

Riches of Righteousness

Proverbs 10:15-32

Proverbs 10:15-32 - *"The rich man's wealth is his strong city; the destruction of the poor is their poverty.*

The labor of the righteous leads to life, and the wages of the wicked to sin.

He who keeps instruction is in the way of life, but he who refuses correction goes astray.

Whoever hides hatred has lying lips, and whoever spreads slander is a fool.

In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is wise.

The tongue of the righteous is choice silver, but the heart of the wicked is worth little.

The lips of the righteous feed many, but fools die for lack of wisdom.

The blessing of the LORD makes one rich, and He adds no sorrow with it.

To do evil is like sport to a fool, but a man of understanding has wisdom.

The fear of the wicked will come upon him, and the desire of the righteous will be granted. When the whirlwind passes by, the wicked is no more, but the righteous has an everlasting foundation.

As vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes, so is the lazy man to those who send him.

The fear of the LORD prolongs days, but the years of the wicked will be shortened.

The hope of the righteous will be gladness, but the expectation of the wicked will perish.

The way of the LORD is strength for the upright, but destruction will come to the workers of iniquity. The righteous will never be removed, but the wicked will not inhabit the earth.

The mouth of the righteous brings forth wisdom, but the perverse tongue will be cut out.

The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable, but the mouth of the wicked speaks what is perverse."

Background Notes

Proverbs is one of the poetic books of the Old Testament. A distinct characteristic of Hebrew poetry is a feature known as "parallelism" - one line of verse followed by a second line of verse that "parallels" it. If the second line is similar to the first line, it is called "synonymous parallelism," and the word "and" usually joins the two lines. If the second line is in contrast to the first line, it is called "antithetic parallelism," and the conjunction "but" usually joins the two lines.

There are other forms of parallelism, but as you can imagine, there are a lot of "antithetic parallelism" in the Book of Proverbs. In fact, the first half of this chapter is mostly antithetic parallelism.

Verses 11-14: *"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.”

That’s antithetic parallelism. We’ll see more of it in this chapter, and in the rest of the Book of Proverbs.

Doctrinal Point

The proverbs are wise advice for everyday living.

Verses 15-16: *“The rich man’s wealth is his strong city, but the destruction of the poor is their poverty. The labor of the righteous leads to life, but the wages of the wicked to sin.”*

Here are two proverbs about money. In reference to money, 1 Timothy 6:10 tells us, *“The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.”* Notice – this verse does **not** say that “money” is evil, or that money is the root of evil. No! It is the **love of money** that is a root of all kinds of evil.

In Proverbs 10:15, the Bible teaches that money can be used wisely for security purposes, such as insurance and staying debt free. Unfortunately the poor often go further into debt. We can use our hard earned money for serving the Lord and blessings in life, but evil people who squander their money on sinful activities.

Verse 17: *“He who keeps instruction is in the way of life, but he who refuses correction goes astray.”*

What’s the key for avoiding a shipwrecked life? Answer: submit to discipline and correction - even though it may not be pleasant, and even though it may sometimes be painful. We all like to give directions to others, but taking correction and following instruction from someone else is often hard to do!

Verse 18: *“Whoever hides hatred has lying lips, and whoever spreads slander is a fool.”*

Hatred of someone is a sin, and hatred leads to further sin. You will either lie to cover up your hatred - or play the fool, and openly slander the person you hate.

Verse 19: *“In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is wise.”*

Unfortunately, many of us never seem to learn this valuable lesson.

Verse 20: *“The tongue of the righteous is choice silver. The heart of the wicked is worth little.”*

Wow, what a contrast! The tongue of the righteous is like sterling silver. There’s great value in what a righteous person says, because that person’s heart is right, and they want to do what’s right. But the heart of the wicked has little value. It’s like a cheap plastic spoon that’s easily broken, compared to a sterling silver spoon. You can’t get words of value from a heart of no value. Remember what Jesus said: *“How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks” (Matthew 12:34).*

Verse 21: *“The lips of the righteous feed many, but fools die for lack of wisdom.”*

What righteous people say will nourish and edify believers - for example, when teaching from Scripture is shared. The worthless words of ungodly people don't have enough spiritual nourishment to keep themselves alive, let alone others.

