

Adam Clarke:

Introduction

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.

Verse 3

The fining 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.

Verse 4

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

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.

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.

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.

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.

Verse 12

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

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.

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, *x"xax'xæxç* (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.

#### 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.

#### Verse 18

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

#### 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.

#### Verse 22

A merry heart doeth good like a medicine - Instead of x'x"x" (gehah), a medicine, it appears that the Chaldee and Syriac had read in their copies x'x•x" (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.

#### 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.

#### 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.

#### 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.

#### 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.