

PROVERBS 12: 1 Whoever loves correction loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is stupid.

Of the benefit of instruction, and the cultivation of piety. The virtuous woman. The different lot of the just and unjust. The humane man. The industrious man. The fool and the wise man. The uncharitable. The excellence of the righteous. The slothful is in want. Righteousness leads to life, etc.

Verse 1

Whoso loveth instruction - מוסר musar, discipline or correction, loves knowledge; for correction is the way to knowledge.

But he that hateth reproof is brutish - בער baar, he is a bear; and expects no more benefit from correction than the ox does from the goad.

PROVERBS 12: 2 A good man shall obtain favour from the LORD, but he will condemn a man of wicked devices.

Verse 2

A good man obtaineth favor - First, it is God who makes him good; for every child of Adam is bad till the grace of God changes his heart. Secondly, while he walks in the path of obedience he increases in goodness, and consequently in the favor of the Lord.

PROVERBS 12: 3 A man shall not be established by wickedness, but the root of the righteous shall not be moved.

Verse 3

A man shall not be established by wickedness - Evil is always variable: it has no fixed principle, except the root that is in the human heart; and even that is ever assuming new forms. Nothing is permanent but goodness; and that is unchangeable, because it comes from God. The produce of goodness is permanent, because it has God's blessing in it: the fruit of wickedness, or the property procured by wickedness, is transitory, because it has God's curse in it. The righteous has his root in God; and therefore he shall not be moved.

PROVERBS 12: 4 A worthy woman is the crown of her husband, but a disgraceful wife is as rottenness in his bones.

Verse 4

A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband - אשת חיל esheth chayil, a strong woman. Our word virtue (virtus) is derived from vir, a man; and as man is the noblest of God's creatures, virtue expresses what is becoming to man; what is noble, courageous, and dignified: and as vir, a man, comes from vis, power or strength; so it implies what is strong and vigorous in principle: and as in uncivilized life strength and courage were considered the very highest, because apparently the most necessary, of all virtues; hence the term itself might have become the denomination of all excellent moral qualities; and is now applied to whatever constitutes the system of morality and moral duties. In some parts of the world, however, where arts and sciences have made little progress, strength is one of the first qualifications of a wife, where the labors of the field are appointed to them. It is not an uncommon sight in different parts of Africa, to see the wives (queens) of the kings and chiefs going out in the morning to the plantations, with their mattock in their hand, and their youngest child on their back; and when arrived at the ground, lay the young prince or princess upon the earth, which when weary of lying on one side, will roll itself on the other, and thus continue during the course of the day, without uttering a single whimper, except at the intervals in which its mother gives it suck; she being employed all the while in such labor as we in Europe generally assign to our horses. In these cases, the strong wife is the highest acquisition; and is a crown to her husband, though he be king of Bonny or Calabar. It is certain that in ancient times the women in Judea did some of the severest work in the fields, such as drawing water from the wells, and watering the flocks, etc. On this account, I think, the words may be taken literally; and especially when we add another consideration, that a woman healthy, and of good muscular powers, is the most likely to produce and properly rear up a healthy offspring; and children of this kind are a crown to their parents.

Is as rottenness in his bones - Does not this refer to a woman irregular in her manners, who by her incontinence not only maketh her husband ashamed, but contracts and communicates such diseases as bring rottenness into the bones? I think so. And I think this was the view taken of the text by Coverdale, who translates thus: "A stedfast woman is a crowne unto her hussbonde: but she that behaveth herself dishonestly is a corruption in his bones."

PROVERBS 12: 5 The thoughts of the righteous are just, but the advice of the wicked is deceitful.

PROVERBS 12: 6 The words of the wicked are about lying in wait for blood, but the speech of the upright rescues them.

PROVERBS 12: 7 The wicked are overthrown, and are no more, but the house of the righteous shall stand.

Verse 7

The wicked are overthrown - Seldom does God give such a long life or numerous offspring.

But the house of the righteous shall stand - God blesses their progeny, and their families continue long in the earth; whereas the wicked seldom have many generations in a direct line. This is God's mercy, that the entail of iniquity may be in some sort cut off, so that the same vices may not be strengthened by successive generations. For generally the bad root produces not only a bad plant, but one worse than itself.

PROVERBS 12: 8 A man shall be commended according to his wisdom, but he who has a warped mind shall be despised.

PROVERBS 12: 9 Better is he who is lightly esteemed, and has a servant, than he who honours himself, and lacks bread.

