

PROVERBS 21: 1 The king's heart is in the LORD's hand like the watercourses. He turns it wherever he desires.

The king's heart is in the hand of God. We should practice mercy and justice. The lying tongue. The quarrelsome woman. The punishment of the wicked. The uncharitable. The private gift. The happiness of the righteous. The wicked a ransom for the righteous. The treasures of the wise. He who guards his tongue. Desire of the sluggard. The false witness. Salvation is of the Lord.

Verse 1

The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord - The Lord is the only ruler of princes. He alone can govern and direct their counsels. But there is an allusion here to the Eastern method of watering their lands. Several canals are dug from one stream; and by opening a particular sluice, the husbandman can direct a stream to whatever part he please: so the king's heart, wherever it turns; i.e., to whomsoever he is disposed to show favor. As the land is enriched with the streams employed in irrigation; so is the favourite of the king, by the royal bounty: and God can induce the king to give that bounty to whomsoever he will. See Harmer.

PROVERBS 21: 2 Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the LORD weighs the hearts.

Verse 2

The Lord pondereth the hearts - Every man feels strongly attached to his own opinions, modes of acting, etc.; and though he will not easily give up any thing to the judgment of a neighbor, whom he will naturally consider at least as fallible as himself, yet he should consider that the unerring eye of God is upon him; and he should endeavor to see that what he does is acceptable in the eye of his Maker and Judge.

PROVERBS 21: 3 To do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice.

Verse 3

To do justice and judgment - The words of Samuel to Saul. See note on 1Sam 15:23.

PROVERBS 21: 4 A high look, and a proud heart, the lamp of the wicked, is sin.

Verse 4

A high look - The evidence of pride, self-conceit, and vanity. A proud heart, from which the high look, etc., come.

And the ploughing - נֶר ner, lucerna, the lamp, the prosperity and posterity of the wicked; is sin - it is evil in the seed, and evil in the root evil in the branch, and evil in the fruit. They are full of sin themselves, and what they do is sinful.

PROVERBS 21: 5 The plans of the diligent surely lead to profit; and everyone who is hasty surely rushes to poverty.

PROVERBS 21: 6 Getting treasures by a lying tongue is a fleeting vapour for those who seek death.

Verse 6

Of them that seek death - Instead of מִבְקֵשֵׁי mebakshey, "them that seek," several MSS., some ancient editions, with Symmachus, the Septuagint, Vulgate, and Arabic, have מִקְשֵׁי mokeshey, the snares. He who gets treasures by a lying tongue, pursues vanity into the snares of death. Our common translation may be as good. But he who, by the snares of his tongue, endeavors to buy and sell to the best advantage, is pursuing what is empty in itself; and he is ensnared by death, while he is attempting to ensnare others.

PROVERBS 21: 7 The violence of the wicked will drive them away, because they refuse to do what is right.

Verse 7

The robbery of the wicked - The wicked shall be terrified and ruined by the means they use to aggrandize themselves. And as they refuse to do judgment, they shall have judgment without mercy.

PROVERBS 21: 8 The way of the guilty is devious, but the conduct of the innocent is upright.

PROVERBS 21: 9 It is better to dwell in the corner of the housetop, than to share a house with a contentious woman.

Verse 9

In a corner of the housetop - A shed raised on the flat roof - a wide house; בֵּית חֶבֶר beith chaber, "a house of fellowship;" what we should call a lodging-house, or a house occupied by several families. This was usual in the East, as well as in the West. Some think a house of festivity is meant: hence my old MS. Bible has, the hous and feste.

PROVERBS 21: 10 The soul of the wicked desires evil; his neighbour finds no mercy in his eyes.

PROVERBS 21: 11 When the mocker is punished, the simple gains wisdom. When the wise is instructed, he receives knowledge.

Verse 11

When the scorner is punished - When those who mock at religion, blaspheme against its Author, and endeavor to poison society, and disturb the peace of the community by their false doctrine, meet with that degree of punishment which their crimes, as far as they affect the public peace, deserve; then the simple, who were either led away, or in danger of being led away, by their pernicious doctrines, are made wise. And when those thus made wise are instructed in the important truths which have been decried by those unprincipled men, then they receive knowledge; and one such public example is made a blessing to thousands. But only blasphemy against God and the Bible should be thus punished. Private opinion the state should not meddle with.

PROVERBS 21: 12 The Righteous One considers the house of the wicked, and brings the wicked to ruin.

Verse 12

The righteous man wisely considereth - This verse is understood as implying the pious concern of a righteous man, for a wicked family, whom he endeavors by his instructions to bring into the way of knowledge and peace.

PROVERBS 21: 13 Whoever stops his ears at the cry of the poor, he will also cry out, but shall not be heard.

