
PROVERBS 3: 1 My son, don't forget my teaching; but let your heart keep my commandments:

An exhortation to obedience, Pro 3:1-4; trust in God's providence, Pro 3:5, Pro 3:6; to humility, Pro 3:7, Pro 3:8; to charity, Pro 3:9, Pro 3:10; to submission to God's chastening, Pro 3:11, Pro 3:12. The profitableness of wisdom in all the concerns of life, Pro 3:13-26. No act of duty should be deferred beyond the time in which it should be done, Pro 3:27, Pro 3:28. Brotherly love and forbearance should be exercised, Pro 3:29, Pro 3:30. We should not envy the wicked, Pro 3:31, Pro 3:32. The curse of God is in the house of the wicked; but the humble and wise shall prosper, Pro 3:33-35.

Verse 1

My son - The preceptor continues to deliver his lessons.

Forget not my law - Remember what thou hast heard, and practice what thou dost remember; and let all obedience be from the heart: "Let thy heart keep my commandments."

PROVERBS 3: 2 for length of days, and years of life, and peace, will they add to you.

Verse 2

For length of days - Three eminent blessings are promised here:

1. אֵרֶךְ יָמִים orech yamim, long days;
 2. שְׁנוֹת חַיִּים shenoth chiyim, years of lives;
 3. שְׁלוֹם shalom, prosperity; i.e. health, long life, and abundance.
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PROVERBS 3: 3 Don't let kindness and truth forsake you. Bind them around your neck. Write them on the tablet of your heart.

Verse 3

Let not mercy and truth forsake thee - Let these be thy constant companions through life.

Bind them about thy neck - Keep them constantly in view. Write them upon the table of thine heart - let them be thy moving principles; feel them as well as see them.

PROVERBS 3: 4 So you will find favour, and good understanding in the sight of God and man.

Verse 4

So shalt thou find favor - Thou shalt be acceptable to God, and thou shalt enjoy a sense of his approbation.

And good understanding - Men shall weigh thy character and conduct; and by this appreciate thy motives, and give thee credit for sincerity and uprightness. Though religion is frequently persecuted, and religious people suffer at first where they are not fully known; yet a truly religious and benevolent character will in general be prized wherever it is well known. The envy of men is a proof of the excellence of that which they envy.

PROVERBS 3: 5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and don't lean on your own understanding.

Verse 5

Trust in the Lord with all thine heart - This is a most important precept:

1. God is the Fountain of all good.
2. He has made his intelligent creatures dependent upon himself.
3. He requires them to be conscious of that dependence.
4. He has promised to communicate what they need.
5. He commands them to believe his promise, and look for its fulfillment.
6. And to do this without doubt, fear, or distrust; "with their whole heart."

Lean not unto thine own understanding - אל תשען al tishshaen, do not prop thyself. It is on God, not on thyself, that thou art commanded to depend. He who trusts in his own heart is a fool.

PROVERBS 3: 6 In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.

Verse 6

In all thy ways acknowledge him - Begin, continue, and end every work, purpose, and device, with God. Earnestly pray for his direction at the commencement; look for his continual support in the progress; and so begin and continue that all may terminate in his glory: and then it will certainly be to thy good; for we never honor God, without serving ourselves. This passage is well rendered in my old MS. Bible: Have trost in the Lord of all thin herte and ne lene thou to thi prudence: in all thi weys think hym, and he shal right ruln thi goyuges; ne be thou wiis anentis thiself. Self-suf ficiency and self-dependence have been the ruin of mankind ever since the fall of Adam. The grand sin of the human race is their continual endeavor to live independently of God, i.e., to be without God in the world. True religion consists in considering God the fountain of all good, and expecting all good from him.

PROVERBS 3: 7 Don't be wise in your own eyes. Fear the LORD, and depart from evil.

PROVERBS 3: 8 It will be health to your body, and nourishment to your bones.

Verse 8

It shall be health to thy navel - We need not puzzle ourselves to find out what we may suppose to be a more delicate meaning for the original word רֶשֶׁת *shor* than navel; for I am satisfied a more proper cannot be found. It is well known that it is by the umbilical cord that the fetus receives its nourishment all the time it is in the womb of the mother. It receives nothing by the mouth, nor by any other means: by this alone all nourishment is received, and the circulation of the blood kept up. When, therefore, the wise man says, that "trusting in the Lord with the whole heart, and acknowledging him in all a man's ways, etc., shall be health to the navel, and marrow to the bones;" he in effect says, that this is as essential to the life of God in the soul of man, and to the continual growth in grace, as the umbilical cord is to the life and growth of the fetus in the womb. Without the latter, no human being could ever exist or be born; without the former, no true religion can ever be found. Trust or faith in God is as necessary to derive grace from him to nourish the soul, and cause it to grow up unto eternal life, as the navel string or umbilical cord is to the human being in the first stage of its existence. I need not push this illustration farther: the good sense of the reader will supply what he knows. I might add much on the subject.