Verse 9

He that is despised, and hath a servant - I believe the Vulgate gives the true sense of this verse: *Melior est pauper, et sufficiens sibi; quam gloriosus, et indigens pane.* "Better is the poor man who provides for himself, than the proud who is destitute of bread." The versions in general agree in this sense. This needs no comment. There are some who, through pride of birth, etc., would rather starve, than put their hands to menial labor. Though they may be lords, how much to be preferred is the simple peasant, who supports himself and family by the drudgery of life!

PROVERBS 12: 10 A righteous man respects the life of his animal, but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.

Verse 10

A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast - One principal characteristic of a holy man is mercy: cruelty is unknown to him; and his benevolence extends to the meanest of the brute creation. Pity rules the heart of a pious man; he can do nothing that is cruel. He considers what is best for the comfort, ease health, and life of the beast that serves him, and he knows that God himself careth for oxen: and one of the ten commandments provides a seventh part of time to be allotted for the rest of laboring beasts as well as for man.

I once in my travels met with the Hebrew of this clause on the sign board of a public inn: *יודע צדיק יודע צדיק יודע צדיק* yodea tsaddik nephesh behemto. "A righteous man considereth the life of his beast;" which, being very appropriate, reminded me that I should feed my horse.

The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel - *אחזרי* achzari, are violent, without mercy, ruthless. The wicked, influenced by Satan, can show no other disposition than what is in their master. If they appear at any time merciful, it is a cloak which they use to cover purposes of cruelty. To accomplish its end, iniquity will assume any garb, speak mercifully, extol benevolence, sometimes even give to the poor! But, *timeo Danaos, et dona ferentes.* The cry of fire at midnight, provided it be in another's dwelling, is more congenial to their souls than the; cry of mercy. Look at the human fiends, "out-heroding Herod," in horse races, bruising matches, and cock fights, and in wars for the extension of territory, and the purposes of ambition. The hell is yet undescribed, that is suited to such monsters in cruelty.

PROVERBS 12: 11 He who tills his land shall have plenty of bread, but he who chases fantasies is void of understanding.

Verse 11

He that tilleth his land - God's blessing will be in the labor of the honest agriculturist.

But he that followeth vain persons - He who, while he should be cultivating his ground, preparing for a future crop, or reaping his harvest, associates with fowlers, coursers of hares, hunters of foxes, or those engaged in any champaign amusements, is void of understanding; and I have known several such come to beggary.

To this verse the Septuagint add the following clause: 'ov estin en oinwn diatribaiv, en toiv eautou ocurwmasi kataleiqei atimian. "He who is a boon companion in banquets, shall leave dishonor in his own fortresses." This has been copied by the Vulgate and the Arabic. That is The man who frequents the ale-house enriches that, while he impoverishes his own habitation.

PROVERBS 12: 12 The wicked desires the plunder of evil men, but the root of the righteous flourishes.

Verse 12

The wicked desireth the net of evil men - They applaud their ways, and are careful to imitate them in their wiles.

PROVERBS 12: 13 An evil man is trapped by sinfulness of lips, but the righteous shall come out of trouble.

Verse 13

The wicked is snared by the transgression of his lips - A man who deals in lies and false oaths will sooner or later be found out to his own ruin. There is another proverb as true as this: A liar had need of a good memory; for as the truth is not in him, he says and unsays, and often contradicts himself.

PROVERBS 12: 14 A man shall be satisfied with good by the fruit of his mouth. The work of a man's hands shall be rewarded to him.

PROVERBS 12: 15 The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he who is wise listens to counsel.

PROVERBS 12: 16 A fool shows his annoyance the same day, but one who overlooks an insult is prudent.

Verse 16

A fool's wrath is presently known - We have a proverb very like this, and it will serve for illustration:

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A fool's bolt is soon shot.

A weak-minded man has no self-government; he is easily angered, and generally speaks whatever comes first to his mind.

PROVERBS 12: 17 He who is truthful testifies honestly, but a false witness lies.

PROVERBS 12: 18 There is one who speaks rashly like the piercing of a sword, but the tongue of the wise heals.

Verse 18

There is that speaketh - Instead of בוטה boteh, blabbing out, blustering, several MSS. have בוטח boteach, Trusting: and instead of כמדקרות kemadkeroth, As the piercings, seven MSS., with the Complutensian Polyglot, have במדקרות bemadkeroth, In the piercings. "There is that trusteth in the piercings of a sword: but the tongue of the wise is health." But I suppose the former to be the true reading.

