he or she has forgotten God’s commandments. It should be noted also that this obedience is one of the heart. A Christian’s goal in obedience is not mere outward conformity to God’s will, but a heart that loves and obeys him.

They will give you. There is a real benefit from this life and heart that obeys God. In principle, life and heart obedience brings long life and peace, i.e. abundant welfare. This is a blessed combination; length of days could be a curse and not a blessing without peace. In principle because this is largely how Proverbs was written and should be regarded. The principle of v.2 is not an absolute promise; there are some people who truly are given to obedience in both conduct and heart and die relatively young or who a lead difficult life. Some godly people have trouble living in peace. These should be regarded as true principles, not absolute promises.

Steadfast love or loyalty and faithfulness. Solomon wisely told his son to keep God’s loyal love, i.e. loyalty - the great Hebrew word *hesed*, and truth close. They should be so close that it would be as if they were a necklace on him at all times. These terms are used together in the Lord’s self-declaration to Moses of his character in covenantal relationship: <<*The Lord passed before him, and proclaimed, ‘The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness’*>> (Exodus 34:6). In light of the appeals to trust (v.5), fear (v.7), and honour (v.9) the Lord, the call here to bind them round your neck and write them on the tablet of your heart is best understood as encouragement to live faithfully to the covenant by heeding faithful parental instruction: <<*All the paths of the Lord are steadfast love and faithfulness, for those who keep his covenant and his decrees*>> (Psalm 25:10). This is further reflected in Proverbs 14:22, 16:6 and 20:28.

So you will find favour and good repute in the sight of God and of people. The blessed, obedient life is magnetic. It enjoys the favour of the God it honours, and

attracts the favour of man: <<*Now the boy Samuel continued to grow both in stature and in favour with the Lord and with the people*>> (1 Samuel 2:26), <<*And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favour*>> (Luke 2:52).

- 5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart,  
and do not rely on your own insight.
- 6 In all your ways acknowledge him,  
and he will make straight your paths.

### Proverbs 3:5-6

Solomon advised his son to live a life of trust in Yahweh. Solomon had found that God was worthy to be trusted. It is human nature to put trust in something or someone, even if it is in self. Solomon says a person should consciously put their trust in the Lord: <<*Offer right sacrifices, and put your trust in the Lord*>> (Psalm 4:5), the covenant-keeping God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. Subordinating one's own understanding to the Lord is in keeping with the major thesis of Proverbs, that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge (Proverbs 1:7).

- Trust in the Lord is necessary for fulfilling any of the wise ways of life taught in Proverbs; trusting the Lord is closely connected to 'fearing' him.
- With all your heart indicates that trust goes beyond intellectual assent to a deep reliance on the Lord, a settled confidence in his care and his faithfulness to his word. If trust in God is to be true, it must be complete. To put half trust in God and half trust in self or something else is really failure to trust the Lord at all. Christians should endeavour to give God all their conscious trust. This aspect troubles some, because they fear there is some part of their heart that is not truly trusting God. Some may sympathise with this concern, knowing that as imperfect people it is impossible for them to trust in the Lord perfectly. In principle, it can be gathered that vv.5-6 does not describe an objectively perfect trust in God, but a heart and life that does not consciously reject or defy God with unbelief. This is a message that is taught by the lives of people like Abraham, Sarah, Jacob and David, who trusted God but often went their own way to achieve his promises ahead of the allotted time..
- Do not rely on your own insight further explains trusting in the Lord. One's 'understanding' in Proverbs is his perception of the right course of action. The wise will govern themselves by what the Lord himself declares, and will not set their own finite and often mistaken understanding against his. Trusting God with all of the heart means to decide to put away

individual and worldly understanding and instead to choose to trust God and his understanding, especially as declared in his word.

**In all your ways acknowledge him.** Trusting God with all of the heart means to honour and acknowledge him in all that is done. It is the choice to ‘invite’ God into everyday life and conduct. It is to practice the presence of God in the regular and sometimes mundane things that happen every day.

