

The Place of Wisdom

Beyond the shadow of a doubt, the subject of wisdom receives more verses in the book of Proverbs than any other. Its author, Solomon, has his wisdom often referred in the Bible. He had much to say upon this subject, and it is to our advantage that the Spirit of God inspired him to give us so many fine things in the book of Proverbs about it.

Let us turn our attention to what it says about it.

I. MUCH WISDOM IS COUCHED IN WISE SA YINGS.

We are told in I Kings that Solomon spoke three thousand proverbs. Wise men of all ages have had their favorite sayings—all brief, but loaded with meaning and application. Paul in his writings talks of and coins sayings which he says are "faithful" or true and "worthy of all acceptance" or can be counted on.

Great truths are needed for everyday living, and they need to be well worded that they might always be remembered and used. The first verses of Proverbs tell us the purpose of proverbs: "The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel: to know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding; to receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity; to give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion. A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels: to understand a proverb, and the interpretation; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings" (1:1-6).

II. PARENTS IMPART WISDOM TO THEIR CHILDREN.

What a responsibility comes with parenthood!

The start that is given little ones is so important and will have such lasting results. Parents are a child's first teachers. 1:8,9 says, "My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: for they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck." Just as Peter talks about godliness ornamenting holy women, so does keeping parents' commandments ornament the lives of children.

7:1-4 states it like this: "My son, keep my words, and lay up my commandments with thee. Keep my commandments; and live; and my law as the apple of thine eye. Bind them upon thy fingers, write them upon the table of thine heart. Say unto wisdom, Thou art my sister; and call understanding thy kinswoman."

Every father should urge his children to seek knowledge. The passage 2:1-9 has many good thoughts in it upon this matter: "My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding. He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: he is a buckler to them that walk uprightly. He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints. Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity: yea, every good path."

III. AS PEOPLE MATURE, THEY SHOULD RECOGNIZE THE PLACE OF GOD IN THEIR WISDOM.

Unless people learn to respect the wisdom of their parents, they seldom respect the wisdom of

God and His Word when they grow up. The importance of respecting God is evident. 1:7 says, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction." When people fear the Lord, they are teachable; they recognize their dependence upon God; they regard His Word as the source of their knowledge.

9:10 says, "The knowledge of the holy is understanding." Yes, it is understanding to know the holy. When one has a knowledge of God, he is a well posted man.

13:13 is a great verse: "Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed: but he that feareth the commandment shall be rewarded."

IV. MEN OFTEN NEED UNDERSTANDING WHEN THEY DO NOT HAVE IT.

Wisdom is personified in the early part of Proverbs. 1:20-31 is an example: "Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets: she crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates: in the city she uttereth her words, saying, How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you. Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: they would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their

own way, and be filled with their own devices."

V. THE BLESSINGS OF WISDOM.

We should appreciate the splendid words concerning the desirableness of wisdom in 4:5-13: "Get wisdom, get understanding; forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth. Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee. Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom; and with all thy getting get understanding. Exalt her, and she shall promote thee: she shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her. She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee. Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings; and the years of thy life shall be many. I have taught thee in the way of wisdom; I have led thee in right paths. When thou goest, thy steps shall not be straitened; and when thou runnest, thou shalt not stumble. Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go; keep her; for she is thy life."

2:10-17 is another fine passage showing the usefulness of wisdom: "When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul; discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee: to deliver thee from the way of the evil man, from the man that speaketh froward things; who leave the paths of uprightness, to walk in the ways of darkness; who rejoice to do evil, and delight in the frowardness of the wicked; whose ways are crooked, and they froward in their paths: to deliver thee from the strange woman, even from the stranger which flattereth with her words." Nothing like wisdom can preserve a person from crooked men and wicked women.

VI. FINAL THOUGHTS ON WISDOM.

Before we conclude, we would like to call your attention to a number of other smaller passages on the subject of wisdom.

12:8: "A man shall be commended according to his wisdom." Other things being as they should be, a man of wisdom is a well respected man. His advice is often sought, His word carries weight. His very person embodies a dignity.

13:20: "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed." This passage shows the importance of proper association. Choosing fools as one's companions does not lead to great things in one's life, but walking with wise men does.

19:2 "That the soul be without knowledge, it is not good." Here is a real appeal to be an informed soul, to know the things we should, to appreciate the privileges of learning and to take advantage of them.

