

Mid Week • Proverbs by Topic

INTRO

Now that we come to chapter 10, we begin that section of the book of Proverbs that most people think of when they think of Proverbs - those short, pithy descriptions of wisdom

This section runs from chapter 10 all the way through chapter 29

Each verse is virtually a self-contained message

And from verse to verse, the topics vary widely

But the more you read, the more clear it becomes that there are certain themes, certain subjects the proverbs focus on

That is how we are going to study through these chapters - thematically, as opposed to verse by verse

The first theme we'll look at is found at the beginning of ch. 10 . . .

THE WISE & THE FOOLISH

{1} The Proverbs of Solomon: A wise son makes a glad father, But a foolish son is the grief of his mother.

The Proverbs are marked by this thesis and antithesis:

The wise contrasted to the foolish

The righteous contrasted to the wicked

The diligent in contrast to the slothful

The reason why we see this comparison and contrast is because in the original Hebrew, this is poetry

In Hebrew, poetry is not conveyed by rhythm and meter as it is in English

It's conveyed by either the repetition or contrasting of an idea

This is called *parallelism* and there are 3 basic forms it takes

Now - don't be tripped up by these big words - they're pretty self-explanatory

1) First - *synonymous* parallelism: where you say the same thing but in different terms

{Prov 5:1} My son, pay attention to my wisdom; Lend your ear to my understanding,

2) Second - *synthetic* parallelism: *add* to a first idea

{Psa 1:1} Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;

3) third - *antithetic* parallelism: say the opposite of

{Prov 10:1} A wise son makes a glad father, But a foolish son is the grief of his mother.

It is this repetition of thought that conveyed the sense of poetry to the Hebrew mind
And all of the Proverbs are poetic

The contrast between the wise and foolish is a major theme, and one we have already seen in the first 9 chapters

Here Solomon says that a child's choices effect the parents

When the child is wise, they rejoice / when he or she acts foolishly, it brings grief

And indeed, it does seem that fathers take more pride in their children's successes while the mother is more deeply effected by their failures

Why that is I'm not sure - but it does seem to be generally true

{Prov 10:8} The wise in heart will receive commands, But a prating fool will fall.

One of the marks of wisdom is a humble heart ready to receive instruction

Wisdom is obedience, it's compliant

It knows it is not the supreme authority and so listens to counsel, and follows direction

A "prating" fool is someone who is a non-stop talker

To "prat" means to run off at the mouth

The fool is one who is spiritually dull and morally rebellious

We'll see this again - but the Proverbs convey the idea that the one who is all talk and rarely listens is a fool, while true wisdom is marked by a humble quietness that doesn't always have to be airing it's own opinion

{Prov 10:17} He who keeps instruction is in the way of life, But he who refuses correction goes astray.

Living wisely means always being open to further insight and instruction

The one who thinks he or she knows it all and refuses to be corrected is headed for trouble

{Prov 11:22} As a ring of gold in a swine's snout, So is a lovely woman who lacks discretion.

Here is a classic proverb - it presents us with an *incongruity* that is memorable for the image it presents our imagination

Just as a gold ring in a pig's nose would be pointless, so is beauty wasted in a woman who lacks taste

The purpose of this proverb is to remind us to look past the *package* and look at the *contents*

A modern proverb that captures this same message says "While beauty is only skin deep, ugly goes all the way to the heart!"

{Prov 11:30} The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, And he who wins souls is wise.

In this verse, the righteous and the wise are linked

Indeed, the righteous person is wise, and the wise, is righteous; these two things are inextricably bound to one another

The righteous person is one whose life is producing good fruit

And this fruit is enjoyed by those around him or her

We do not live just to ourselves - our lives will touch those around us

Either our sin will harm others, or our righteousness will bless them

The wise person is someone who realizes this world is a battlefield for the hearts of men and women - and the outcome of this battle is eternal

So he or she will make it their aim to engage in a life that accomplishes something meaningful, something lasting

And what could be more important, more valuable, than saving souls from hell?
Think about it - when all is said and done, and this material universe is done away with
by God, what remains out of all of creation? People!!!!!!!!!!
You and I are the messengers God has left in the world to declare the good news that
people can be saved
There is no more noble or important work

**{Prov 13:13-14} He who despises the word will be destroyed, But he who fears the
commandment will be rewarded.**

**{14} The law of the wise is a fountain of life, To turn one away from the snares of
death.**

The Word of God is an essential ingredient of wisdom
It is the revelation of God about Himself, about us and about how to live
If we neglect it, even worse, if we despise it's counsel, what is left but to suffer the
consequences of violating the laws that govern the moral order?
But if we respect God's word and honor it by living in compliance with it, then we
will discover success in living

{Prov 24:5} A wise man is strong, Yes, a man of knowledge increases strength;

Wisdom is moral strength!
And how we all need strength in this day!

If there was ever an age that needed to redouble it's devotion to the study of the Word of
God, it's today
Jesus said that the last days would be characterized by deception, and by such trying
times that men's hearts would fail them for fear
The problems and complexities of life would be so great, there would be no apparent
way out
In other words, the wisdom of man would finally fail him
Having eaten of the tree of knowledge, he will finally find himself backed into a
corner with no way out!!!!!!

We are beginning to see this mindset settle over people
Therefore, it's essential that God's people give themselves as never before to the
wisdom found in God's word so they might find strength and hope in these last
days.