To **make straight** a person’s **paths** means to make the course of the person’s life one that continually progresses toward a goal: <<***he puts my feet in the stocks, and watches all my paths***>> (Job 33:11), <<***Lead me, O Lord, in your righteousness because of my enemies; make your way straight before me***>> (Psalm 5:8), and: <<***Let the Lord your God show us where we should go and what we should do***>> (Jeremiah 42:3). In Proverbs, the emphasis is on the moral quality of one’s life path (here, its moral ‘straightness’). This is the great principle of God’s response towards those who trust him in the way described in the previous verses. When a person acknowledges him in their ways, he will direct their paths in the fulfilment of his will, into what is right before him and pleasing to them.

More than a few are afraid to have God direct their paths. They would much rather direct themselves! This, fundamentally, is the heart that does not trust in the Lord with the entire heart. The surrendered heart delights in God’s direction and in God’s paths. One of the most frequently asked questions among believers is, “How can I know the will of God?” In principle, Solomon gave a wonderful answer in vv.5-6. When people:

- Decide to put their trust in the Lord.
- Decide to not trust in their own understanding, but give attention and priority to God’s revealed word.
- Decide to acknowledge and honour God in all that they do, say and think.

When people do those things, they can trust that God will direct their paths. They can go forward in peace, believing that through his word, through the example and teachings of Jesus, through the leading of the Holy Spirit, through the counsel of others, through godly common sense, and through life circumstances, God will direct their paths. They will walk along their way of life and come to see that they have been on the path God intended all along.

<sup>7</sup> Do not be wise in your own eyes;  
fear the Lord, and turn away from evil.

<sup>8</sup> It will be a healing for your flesh  
and a refreshment for your body.

### Proverbs 3:7-8

Do not be wise in your own eyes. This can be regarded as an explanation of what it means to lean on one's own understanding (v.5). It is to regard individual wisdom and understanding to be better and greater than God's.

Part of Job's complaint was that he did not believe that God understood Job's situation and he had placed his argument for how he thought things should be. To this the Lord answered Job: <<Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up your loins like a man, I will question you, and you shall declare to me. 'Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding'>> (Job 38:2-4).

Fear the Lord, and turn away from evil. This is the natural result of trusting God. As a person trusts him they come to know him better, leading to natural reverence and awe, i.e. they know what it is to fear the Lord. As they trust him, they are drawn more to God and further away from evil and the snares of Satan.

It will be a healing for your flesh and a refreshment for your body. A life of surrender and trust in God has real benefits to the health of the trusting one: <<For they are life to those who find them, and healing to all their flesh>> (Proverbs 4:22). It gives a greater sense of peace and strength that the one would have apart from a life of trust and surrender to God. Flesh is literally 'navel' and is usually taken as a centre point referring to the entire body.

- <sup>9</sup> Honour the Lord with your substance  
and with the first fruits of all your produce;
- <sup>10</sup> then your barns will be filled with plenty,  
and your vats will be bursting with wine.

### Proverbs 3:9-10

Honour the Lord. This requires giving proper weight to your substance or wealth by using it only for righteous, just, and equitable purposes: <<In all your ways acknowledge him>> (v.6a), which begins with offering the first fruits of everything to the Lord: <<The levitical priests, the whole tribe of Levi, shall have no allotment or inheritance within Israel. They may eat the sacrifices that are the Lord's portion but they shall have no inheritance among the other members of the community; the Lord is their inheritance, as he promised them. This shall be the priests' due from the people, from those offering a sacrifice, whether an ox or a sheep: they shall give to the priest the shoulder, the two jowls, and the stomach. The first fruits of your grain, your wine, and your oil, as well as the first of the fleece of your sheep, you shall give him. For the Lord your God has chosen Levi out of all your tribes, to stand and

*minister in the name of the Lord, him and his sons for all time*>> (Deuteronomy 18:1-5). To give the first fruits is to imply that everything belongs to God, indeed the whole worshipper: <<*The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it*>> (Psalm 24:1). The prosperity described in v.10 is the blessing of the covenant (refer to Deuteronomy 28:1-14), a kind of restored Eden.

This is another practical way to show that one does trust in the Lord with the entire heart (v.5). When people truly trust him, they can honour him with generosity that realises he is the great provider and God has inexhaustible resources. Many commentators note that the word honour has a connection with sacrifice. The principle of first fruits also means that people give to God in active anticipation that he will provide more. They honour him by thinking, "I can give you the first and the best because I know you can and will give much more."

