

Adam Clarke:

Introduction

The teacher promises his pupil the highest advantages, if he will follow the dictates of wisdom, Proverbs 2:1-9. He shall be happy in its enjoyment, Proverbs 2:10, Proverbs 2:11; shall be saved from wicked men, Proverbs 2:12-15; and from the snares of bad women, Proverbs 2:16-19; be a companion of the good and upright; and be in safety in the land, when the wicked shall be rooted out of it, Proverbs 2:20-22.

Verse 1

My son - Here the tutor still continues to instruct his disciple.

Hide my commandments with thee. Treasure them up in thy heart, and then act from them through the medium of thy affections. He who has the rule of his duty only in his Bible and in his head, is not likely to be a steady, consistent character; his heart is not engaged, and his obedience, in any case, can be only forced, or done from a sense of duty: it is not the obedience of a loving, dutiful child, to an affectionate father. But he who has the word of God in his heart, works from his heart; his heart goes with him in all things, and he delights to do the will of his heavenly Father, because his law is in his heart. See Proverbs 3:3.

Verse 4

If thou seekest her as silver - How do men seek money? What will they not do to get rich? Reader, seek the salvation of thy soul as earnestly as the covetous man seeks wealth; and be ashamed of thyself, if thou be less in earnest after the true riches than he is after perishing wealth.

Hid treasures - The original word signifies property of any kind concealed in the earth, in caves or such like; and may also mean treasures, such as the precious metals or precious stones, which are presumptively known to exist in such and such mines. And how are these sought? Learn from the following circumstance: In the Brazils slaves are employed to scrape up the soil from the bed of the Rio Janeiro, and wash it carefully, in order to find particles of gold and diamonds; and it is a law of the state, that he who finds a diamond of so many carats shall have his freedom. This causes the greatest ardor and diligence in searching, washing out the soil, picking, etc., in order to find such diamonds, and the greatest anxiety for success; so precious is liberty to the human heart. This method of searching for gold and precious stones is alluded to in Proverbs 3:13-15. In this way Solomon wishes men to seek for wisdom, knowledge, and understanding; and he who succeeds finds the liberty of the children of God, and is saved from the slavery of sin and the empire of death.

Verse 7

He layeth up sound wisdom - *חֵסֶד וְיִשְׁעִים* (tushiyah). We have met with this word in Job; see Job 5:12; Job 6:13; Job 11:6; Job 12:16. See especially the note on Job 11:6 (note), where the different acceptations of the word are given.

Coverdale translates, *He preserveth the welfare of the righteous.* It is difficult to find, in any language, a term proper to express the original meaning of the word; its seems to mean generally the essence or substance of a thing, The thing itself - that which is chief of its kind. He layeth up What Is Essential for the righteous.

Verse 9

Then shalt thou understand - He who is taught of God understands the whole law of justice, mercy, righteousness, and truth; God has written this on his heart. He who understands these things by books only is never likely to practice or profit by them.

Verse 11

Discretion shall preserve thee - *חֵסֶד וְיִשְׁעִים* (mezimmah). See on Proverbs 1:4 (note). Here the word is taken in a good sense, a good device. The man invents purposes of good; and all his schemes, plans, and devices, have for their object God's glory and the good of man: he deviseth liberal things, and by liberal things he shall stand. Coverdale translates, *Then shall Counsel preserve thee.* A very good translation, much better than the present.

Verse 12

The man that speaketh froward things - *חֵסֶד וְיִשְׁעִים* (tahpuchoth), things of subversion; from *חֵסֶד וְיִשְׁעִים* (taphach), to turn or change the course of a thing. Men who wish to subvert the state of things, whether civil or religious; who are seditious themselves, and wish to make others so. These speak much of liberty and oppression, deal greatly in broad assertions, and endeavor especially to corrupt the minds of youth.

Verse 16

The stranger which flattereth with her words - חֶחֶלִיכָה (hechelikhah), she that smooths with her words. The original intimates the glib, oily speeches of a prostitute. The English lick is supposed to be derived from the original word.

Verse 17

Which forsaketh the guide of her youth - Leaves her father's house and instructions, and abandons herself to the public.

The covenant of her God - Renounces the true religion, and mixes with idolaters; for among them prostitution was enormous. Or by the covenant may be meant the matrimonial contract, which is a covenant made in the presence of God between the contracting parties, in which they bind themselves to be faithful to each other.

Verse 18

For her house inclineth unto death - It is generally in by and secret places that such women establish themselves. They go out of the high road to get a residence; and every step that is taken towards their house is a step towards death. The path of sin is the path of ruin: the path of duty is the way of safety. For her paths incline unto the dead, רֵפְהִים (repheim), the inhabitants of the invisible world. The woman who abandons herself to prostitution soon contracts, and generally communicates, that disease, which, above all others, signs the speediest and most effectual passport to the invisible world. Therefore it is said,

Verse 19

None that go unto her return again - There are very few instances of prostitutes ever returning to the paths of sobriety and truth; perhaps not one of such as become prostitutes through a natural propensity to debauchery. Among those who have been deceived, debauched, and abandoned, many have been reclaimed; and to such alone penitentiaries may be useful; to the others they may only be incentives to farther sinning. Rakes and debauchees are sometimes converted: but most of them never lay hold on the path of life; they have had their health destroyed, and never recover it. The original, חַיִּים (chaiyim), means lives; not only the health of the body is destroyed, but the soul is ruined. Thus the unhappy man may be said to be doubly slain.

Verse 20

That thou mayest mark - Therefore thou shalt walk.

Verse 22

Transgressors - בֹּגְדִים (bogedim). The garment men, the hypocrites; those who act borrowed characters, who go under a cloak; dissemblers. All such shall be rooted out of the land; they shall not be blessed with posterity. In general it is so: and were it not so, one evil offspring succeeding another, adding their own to their predecessors' vices, the earth would become so exceedingly corrupt that a second flood, or a fire, would be necessary to purge it.