

Wisdom in Knowledge

Proverbs 14:1-14

Proverbs 14:1-14 - *"The wise woman builds her house, but the foolish pulls it down with her hands. He who walks in his uprightness fears the LORD, but he who is perverse in his ways despises Him. In the mouth of a fool is a rod of pride, but the lips of the wise will preserve them. Where no oxen are, the trough is clean, but much increase comes by the strength of an ox. A faithful witness does not lie, but a false witness will utter lies. A scoffer seeks wisdom and does not find it, but knowledge is easy to him who understands. Go from the presence of a foolish man when you do not perceive in him the lips of knowledge. The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way, but the folly of fools is deceit. Fools mock at sin, but among the upright there is favor. The heart knows its own bitterness, and a stranger does not share its joy. The house of the wicked will be overthrown, but the tent of the upright will flourish. There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death. Even in laughter the heart may sorrow, and the end of mirth may be grief. The backslider in heart will be filled with his own ways, but a good man will be satisfied from above."*

Background Notes

Let's consider the "trespass offering" as our background for verse 9: *"Fools mock at sin, but among the upright there is favor."* The Hebrew word translated here as "sin" is the same word that's used for the Old Testament "trespass offering" or "guilt offering." In the guilt offering, there was the vertical, God-ward, aspect of the sacrifice, and the horizontal, man-ward aspect of restitution (Leviticus 6:1-7). Notice that this sacrifice and restitution was in reference to the sin as it offended both God and man. And that same Hebrew word for the "trespass offering" is used here in Proverbs 14:9 for "sin." Both God and man are affected by sin.

With this background, we see that the full meaning of *"fools mock at sin"* is not only that they make light of sin (their own sins as well as sin in general) - but they also make light of the provision that God has made to deliver from sin and guilt.

This is just as true today as it was in Old Testament times. Scoffers and fools don't take sin seriously, and they don't take the work of Christ on the cross as sin offering seriously either. They make light of the wonderful provision God has made for us to be free from the penalty of our sins. Those who mock this truth are fools – now, and eternally.

Upright people enjoy acceptance, favor, and goodwill from God and man because they properly understand the seriousness of sin and the provision that God has made for forgiveness. What a contrast! They properly understand what restitution and making amends is all about, because they realize that their sins have offended and hurt people.

Doctrinal Point

The proverbs are wise advice for everyday living.

Verse 1: *“The wise woman builds her house, but the foolish pulls it down with her hands.”* Obviously this proverb is not talking about literal women carpenters or female demolition experts! The term is figurative for the woman who doesn't care about the well being of her family, and by her words and actions she contributes to her family's dysfunction. The wise woman, on the other hand, is a caring mother and homemaker, and thus she's a blessing to a flourishing family.

Verse 2: *“He who walks in his uprightness fears the LORD, but he who is perverse in his ways despises Him.”* Average Americans would say that they don't “despise” God. But if they don't have awe and respect [fear] for the Lord, and they don't live their lives in line with the His Word, they don't realize that they **are** despising the Lord. Any departure from the revealed Word of God is an act of rebellion - whether that person disagrees with God, or doesn't like what God says.

What does this say about Christians who choose to reject the doctrine of hell, or refuse to accept the authority structures that God has ordained in His Word? Are they despising God? Think about it. What is your view of God? If we disagree with God's Word, and look down Him by rejecting truth in His Word, the Bible says that we're **despising God!**

Verse 3: *“In the mouth of a fool is a rod of pride, but the lips of the wise will preserve them.”* Some translations have “a rod for his back” rather than “a rod of pride.” The thought seems to be that a fool will experience a punitive rod for his arrogant talk, but the wise words of the righteous will protect them.

Verse 4: *“Where no oxen are, the trough is clean; but much increase comes by the strength of an ox.”* You can have a nice clean barn if there are no oxen to mess it up - but if you have no oxen, your farm will be a lot less productive. Another way to state this proverb is, “There's no milk without some manure.” The proverb encourages us to realize that some mess and extra work is always involved when a good, productive job is accomplished - no matter how efficient we are!