Your barns will be filled with plenty is a generalisation concerning the effect of honouring the Lord with all that one has and is. It is not, however, more than a generalisation as Job's comforters held, for to view this as a mechanical formula dishonours God and his inscrutable sovereign purposes. This is a wonderful principle. God is the master and distributor of unlimited resources. He knows how to prosper and take care of those who honour him with the resources he has given to them.

As a mainly agricultural society the Israelites viewed full barns and healthy crops and livestock as a blessing from God and it would be something they sought from him in praise: <<*May our barns be filled with produce of every kind; may our sheep increase by thousands, by tens of thousands in our fields, and may our cattle be heavy with young*>> (Psalm 144:13-14a).

- <sup>11</sup> My child, do not despise the Lord's discipline  
or be weary of his reproof,
- <sup>12</sup> for the Lord reproves the one he loves,  
as a father the son in whom he delights.

### Proverbs 3:11-12

My child, do not despise the Lord's discipline. In giving advice to his son, Solomon taught him how to regard correction or discipline from God: <<*How happy is the one whom God reproves; therefore do not despise the discipline of the Almighty*>> (Job 5:17). A father who reflects on these words will take pains to mould his own parenting, especially discipline, according to the pattern set by the Lord's parenting.

Adam Clarke commented, “The word *musar* [chastening] signifies correction, discipline, and instruction. Teaching is essentially necessary to show the man the way in which he is to go; discipline is necessary to render that teaching effectual; and, often, correction is requisite in order to bring the mind into submission, without which it cannot acquire knowledge.”

The writer to the Hebrews quotes this passage in Hebrews 12:4-5 as encouragement that Christians should endure their own seasons of chastening and the discouragement that often comes with it. They could be encouraged in knowing that such suffering is a sign of sonship.

Or be weary of his reproof. This is when God either brings or allows some discomfort or affliction in the life of the believer for the good of:

- Exposing a sin or evil not previously seen.
- Showing the nature of the problem and need to address it.
- Discouraging the previous embrace of the sin or evil.
- Guiding to the rejection of sin or evil and embrace of God’s best.

The particular discomfort or affliction could come in many ways. God may do it through the inward conviction of the Holy Spirit. It may come through critics and adversaries. It may come through disappointing and sour circumstances. However it may come, it will not feel good, but is often necessary before God is allowed to do much good in the life of the believer.

For the Lord reproves the one he loves. Seen rightly, God’s correction of his people is a wonderful sign of his love: <<*I reprove and discipline those whom I love. Be earnest, therefore, and repent*>> (Revelation 3:19). In instinctive human desire for ease and comfort people often wish God would not correct them. Yet because he loves and delights in his people, according to his wisdom he will deal with their sins, weaknesses, and failings. A father who truly loves his children will correct them appropriately. For a father to leave sins and failings uncorrected is not a sign of love; it is a sign of indifference to his child’s true welfare and the selfish disregard that often accompanies indifference: <<*Those who spare the rod hate their children, but those who love them are diligent to discipline them*>> (Proverbs 13:24).

## II.e Proverbs 3:13-20 - A Hymn to Wisdom

In extolling their benefits, this section makes it clear in the repeated reference to wisdom and understanding (v.13 and v.19) indicate that they are both given and governed by the Lord (vv.19-20). Following the encouragement to humbly trust the Lord’s instruction and discipline (vv.1-12), this section describes the benefits of wisdom as more precious than anything that could be gained on earth (vv.14-15), as the way of true peace and life (vv.16-18a), and thus as the means by which those who cling to wisdom are blessed by the Lord (v.13 and v.18). Just as wisdom

is the means by which the Lord founded and established creation (v.19), so it is also the means by which the one who finds it will be sustained (vv.13-18) and established (vv.21-35).

### II.e.i Proverbs 3:13-18 - The True Wealth

Wisdom brings a blessing that is of far greater value than any worldly wealth.

- 13 Happy are those who find wisdom,  
and those who get understanding,  
14 for her income is better than silver,  
and her revenue better than gold.  
15 She is more precious than jewels,  
and nothing you desire can compare with her.  
16 Long life is in her right hand;  
in her left hand are riches and honour.  
17 Her ways are ways of pleasantness,  
and all her paths are peace.  
18 She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her;  
those who hold her fast are called happy.

