

Wisdom in Praise

Proverbs 27:1-13

Proverbs 27:1-13 - *“Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth.*

Let another man praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips.

A stone is heavy and sand is weighty, but a fool’s wrath is heavier than both of them.

Wrath is cruel, and anger a torrent, but who is able to stand before jealousy?

Open rebuke is better than love carefully concealed.

Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.

A satisfied soul loathes the honeycomb, but to a hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.

Like a bird that wanders from its nest, so is a man who wanders from his place.

Ointment and perfume delight the heart, and the sweetness of a man’s friend gives delight by hearty counsel.

Do not forsake your own friend or your father’s friend, nor go to your brother’s house in the day of your calamity.

Better is a neighbor nearby than a brother far away.

My son, be wise, and make my heart glad, that I may answer him who reproaches me.

A prudent man foresees evil and hides himself; the simple pass on and are punished.

Take the garment of him who is surety for a stranger, and hold it in pledge when he is surety for a seductress.”

Background Notes

Proverbs 27 is a good place to review Hebrew parallelism, because the four main types of Hebrew parallelism are all found in the first half of the chapter. Remember, Hebrew poetry, including the Book of Proverbs, is not characterized by rhyme. It is structured by “parallelism”: the first line of a verse in some way parallels the second line in the verse.

In **synonymous parallelism**, the second line of the verse reinforces the first line by saying pretty much the same thing as the first line, only in different words. Verse 2 here would be an example of synonymous parallelism: *“Let another man praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips.”* Notice that the second line says just about the same thing as the first line, but uses different words.

In **antithetic parallelism**, the thought of the second line is a contrast to the thought of the first line. The conjunction “but” is normally used to join the two lines. Verse 6 is an example of antithetic parallelism: *“Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.”* Notice the contrast between the two lines and the telltale word “but.”

In **emblematic parallelism**, a word picture in the first line illustrates the thought in the second line. The words “like” or “as” and “so” are used to connect the two lines. Verse 8 is a good example of emblematic parallelism: *“Like a bird that*

wanders from its nest, so is a man who wanders from his place.” Notice the word “like” and the picture in the first line illustrate the thought of the second line, with the connecting word “so.”

In **synthetic parallelism**, the second line and sometimes the third (or even more) lines add to or complete the thought of the first line. Verse 10 is three lines in synthetic parallelism: *“Do not forsake your own friend or your father’s friend, nor go to your brother’s house in the day of your calamity. Better is a neighbor nearby than a brother far away.”*

Doctrinal Point

The proverbs are wise advice for everyday living.

Verse 2: *“Let another man praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips.”* Praising yourself or promoting yourself is not only in poor taste - it is wrong! If we are to be praised at all, let someone else do it, because they are more objective. (Beware of autobiographies!) And notice – it’s the **stranger** who is most objective in praising you, not your employees who are looking for a raise, or your students who are looking for a better grade, or a colleague who may have a secret agenda! If a stranger notices something praiseworthy in your life - that’s more objective praise.

Verse 3: *“A stone is heavy and sand is weighty, but a fool’s wrath is heavier than both of them.”* A carpenter fired his inept helper and decided to do all the heavy work himself, because the helper caused problems in almost everything he said and did. This “foolish helper” needed a long piece of wood, and he actually removed a board from the scaffold that the boss was using - with near disastrous results! And that was only the tip of the iceberg. (It’s a true story!)

Verse 4: *“Wrath is cruel, and anger a torrent, but who is able to stand before jealousy?”* Just watch the news, and you’ll see the truth of this proverb almost every day. Whether it’s jealous lovers or jealous employees, insane jealousy can lead to cruel and murderous results – far more than just anger. Watch out for jealousy in the area of Christian service and spiritual gifts and blessings. It’s destructive. Don’t be jealous!

Verse 5: *“Open rebuke is better than love carefully concealed.”* True love is tough love. It expresses itself during the good times, but it does not hide during the times when rebuke and discipline are needed.

Verse 6: *“Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.”* When you read this proverb, consider this unusual question: Would you rather be kissed by an enemy, or wounded by a bullet shot by a friend? If we didn’t know the end of the story, we might be inclined to say we’d choose the kiss, because it’s a lot less painful! But suppose the enemy’s kiss was his method luring you into falling over a cliff, and your friend shot you in the leg to stop you before you got to the edge of the cliff? Now which option would you select?