Verse 22: *"The blessing of the LORD makes one rich, and He adds no sorrow with it."*

What does that second line mean? Does it mean that the Lord will never allow believers to suffer? No. The point of this proverb is, if you look to the Lord, you can be sure you'll be rich in His blessings - and He may even bless you with money! If He does, He doesn't attach sorrows to it. However, if your goal in life is to get rich, and you sell your soul to trying to get rich, you will have many sorrows. That's the way it is.

1 Timothy 6:9-10: *"Those who desire to be rich will fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts that drown people in ruin and destruction... Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs."* In very strong language these verses give a stern warning: **don't try to get rich!** Don't set your heart on becoming wealthy!

Notice – that verse doesn't say people who want to be rich **may** run into trouble - it says they "**will**"! They **will** be tempted, and they **will** be ensnared. In other words, if you want to get rich, and that's your top priority in life, you **will** become entrapped. You **will** have many sorrows - and you may destroy your life. Jesus said, *"What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, but forfeit their soul?"* (Mark 8:36).

Verse 23: *"To do evil is like sport to a fool, but a man of understanding has wisdom."*

This proverb does not mean that you can't enjoy practical jokes. But practical jokes are not always wise. They can cross the line, and cause great harm to others.

Verse 24: *"The fear of the wicked will come upon him, and the desire of the righteous will be granted."*

Ultimately, the wicked will experience their worst fear: lost forever! But the desires of righteous people will be granted, because their desires are in line with the will of God. *"Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart"* (Psalm 37:3-4).

Verse 25: *"When the whirlwind passes by, the wicked is no more, but the righteous has an everlasting foundation."*

The whirlwind mentioned here is God's whirlwind of judgment. Just as a tornado come suddenly and sweep away everything in its path, so it will be with God's judgment of the wicked. But the righteous have nothing to worry about. The Lord is their "tornado shelter" - their reinforced, underground, concrete, protective bunker!

As we read verses 27-30, notice the blessings that come to those who are righteous, but do not come to the wicked:

"The fear of the LORD prolongs days, but the years of the wicked will be shortened.

The hope of the righteous will be gladness, but the expectation of the wicked will perish. The way of the LORD is strength for the upright, but destruction will come to the workers of iniquity."

Did you notice the “antithetic parallelism” in those verses? A righteous lifestyle tends for longevity. A sinful lifestyle tends to result in a shorter life (v27). Alcohol, drugs, crime, and a dissipated lifestyle often lead to an earlier death.

Another blessing for righteous people is that their innate desire for true joy is realized! People who live an ungodly lifestyle may think they’re experiencing happiness, but in the end they are bound to be disillusioned and disappointed (v28). A further blessing for the righteous is security - but the wicked can expect destruction and ruin (v29-30).

Verses 31-32 discuss the subject of our speech, and they are very practical. *“The mouth of the righteous brings forth wisdom, but the perverse tongue will be cut out. The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable, but the mouth of the wicked what is perverse.”*

What a person says indicates that person’s character. Talk that encourages people and motivates them to do the right thing comes from a godly speaker. Perverse talk indicates perverse character. It’s the opposite of speech that is right and acceptable.

The proverbs are wise advice for everyday living.

Practical Application

Don’t let smoke get in your eyes!

That’s good advice when you’re on the wrong side of a campfire on a windy night! But how is that a practical lesson for Proverbs 10? Look at verse 26: *“As vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes, so is the lazy man to those who send him.”*

In this verse, who is the “vinegar” and who is the “smoke”? They’re the lazy worker. Just as vinegar is sour, and smoke irritates your eyes and blurs your vision, so lazy workers or sluggish messengers are annoying and irritating – and sometimes disastrous. The job is never completed. The errand never gets done. The message never gets through.

So what’s the practical advice? Be wise! In business or in ministry, be careful not to assign important jobs or errands to lazy and selfish workers. When selecting someone for a key position, don’t allow that person to deceive you with a false resume, or with a lot of slick, self-promoting talk. Don’t let their “smoke” blur your vision!

So be wise. Don’t let smoke get in your eyes!