This proverb applies to our homes as well as to Christian ministry. Show me an effective and successful church youth ministry, for example, and I'll show you some loose ends that need to be tied up after the inefficient work of untrained volunteers. But overall, a good job has been accomplished!

Verse 5: *“A faithful witness does not lie, but a false witness will utter lies.”* In case you didn't catch it yet in Proverbs, **God hates lies!** Tell the truth at all times.

Verse 6: *“A scoffer seeks wisdom and does not find it, but knowledge is easy to him who understands.”* This proverb backs up the basic theme of the Book of Proverbs: the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge. No wonder scoffers don’t “get wisdom” - but simple believers do!

Verse 7: *“Go from the presence of a foolish man, when you do not perceive in him the lips of knowledge.”* In other words, don’t hang around with fools. You won’t learn anything, and before you know it, you’ll be thinking just like them.

Verse 8: *“The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way, but the folly of fools is deceit.”* The wise and prudent person thinks through what they’re doing, so they’re not easily deceived, but the fool is deceived by his own folly.

Verse 9: *“Fools mock at sin, but among the upright there is favor.”* Fools not only mock sin, but (as we’ve seen) they also mock the cross where Christ paid for our sins with His own life. But the upright, find favor with both God and man.

Verse 10: *“The heart knows its own bitterness, and a stranger does not share its joy.”* You can share your joys and sorrows with others, but they cannot fully enter into your own personal experiences of joy and sorrow. Only the Lord understands us intimately.

Verse 11: *“The house of the wicked will be overthrown, but the tent of the upright will flourish.”* The contrast here is not only between the **destiny** of the righteous versus the destiny of wicked, but also the **way they live now**. The wicked are pictured as having a house - a permanent dwelling place on earth. The righteous are pictured as having only a tent - a temporary dwelling place. The wicked may have great possessions, but their possessions are for this life only. Righteous people are pilgrims who possess only a tent, but they have joy and blessing in this life - and forever.

Verse 13: *“Even in laughter the heart may sorrow, and the end of mirth may be grief.”* In this life, don’t expect laughter to last long, because there are so many things that can cause problems and grief. And things that cause grief can happen very suddenly and unexpectedly.

Verse 14: *“The backslider in heart will be filled with his own ways, but a good man will be satisfied from above.”* Notice that it’s not the unbelieving wicked man that is put in contrast with the good man. Rather, it is the backslider - the believer who is not walking, by faith, with the Lord! The case of the backslider is so sad. What could have been is never realized. Think of Lot and Samson, for example. Their great potential was squandered.

God’s moral law works in the lives of both believers and unbelievers: *“Whatever a person sows, that he will also reap”* (Galatians 6:7). And Galatians 6:8-9 elaborates on this moral law. *“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.”*

The backslider of Proverbs 14:14 reaps corruption, but the good and faithful and righteous person reaps blessing from above in due season.

The proverbs are wise advice for everyday living.

Practical Application

Make sure you're on the right road!

Verse 12: *"There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death."*

I think we've all experienced times when we thought we were on the right road and going in the right direction, only to find out that we were confused, lost, and far from our destination. I heard the story of a person who wanted to fly from Chicago to Portland, Maine, but he ended up in Portland, Oregon, because he bought the wrong ticket. A true story! He was sincere. He thought he was going the right way. But he was sincerely mistaken. He was going in the opposite direction, and ended up on the west coast instead of the east coast.

Obviously our **eternal** destiny is far more serious. *"A way that **seems right**"* might be the way of good works. Do you truly believe that if you do the best you can, be sincere, and help others, God will take you to Heaven when you die? That way **seems** right - but it's not! It's the wrong way, and it can end in eternal death. Being "good" doesn't remove the penalty for sin, because being "good" isn't the same as being perfect! There's only one way to Heaven and that's through faith in Jesus Christ, because He died for the penalty of our sins.

Jesus said, *"I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father but through Me"* (John 14:6). And in Matthew 7:14 Jesus said that the way to life is narrow, and relatively few people find it. Sadly, the majority of people are lost, because they're not on the right road. Make sure you're on the right road!