And marrow to thy bones - This metaphor is not less proper than the preceding. All the larger bones of the body have either a large cavity, or they are spongy, and full of little cells: in both the one and the other the oleaginous substance, called marrow, is contained in proper vesicles, like the fat. In the larger bones, the fine oil, by the gentle heat of the body, is exhaled through the pores of its small vesicles, and enters some narrow passages which lead to certain fine canals excavated in the substance of the bone, that the marrow may supply the fibres of the bones, and render them less liable to break. Blood-vessels also penetrate the bones to supply this marrow and this blood; and consequently the marrow is supplied in the infant by means of the umbilical cord. From the marrow diffused, as mentioned above, through the bones, they derive their solidity and strength. A simple experiment will cast considerable light on the use of the marrow to the bones: - Calcine a bone, so as to destroy all the marrow from the cells, you will find it exceedingly brittle. Immerse the same bone in oil so that the cells may be all replenished, which will be done in a few minutes; and the bone reacquires a considerable measure of its solidity and strength; and would acquire the whole, if the marrow could be extracted without otherwise injuring the texture of the bone. After the calcination, the bone may be reduced to powder by the hand; after the impregnation with the oil, it becomes hard, compact, and strong. What the marrow is to the support and strength of the bones, and the bones to the support and strength of the body; that, faith in God, is to the support, strength, energy, and salvation of the soul. Behold, then, the force and elegance of the wise man's metaphor. Some have rendered the last clause, a lotion for the bones. What is this? How are the bones washed? What a pitiful destruction of a most beautiful metaphor!

PROVERBS 3: 9 Honour the LORD with your substance, with the first fruits of all your increase:

Verse 9

Honor the Lord with thy substance - The מִנְחָה *Minchah* or gratitude-offering to God, commanded under the law, is of endless obligation. It would be well to give a portion of the produce of every

article by which we get our support to God, or to the poor, the representatives of Christ. This might be done either in kind, or by the worth in money. Whatever God sends us in the way of secular prosperity, there is a portion of it always for the poor, and for God's cause. When that portion is thus disposed of, the rest is sanctified; when it is withheld, God's curse is upon the whole. Give to the poor, and God will give to thee.

PROVERBS 3: 10 so your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine.

PROVERBS 3: 11 My son, don't despise the LORD's discipline, neither be weary of his reproof:

Verse 11

Despise not the chastening of the Lord - The word מוסר musar 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. Do not therefore reject this procedure of God; humble thyself under his mighty hand, and open thy eyes to thy own interest; and then thou wilt learn specially and effectually. It is of no use to rebel; if thou do, thou kicest against the pricks, and every act of rebellion against him is a wound to thine own soul. God will either end thee or mend thee; wilt thou then kick on?

PROVERBS 3: 12 for whom the LORD loves, he reproves; even as a father reproves the son in whom he delights.

Verse 12

Whom the Lord loveth - To encourage thee to bear correction, know that it is a proof of God's love to thee; and thereby he shows that he treats thee as a father does his son, even that one to whom he bears the fondest affection.

The last clause the Septuagint translate μαστιγοι δε παντα υιον ον παραδεχεται, "and chasteneth every son whom he receiveth;" and the apostle, Heb 12:6, quotes this literatim. Both clauses certainly amount to the same sense. Every son whom he receiveth, and the son in whom he delighteth, have very little difference of meaning.

PROVERBS 3: 13 Happy is the man who finds wisdom, the man who gets understanding.

Verse 13

Happy is the man that findeth wisdom - This refers to the advice given in Pro 2:4 (note); where see the note.

PROVERBS 3: 14 For her good profit is better than getting silver, and her return is better than fine gold.

Verse 14

For the merchandise - סוחר sachar, the traffic, the trade that is carried on by going through countries and provinces with such articles as they could carry on the backs of camels, etc.; from סוחר sachar, to go about, traverse. Chaffarynge; Old MS. Bible.