Verse 13

Whoso stoppeth his ears - See the conduct of the priest and Levite to the man who fell among thieves; and let every man learn from this, that he who shuts his ear against the cry of the poor, shall have the ear of God shut against his cry. The words are quite plain; there is no difficulty here.

PROVERBS 21: 14 A gift in secret pacifies anger; and a bribe in the cloak, strong wrath.

PROVERBS 21: 15 It is joy to the righteous to do justice; but it is a destruction to the workers of iniquity.

PROVERBS 21: 16 The man who wanders out of the way of understanding shall rest in the assembly of the departed spirits.

Verse 16

The man once enlightened, that wandereth out of the way of understanding, in which he had walked, shall remain - have a permanent residence - in the congregation of the dead; רפאים rephaim, the lost; either separate spirits in general, or rather the assembly of separate spirits, which

had fallen from primitive rectitude; and shall not be restored to the Divine favor; particularly those sinners who were destroyed by the deluge. This passage intimates that those called rephaim are in a state of conscious existence. It is difficult to assign the true meaning of the word in several places where it occurs: but it seems to mean the state of separate spirits, i.e., of those separated from their bodies, and awaiting the judgment of the great day: but the congregation may also include the fallen angels. My old MS. Bible translates, The man that errith fro the wei of doctrine, in the felowschip of geantis schal wonnen.

PROVERBS 21: 17 He who loves pleasure shall be a poor man. He who loves wine and oil shall not be rich.

Verse 17

He that loveth pleasure - That follows gaming, fowling, hunting, coursing, etc., when he should be attending to the culture of the fields, shall be a poor man; and, I may safely add, shall be so deservedly poor, as to have none to pity him.

PROVERBS 21: 18 The wicked is a ransom for the righteous; the treacherous for the upright.

Verse 18

The wicked shall be a ransom for the righteous - God often in his judgments cuts off the wicked, in order to prevent them from destroying the righteous. And in general, we find that the wicked fall into the traps and pits they have digged for the righteous.

PROVERBS 21: 19 It is better to dwell in a desert land, than with a contentious and fretful woman.

PROVERBS 21: 20 There is precious treasure and oil in the dwelling of the wise; but a foolish man swallows it up.

PROVERBS 21: 21 He who follows after righteousness and kindness finds life, righteousness, and honour.

PROVERBS 21: 22 A wise man scales the city of the mighty, and brings down the strength of its confidence.

Verse 22

A wise man scaleth the city of the mighty - Wisdom is in many respects preferable to strength, even in the case of defense. See what skill does in the fortification and reduction of strong places.

PROVERBS 21: 23 Whoever guards his mouth and his tongue keeps his soul from troubles.

PROVERBS 21: 24 The proud and haughty man, “scoffer” is his name; he works in the arrogance of pride.

PROVERBS 21: 25 The desire of the sluggard kills him, for his hands refuse to labour.

Verse 25

The desire of the slothful killeth him - He desires to eat, drink, and be clothed: but as he does not labor, hence he dies with this desire in his heart, envying those who possess plenty through their labor and industry. Hence he is said to covet greedily all the day long, Pro 21:26, while the righteous, who has been laborious and diligent, has enough to eat, and some to spare.

PROVERBS 21: 26 There are those who covet greedily all day long; but the righteous give and don't withhold.

PROVERBS 21: 27 The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination: how much more, when he brings it with a wicked mind!

Verse 27

When he bringeth it with a wicked mind? - If such a person even bring the sacrifices and offerings which God requires, they are an abomination to him, because the man is wicked; and if such offerings be imperfect in themselves, or of goods ill-gotten, or offered by constraint of custom, etc., they are doubly abominable.

PROVERBS 21: 28 A false witness will perish, and a man who listens speaks to eternity.

PROVERBS 21: 29 A wicked man hardens his face; but as for the upright, he establishes his ways.

Verse 29

He directeth his way - Instead of יָכִין yachin, he directeth, upwards of fifty of Kennicott's and De Rossi's MSS., several ancient editions with some of the versions, read יָבִין yabin, he understands; and because he understands his way, he is able to direct himself in walking in it.

PROVERBS 21: 30 There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the LORD.

PROVERBS 21: 31 The horse is prepared for the day of battle; but victory is with the LORD.

Verse 31

The horse is prepared against the day of battle - Horses were not used among the Jews before the time of Solomon. There was a Divine command against them, Deu 17:16; but Solomon transgressed it; see 1Kgs 10:29. But he here allows that a horse is a vain thing for safety; and that however strong

and well appointed cavalry may be, still safety, escape, and victory, are of the Lord. Among the ancient Asiatics, the horse was used only for war; oxen labored in the plough and cart, the ass and the camel carried backloads; and mules and asses served for riding. We often give the credit of a victory to man, when they who consider the circumstances see that it came from God.