19:27: "Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge." There is false knowledge that leads astray. In this passage, the father warns the son about receiving false instruction and counsel.

24:3-5: "Through wisdom is an house builded; and by understanding it is established: and by knowledge shall the chambers be filled with all precious and pleasant riches. A wise man is strong; yea, a man of knowledge increaseth strength." Yes, wisdom is strength, and knowledge leads to many victories.

And last, but not least, 23:23: "Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding." "Buy the truth"—obtain it at all costs! "Sell it not"—don't part with it at any price!

The Human Tongue

Of all the subjects that can be named, the subject of the tongue is one that needs to be considered about the most. This important part of our bodies can get so far out of line at times, and the terrible havoc that the tongue has done cannot be completely recorded. On the other hand, the good that has been done through words is likewise inestimable.

Exclusive of Proverbs, when preachers go to the Bible to prepare messages on the tongue, the book of James, the book of Ephesians, and the book of Matthew are among the chief sources of material. But, Proverbs discusses this subject more fully than any other book of the Bible—so much so that all the material found elsewhere in the Bible does not nearly equal the material found alone in it.

Let us, then, anticipate our consideration of this subject.

I. THE RIGHT USE OF THE TONGUE IS PRAISED IN PROVERBS.

"The mouth of a righteous man is a well of life" (10:11). If you are a righteous person, don't fear to speak, for your mouth is a well of life to others. "A wholesome tongue is a tree of life" (15:4). The tongue can be important when it is called a tree of life. "The tongue of the just is as choice silver (10:20). The value of the tongue of the just is well described.

But, if the tongue is to be a blessing, it doesn't speak before it is ready to speak. "The heart of the righteous studieth to answer" (16:28). Sometimes it takes quite a bit of studying to know what to say and how to say it. "The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips" (16:23). The

reason the wise have wise lips is that their hearts teach their mouths. That is why 10:32 says, "The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable," and why 15:2 says, "The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright."

Right talking is as important as right doing. We could no more dispense with good talking than we could with good deeds. While the words of the unwise tear down and do damage, the words of the wise build up. 10:21 says, "The lips of the righteous feed many," and 10:31 says, "The mouth of the just bringeth forth wisdom." 15:7 reiterates the fact: "The lips of the wise disperse knowledge." One can tell when a tornado has gone through a community by the damage done. One can tell in the Midwest that we live in the days of bull-dozers by the many large ponds here and there. Even so, one can tell what kind of parental teaching, what kind of school teachers, and what kind of preaching a community has had by spending some time mingling among the people. Remember "the lips of the wise disperse knowledge".

Many people are so crude in their speech. Vulgarities are common. Anger also exhibits itself in their words. In contrast, Proverbs says, "The words of the pure are pleasant words." The virtuous woman of Prov. 31 has that which all persons should strive for: "She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness" (31:26). A premium is placed upon pleasant words in the following statement: "Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones" (16:24). Why, then, will people continue with their hateful ways? with their coarse words? with their unguarded speech?

Other people appreciate us when we have the right use of our speech, and so will we. "A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth: and a word spoken

in due season, how good is it!" (15:23). "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver" (25:11). Again: "A man shall eat good by the fruit of his mouth" (13:2). And 24:26 says, "Every man shall kiss his lips that giveth a right answer."

II. THE WRONG USE OF THE TONGUE IS POINTED OUT IN PROVERBS.

The piece of toast has two sides—the buttered side and the burned side! Did you ever get hold of a piece of toast like that? We have been considering the good side (the buttered side), but now we turn the toast over, and see something altogether different. This is the burned side that is not so good.

First that we consider is the matter of lying. 6:17 starts us off with strong language by saying "a lying tongue" is one of the things the Lord hates. 12:22 says, "Lying lips are abomination to the Lord: but they that deal truly are his delight." You who do not deal squarely with your fellowmen, listen to these strong statements from God's Word! On the other hand, maybe you are one who has been lied about and misrepresented. Naturally, people believe what they have been told about you. The hurt seems more than you can bear. But, we have a saying that says the truth will come out, and it usually will. Patiently bide your time, live aright, falsehood will run its course, and people will forget what was even said about you. 12:19 says, "The lip of truth shall be established for ever: but a lying tongue is but for a moment".

