
PROVERBS 22: 1 A good name is more desirable than great riches, and loving favour is better than silver and gold.

A good reputation. The rich and the poor. The idle. Good habits formed in infancy. Injustice and its effects. The providence of God. The lewd woman. The necessity of timely correction. Exhortation to wisdom. Rob not the poor. Be not the companion of the froward. Avoid suretyship. Be honest. The industrious shall be favored.

Verse 1

A good name - שם shem, a name, put for reputation, credit, fame. Used nearly in the same way that we use it: "He has got a name;" "his name stands high;" for "He is a man of credit and reputation." טוב toba, καλον, hamood, and bonum, are added by the Chaldee, Septuagint, Arabiac, and Vulgate, all signifying good or excellent.

Is rather to be chosen than great riches - Because character will support a man in many circumstances; and there are many rich men that have no name: but the word of the man of character will go farther than all their riches.

PROVERBS 22: 2 The rich and the poor have this in common: The LORD is the maker of them all.

Verse 2

The rich and poor meet together - עשיר ashir the opulent, whether in money, land, or property; רש rash, the man that is destitute of these, and lives by his labor, whether a handicraftsman, or one that tills the ground. In the order of God, the rich and the poor live together, and are mutually helpful to each other. Without the poor, the rich could not be supplied with the articles which they consume; for the poor include all the laboring classes of society: and without the rich, the poor could get no vent for the produce of their laborer, nor, in many cases, labor itself. The poor have more time to labor than the mere necessities of life require; their extra time is employed in providing a multitude of things which are called the superfluities of life, and which the rich especially consume. All the poor man's time is thus employed; and he is paid for his extra labor by the rich. The rich should not despise the poor, without whom he can neither have his comforts, nor maintain his state. The poor should not envy the rich, without whom he could neither get employment, nor the necessities of life.

The Lord is the Maker of them all - Both the states are in the order of God's providence and both are equally important in his sight. Merely considered as men, God loves the simple artificer or laborer as much as he does the king; though the office of the latter, because of its entering into the plan of his government of the world, is of infinitely greater consequence than the trade of the poor artificer. Neither should despise the other; neither should envy the other. Both are useful; both important; both absolutely necessary to each other's welfare and support; and both are accountable to God for the manner in which they acquit themselves in those duties of life which God has respectively assigned them. The abject poor - those who are destitute of health and the means of life - God in

effect lays at the rich man's door, that by his superfluities they may be supported. How wise is that ordinance which has made the rich and the poor! Pity it were not better understood!

PROVERBS 22: 3 A prudent man sees danger, and hides himself; but the simple pass on, and suffer for it.

Verse 3

A prudent man foreseeth the evil - God in mercy has denied man the knowledge of futurity; but in its place he has given him hope and prudence. By hope he is continually expecting and anticipating good; by prudence he derives and employs means to secure it. His experience shows him that there are many natural evils in a current state, the course of which he can neither stem nor divert: prudence shows him beforehand the means he may use to step out of their way, and hide himself. The simple - the inexperienced, headstrong, giddy, and foolish - rush on in the career of hope, without prudence to regulate, chastise, and guide it; thus they commit many faults, make many miscarriages, and suffer often in consequence; and the commission of crimes leads to punishment.

PROVERBS 22: 4 The result of humility and the fear of the LORD is wealth, honour, and life.

PROVERBS 22: 5 Thorns and snares are in the path of the wicked: whoever guards his soul stays from them.

Verse 5

Thorns and snares - Various difficulties, trials, and sufferings.

PROVERBS 22: 6 Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.

Verse 6

Train up a child in the way he should go - The Hebrew of this clause is curious: חנך לנער על פי דרכו chanoch lannaar al pi darco, "Initiate the child at the opening (the mouth) of his path." When he comes to the opening of the way of life, being able to walk alone, and to choose; stop at this entrance, and begin a series of instructions, how he is to conduct himself in every step he takes. Show him the duties, the dangers, and the blessings of the path; give him directions how to perform the duties, how to escape the dangers, and how to secure the blessings, which all lie before him. Fix these on his mind by daily inculcation, till their impression is become indelible; then lead him to practice by slow and almost imperceptible degrees, till each indelible impression becomes a strongly radicated habit. Beg incessantly the blessing of God on all this teaching and discipline; and then you have obeyed the injunction of the wisest of men. Nor is there any likelihood that such impressions shall ever be effaced, or that such habits shall ever be destroyed. חנך chanac, which we translate train up or initiate, signifies also dedicate; and is often used for the consecrating any thing, house, or

person, to the service of God. Dedicate, therefore, in the first instance, your child to God; and nurse, teach, and discipline him as God's child, whom he has intrusted to your care. These things observed, and illustrated by your own conduct, the child (you have God's word for it) will never depart from the path of life. Coverdale translates the passage thus: "Yf thou teachest a childe what waye he shoulde go, he shall not leave it when he is olde." Coverdale's Bible, for generally giving the true sense of a passage, and in elegant language for the time, has no equal in any of the translations which have followed since. Horace's maxim is nearly like that of Solomon: -

Fingit equum tenera docilem cervice magister

Ire viam, quam monstrat eques; venaticus, ex quo

Tempore cervinam pellem latravit in aula,

Militat in sylvis catulus. Nunc adbibe puro

Pectore verba, puer; nunc te melioribus offer.