And the gain thereof - תבואתה tebuathah, its produce; what is gained by the articles after all expenses are paid. The slaves, as we have already seen, got their liberty if they were so lucky as to find a diamond of so many carats' weight; he who finds wisdom - the knowledge and salvation of God - gets a greater prize; for he obtains the liberty of the Gospel, is adopted into the family of God, and made an heir according to the hope of an eternal life.

PROVERBS 3: 15 She is more precious than rubies. None of the things you can desire are to be compared to her.

Verse 15

She is more precious than rubies - מפנינים mippeninim. The word principally means pearls, but may be taken for precious stones in general. The root is פנה panah, he looked, beheld; and as it gives the idea of the eye always being turned towards the observer, Mr. Parkhurst thinks that it means the loadstone; see the note on Job 28:18 (note), where this subject is considered at large. If the oriental ruby, or any other precious stone, be intended here, the word may refer to their being cut and polished, so that they present different faces, and reflect the light to you in whatever direction you may look at them.

All the things thou canst desire - Superior to every thing that can be an object of desire here below. But who believes this?

PROVERBS 3: 16 Length of days is in her right hand. In her left hand are riches and honour.

Verse 16

Length of days is in her right hand - A wicked man shortens his days by excesses; a righteous man prolongs his by temperance.

In her left hand riches and honor - That is, her hands are full of the choicest benefits. There is nothing to be understood here by the right hand in preference to the left.

PROVERBS 3: 17 Her ways are ways of pleasantness. All her paths are peace.

Verse 17

Her ways are ways of pleasantness - These blessings of true religion require little comment. They are well expressed by the poet in the following elegant verses: - "Wisdom Divine! Who tells the price

Of Wisdom's costly merchandise?

Wisdom to silver we prefer,

And gold is dross compared to her.

Her hands are fill'd with length of days,

True riches, and immortal praise;

Riches of Christ, on all bestow'd,

And honor that descends from God.

To purest joys she all invites,

Chaste, holy, spiritual delights;

Her ways are ways of pleasantness,

And all her flowery paths are peace.

Happy the man that finds the grace,

The blessing of God's chosen race;

The wisdom coming from above,

The faith that sweetly works by love!"

Wesley.

PROVERBS 3: 18 She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her. Happy is everyone who retains her.

Verse 18

She is a tree of life - עץ חיים ets chiyim, "the tree of lives," 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. This is an opinion which appears probable enough. The blessings which wisdom - true religion - gives to men, preserve them in life, comfort them through life, cause them to triumph in death, and ensure them a glorious immortality.

PROVERBS 3: 19 By wisdom the LORD founded the earth. By understanding, he established the heavens.

Verse 19

The Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth - Here wisdom is taken in its proper acceptation, for that infinite knowledge and skill which God has manifested in the creation and composition of the earth, and in the structure and economy of the heavens. He has established the order as well as the essence of all things; so that though they vary in their positions, etc., yet they never change either their places, or their properties. Composition and analysis are not essential changes; the original particles, their forms and properties, remain the same.

PROVERBS 3: 20 By his knowledge, the depths were broken up, and the skies drop down the dew.

Verse 20

By his knowledge the depths are broken up - He determined in his wisdom how to break up the fountains of the great deep, so as to bring a flood of waters upon the earth; and by his knowledge those fissures in the earth through which springs of water arise have been appointed and determined; and it is by his skill and influence that vapours are exhaled, suspended in the atmosphere, and afterwards precipitated on the earth in rain, dews, etc. Thus the wisest of men attributes those effects which we suppose to spring from natural causes to the Supreme Being himself.

PROVERBS 3: 21 My son, let them not depart from your eyes. Keep sound wisdom and discretion:

Verse 21

Let not them depart from thine eyes - Never forget that God, who is the author of nature, directs and governs it in all things; for it is no self-determining agent.

Keep sound wisdom and discretion - תושיה ומזמה tushiyah umezimmah. We have met with both these words before. Tushiyah is the essence or substance of a thing; mezimmah is the resolution or purpose formed in reference to something good or excellent. To acknowledge God as the author of all good, is the tushiyah, the essence, of a godly man's creed; to resolve to act according to the directions of his wisdom, is the mezimmah, the religious purpose, that will bring good to ourselves and glory to God. These bring life to the soul, and are ornamental to the man who acts in this way, Pro 3:22.

PROVERBS 3: 22 so they will be life to your soul, and grace for your neck.

PROVERBS 3: 23 Then you shall walk in your way securely. Your foot won't stumble.

PROVERBS 3: 24 When you lie down, you will not be afraid. Yes, you will lie down, and your sleep will be sweet.