PROVERBS 12: 19 Truth's lips will be established forever, but a lying tongue is only momentary.

Verse 19

A lying tongue is but for a moment - Truth stands for ever; because its foundation is indestructible: but falsehood may soon be detected; and, though it gain credit for a while, it had that credit because it was supposed to be truth.

PROVERBS 12: 20 Deceit is in the heart of those who plot evil, but joy comes to the promoters of peace.

PROVERBS 12: 21 No mischief shall happen to the righteous, but the wicked shall be filled with evil.

Verse 21

There shall no evil happen to the just - No, for all things work together for good to them that love God. Whatever occurs to a righteous man God turns to his advantage. But, on the other hand, the wicked are filled with mischief: they are hurt, grieved, and wounded, by every occurrence; and nothing turns to their profit.

PROVERBS 12: 22 Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD, but those who do the truth are his delight.

PROVERBS 12: 23 A prudent man keeps his knowledge, but the hearts of fools proclaim foolishness.

Verse 23

A prudent man concealeth knowledge - "If a fool hold his peace he may pass for a wise man." I have known men of some learning, so intent on immediately informing a company how well cultivated their minds were, that they have passed either for insignificant pedants or stupid asses.

PROVERBS 12: 24 The hands of the diligent ones shall rule, but laziness ends in slave labour.

Verse 24

The hand of the diligent shall bear rule - And why? because by his own industry he is independent; and every such person is respected wherever found.

PROVERBS 12: 25 Anxiety in a man's heart weighs it down, but a kind word makes it glad.

Verse 25

Heaviness in the heart of a man maketh it stoop - Sorrow of heart, hopeless love, or a sense of God's displeasure - these prostrate the man, and he becomes a child before them.

But a good word maketh it glad - A single good or favorable word will remove despondency; and that word, "Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee," will instantly remove despair.

PROVERBS 12: 26 A righteous person is cautious in friendship, but the way of the wicked leads them astray.

Verse 26

The righteous is more excellent than his neighbor - That is, if the neighbor be a wicked man. The spirit of the proverb lies here: The Poor righteous man is more excellent than his sinful neighbor, though affluent and noble. The Syriac has it, "The righteous deviseth good to his neighbor." A late commentator has translated it, "The righteous explore their pastures." How מרעהו can be translated Their pastures I know not; but none of the versions understood it in this way. The Vulgate is rather singular: Qui negligit damnum propter amicum, justus est. "He who neglects or sustains a loss for the sake of his friend, is a just man." The Septuagint is insufferable: "The well-instructed righteous man shall be his own friend." One would hope these translators meant not exclusively; he should love his neighbor as himself.

PROVERBS 12: 27 The slothful man doesn't roast his game, but the possessions of diligent men are prized.

Verse 27

The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting - Because he is a slothful man, he does not hunt for prey; therefore gets none, and cannot roast, that he may eat. There is some obscurity in the original on which the versions cast little light. Coverdale translates the whole verse thus: "A discreatfull man schal fynde no vantage: but he that is content with what he hath, is more worth than golde." My old MS. Bible: The gylful man schal not fynd wynnyng: and the substance of a man schal ben the pris of gold.

By translating hymr remiyah the deceitful, instead of the slothful man, which appears to be the genuine meaning of the word, we may obtain a good sense, as the Vulgate has done: "The deceitful man shall not find gain; but the substance of a (just) man shall be the price of gold." But our common version, allowing hymr remiyah to be translated fraudulent, which is its proper meaning, gives the best sense: "The fraudulent man roasteth not that which he took in hunting," the justice of God snatching from his mouth what he had acquired unrighteously.

But the substance of a diligent man - One who by honest industry acquires all his property - is precious, because it has the blessing of God in it.

PROVERBS 12: 28 In the way of righteousness is life; in its path there is no death.

Verse 28

In the way of righteousness is life - חַיִּים *chaiyim*, lives; life temporal, and life eternal.

And in the pathway thereof there is no death - Not only do the general precepts and promises of God lead to life eternal, and promote life temporal; but every duty, every act of faith, patience of hope, and labor of love, though requiring much self-abasement, self-denial, and often an extension of corporal strength, all lead to life. For in every case, in every particular, "the path of duty is the way of safety." The latter clause is only a repetition of the sense of the former.