Quo semel est imbuta recens, servabit odorem

Testa diu.

Hor. Ep. lib. i., ep. 2, ver. 64. "The docile colt is form'd with gentle skill

To move obedient to his rider's will.

In the loud hall the hound is taught to bay

The buckskin trail'd, then challenges his prey

Through the wild woods. Thus, in your hour of youth

From pure instruction quaff the words of truth:

The odours of the wine that first shall stain

The virgin vessel, it shall long retain."

Francis.

PROVERBS 22: 7 The rich rule over the poor. The borrower is servant to the lender.

Verse 7

The rich ruieth over the poor - So it is in the order of God, and may be a blessing to both.

PROVERBS 22: 8 He who sows wickedness reaps trouble, and the rod of his fury will be destroyed.

Verse 8

He that soweth iniquity - The crop must be according to the seed. If a man sow thistle seed, is it likely he shall reap wheat? If he sow to the flesh, shall he not of the flesh reap destruction?

PROVERBS 22: 9 He who has a generous eye will be blessed; for he shares his food with the poor.

Verse 9

A bountiful eye - One that disposes him to help all that he sees to be in want; the bountiful eye means the bountiful heart; for the heart looks through the eye. The merciful heart, even when the hand has little or nothing to give, shall be blessed of the Lord.

PROVERBS 22: 10 Drive out the mocker, and strife will go out; yes, quarrels and insults will stop.

PROVERBS 22: 11 He who loves purity of heart and speaks gracefully is the king's friend.

Verse 11

He that loveth pureness of heart - Who aims to be what God would have him to be - the King of kings shall be his Friend. There is no class of men that value uprightness more than kings; as none stand so much in need of it in their servants.

PROVERBS 22: 12 The eyes of the LORD watch over knowledge; but he frustrates the words of the unfaithful.

Verse 12

The eyes of the Lord - (the Divine providence) preserve knowledge - This providence has been wonderfully manifested in preserving the sacred oracles, and in preserving many ancient authors, which have been of great use to the civil interests of man.

PROVERBS 22: 13 The sluggard says, "There is a lion outside! I will be killed in the streets!"

Verse 13

The slothful man saith, There is a lion without - But why does he say so? Because he is a slothful man. Remove his slothfulness, and these imaginary difficulties and dangers will be no more. He will not go abroad to work in the fields, because he thinks there is a lion in the way, he will not go out into the town for employment, as he fears to be assassinated in the streets! From both these circumstances he seeks total cessation from activity.

PROVERBS 22: 14 The mouth of an adulteress is a deep pit: he who is under the LORD's wrath will fall into it.

Verse 14

The mouth of strange women is a deep pit - In Pro 23:27, he says, A whore is a Deep Ditch; and a strange woman is a Narrow Pit.

The allusions in these three places are too plain to be misunderstood.

Virgil's hell has been adduced in illustration: - - Sate sanguine Divum,

Tros Anchisiade, facilis decensus Averni;

Noctes atque dies patet atri janua Ditis:

Sed revocare gradum, superasque evadere ad auras,

Hoc Opus, hic Labor est.

Pauci quos aequus amavit

Jupiter, aut ardens evexit ad aethera virtus,

Dis geniti potuere.

Virg. Aen, lib. vi., ver. 125. "O glorious prince of brave Anchises' line!

Great godlike hero! sprung from seed divine,

Smooth lies the road to Pluto's gloomy shade;

And hell's black gates for ever stand display'd:

But 'tis a long unconquerable pain,

To climb to these ethereal realms again.

The choice-selected few, whom favoring Jove,

Or their own virtue, rais'd to heaven above,

From these dark realms emerged again to day;

The mighty sons of gods, and only they.

Pitt.

PROVERBS 22: 15 Folly is bound up in the heart of a child: the rod of discipline drives it far from him.

PROVERBS 22: 16 Whoever oppresses the poor for his own increase and whoever gives to the rich, both come to poverty.

Verse 16

He that oppresseth the poor - He who, in order to obtain the favor of the rich and great, either robs or cheats the poor, to make those men presents; or gives in presents to them, for the sake of honor and reputation, what he should have given to the poor, shall surely come to want.