Verse 24

When thou liest down - In these verses (Pro 3:23-26) the wise man describes the confidence, security, and safety, which proceed from a consciousness of innocence. Most people are afraid of sleep, lest they should never awake, because they feel they are not prepared to appear before God. They are neither innocent nor pardoned. True believers know that God is their keeper night and day; they have strong confidence in him that he will be their director and not suffer them to take any false step in life, Pro 3:23. They go to rest in perfect confidence that God will watch over them; hence their sleep, being undisturbed with foreboding and evil dreams, is sweet and refreshing, Pro 3:24. They are not apprehensive of any sudden destruction, because they know that all things are under the control of God; and they are satisfied that if sudden destruction should fall upon their wicked neighbor, yet God knows well how to preserve them, Pro 3:25. And all this naturally flows from the Lord being their confidence, Pro 3:26.

PROVERBS 3: 25 Don't be afraid of sudden fear, neither of the desolation of the wicked, when it comes:

PROVERBS 3: 26 for the LORD will be your confidence, and will keep your foot from being taken.

PROVERBS 3: 27 Don't withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in the power of your hand to do it.

Verse 27

Withhold not good from them to whom it is due - מִבְּעַלְיָוִי mibbealaiv, from the lords of it. But who are they? The poor. And what art thou, O rich man? Why, thou art a steward, to whom God has given substance that thou mayest divide with the poor. They are the right owners of every farthing thou hast to spare from thy own support, and that of thy family; and God has given the surplus for their sakes. Dost thou, by hoarding up this treasure, deprive the right owners of their property? If this were a civil case, the law would take thee by the throat, and lay thee up in prison; but it is a case in which God alone judges. And what will he do to thee? Hear! "He shall have judgment without mercy, who hath showed no mercy;" Jam 2:13. Read, feel, tremble, and act justly.

PROVERBS 3: 28 Don't say to your neighbour, "Go, and come again; tomorrow I will give it to you," when you have it by you.

Verse 28

Say not unto thy neighbor - Do not refuse a kindness when it is in thy power to perform it. If thou have the means by thee, and thy neighbor's necessities be pressing, do not put him off till the morrow. Death may take either him or thee before that time.

PROVERBS 3: 29 Don't devise evil against your neighbour, since he dwells securely by you.

PROVERBS 3: 30 Don't strive with a man without cause, if he has done you no harm.

Verse 30

Strive not with a man - Do not be of a litigious, quarrelsome spirit. Be not under the influence of too nice a sense of honor. 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. But, if he have done thee no harm, why contend with him? May not others in the same way contend with and injure thee!

PROVERBS 3: 31 Don't envy the man of violence. Choose none of his ways.

Verse 31

Envy thou not the oppressor - O how bewitching is power! Every man desires it; and yet all hate tyrants. But query, if all had power, would not the major part be tyrants?

PROVERBS 3: 32 For the perverse is an abomination to the LORD, but his friendship is with the upright.

Verse 32

But his secret - ΙΤΙΟ sodo, his secret assembly; godly people meet there, and God dwells there.

PROVERBS 3: 33 The LORD's curse is in the house of the wicked, but he blesses the habitation of the righteous.

Verse 33

The curse of the Lord - No godly people meet in such a house; nor is God ever an inmate there.

But he blesseth the habitation of the just - He considers it as his own temple. There he is worshipped in spirit and in truth; and hence God makes it his dwelling-place.

PROVERBS 3: 34 Surely he mocks the mockers, but he gives grace to the humble.

Verse 34

Surely he scorneth the scorners; but he giveth grace unto the lowly - The Septuagint has Κυριος υπερηφανοις αντιπασσεται, ταπεινοις δε διδωσι χαριν. The Lord resisteth the proud; but giveth grace to the humble. These words are quoted by St. Peter, 1Pet 5:5, and by St. James, Jam 4:6, just as they stand in the Septuagint, with the change of ο Θεος, God, for Κυριος, the Lord.

PROVERBS 3: 35 The wise will inherit glory, but shame will be the promotion of fools.

Verse 35

The wise - The person who follows the dictates of wisdom, as mentioned above, shall inherit glory; because, being one of the heavenly family, a child of God, he has thereby heaven for his inheritance; but fools, such as those mentioned chapters 1 and 2, shall have ignominy for their exaltation. Many such fools as Solomon speaks of are exalted to the gibbet and gallows. The way to prevent this and the like evils, is to attend to the voice of wisdom.