Next let us consider the damage that people can do with their tongues. How cutting words can be! "There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword" (12:18), and we need no comments to understand that verse. I know of no truer words than those expressed in 15:1: "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up strife." Gentleness of speech is a goal to strive for. It will allay and

calm troubles. But, if one responds with grievous words, there will be strife the more. This will prove to be true in the home, on the street, or in the church. Doesn't this that follows remind you of some people? "An ungodly man diggeth up evil: and in his lips there is as a burning fire" (16:27). Again, "A hypocrite with his mouth destroyeth his neighbor" (11:9), and 12:6 says, "The words of the wicked are to lie in wait for blood." What terrible damage is done yearly by the unspiritual, ungodly words of people.

But, what are the means used to do this damage? Some use flattery: "A man that flattereth his neighbour spreadeth a net for his feet" (29:5); "A flattering tongue worketh ruin" (26:28). When people flatter, they are merely buttering a person before they eat him. Preachers have suffered more flattery by hypocrites working evil behind their backs than any other class. But, others employ false witness as their weapon. Somebody has to MAKE UP that which is not true. How true is the triple description of the false witness in 25:18: "A man that beareth false witness against his neighbour is a maul, and a sword, and a sharp arrow. The maul pounds you to pieces; the sword cuts you to pieces; the arrow hits your vitals. With so many lies told about good people, there must be more false witnesses than we realize. "A false witness that speaketh lies" is another one of those things 6:19 says the Lord hates, and it is placed in that verse just before the words, "And he that soweth discord among brethren." to which it leads.

Talebearing (usually the second person in a false-witness deal—the false witness spins the yarn, and the talebearer carries it) also comes in for treatment among the trouble-makers of Proverbs. "The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly. Burning lips and a wicked heart (Note—how often they go to-

gether!) are like a potsherd covered with silver dross. He that hateth dissembleth with his lips, and layeth up deceit within him; when he speaketh fair, believe him not: for there are seven abominations in his heart" (26:22-25). At times, it appears that the talebearer may also be carrying that which is true, but which should not be told. "He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips." "A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter" (11:13). Some things need to be kept quiet. The faithful spirit will keep quiet; the talebearer won't. The talebearer fills an important role in trouble, so much so that 26:20 says, "Where no wood, is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth."

The "whisperer" also comes in for treatment in Proverbs. He is the person who goes behind one's back and to but one or two persons at a time and confidently says that which ought to be kept quiet. While he has asked all to promise to say nothing about it, he himself goes from person to person saying the same thing and asking each one to say nothing about it. Other times, he causes trouble between two people by whispering to only a person or two at the most. His potential damage is to be read about in 16:28, where it says, "A whisperer separateth chief friends." There probably are not two people who cannot be separated by a whisperer, so deadly and so deceitful are his workings that the damage is done, and each party supposes the other one has said or done what has been attributed to him by the whisperer.

Lastly, we deal with the matter of over-talking, incessant talking, gabbing. Proverbs has much to say about it. "In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise" (10:19). This is a strong statement, affirming that one who talks much will be sure to sin with his lips.

Listen again: "He that hath knowledge spareth his words; and a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit. Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding" (17:27,28). When the man who normally says little speaks, people listen because he is viewed as a thinker who has something worth hearing. Respect for one's judgment will be built faster by talking less than by talking much. 29:11 says, "A fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards. The man with little understanding tells his business to everybody where ever he goes. And 29:20 says, "Seest thou a man who is hasty in his words? (a man who talks before he thinks) There is more hope of a fool than of him." And finally, "He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life: but he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction" (13:3).

Let no one conclude that there is not a grave need to consider seriously every one of these statements from Proverbs concerning our speech. This is a field in which there is much cultivation yet to be done. To the extent that one has been bridling his tongue and directing it in proper ways, to that extent has he been looked upon as wise, godly, and successful. And to the extent that one has allowed his tongue to go free and loose, to that extent has he gotten himself in trouble, and to that extent has he failed as a Christian. May God help us, then, in this matter, and may we employ the best of judgment in the use of this wonderful gift of God that can be as greatly perverted through misuse as can be used to the glory of God and to the profit of ourselves and others.

Lazy People

I recall hearing the story of a man who grew lazier and lazier with the passing of time. His family could get him to do nothing. Things finally got so bad that the two grown sons finally decided to take him out and shoot him. They loaded him in the wagon and put a tarpaulin over him as they started away. As they drove down the road, they met a neighbor who asked them what they had under the tarpaulin. They told him. The neighbor said he hated to see them do that and that he would help get their father back on his feet. He said, "Here's a bushel of corn that I will give him." From under the cover came the voice of the father, "Is it shelled?" It wasn't. The old man said, "Drive on."