PROVERBS 22: 17 Turn your ear, and listen to the words of the wise. Apply your heart to my teaching.

Verse 17

Bow down thine ear - From this to the end of Pro 22:21 are contained, not proverbs, but directions how to profit by that which wisdom has already delivered; the nature of the instruction, and the end for which it was given.

I shall give a paraphrase of this very important passage: -

- I. Solomon addresses his pupils on the use of his past teachings. See on Pro 22:6 (note).
 1. The wise man speaks; and all his words, not merely his sentiments, are to be carefully heard.
 2. He speaks knowledge - gives doctrines true in themselves, and confirmed by observation and experience.
 3. These are to be heard with humility and deep attention: "Bow down thine ear."
 4. They must not only be heard, but meditated and pondered: "Apply thine heart to my knowledge."
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PROVERBS 22: 18 For it is a pleasant thing if you keep them within you, if all of them are ready on your lips.

Verse 18

For it is a pleasant thing if thou keep them within thee -

II. The pleasure and profit which may be derived from an attentive hearing.

1. They should be laid up in the heart-stored, treasured up within thee.
 2. This will yield high satisfaction and happiness to the soul: "For it is a pleasant thing if thou keep them within thee."
 3. The man who thus attends to the teachings of wisdom shall gain an experimental knowledge of them, so as to be able to speak of them suitably, pertinently and persuasively. "They shall withal be fitted in thy lips."
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PROVERBS 22: 19 That your trust may be in the LORD, I teach you today, even you.

Verse 19

That thy trust may be in the Lord, I have made known, etc. -

III. The End for which the wise man gives these instructions: -

1. "That thy trust may be in the Lord." That thou mayest acknowledge Him as the Fountain of all good; and refer every thing to him.

2. That this end may be accomplished, the instructions are specific and particular: "I have made known to thee, even to thee."

3. And this has not only been done in times past, "I have made known:" but even in the present, "I have made known this day!"

IV. An appeal is made to the person himself relative to the matter and importance of the teaching.

1. "Have I not written to thee excellent things;" שלשים shalishim, literally threefold, thrice, in three different ways; which some think refers to his three books: -

1. Song of Solomon.

2. Koheleth, or Ecclesiastes.

3. Proverbs.

Others, understanding it of the voice of Divine wisdom, suppose the three grand divisions of the sacred oracles are intended; viz.,

1. The Law;

2. The Prophets;

3. The Hagiographa.

And others interpret it of the three grand intellectual sciences: -

1. Morality, or Ethics.

2. Natural Philosophy, or Physics.

3. Theology, or the science of Divine things as reported in the Scriptures. But Solomon's books of Natural Philosophy are lost.

And lastly, some of the rabbins and some Christians find in these shalishim the three senses of Scripture:

1. Literal;

2. Figurative;

3. Allegorical.

After all, as we know the term thrice was used as the term seven, a certain number for an uncertain, (see Amo 1:11; 2Cor 12:8), it may mean no more here than, I have written to thee often. But perhaps it is safer to apply it to the Scriptures, and the excellent doctrines they contain: for שלשים shalishim signifies also excellent, princely things; things which become a king to speak. Indeed, it

would not be difficult to prove that there is not one important art or science which is not alluded to in the Holy Scriptures, and used to illustrate and inculcate heavenly truths.

2. These excellent, princely, or threefold teachings, consist of two grand parts:

1. Counsels, מַעֲצוֹת moetsoth, from יָיַץ yaats, to give advice, counsel, or information. These (1) show thee what thou shouldst know; and (2) advise thee what thou shouldst do.

2. Knowledge, דַּעַת daath, from יָדַע yada, to perceive, or feel by means of the senses and internal perception; viz., what should be felt, experienced, known to be true by mental perception, and by their influence on the heart and affections.

V. All this is done to give the pupil the fullest satisfaction, and most plenary evidence concerning the truths of God.

PROVERBS 22: 20 Haven't I written to you thirty excellent things of counsel and knowledge,

PROVERBS 22: 21 To teach you truth, reliable words, to give sound answers to the ones who sent you?

Verse 21

That I might make thee know the certainty of the words of truth -

1. These are words or doctrines of truth:

1. They are true in themselves.

2. Come from the God of truth.

3. Are truly fulfilled to all that believe.

2. These words of truth are certain, כֹּשֶׁת koshet, they are not of dubious or difficult interpretation; they point directly to the great end for which God gave them; they promise, and they are fulfilled. He who pleads them by faith, receives their accomplishment in the spirit and power of Divine love. The Scriptures, as far as they concern the salvation of the soul, are to be experimentally understood; and, by this experimental knowledge, every believer has the witness in himself, and knows the certainty of the words of truth.

VI. What we know ourselves to be true, and of infinite importance to the welfare of men in general, we should carefully proclaim and witness, that they also may believe.

