

Adam Clarke:

Introduction

Various moral sentences; the wise child; continence of speech; of the poor rich man and the rich poor man; ill-gotten wealth; delay of what is hoped for; the bad consequences of refusing instruction; providing for one's children; the necessity of correcting them, etc.

Verse 1

A wise son heareth his father's instruction - The child that has had a proper nurturing, will profit by his father's counsels; but the child that is permitted to fulfill its own will and have its own way, will jest at the reproofs of its parents.

Verse 3

He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life - How often have the foolish, headstrong, and wicked, forfeited their lives by the treasonable or blasphemous words they have spoken! The government of the tongue is a rare but useful talent.

But he that openeth wide his lips - He that puts no bounds to his loquacity, speaks on every subject, and gives his judgment and opinion on every matter. It has often been remarked that God has, given us two Eyes, that we may See much; two Ears, that we may Hear much; but has given us but One tongue, and that fenced in with teeth, to indicate that though we hear and see much, we should speak but little.

Verse 4

The soul of the sluggard desireth and hath nothing - We often hear many religious people expressing a desire to have more of the Divine life, and yet never get forward in it. How is this? The reason is, they desire, but do not stir themselves up to lay hold upon the Lord. They are always learning, but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. They seek to enter in at the strait gate, but are not able, because they do not strive.

Verse 7

There is that maketh himself rich - That labors hard to acquire money, yet hath nothing; his excessive covetousness not being satisfied with what he possesses, nor permitting him to enjoy with comfort what he has acquired. The fable of the dog in the manger will illustrate this.

There is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches - As poor, said St. Paul, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing all things. The former is the rich poor man; the latter is the poor rich man.

As the words are here in the hithpael conjugation, which implies reflex action, or the action performed on one's self, and often signifies feigning or pretending to be what one is not, or not to be what one is; the words may be understood of persons who feign or pretend to be either richer or poorer than they really are, to accomplish some particular purpose. There is that feigneth himself to be rich, yet hath nothing; there is that feigneth himself to be poor, yet hath great riches. Both these characters frequently occur in life.

Verse 8

The ransom of a man's life - Those who have riches have often much trouble with them; as they had much trouble to get them, so they have much trouble to keep them. In despotic countries, a rich man is often accused of some capital crime, and to save his life, though he may be quite innocent, is obliged to give up his riches; but the poor, in such countries, are put to no trouble.

Verse 9

The light of the righteous rejoiceth - They shall have that measure of prosperity which shall be best for them; but the wicked, howsoever prosperous for a time, shall be brought into desolation. Light and lamp in both cases may signify posterity. The righteous shall have a joyous posterity; but that of the wicked shall be cut off. So 1 Kings 11:36: And unto his son will I give one tribe, that David my servant may have a light (x x" (ner), a lamp) always before me. 1 Kings 15:4: Nevertheless for David's sake did the Lord give them a lamp, to set up his son after him. See also Psalm 132:17, and several other places.

Verse 10

By pride cometh contention - Perhaps there is not a quarrel among individuals in private life, nor a war among nations, that does not proceed from pride and ambition. Neither man nor nation will be content to be less than another; and to acquire the wished-for superiority all is thrown into general confusion, both in public and

private life. It was to destroy this spirit of pride, that Jesus was manifested in the extreme of humility and humiliation among men. The salvation of Christ is a deliverance from pride, and a being clothed with humility. As far as we are humble, so far we are saved.

#### Verse 11

Wealth gotten by vanity - Wealth that is not the result of honest industry and hard labor is seldom permanent. All fortunes acquired by speculation, lucky hits, and ministering to the pride or luxury of others, etc., soon become dissipated. They are not gotten in the way of Providence, and have not God's blessing, and therefore are not permanent.