It is hard for us to imagine anyone that lazy, yet the book of Proverbs says substantially the same thing. "A slothful man hideth his hand in his bosom (Revised Version says, "burieth his hand in the dish"), and will not so much as bring it to his mouth again" (19:24).

"Sloth" (from which we get "slothful") and "slug" (from which we get "sluggard") are roots that come to us from Middle English, both meaning "slow". That slow moving, lifeless animal in the zoo that spends his days hanging from branches upside down we call a "sloth", and that slow moving, snail-like worm we call a "slug" because they are so slow. And the book of Proverbs repeatedly speaks of certain people as "slothful" and as "sluggards" because of their lack of ambition, because they are so extremely and needlessly slow. In fact, that book has much to say upon the subject.

I. LAZY PEOPLE WILL BE SLEEPING WHEN THEY OUGHT TO BE WORKING.

10:5 speaks of "sleeping in harvest", and it says

that he who does that is a son who causeth shame. Sleep is an essential, but the Bible does not sanction people sleeping when it is time to be up doing the work.

Listen to other proverbs on Lazy people's sleep: "Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep" (19:15). What causes some people to sleep so much? "Slothfulness." 26:14 says, "As the door turneth upon his hinges, so doth the slothful upon his bed." Say, if I were one of these persons who never wanted to get up in the morning, but who just rolls over and sleeps on and on, I would realize from these passages that the Bible does not approve my indolence.

But, listen again as God shames the sluggard. He says, "Go to the ant, thou sluggard," which is one of the most ambitious of all God's creation; "consider her ways, and be wise: which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer and gathereth her food in the harvest"—the time of work, to store up, to make hay. "How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep?" (6:6-9). How many parents have ambitionless, lifeless, dead-head children well described by the foregoing! Occasionally some woman gets married to a man just like that—she gets up before he does, gets the house warm, gets breakfast, and then can hardly get him up to eat it. What a sluggard! And there are men who have wives just as bad—the men have to get up and cook their own breakfasts and pack their own lunches. They don't even try to get the women up to eat with them. They would just sit there with one leg over the other, stooped over, and sip half a cup of coffee with uncombed hair and unwashed face. Men would rather eat by themselves than to have such an unpleasant breakfast partner.

II. LAZY PEOPLE FIND EASY EXCUSES TO KEEP FROM WORKING.

20:4 says, "The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold." The responsible man knows the work

must be done. He realizes that cold days will come. He puts on extra clothes to keep him warm, eats good solid food, and goes on with his work and actually thinks less about the disagreeableness of the weather than the lazy man who sits around the stove and shivers every time somebody opens the door or the radio announcer tells how cold it is.

The sluggard who will not work because of the cold will find times when he will not work because it is hot, and other times because it is damp, and other times because it is too hard, and other times because the pay is not very high, and other times because he didn't get to bed very early last night, and other times because his head hurts, and other times because he would be the only one there, and other times because he would rather do something else, and other times because he is tired of work.

Hear another excuse from the lazy man, "The slothful man saith, There is a lion without, I shall be slain in the streets" (22:13). The implication is that there really isn't a lion without, but it is easy to imagine that there is so he won't have to go out.

III. LAZY PEOPLE KNOW ALL THE ANSWERS.

"The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason" (26:16). Those men with just enough ambition to get uptown to spend the day on some benches talking, whittling, and arguing have all the answers. They can tell the President how to run this country, yet nobody ever thought enough of their insight to have them put on any political ticket. They could tell the Secretary of Agriculture (whose problems relate to the corn farmer, the cotton farmer, the fruit farmer, the wheat farmer, the nut farmer, the hay farmer, the dairy farmer, the rancher, the poultryman, the nation's surpluses, and a hundred other large fields) just how to handle his job when they themselves cannot even have a respectable garden.

Those men who sit around the stove in the back of

a store and spit tobacco juice at the coal bucket are wise enough to be judges, preachers, inventors, and capitalists—to hear them talk. They are sluggards, who are too lazy to work, but not too lazy to talk. They have an inflated opinion of their thinking—that's why they have such hot arguments. They are "wise in their own conceits"—yes wiser than seven men who can render a reason, actually seven men who know something. The reason they are so sure about everything is that they have done very little themselves, for in doing one becomes more and more acquainted with the problems involved.

