

Wisdom in Conversation

Proverbs 12:15-28

Proverbs 12:15-28 - *“The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he who heeds counsel is wise.*

A fool’s wrath is known at once, but a prudent man covers shame.

He who speaks truth declares righteousness, but a false witness, deceit.

There is one who speaks like the piercings of a sword, but the tongue of the wise promotes health.

The truthful lip shall be established forever, but a lying tongue is but for a moment.

Deceit is in the heart of those who devise evil, but counselors of peace have joy.

No grave trouble will overtake the righteous, but the wicked shall be filled with evil.

Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD, but those who deal truthfully are His delight.

A prudent man conceals knowledge, but the heart of fools proclaims foolishness.

The hand of the diligent will rule, but the lazy man will be put to forced labor.

Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression, but a good word makes it glad.

The righteous should choose his friends carefully, for the way of the wicked leads them astray.

The lazy man does not roast what he took in hunting, but diligence is man’s precious possession.

In the way of righteousness is life, and in its pathway there is no death.”

Background Notes

For our Background Notes, let’s consider verse 28. What does the Old Testament have to say about life after death?

Verse 28: *“In the way of righteousness is life, and in its pathway there is no death.”*

First of all, check different Bible versions, and you’ll notice that there are various translations of this verse. The meaning of the Hebrew in this verse is uncertain, so it’s not easy to translate. The Revised Standard Version translates verse 28 in the context of antithetic parallelism as follows: “In the path of righteousness is life, but the way of error leads to death.”

Most versions, however, translate the last part of verse 28 with the positive hope of *“no death.”* So we believe that this Old Testament proverb as the Word of God is teaching that there is eternal life for the righteous. There is not only the abundant life for living righteously in this lifetime, but that righteousness puts you on the road that leads to immortality and eternal life.

With the full revelation of the New Testament, we know that the way of righteousness that leads to eternal life is only possible through faith in Jesus Christ - in His finished work on the cross, where He died to take the penalty of our sins. The New Testament makes it clear that our eternal life will involve bodily resurrection, so we will have glorified bodies like

our Lord's resurrected body. *"For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself"* (Philippians 3:20-21).

This full revelation about life after death was not given in the Old Testament, but more was given than perhaps we realize. Besides Proverbs 12:28, we have David's inspired statement in Psalm 23:6:

- *"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever"* (Psalm 23:6).

- In Isaiah 25:8 we read, *"He will swallow up death forever, and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces."*

- In Job 19:25-27, we have a clear prediction of the bodily resurrection of the believer: *"For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!"*

Doctrinal Point

The proverbs are wise advice for everyday living.

Verse 15: *"The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he who heeds counsel is wise."* Did King Rehoboam, King Solomon's son, read this Proverb? If he did, he didn't follow it. Remember, Rehoboam did not follow the wise counsel of the elders, but took the advice of his peers. Why? Because they told him what he wanted to hear! And as a result, the united kingdom of Israel split. (See 1 Kings 12 & 2 Chronicles 10.) Let's ask ourselves: Do we listen to wise counsel? Or do we only listen to what we want to hear.

Verse 16: *"A fool's wrath is known at once, but a prudent man covers shame."* How do you react when you're insulted? Do you immediately lose your temper and try to take verbal revenge? Or can you control yourself and hide your emotions, and either ignore the insult or respond with an answer that's carefully thought through? Verse 16 says that, as far as God is concerned, this little test determines whether you're wise – or a fool.

Verse 17: *"He who speaks truth declares righteousness, but a false witness, deceit."* Whether in court or out of court, our statements should **always** be in line with the facts. We should never "shade" the truth or manipulate the truth.

Verse 18: *"There is one who speaks like the piercings of a sword, but the tongue of the wise promotes health."* The power of words is amazing. They can cut like a sword and leave gaping wounds, or they can bring encouragement and comfort and healing. Be careful what you speak and how you speak during your small group sharing times.

