

The Wise and the Foolish

Proverbs 10:1-14

Proverbs 10:1-14 - *“The proverbs of Solomon: A wise son makes a glad father, but a foolish son is the grief of his mother. Treasures of wickedness profit nothing, but righteousness delivers from death. The LORD will not allow the righteous soul to famish, but He casts away the desire of the wicked. He who has a slack hand becomes poor, but the hand of the diligent makes rich. He who gathers in summer is a wise son; he who sleeps in harvest is a son who causes shame.*

Blessings are on the head of the righteous, but violence covers the mouth of the wicked. The memory of the righteous is blessed, but the name of the wicked will rot.

The wise in heart will receive commands, but a prating fool will fall. He who walks with integrity walks securely, but he who perverts his ways will become known. He who winks with the eye causes trouble, but a prating fool will fall. The mouth of the righteous is a well of life, but violence covers the mouth of the wicked.

Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all sins. Wisdom is found on the lips of him who has understanding, but a rod is for the back of him who is devoid of understanding. Wise people store up knowledge, but the mouth of the foolish is near destruction.”

Background Notes

A simple outline of the Book of Proverbs is:

- **Precepts of Wisdom** (chapters 1-9)
- **Proverbs of Wisdom** (chapters 10-21).

Chapter 10 begins the second division – the Proverbs of Wisdom.

Proverbs are general truths and principles and guidelines for living life. They are **common sense advice given in general terms**. If you think you have found an exception to one of the proverbs, you're wrong - because “proverbs” do not have exceptions! They are general truths that are stated in general terms.

For example, in Proverbs 10:1 the proverb is, *“A wise son makes a glad father, but a foolish son is the grief of his mother.”* Someone may say, “That proverb isn't always true. I know a wise son whose father is very unhappy. The father cheats in his business, but the son won't cheat too!” Or, ‘I know of a foolish son who doesn't cause his mother grief because his

mother is just as foolish.’ But these cases don’t make the proverbs false, because proverbs speak of **most** cases. They do not have “exceptions” because they are **generally** true – they’re general truths stated in general terms. And **in general**, a wise son will make his father glad, and **in general** a foolish son will bring grief to his mother.

Doctrinal Point

The proverbs are wise advice for everyday living.

We’ll take the proverbs one or two at a time and explain them, and then draw our practical application.

Verse 2: *“Treasures of wickedness profit nothing, but righteousness delivers from death.”* The worst approach to life would be to get rich at any cost. The best approach to life would be to gain righteousness, which has eternal value.

Verse 3: *“The LORD will not allow the righteous soul to famish, but He casts away the desire of the wicked.”* ‘Wait!’ you may say. “I know of many righteous believers who have been famished. Some even starved to death. Think of the many believers who have suffered under cruel dictatorships, or from natural disaster or famine. And we know of many wicked people who are living high, with no hint of God denying their desires!’ So what’s the answer here? You guessed it! The answer is in our background notes. These are proverbs, and proverbs are **general** truths stated in **general** terms.

One could argue that this proverb is viewing life from the viewpoint of eternity. Ultimately, no righteous soul will be famished. And ultimately every desire of the wicked will be denied. It will all come out right in the end. So the truth of this proverb is absolutely true in eternity, but it’s generally true in this lifetime as well - because it is a **proverb**. This is what our Lord meant in His Sermon on the Mount when He said, *“Do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ The Gentiles seek all these things. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you”* (Matthew 6:31-33).

This proverb has many applications. For example, you can be sure that the Lord will help you and meet your needs if you’re trying to live righteously, and trying to do the right thing (for example, trying to save your marriage). But you can be sure the Lord will not help you if you’re determined to live in a way that is not pleasing to Him.

Verse 4: *“He who has a slack hand becomes poor, but the hand of the diligent makes rich.”* If you’re lazy, you can expect to be in need. The key to getting ahead is a willingness to work hard.