Although at times the Lord may have to wound us to preserve us from danger, He always acts with loving care. Remember, the Lord is our best Friend!

Verse 7: *“A satisfied soul loathes the honeycomb, but to a hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.”* Have you ever been so full that even a piece of chocolate didn't appeal to you? Have you ever been so hungry that you'd be willing to eat *cat food*? This proverb, of course, has plenty of application: material possessions, pleasant experiences, education, and even spiritual blessings. We don't appreciate what we have until we don't have it.

I remember preaching at a small country church, and the people ate up the teaching. They had a real hunger for the Word! But I had taught the very same material to my Bible college students the day before, and they didn't seem to appreciate it as much as the people in the small church. In fact, one student even fell asleep during the class! Why the difference? These students received a lot of Bible teaching each and every day. How true this proverb is! We don't appreciate the abundance we have - until we don't have it.

Verse 8: *“Like a bird that wanders from its nest is a man who wanders from his place.”* When, for whatever reason, you leave the security of your home and the fellowship of your family, you're at greater risk. You're more vulnerable to all kinds of pitfalls, just like a young bird when it's out of its nest. This is a good proverb to give as a warning to your kids when they leave home for college or the military.

Verse 9: *“Ointment and perfume delight the heart, and the sweetness of a man's friend gives delight by hearty counsel.”* The ancient use of olive oil and perfume was, in general, a pleasant experience. So, in general, is the beneficial counsel of a good friend.

Verse 10: *“Do not forsake your own friend or your father's friend, nor go to your brother's house in the day of your calamity. Better is a neighbor nearby than a brother far away.”* This proverb gives us some very good practical and common sense advice. The overall point of the proverb is that it's important to maintain close relationships with friends and neighbors, because in a time of crisis a close friend may be more helpful than a distant relative. And as Proverbs 18:24 says, *“There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.”* And that proverb certainly can be applied to our Lord Himself!

Verse 11: *“My son, be wise, and make my heart glad, that I may answer him who reproaches me.”* What's the best proof possible to show the competence of a parent or a teacher? Look at the children - or the students! An interesting side note here: as I was preparing this Talk, just as I was reading and thinking about this proverb, the phone rang. It was one of my former students, calling to ask me a question about the Bible, and to share with me how the Lord is blessing his life and using him in Christian service. Very encouraging!

Verse 12: *“A prudent man foresees evil and hides himself; the simple pass on and are punished.”* This proverb is the same as Proverbs 22:3: *“A prudent man foresees evil and hides himself, but the simple pass on and are punished.”* Let's paraphrase this proverb in insurance terms: 'A prudent person foresees possible danger and buys insurance. Foolish people don't think ahead. They don't see or care about potential danger or calamity, so they don't buy insurance - and

they may end up in big financial trouble.’ (By the way, some believers say that if you buy insurance, you’re not depending on the Lord. No. Insurance is one of the means that the Lord provides to take care of us.)

Verse 13: *“Take the garment of him who is surety for a stranger, and hold it in pledge when he is surety for a seductress.”*

Here again is a proverb about “surety,” or co-signing for a loan or some kind of financial guarantee. There are various translations of this proverb, but the main idea is that if there’s a great risk of financial default, you must exercise great control and caution before you sign.

The proverbs are wise advice for everyday living.

Practical Application

Don’t presume when you plan!

Verse 1: *“Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth.”* Does this proverb mean that you shouldn’t plan ahead? No! Remember the principle of the “balance of Scripture.” In this chapter of proverbs we’ve already seen that you’re not wise if you don’t think ahead (v12). The point of verse 1 is not that it’s wrong to plan ahead, but it’s wrong to assume that you confidently know the future. We can’t take the future for granted – not even tomorrow - because everything in our lives could change. We truly **“do not know what a day may bring forth.”**

James 4:13-15 also gives us the balance of Scripture: *“Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit.” But you do not know what will happen tomorrow! For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. Instead, you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.”*

So it’s okay to plan ahead - but always with the attitude that the Lord is sovereign, and He is in control of our lives. Our plans will happen *“if the Lord wills.”* But we don’t know what tomorrow will bring, so when you plan - don’t presume!