IV. LAZY PEOPLE ARE KIN TO GREAT WASTERS.

The Bible reveals waste to be a terrible thing. This is not a saying from the Bible, but it is surely true: "Wilful waste makes woeful want." We see that in the prodigal son. But, listen to what 18:9 says, "He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster." You can see how that would be: the waster destroys that which is produced while the slothful man fails to produce it in the first place.

There are those who are ambitious, but wasteful, and they think it is so terrible when people are lazy. On the other hand, there are those who talk about how wasteful some people are, but they themselves are too lazy to work. Proverbs says in the final analysis, both are brothers.

V. LAZY PEOPLE LET THEIR PLACES RUN DOWN.

Some people are builders and improvers where ever they go. Others merely occupy while everything goes to wrack and ruin. Some build up the soil while they reap greater profits from their land while others farm the ground to death or neglect it altogether.

Solomon tells of stopping to look at the place of a slothful man. He said, "I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of un-

derstanding; and, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down" (24:30,31). It takes work to work a field. It takes work to tend a vineyard. The way thorns and nettles took over was a testimony to every considering passerby that such a field belonged to a lazy man. It took too much work to keep the fence up, so they had fallen apart.

Such indolence and its effect on one's place reminds one that this same Solomon said in another book (Ecclesiastes) that because of slothfulness a building rots and because of idleness a house falls in.

What a shame when people are too lazy to keep their places up, to keep things repaired and fixed, and to have things growing and green.

VI. LAZY PEOPLE USUALLY BECOME POOR PEOPLE.

10:4 says, "He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand: but the hand of the diligent maketh rich." Evidently because it is too much bother, "The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting," whereas "the substance of the diligent man is precious" (12:27). The diligent bear the rule, "but the slothful shall be under tribute (Revised Version says 'taskwork')" (12:24). Those who are at the bottom of the ladder are forever making uncomplimentary remarks and holding the worst of feelings toward those who go ahead. But, why are many people where they are today? The Bible tells you. It says, "Slothfulness!" 15:19 says, "The way of the slothful man is as an hedge of thorns" (a rough, difficult way) "but the way of the righteous is made plain (Revised Version says 'a highway')." Notice that the "slothful" are contrasted from the "righteous" in this passage.

Yes, over and over in Proverbs, it says that the slothful man "hath nothing". There is an honorable poverty, and the Bible so recognizes it. But, pover-

ty that comes through slothfulness is not honorable—it is dishonorable in every way.

Woman, read about the ambitious woman in Prov. 31, better known to us as the "virtuous woman". What a model of excellence. Make that one of your favorite passages of Scripture. Read it often. Appreciate it. Be that kind of a woman yourself.

Men, listen to 22:29: Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean (Marginal reading is 'obscure') men." You have much to do with the pace that is set at your house, with the standard of living that is maintained, with the outlook upon life of your family.

Be diligent, not lazy, the Proverbs would say!

The Cry of the Needy

The book of Proverbs has much to say about the cry of the needy—the unfortunate needy. There is a difference between the unfortunate needy and the lazy needy treated in the foregoing sermon. The man who is lazy can help himself, and he is obligated to do so. But, the unfortunate needy need help, and we are commanded to give them that help. Usually you will see that people have a feeling for the unfortunate and will respond to their calamities, but they will not do a dime's worth of help for that man who is shiftless and will but drink up what is given.

I. TAKE KNOWLEDGE OF THE NEEDS OF THE NEEDY.

29:7 says, "The righteous considereth ('taketh

knowledge of"—R.V.) the cause of the poor: but the wicked regardeth not to know it." There are those who have never known what real shortage is. They have always had plenty, and they suppose they always will have plenty. It is hard for them to realize how "hard put" people can be and how helpless they are before such conditions. So they go their ways, not bothering themselves to look into people's conditions. But, 29:7 says the righteous look into their cases.

It is too easy for some people to be like the priest and the Levite, who did not want to be bothered with the needs of the needy. It takes time, it takes money, and it may even give one a headache to get next to the condition of the needy. No wonder, then, that it is "the righteous" who considers the cause of the needy.

In the fast pace of present-day living, let us not permit sickness to go on in our communities, and we not know anything about it. Let us not permit death to strike, and we not be there to help. Let us not permit tragedies to happen, and we not concern ourselves.

II. SOME TAKE ADVANTAGE OF PEOPLE'S POVERTY.

22:16 shows that some will take advantage of people's poverty-stricken condition: "He that oppresseth the poor to increase his riches, and he that giveth to the rich, shall surely come to want." 22:22 points out the same thing: "Rob not the poor because he is poor: neither oppress the afflicted in the gate."