That thou mightest answer the words of truth -

1. When the doctrine of salvation is preached, there will be many inquirers. What is this doctrine? Have any persons received these blessings - the remission of sins, witness of the Holy Spirit, purification of the heart, etc., etc.? Who are they? What are the collateral arguments that prove these things, and show us that you have not misapprehended the meaning of these Scriptures?

2. Inquiries of this kind should meet with the speediest and most distinct answers; and the doctrines of truth should be supported and illustrated with the words of truth. "That thou mightest answer the words of truth to them that send unto thee."

PROVERBS 22: 22 Don't exploit the poor, because he is poor; and don't crush the needy in court;

Verse 22

Neither oppress the afflicted in the gate - In judgment let the poor have a fair hearing; and let him not be borne down because he is poor. The reader has often seen that courts of justice were held at the gates of cities in the East.

PROVERBS 22: 23 for the LORD will plead their case, and plunder the life of those who plunder them.

Verse 23

For the Lord will plead their cause - Wo therefore to them that oppress them, for they will have God, not the poor, to deal with.

PROVERBS 22: 24 Don't befriend a hot-tempered man, and don't associate with one who harbours anger:

Verse 24

Make no friendship with an angry man - Spirit has a wonderful and unaccountable influence upon spirit. From those with whom we associate we acquire habits, and learn their ways, imbibe their spirit, show their tempers and walk in their steps. We cannot be too choice of our company, for we may soon learn ways that will be a snare to our soul.

PROVERBS 22: 25 lest you learn his ways, and ensnare your soul.

PROVERBS 22: 26 Don't you be one of those who strike hands, of those who are collateral for debts.

Verse 26

That strike hands - See on Pro 6:1 (note); Pro 11:15 (note).

PROVERBS 22: 27 If you don't have means to pay, why should he take away your bed from under you?

Verse 27

If thou hast nothing to pay - Should any man give security for more than he is worth? If he does, is it not a fraud on the very face of the transaction?

Why should he take away thy bed from under thee? - The creditor will not pursue the debtor whom he knows to be worth nothing; but he will sue the bail or bondsman. And why shouldst thou put thyself in such circumstances as to expose thyself to the loss even of thy bed?

PROVERBS 22: 28 Don't move the ancient boundary stone, which your fathers have set up.

Verse 28

Remove not the ancient landmark - Do not take the advantage, in ploughing or breaking up a field contiguous to that of thy neighbor, to set the dividing stones farther into his field that thou mayest enlarge thy own. Take not what is not thy own in any case. Let all ancient divisions, and the usages connected with them, be held sacred. Bring in no new dogmas, nor rites, nor ceremonies, into religion, or the worship of God, that are not clearly laid down in the sacred writings. "Stand in the way; and see, and ask for the old paths, which is the good way, and walk therein; and ye shall find rest for your souls;" Jer 6:16. But if any Church have lost sight of the genuine doctrines of the Gospel, calling them back to these is not removing the ancient landmarks, as some have falsely asserted. God gave a law against removing the ancient landmarks, by which the inheritances of tribes and families were distinguished. See Deu 19:14, from which these words of Solomon appear to be taken.

Even among the heathens the landmark was sacred; so sacred that they made a deity of it. Terminus signifies the stone or post that served as a landmark. And Terminus was reputed a god, and had offerings made to him. Hence Ovid: -

Tu quoque sacrorum, Termine, finis eras.

Fast. lib. i., ver. 50.

Nox ubi transierit, solito celebratur honore,Separat indicio qui Deus arva suo.

Termine, sive lapis, sive es defossus in agroStipes, ab antiquis sic quoque Numen habes.

Te duo diversa domini pro parte coronant;Binaque sarta tibi, binaque liba ferunt -

Conveniunt, celebrantque dapes vicinia simplex;Et cantant laudes, Termine sancte, tuas.

Tu populos, urbesque, et regna ingentia finis:Omnis erit, sine te, litigiosus ager.

Fast. lib. ii., ver. 639.

Here we find the owners of both fields bringing each his garland and libation to the honor of this god. They sung its praises, put on its top a chaplet of flowers, poured out the libation before it; and the inhabitants of the country held a festival in its honor. It was, in short, celebrated as the preserver of the bounds and territorial rights of tribes, cities, and whole kingdoms; and without its testimony and evidence, every field would have been a subject of litigation.

PROVERBS 22: 29 Do you see a man skilled in his work? He will serve kings. He won't serve obscure men.

Verse 29

He shalt not stand before mean men - חשוכים chashukkim, dark or obscure persons; men of no repute. Na he schal ben before un-noble men - Old MS. Bible. "Not among the symple people." - Coverdale.

The general meaning of the proverb is, "Every diligent, active man, shall be at once independent and respectable."