In verse 5, an example of laziness is given: *“He who gathers in summer is a wise son; he who sleeps in harvest is a son who causes shame.”* There’s a proper time to sleep - and there’s a time not to sleep! You don’t sleep during harvest

time. That's just plain laziness. The harvest sleeper needs to read and follow through on what we learned about the ant in chapter 6: *"Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise! Having no captain, overseer or ruler, she provides her supplies in the summer, and gathers her food in the harvest. How long will you slumber, O sluggard? When will you rise from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep— so shall your poverty come on you like a prowler, and your need like an armed man"* (Proverbs 6:6-11). So there are many applications - and they're not just about harvesting crops!

Proverbs 10:6: *"Blessings are on the head of the righteous, but violence covers the mouth of the wicked."* This is another way of saying, "You reap what you sow." You reap blessings if you sow the seeds of righteousness, and violence if you sow wickedness.

Verse 7: *"The memory of the righteous is blessed, but the name of the wicked will rot."* What you do in your life, what you say, what you write – if you've lived a righteous life, these things can still bring blessing to others when you're gone. But if you've lived out a wrong and selfish agenda in life, bad memories will linger on when you die. Would you agree? As one commentary said, "Boys are still named Paul and John, but they're seldom named Judas"!

Verse 8: *"The wise in heart will receive commands, but the babbling fool will fall."* Are you "teachable"? If so, you are wise. The fool doesn't stop talking long enough to learn anything, and that leads to their ruin. Do you know anyone in that category?

Verse 9: *"He who walks with integrity walks securely, but he who perverts his ways will become known."* How long do you think you can cover up a sinful lifestyle? Usually not long - and certainly not forever. Live an upright life, and you won't have anything to cover up!

Verse 10: *"He who winks with the eye causes trouble, but a prating [babbling] fool will fall."* Be warned! There's a good possibility that there will be trouble ahead if you associate with deceptive fast-talkers, who babble on with smooth words.

Verse 11: *"The mouth of the righteous is a well of life, but violence covers the mouth of the wicked."* Be guided by the words of righteous people, and you will be blessed in life. Be guided by the words of the wicked, and you will face trouble and violence. Watch out for sweet-talkers with hidden agendas. Many examples could be given here!

Verse 12: *"Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all sins."* This proverb does **not** mean that we should cover up sins, and never bring anyone to justice. No! The idea here is the same as 1 Corinthians 13:4 - *"Love suffers long and is kind..."* Are you willing to forgive people who have said mean and untrue things about you, or wronged you in some way?

Verses 13-14: *"Wisdom is found on the lips of him who has understanding, but a rod is for the back of him who is devoid of understanding. Wise people store up knowledge, but the mouth of the foolish is near destruction."* Wise people know what to say, and when and where to say it. Foolish people are always putting their feet in their mouths! Thus they bring

shame or punishment on themselves - and trouble for themselves and others. Do you know any people like that? Maybe some government officials? It's best to say nothing rather than put your foot in your mouth!

The proverbs are wise advice for everyday living.

Practical Application

Don't sleep during harvest time!

Verse 5: *"He who gathers in summer is a wise son; he who sleeps in harvest is a son who causes shame."*

We mentioned that this proverb is an exhortation against laziness. If you choose to sleep during harvest time, you're probably lazy.

Now let's apply this truth to witnessing and spreading the gospel. The Lord Jesus said, *"Do not say there are still four months and then comes the harvest. Behold I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already ripe for harvest"* (John 4:35).

In that verse the Lord was referring to the "fields" of the unsaved people who need to hear the gospel. There are souls out there who are ripe and ready to be harvested! They are ready to be saved, and we're responsible to get the good news and the way of salvation to them.

There's so much to do, so let's not be lazy. There are folks who need to hear the message that we have. We work with them - or go to school with them - or live next door to them. We can actively participate in outreach ministries in our churches and communities. There are missionaries in other lands we can support, and for whom we can pray.

Now is not the time for sleep! It's harvest time. Don't sleep during harvest time!