
PROVERBS 17: 1 Better is a dry morsel with quietness, than a house full of feasting with strife.

Contentment. The wise servant. The Lord tries the heart. Children a crown to their parents. We should hide our neighbour's faults. The poor should not be despised. Litigations and quarrels to be avoided. Wealth is useless to a fool. The good friend. A fool may pass for a wise man when he holds his peace.

Verse 1

Better is a dry morsel - Peace and contentment, and especially domestic peace, are beyond all other blessings.

A house full of sacrifices - A Hindoo priest, who officiates at a festival, sometimes receives so many offerings that his house is filled with them, so that many of them are damaged before they can be used - Ward.

PROVERBS 17: 2 A servant who deals wisely will rule over a son who causes shame, and shall have a part in the inheritance among the brothers.

PROVERBS 17: 3 The refining pot is for silver, and the furnace for gold, but the LORD tests the hearts.

Verse 3

The refining pot is for silver - When silver is mixed, or suspected to be mixed, with base metal, it must be subjected to such a test as the cupel to purify it. And gold also must be purified by the action of the fire. So God tries hearts. He sends afflictions which penetrate the soul, and give a man to see his state, so that he may apply to the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning, to destroy what cannot stand the fire, to separate and burn up all the dross.

PROVERBS 17: 4 An evildoer heeds wicked lips. A liar gives ear to a mischievous tongue.

Verse 4

A wicked doer giveth heed - An evil heart is disposed and ever ready to receive evil; and liars delight in lies.

PROVERBS 17: 5 Whoever mocks the poor reproaches his Maker. He who is glad at calamity shall not be unpunished.

Verse 5

He that is glad at calamity - He who is pleased to hear of the misfortune of another will, in the course of God's just government, have his own multiplied.

PROVERBS 17: 6 Children's children are the crown of old men; the glory of children are their parents.

PROVERBS 17: 7 Arrogant speech isn't fitting for a fool, much less do lying lips fit a prince.

Verse 7

Excellent speech becometh not a fool - This proverb is suitable to those who affect, in public speaking, fine language, which neither comports with their ordinary conversation, nor with their education. Often fine words are injudiciously brought in, and are as unbecoming and irrelevant as a cart wheel among clockwork.

PROVERBS 17: 8 A bribe is a precious stone in the eyes of him who gives it; wherever he turns, he prospers.

Verse 8

A gift is as a precious stone - It both enriches and ornaments. In the latter clause there is an evident allusion to cut stones. Whithersoever you turn them, they reflect the light, are brilliant and beautiful.

PROVERBS 17: 9 He who covers an offence promotes love; but he who repeats a matter separates best friends.

PROVERBS 17: 10 A rebuke enters deeper into one who has understanding than a hundred lashes into a fool.

Verse 10

A reproof entereth more - Though the rod, judiciously applied, is a great instrument of knowledge, yet it is of no use where incurable dulness or want of intellect, prevails. Besides, there are generous dispositions on which counsel will work more than stripes.

PROVERBS 17: 11 An evil man seeks only rebellion; therefore a cruel messenger shall be sent against him.

PROVERBS 17: 12 Let a bear robbed of her cubs meet a man, rather than a fool in his folly.

Verse 12

Let a bear robbed of her whelps - At which times such animals are peculiarly fierce. See the note on 2Sam 17:8.

PROVERBS 17: 13 Whoever rewards evil for good, evil shall not depart from his house.

Verse 13

Whoso rewardeth evil for good - Here is a most awful warning. As many persons are guilty of the sin of ingratitude, and of paying kindness with unkindness, and good with evil, it is no wonder we find so much wretchedness among men; for God's word cannot fail; evil shall not depart from the houses and families of such persons.

PROVERBS 17: 14 The beginning of strife is like breaching a dam, therefore stop contention before quarrelling breaks out.

Verse 14

The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water - As soon as the smallest breach is made in the dike or dam, the water begins to press from all parts towards the breach; the resistance becomes too great to be successfully opposed, so that dikes and all are speedily swept away. Such is the beginning of contentions, quarrels, lawsuits, etc.