### Proverbs 3:13-18

Happy are those who find wisdom. Solomon longed for his son (and all who would read Proverbs) to seek after wisdom. In the fear of the Lord, wisdom and understanding, often the result of God's loving correction, would guide men and women into a truly contented and blessed life.

Happy or, more commonly, **blessed** translates the Hebrew word *esher* meaning also contentment. The truly happy person is happy because God showers him with favour and blessing. Jesus uses the Greek equivalent in Matthew 5:3-11; as confirmed by: <<***Blessed is anyone who endures temptation. Such a one has stood the test and will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him***>> (James 1:12). The Latin translation, *beatus*, is the source of the word beatitude.

For her income is better than silver, and her revenue better than gold. Wisdom, especially that which comes from God's correction, is better than material gain. It imparts the kind of character and training that brings contentment and quality of life that money cannot provide. Solomon sought wisdom and God took care of the

rest: <<Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil; for who can govern this your great people?>> (1 Kings 3:9).

Nothing you desire can compare with her. This wisdom is greater than all kinds of riches - silver, fine gold, or jewels. To have the wisdom that comes from God's loving correction is to have something better than material wealth. By inheritance from his father and through his own shrewd business dealings, Solomon was a fabulously wealthy man: <<Thus King Solomon excelled all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom>> (2 Chronicles 9:22). In a way that few would ever know, Solomon knew that the blessings of relationship with God and godly character were greater than all what man may desire of material things.

Long life is in her right hand. In principle, wisdom brings many benefits. Wise people generally live longer, enjoy great prosperity (riches) and esteem (honour). They live lives marked by pleasantness, by peace, and by happiness, i.e. those who hold her fast are called happy.

All her paths are peace. The evening before his crucifixion Jesus said to his disciples: <<Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you>> (John 14:27a). This statement both echoes and fulfils OT prophecy: <<I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; and I will bless them and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary among them for evermore>> (Ezekiel 37:26). The expression peace, Hebrew *shalom*, has a much richer connotation than the English word does since it conveyed not merely the absence of conflict and turmoil but also the notion of positive blessing, especially in terms of a right relationship with God: <<The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace>> (Numbers 6:24-26), <<May the Lord give strength to his people! May the Lord bless his people with peace!>> (Psalm 29:11), and: <<The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, says the Lord of hosts. And in this place I will give peace, declares the Lord of hosts>> (Haggai 2:9 ESV); and also, as a result, the idea that 'all is well' in one's life. This may be manifested most clearly amid persecution and tribulation.

The peace that Jesus offers is the gift of calmness and confidence that comes from a union with God and faith in him and his purposes: <<True instruction was in his mouth and nothing false was found on his lips. He walked with me in peace and uprightness, and turned many from sin>> (Malachi 2:6 NIV), <<And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus>> (Philippians 4:7), <<And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful>> (Colossians 3:15), <<Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in all ways. The Lord be with all of you>> (2 Thessalonians

3:16), and: <<Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ>> (Philemon 3).

The tree of life first appears in Genesis: <<Out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil>> (Genesis 2:9), and: <<Then the Lord God said, ‘See, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever’ – therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man; and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim, and a sword flaming and turning to guard the way to the tree of life>> (Genesis 3:22-24), and is referred to as if it had the effect of confirming a person in his moral state, especially Genesis 3:22. Through obedience, Adam and Eve would have had continued access to the tree and would have been confirmed in an unblemished state, but upon disobedience they were mercifully removed from the garden to keep from being confirmed in a state of guilt. This helps explain the image in Proverbs: the things that are called a tree of life are pictured as means by which the righteous continue on and are further confirmed in the way that is blessed in the end: <<The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, but violence takes lives away>> (Proverbs 11:30), <<Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a desire fulfilled is a tree of life>> (Proverbs 13:12), and: <<A gentle tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit>> (Proverbs 15:4). The tree appears again in Revelation with a similar function of confirming in holiness those who conquer; refer to Revelation 2:7, 22:2, 22:14 and 22:19.

Clarke commented, “Alluding most manifestly to the tree so called which God in the beginning planted in the garden of Paradise, by eating the fruit of which all the wastes of nature might have been continually repaired, so as to prevent death for ever.”