You might ask how people can do that. By asking (as is many times done) an unreasonable amount of security for a small loan. The man needs the money, so the rich will demand a mortgage on everything of value that a man has—oftentimes thousands of dollars worth of mortgage for five hundred dollars of loan. Then, if calamities hit the man, the rich can move in and clean out everything of value that the poor

man has. That is not right. That is wicked in God's sight.

The rich will other times do something against a poor man, knowing that the poor man doesn't have the money to hire an attorney. It would cost more to hire an attorney than the amount is actually worth.

11:26 speaks of a time of great shortage. The people are hungry. Some rich fellow has much corn. But, he is going to hold on to it for awhile, because it will bring even more exorbitant prices later on. That verse says, "He that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him (but he doesn't care); but blessing shall be upon the head of him that selleth it."

III. PEOPLE SHOULD NOT MAKE FUN OF THE POOR.

17:5 says, "Whoso mocketh the poor reproacheth his Maker: and he that is glad at calamities shall not be unpunished." There are those who make fun of the poor when in reality their sad condition is enough to make any thoughtful person weep. People will make fun of what they eat, how their children look, the crude way they have to do their work, and many other things about them.

In reality, people's hearts should be touched by the shortages of the unfortunate. They should weep when they see the shameful clothing of their little innocent children. They should feel sorry when they see the woman have to wash for that large family on a wash board and that man trying to make a living with a team that has one big horse and one little horse.

Children especially are so cruel in this way. Parents should not permit their children to laugh at the poverty-stricken. We teach our children that most people who live in filthy hovels are in that condition because they are not ambitious or because the father drinks the money up or because the people make foolish purchases. At the same time, there are peo-

ple so poor simply because of bad circumstances over which they have no power, and that it is a terrible, unchristian thing to laugh at people's calamities.

IV. GOD HAS COMMANDED US TO HELP THE NEEDY.

He says, "Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it. Say not unto thy neighbour, Go, and come again, and tomorrow I will give; when thou hast it by thee" (3: 27, 28). Anytime we are better off than somebody else, and he is in a pathetic condition, God calls upon us to help him. We don't have to have a lot in the bank, and we don't have to have our homes and our businesses all paid for before God expects us to step in and help.

Listen again: "He that despiseth his neighbour sinneth: but he that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he" (14:21). God says a person sins who does not help. There is more than one way to sin. Just because a person does not drink or smoke or curse does not mean he is not a sinner. If he doesn't help his needy neighbor, he is a sinner.

God says, "The king that faithfully judgeth the poor, his throne shall be established for ever" (29: 14). The poor man has often suffered in courts because he is poor. The poor man has nothing to bribe any of the officials with. God pronounced a blessing upon the king who would judge the poor fairly.

V. PEOPLE DO NOT LOSE BY HELPING THE NEEDY.

I like 19:17: "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will he (God) pay him again." In other words, when one GIVES to the poor, he is actually LOANING to God, and God always pays up! We can surely trust the Lord. We do not help the needy just to be helped of the Lord, but in our own limitations when it seems

that we cannot do very much, it is comforting to know that if we help another, God Himself will bless us that we too might be able to make it through.

22:9 says, "He that hath a beautiful eye shall be blessed; for he giveth of his bread to the poor."

11:24, 25 says, "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty. The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself." It is like sowing. A farmer can take a bushel of oats and scatter it over a portion of ground. It may look like he is throwing it away, but up come the plants, and in a few weeks he has many bushels of oats. If the generous person shall abound, then he has not lost by being thoughtful of others. He who has watered others will himself be watered.

VI. THE TABLES MAY BE REVERSED.

Sometimes the poor become financially solid. Sometimes the rich go under. Then what? What can the selfish, unbenevolent soul expect in the time of his own calamity? 21:13 answers: "Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard." That won't be so funny then.

There is a time when a person has more friends than he knows what to do with. He doesn't make friends of the poverty-ridden man. Yet, in time to come, he may not have so many friends, and he may wish for the help that the once poverty-ridden man could now give him.

Thus, we see that Proverbs teaches us the same thing on this subject that is taught elsewhere in the Bible. It, however, is as fine a collection of verses upon this subject as can be found within the confines of one book. Memorize the Proverbs. Have them on your tongue, in your mind, and in your heart. They will help you do that which you are supposed to do at the time.