

### Wisdom in Examination

#### Proverbs 30:10-20

**Proverbs 30:10-20** - *“Do not malign a servant to his master lest he curse you, and you be found guilty.*

*There is a generation that curses its father, and does not bless its mother.*

*There is a generation that is pure in its own eyes, yet is not washed from its filthiness.*

*There is a generation - oh, how lofty are their eyes!- and their eyelids are lifted up.*

*There is a generation whose teeth are like swords, and whose fangs are like knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from among men.*

*The leech has two daughters: Give and Give!*

*There are three things that are never satisfied, and four never say, ‘Enough!’: The grave, the barren womb, the earth that is not satisfied with water— and the fire never says, ‘Enough!’*

*The eye that mocks his father, and scorns obedience to his mother, the ravens of the valley will pick it out, and the young eagles will eat it.*

*There are three things which are too wonderful for me, yes, four which I do not understand: The way of an eagle in the air, the way of a serpent on a rock, the way of a ship in the midst of the sea, and the way of a man with a virgin.*

*This is the way of an adulterous woman: she eats and wipes her mouth, and says, ‘I have done no wickedness.’”*

#### Background Notes

For our background notes, let’s consider Agur’s saying in verse 17: *“The eye that mocks his father, and scorns obedience to his mother, the ravens of the valley will pick it out, and the young eagles will eat it.”*

It’s easy to understand the first part of this saying. Showing contempt and disrespect for one’s parents is serious sin. Honoring one’s parents is one of the Ten Commandments. Notice, by the way, that no indication of age is given here - so it’s not just teens that are in view! It’s possible for mature adults to scorn and ridicule aging parents with whom they disagree over all kinds of matters: finances, politics, and even spiritual matters. You can disagree with your parents - but still be respectful.

What about the penalty in the second part of the saying? Will ravens swoop down and pluck out the eyes of the disrespectful person? Will young eagles feast on the gouged out eyes? No! This verse is speaking about the disgrace of the unburied body of a sinful person being left for the birds and beasts to devour.

Under the Law, not having a decent burial was the judgment of God. This saying echoes Deuteronomy 28:25-26, that gives God’s judgment upon those who would not follow the Lord: *“The Lord will cause you to be defeated before your*

*enemies; you shall go out one way against them and flee seven ways before them; and you shall become troublesome to all the kingdoms of the earth. Your carcasses shall be food for all the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, and no one shall frighten them away."*

## Doctrinal Point

### The sayings of Agur contain truth for every believer.

**Verse 10:** *"Do not malign a servant to his master lest he curse you, and you be found guilty."* The word "malign" or "slander" that is used here indicates it is a false accusation. The question is whether the "he" in the second half of the proverb is the servant who has been slandered, or the master of the servant who has been slandered. But in either case, the implication is that the curse will carry some weight because it is deserved. It's not like the undeserved curse in Proverbs 26:2, which carried no weight. In other words, here in Proverbs 30:10, God will make sure a penalty will follow this sinful act of slander.

The overall point of this proverb is: don't meddle in another person's domestic affairs! This proverb certainly has application to the Christian community today. Romans 14:4 says, *"Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand."* Let's be careful how we talk about other believers and their service to the Lord.

**Verses 11-14:** *"There is a generation that curses its father, and does not bless its mother. There is a generation that is pure in its own eyes, yet is not washed from its filthiness. There is a generation - oh, how lofty are their eyes! - and their eyelids are lifted up. There is a generation whose teeth are like swords, and whose fangs are like knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from among men."* The word "generation" could also be translated "class of people." You can see from these verses that four evil classifications are mentioned: the disrespectful (v11), the hypocrite (v12), the proud (v13), and the greedy (v14).

**Verse 11:** *"There is a generation that curses its father, and does not bless its mother."* The sin of disrespect for parents (and all authority figures) is all around us today. Maybe you've experienced this class of person in your own family.

**Verse 12:** *"There is a generation that is pure in its own eyes, yet is not washed from its filthiness."* Here we have the self-righteous hypocrite - the person who arrogantly believes he meets with God's approval, but actually he is *"not washed from his filthiness."* The Pharisees were a typical example of this classification of people. Remember what the Lord said to them in Matthew 23:27: *"Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness."*

**Verse 13:** *"There is a generation - oh, how lofty are their eyes! - and their eyelids are lifted up."* Here is the proud class of people. They have "lofty eyes" - they look down scornfully on everyone who disagrees with them. God **hates** the sin of

pride (Proverbs 6:16-17). These proud people believe they are right, but are not (v12), and they sneer at and cut down anyone who differs from their ideas. Proud scorners are all around us today as well.

**Verse 14:** *“There is a generation whose teeth are like swords, and whose fangs are like knives to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from among men.”* This class of people is fierce in its greed. Like fierce animals, they rip apart, trample underfoot, and cut down anyone who stands in their way - without the slightest feeling of guilt. Terrorists and radical activists fit into this classification.

**Verses 15-16:** *“The leech has two daughters: Give and Give! There are three things that are never satisfied, four never say, ‘Enough!’ - The grave, the barren womb, the earth that is not satisfied with water— and the fire never says, ‘Enough!’* The expression *“There are three things, yes four”* is a literary formula to emphasize the truth that’s being illustrated in the series. Here the point is that **greed** is never satisfied.

Verse 14 gave us a description of the class of people who are greedy oppressors. In verse 15 we have an illustration of this type of greedy oppressor. This person is like a vampire bat or a bloodsucking leech that cries out “More, more!” It’s certainly not a compliment to be included in the class of people labeled “leech.”

The second half of verse 15 and verse 16 give us four other examples of desires that are never satisfied:

- Death and the grave: they never say, “We have enough!”
- A childless womb: it continually desires to be filled with life
- The earth: it has a constant need for moisture
- A fire: its constant need for more fuel is never satisfied.

**Verses 18-19:** *“There are three things which are too wonderful for me, yes, four which I do not understand: The way of an eagle in the air, the way of a serpent on a rock, the way of a ship in the midst of the sea, and the way of a man with a young woman.”* What’s the connection between these four amazing things? Various suggestions have been given for the common thread. Is it that all four follow no set path, or leave no trace? I like the idea that here we have four wonderful things in four different areas: sky, land, sea, and human love.

Think of the wonder of flight and aeronautics, when you observe the seemingly effortless flight of an eagle. And how does a snake, with no feet or legs, so easily propel itself on a smooth rock? How majestic is a sailing ship gliding through the sea! And the wonder and joy of the blossoming of human love, as a young man courts a young woman, is beyond description. All four of these amazing things should cause us to praise and worship the Lord who designed it all.

The sayings of Agur contain truth for every believer.

## Practical Application

**Don't become desensitized to sin.**

**Verse 20:** *"This is the way of an adulterous woman: she eats, and wipes her mouth, and says, 'I have done no wickedness.'"*

What a contrast in verse 20, compared with the beauty of human love at the end of verse 19! How was it possible for the adulterous woman of verse 20 to become so desensitized to sin? My guess is that she didn't treat her first act of adultery as "just another meal." And after her first act of adultery she didn't say to herself, "I haven't done anything wrong!" Why? Because after the first sinful act she was not yet desensitized to the sin of adultery.

But with further sinful acts, adultery became easier, and seemed less and less sinful. Finally she got to the point where adultery became as ordinary as eating a meal - with no sense of having done anything wrong. The more you sin ***in any area***, the more you'll become desensitized to sin in that area.

Let's be very careful what we allow ourselves to read or watch or do, so we don't start down a path of becoming hardened and insensitive to sin. Don't become desensitized to sin!