#### II.e.ii Proverbs 3:19-20 - God’s Wisdom in Creation

Creation came out of God’s wisdom, knowledge and will. Therefore, as created beings, people should seek at least some of God’s wisdom.

- <sup>19</sup> The Lord by wisdom founded the earth;  
by understanding he established the heavens;
- <sup>20</sup> by his knowledge the deeps broke open,  
and the clouds drop down the dew.

## Proverbs 3:19-20

The Lord by wisdom founded the earth. For an extended description of wisdom as the means by which the Lord worked in creation, see the speech of personified Wisdom in Proverbs 8:4-36. The essential point is that God has built the principles of wisdom into the structure of the world itself; wisdom is the ordering principle by which everything functions and does not devolve into chaos. Thus, when one lives without integrity, one violates the very rules whereby everything is held together. One cannot do this and thrive. This idea is developed at length in Proverbs 8:22-31.

In his work of creation, God showed great wisdom. This is remarkably seen in both the large features and small details of creation. The universe has the marks of a brilliant designer whose design shows his wisdom. God's self-revelation through his creation is an important theme in Paul's argument: *<<For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of those who by their wickedness suppress the truth. 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>>* (Romans 1:18-20), which also describes the guilt of mankind in ignoring and rejecting God's self-revelation through what he created.

By understanding he established the heavens. God's creating wisdom is seen in the smallest details of the single cell, but also in the expansive majesty of the heavens. In his great understanding God created a universe that some call 'just right.' According to physicists and scientists humans live in a 'just right' universe.

The universe has a 'just right' gravitational force. If it were larger, the stars would be too hot and would burn up too quickly and too unevenly to support life. If it were smaller, the stars would remain so cool, nuclear fusion would never ignite, and there would be no heat and light. The universe has a 'just right' speed of light. If it were larger, stars would send out too much light. If it were smaller, stars would not send out enough light. The universe has a 'just right' average distance between the stars. If it were larger, the heavy element density would be too thin for rocky planets to form, and there would only be gaseous planets. If it were smaller, planetary orbits would become destabilised because of the gravitational pull from other stars. One of the fascinating facts about scientific knowledge of the universe is that only 5% is fully known; the remaining 95% is unknown and unknowable, leading to many theories about creation but with limited knowledge of the full facts. This is in keeping with Scripture: *<<The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the revealed things belong to us and to our children for ever, to observe all the words of this law>>* (Deuteronomy 29:29).

By his knowledge the deeps broke open, and the clouds drop down the dew.

This is likely a reference to what happened at the flood described in Noah's day: <<*In the six-hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened*>> (Genesis 7:11). God knew that such a judgement was necessary and he knew how to make it happen. The radical ecological changes suggested by the flood of Noah possibly set in motion our earth's modern hydrological system.

II.f Proverbs 3:21-35 - The True Security

This appeal encourages the one who 'finds wisdom' (vv.13-20) to guard it and walk in its ways, knowing that the Lord sustains and secures the path of the righteous (vv.21-26). At the centre of this section is a series of commands (vv.27-31) prohibiting actions that would contravene Leviticus 19:9-18, i.e. the command to love your neighbour as yourself, because such behaviour treats others in a manner detestable to the Lord (v.32). The appeal ends with the reminder that those who walk in wisdom will inherit honour (v.16) because it is the Lord who blesses the one who walks in humility (vv.33-35).

- <sup>21</sup> My child, do not let these escape from your sight:  
keep sound wisdom and prudence,  
<sup>22</sup> and they will be life for your soul  
and adornment for your neck.

Proverbs 3:21-22

My child, do not let these escape from your sight. Solomon told his son the importance of constant attention to God's wisdom and prudence. This requires not only a life-diligence, but also an appropriately surrendered heart that recognises that God's wisdom and prudence are greater than that of any human. They will be life to the soul: Constant attention to God's wisdom and discretion brings real benefit to life: <<*My child, be attentive to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. Do not let them escape from your sight; keep them within your heart. For they are life to those who find them, and healing to all their flesh*>> (Proverbs 4:20-22).

- <sup>23</sup> Then you will walk on your way securely  
and your foot will not stumble.  
<sup>24</sup> If you sit down, you will not be afraid;  
when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet.