Leave off contention, before it be meddled with - As you see what an altercation must lead to, therefore do not begin it. Before it be mingled together, היתגלע hithgalla, before the spirits of the contending parties come into conflict - are joined together in battle, and begin to deal out mutual reflections and reproaches. When you see that the dispute is likely to take this turn, leave it off immediately.

PROVERBS 17: 15 He who justifies the wicked, and he who condemns the righteous, both of them alike are an abomination to the LORD.

PROVERBS 17: 16 Why is there money in the hand of a fool to buy wisdom, since he has no understanding?

PROVERBS 17: 17 A friend loves at all times; and a brother is born for adversity.

Verse 17

A friend loveth at all times - Equally in adversity as in prosperity. And a brother, according to the ties and interests of consanguinity, is born to support and comfort a brother in distress.

PROVERBS 17: 18 A man void of understanding strikes hands, and becomes collateral in the presence of his neighbour.

 Verse 18

Striketh hands - Striking each other's hands, or shaking hands, was anciently the form in concluding a contract. See notes on Pro 6:1.

PROVERBS 17: 19 He who loves disobedience loves strife. One who builds a high gate seeks destruction.

Verse 19

He that exalteth his gate - In different parts of Palestine they are obliged to have the doors of their courts and houses very low, not more than three feet high, to prevent the Arabs, who scarcely ever leave the backs of their horses, from riding into the courts and houses, and spoiling their goods. He, then, who, through pride and ostentation, made a high gate, exposed himself to destruction; and is said here to seek it, because he must know that this would be a necessary consequence of exalting his gate. But although the above is a fact, yet possibly gate is here taken for the mouth; and the exalting of the gate may mean proud boasting and arrogant speaking, such as has a tendency to kindle and maintain strife. And this interpretation seems to agree better with the scope of the context than the above.

PROVERBS 17: 20 One who has a perverse heart doesn't find prosperity, and one who has a deceitful tongue falls into trouble.

PROVERBS 17: 21 He who becomes the father of a fool grieves. The father of a fool has no joy.

PROVERBS 17: 22 A cheerful heart makes good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.

Verse 22

A merry heart doeth good like a medicine - Instead of גהה gehah, a medicine, it appears that the Chaldee and Syriac had read in their copies גוה gevah, the body, as they translate in this way. This makes the apposition here more complete: "A merry heart doeth good to the body; but a broken spirit drieth the bones." Nothing has such a direct tendency to ruin health and waste out life as grief, anxiety, fretfulness, bad tempers, etc. All these work death.

PROVERBS 17: 23 A wicked man receives a bribe in secret, to pervert the ways of justice.

Verse 23

A gift out of the bosom - Out of his purse; as in their bosoms, above their girdles, the Asiatics carry their purses. I have often observed this.

PROVERBS 17: 24 Wisdom is before the face of one who has understanding, but the eyes of a fool wander to the ends of the earth.

Verse 24

Are in the ends of the earth - Wisdom is within the sight and reach at every man: but he whose desires are scattered abroad, who is always aiming at impossible things, or is of an unsteady disposition, is not likely to find it.

PROVERBS 17: 25 A foolish son brings grief to his father, and bitterness to her who bore him.

PROVERBS 17: 26 Also to punish the righteous is not good, nor to flog officials for their integrity.

Verse 26

Nor to strike princes for equity - To fall out with the ruler of the people, and to take off his head under pretense of his not being a just or equitable governor, is unjust. To kill a king on the ground of justice is a most dreadful omen to any land. Where was it ever done, that it promoted the public prosperity? No experiment of this kind has ever yet succeeded, howsoever worthless the king might be.

PROVERBS 17: 27 He who spares his words has knowledge. He who is even tempered is a man of understanding.

PROVERBS 17: 28 Even a fool, when he keeps silent, is counted wise. When he shuts his lips, he is thought to be discerning.

Verse 28

Even a fool - He is counted wise as to that particular. He may know that he cannot speak well, and he has sense enough to keep from speaking. He is, as to that particular, a wise fool.

A man may be golden-mouthed and silver-tongued in eloquence; but to know when and where to speak and to be silent, is better than diamonds. But who that thinks he can speak well can refrain from speaking? His tongue has no rest.