#### Verse 12

Hope deferred maketh the heart sick - When once a good is discovered, want of it felt, strong desire for the possession excited, and the promise of attainment made on grounds unsuspected, so that the reality of the thing and the certainty of the promise are manifest, hope posts forward to realize the blessing. Delay in the gratification pains the mind; the increase of the delay prostrates and sickens the heart; and if delay sickens the heart, ultimate disappointment kills it. But when the thing desired, hoped for, and expected comes, it is a tree of life, עץ חיים (ets chaim), the tree of lives; it comforts and invigorates both body and soul. To the tree of lives, in the midst of the gardens of paradise, how frequent are the allusions in the writings of Solomon, and in other parts of the Holy Scriptures! What deep, and perhaps yet unknown, mysteries were in this tree!

#### Verse 13

Whoso despiseth the word - The revelation which God has in his mercy given to man - shall be destroyed; for there is no other way of salvation but that which it points out.

But he that feareth the commandment - That respects it so as to obey it, walking as this revelation directs - shall be rewarded; shall find it to be his highest interest, and shall be in peace or safety, as the Hebrew word יראת (yirat) may be translated.

#### Verse 14

The law of the wise is a fountain of life - Perhaps it would be better to translate, The law is to the wise man a fountain of life. It is the same to him as the vein of lives, מֶקוֹר חַיִּים (mekor chaim), the great aorta which transmits the blood from the heart to every part of the body. There seems to be here an allusion to the garden of paradise, to the tree of lives, to the tempter, to the baleful issue of that temptation, and to the death entailed on man by his unwisely breaking the law of his God.

#### Verse 16

The way of transgressors is hard - Never was a truer saying; most sinners have more pain and difficulty to get their souls damned, than the righteous have, with all their cross-bearings, to get to the kingdom of heaven.

#### Verse 17

A wicked messenger - The Septuagint: basileus yrasuev, a bold king; instead of מַלְאֲכִי (malach), a messenger, they had read מֶלֶךְ (melech), a king: but they are singular in this rendering; none of the other versions have it so. He that betrays the counsels of his government, or the interests of his country, will sooner or later fall into mischief; but he that faithfully and loyally fulfils his mission, shall produce honor and safety to the commonwealth.

#### Verse 19

The desire accomplished - See on Proverbs 13:12 (note).

#### Verse 20

He that walketh with wise men shall be wise - To walk with a person implies love and attachment; and it is impossible not to imitate those we love. So we say, Show me his company, and I'll tell you the man. Let me know the company he keeps, and I shall easily guess his moral character.

#### Verse 22

A good man leaveth an inheritance - He files many a prayer in heaven in their behalf, and his good example and advices are remembered and quoted from generation to generation. Besides, whatever property he left was honestly acquired, and well-gotten goods are permanent. The general experience of men shows this to be a common case; and that property ill-gotten seldom reaches to the third generation. This even the heathens observed. Hence:

**De male quaesitis non gaudet tertius haeres.**

•The third generation shall not possess the goods that have been unjustly acquired.â€•

#### **Verse 23**

That is destroyed for want of judgment - O, how much of the poverty of the poor arises from their own want of management! They have little or no economy, and no foresight. When they get any thing, they speedily spend it; and a feast and a famine make the chief varieties of their life.

#### **Verse 24**

He that spareth his rod hateth his son - That is, if he hated him, he could not do him a greater disservice than not to correct him when his obstinacy or disobedience requires it. We have met with this subject already, and it is a favourite with Solomon. See Psalm 34:10 (note) and Psalm 37:3 (note).

The Rev. Mr. Holden makes some sensible observations on this passage: â€œBy the neglect of early correction the desires (passions) obtain ascendancy; the temper becomes irascible, peevish, querulous. Pride is nourished, humility destroyed, and by the habit of indulgence the mind is incapacitated to bear with firmness and equanimity the cares and sorrows, the checks and disappointments, which flesh is heir to.â€•

#### **Verse 25**

To the satisfying of his soul - His desires are all moderate; he is contented with his circumstances, and is pleased with the lot which God is pleased to send. The wicked, though he use all shifts and expedients to acquire earthly good, not sticking even at rapine and wrong, is frequently in real want, and always dissatisfied with his portion. A contented mind is a continual feast. At such feasts he eats not.