Verse 19: *"The truthful lip shall be established forever, but a lying tongue is but for a moment."* Truth is eternal because it is what God reveals about everything. If you line up with the truth in what you say and what you believe, you will become

a Christian and live forever. Why? Because Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:6). But if you deny and reject the truth, you will perish at the end of this momentary life.

Verse 20: *“Deceit is in the heart of those who devise evil, but counselors of peace have joy.”* If you’re devising evil in any way, you cannot - and you will not - have joy in your heart. You may gain wealth and power through deceitful schemes, but you’ll have no joy, only grief. But if your aim is to counsel for peace, you will have joy in your heart that the world cannot give - even if it costs you personally.

Verse 21: *“No grave trouble will overtake the righteous, but the wicked shall be filled with evil.”* Here’s a wonderful promise of protection for the believer. But wait a minute you say, bad things do happen to good people and to believers! And certainly Solomon knew the story of Job. So what’s the answer here? Is this a contradiction in the Bible? Keep two things in mind as we answer.

1. Remember, this is a **proverb**: general truth stated in general terms. This proverb could be paraphrased as follows: if you want a more trouble-free life, then always do the right thing. If you do the wrong thing, you can be sure your life will be filled with trouble.

2. The rest of Scripture teaches that God, in His sovereignty, works all things together for good for the believer. Nothing happens by chance. What God allows to come into our lives is not to harm us, but to help us in the long run. Maybe what He allows is intended to test and strengthen our faith, or maybe to teach us patience or humility.

Verse 22: *“Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD, but those who deal truthfully are His delight.”* When reading the proverbs, do you get the sense that God is **very opposed** to lying? That’s for sure! If you want to please the Lord, don’t change or twist the truth.

Verse 23: *“A prudent man conceals knowledge, but the heart of fools proclaims foolishness.”* A wise and prudent person doesn’t show off his store of knowledge. A fool blurts out nonsense, and thus reveals his lack of knowledge. A good present-day example of this would be when a person blurts out the idea that if everyone just turned in all their weapons to

the United Nations, all the problems in the Middle East would be solved. That statement reveals a great lack of knowledge. In fact, it *“proclaims foolishness.”*

Verse 24: *“The hand of the diligent will rule, but the lazy man will be put to forced labor.”* This general truth applies to all areas of life, including Christian service. Work hard, and you advance and will be able to serve more people. If you’re lazy, you’ll fall far short of what you could have done with your life - and you may end up working in a less desirable job just to pay the bills.

Verse 26: *“The righteous chooses their friends carefully, for the way of the wicked leads them astray.”* You will notice that different versions translate this verse differently. Most likely the idea here is not a directive to remember that your friends and neighbors are watching you, so don’t lead them astray - although is certainly true. The main idea here seems to be: choose your friends wisely because if you don’t, you will be led astray. This is certainly an important truth to teach your children.

Verse 27: *“The lazy man does not roast what he took in hunting, but diligence is man’s precious possession.”* In this proverb, we have a great contrast between the diligent person and the lazy person. The diligent person knows how to work hard, persevere, and get the job done. The lazy person doesn’t even finish the job of cooking his food properly! Maybe he doesn’t even start the fire. Do you know any people like that?

Proverbs is a very practical book. The proverbs are wise advice for everyday living.

Practical Application

A word to the weary works wonders!

We’ve already seen a proverb that teaches, “A word to the wise is sufficient.” Well, here in Proverbs 12:25 we have the truth that “A word to the weary works wonders.”

“Anxiety in the heart of man causes weariness [depression], but a good word makes it glad.” There are a lot of things that can cause weariness: constant worry and anxiety about business pressures or family troubles, overwork, broken relationships, shattered dreams, illness, discouragement, heartbreak...

Well, a word to the weary can work wonders. Believe me, this is certainly true in Christian ministry. I just wrote back to a person who sent an encouraging email to us about the GCM website. I told them that their word of encouragement motivated me to continue the work of the Lord!

Look around you. Many people are disheartened and weary. Someone around you needs a word of encouragement – over a cup of coffee, or by email, or a phone call, or a letter. Remember - a word to the weary works wonders!