- 25 Do not be afraid of sudden panic,  
or of the storm that strikes the wicked;
- 26 for the Lord will be your confidence  
and will keep your foot from being caught.

### Proverbs 3:23-26

Then you will walk on your way securely. In principle, God guides those who honour his wisdom into paths of safety. There is nothing safer than living in the wisdom and will of God.

Do not be afraid of sudden panic, or of the storm that strikes the wicked. Verses 25-26 encourage those who seek to walk in wisdom not to live in fear of the ruin that will come upon the wicked: *<<I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when panic strikes you, when panic strikes you like a storm, and your calamity comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you>>* (Proverbs 1:26-27), but to trust that the Lord will keep them safe through the just and equitable lifestyle he requires of the righteous.

For the Lord will be your confidence. The wise life can let go of fear and in the release of anxiety know the blessing of sleep. Confident in God, Christians need not be afraid of sudden terror or trouble from the wicked.

- 27 Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due,  
when it is in your power to do it.
- 28 Do not say to your neighbour, ‘Go, and come again;  
tomorrow I will give it’ – when you have it with you.
- 29 Do not plan harm against your neighbour  
who lives trustingly beside you.
- 30 Do not quarrel with anyone without cause,  
when no harm has been done to you.

### Proverbs 3:27-30

Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due. Here Solomon gave some practical examples of the lessons wisdom teaches. He began with the simple principle that everyone should do good when it is in the power of their hand to do so. Clarke remarked, “Do not refuse a kindness when it is in thy power to perform it. If thou have the means by thee, and thy neighbour’s necessities be pressing, do

not put him off till the morrow. Death may take either him or thee before that time.”

Do not say to your neighbour. The good people should do should be done promptly, while opportunity still exists. If it is left until tomorrow, it may never happen - and will certainly not happen as soon as it could and should have.

Do not plan harm against your neighbour. God’s wisdom teaches that people should treat others well. Since their own security and safety is connected to the good of their neighbour, who lives trustingly beside you, then for safety’s sake they should not quarrel with their neighbour when there is no cause, i.e. when no harm has been done to you, or as Paul wrote: *<<If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all>>* (Romans 12:18), and: *<<Finally, brothers and sisters, farewell. Put things in order, listen to my appeal, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you>>* (2 Corinthians 13:11) Clarke observed, “Do not be of a litigious, quarrelsome spirit. Be not under the influence of too nice a sense of honour. If thou must appeal to judicial authority to bring him that wrongs thee to reason, avoid all enmity, and do nothing in a spirit of revenge.”

- 31 Do not envy the violent  
and do not choose any of their ways;
- 32 for the perverse are an abomination to the Lord,  
but the upright are in his confidence.
- 33 The Lord’s curse is on the house of the wicked,  
but he blesses the abode of the righteous.
- 34 Towards the scorers he is scornful,  
but to the humble he shows favour.
- 35 The wise will inherit honour,  
but stubborn fools, disgrace.

### Proverbs 3:31-35

Do not envy the violent or oppressor. Wisdom teaches that although the way of the wicked may seem good and at times enviable, Christians should not choose any of their ways. In honour to God, in love to others, and in wisdom of life they should never oppress others as Jesus taught: *<<A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above the master; it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household!*

*'So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops. Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell>> (Matthew 10:24-28), as well as in other passages.*

For the perverse are an abomination to the Lord. Christians should not envy or imitate the oppressor because God knows how and when to judge such wicked and ungodly people. God blesses the abode of the righteous, but to the scorers he is scornful. The temporary prosperity of the wicked should never make a person envy or imitate them.

Towards the scorers he is scornful, but to the humble he shows favour. James 4:6 and 1 Peter 5:5 cite this verse from the Septuagint, encouraging humility. It shows how pride sets God in opposition to people, but humility invites the grace of God. Christians want to be humble and receive God's grace. There is a sense in which Solomon spoke of wisdom and humility as being closely related. Those who are wise enough to see God as he really is and themselves as they really are will have a natural and appropriate humility. Yet Christians should not be hard on themselves for their failures remembering the promises of Scripture: *<<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), and: <<There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus>> (Romans 8:1).*

The wise will inherit honour. Whatever exaltation the wicked seem to have, it is only temporary. Their legacy shall be shame and disgrace, but God has a destiny of honour or glory for his wise, humble ones.