**{Prov 29:9} If a wise man contends with a foolish man, Whether the fool rages or
laughs, there is no peace.**

In other words, you can't win an argument with a fool
Remember, a fool is a fool, not merely because he lacks *knowledge*
He is a fool because he *rejects* knowledge
He *despises* wisdom - he *hates* understanding!
The wise person tries to reason with the fool, but he may as well be speaking a
foreign language
You cannot win an argument with a fool because their whole attitude is, "Don't
confuse me with facts. My mind is made up!"

Now, that leads us to **Prov 26:4-5**

{4} Do not answer a fool according to his folly, Lest you also be like him.

{5} Answer a fool according to his folly, Lest he be wise in his own eyes.

This seems to present us with a contradiction - and on the surface it does
But why would Solomon put down such an obvious contradiction in back to back
verses?
That in itself gives us a clue as to what he means here . . .
And it's something we just saw in 29:9
The point is this: No matter how you respond to a fool, you can't win!
If you answer a fool's provocation, then you only get embroiled in a losing
proposition because you can't reason with a fool
But, if you remain silent, then the fool thinks he's wiser than you cause he's shut you
up!
Either way, you lose!

Solomon's whole counsel to his son is - STAY AWAY FROM FOOLS!!!!!!!!!!!!

But what if you can't - what if you have to work with them, or go to school with them?
Realize that no matter what course of action you take in dealing with the folly of
fools, it is going to be frustrating!!!!!! It's the nature of the game
The best course of action is to reserve all comments unless empowered by the Holy
Spirit, and pray for their conversion from folly to wisdom!
Think of this: The fools of Jesus' day were not convinced by Him, and he was the Truth
and Wisdom Incarnate!
It took His death and resurrection to accomplish their conversion, and even then, the
majority still did not respond

Jesus said that we are not to cast our pearls before swine

Two more titles for the Wise and the Foolish

Proverbs uses other synonyms for the wise and the foolish, but by far the two most
common are the *Prudent* & the *Scoffer*

{Prov 13:16} Every prudent man acts with knowledge, But a fool lays open his folly.

Prudence speaks of the ability of handling one's affairs *efficiently*
It's a *practical application* of wisdom to the affairs of daily life
For Solomon, wisdom wasn't merely some kind of esoteric and detached level of
knowledge that was content to sit in an upper room all day and contemplate it's
navel
Wisdom was a thing for the home and the marketplace
It was practical - it was the rubber meeting the road - so to speak

Another word for the fool is *Scoffer*

**{Prov 21:24} A proud and haughty man; "Scoffer" is his name; He acts with arrogant
pride.**

The scoffer is one who mocks and displays his disdain for anything not within the
sphere of his interest
This verse nails the motivations behind the scoffer's mocking - He is proud
He's the center of his own universe, and anything that does not revolve around
him comes in for aspersion!

Here lies one of the fundamental differences between the fool and the wise:

The fool sees him or herself as the center of everything - and they judge everything on the basis of how it will affect them

The wise sees him or herself as a part of God's creation, where the critical issue is not "Me" but how does this relate to God's plan

Pride is the prevailing sin of the fool, while *humility* is the fundamental trait of the wise

THE RIGHTEOUS & THE WICKED

This is a major theme in Proverbs along with the wise and foolish

And the reason why is that they are closely allied

{10:2} Treasures of wickedness profit nothing, But righteousness delivers from death.

{10:3} The LORD will not allow the righteous soul to famish, But He casts away the desire of the wicked.

One of the recurring testimonies you hear from those who have amassed fortunes, is that there is no real satisfaction in the accumulation of wealth

Money can buy more and bigger things - but things really do not satisfy

Money also attracts more people, but people attracted by money are *shallow*

The rich come to the end of their days, and while lying on their death bed lament that they had not pursued the things they now see so clearly were the important things in life

Now that death lies waiting, they realize their life had been consumed with avoiding something they in the final analysis could not avoid

The time, they say, would have been better spent preparing for the inevitable, preparing for death, instead of trying to avoid it

I'm not wealthy, as the world counts wealth - but in the things that really matter, I am rich!

I am ready right now to step out of this body into the new life of Heaven

There is no amount of money that can be spent to secure that kind of hope and promise!

The person who is right with God, is progressively made right with everything else, so they know satisfaction

The person who is not right with God, is never satisfied, because though they deny it - they were made for Him

{Prov 10:11} The mouth of the righteous is a well of life, But violence covers the mouth of the wicked.

This is parallel to what we saw in the wise and foolish

And it shows us that the wise is righteous, while the fool is wicked

{Prov 10:16} The labor of the righteous leads to life, The wages of the wicked to sin.

Each of us is producing something - the only question is, what?

The one who does what is right produces good stuff that enhances life

The wicked only produce more sin

{Prov 10:24-25} The fear of the wicked will come upon him, And the desire of the righteous will be granted.

{25} When the whirlwind passes by, the wicked is no more, But the righteous has an everlasting foundation.

Over and over in Proverbs we see this principle that the wise and righteous live solid, stable, steady lives

When the storms of life come, they aren't swept away but remain steadfast and secure because they know that ultimately, God is in control

The foolish and wicked, on the other hand, because their whole life is built on a lie, are done in by these storms

{Prov 11:28} He who trusts in his riches will fall, But the righteous will flourish like foliage.

The righteous man and woman are known by where they put their trust - they place it in God!

The wicked places his trust in his one power, or wealth

And there's something interesting about both power and wealth

They tend to sprout wings and fly away

This brings us to a question that we ought all to ask ourselves - In what do we put our trust?

{Prov 14:19} The evil will bow before the good, And the wicked at the gates of the righteous.

Solomon seeks to convey a message he had probably learned from his father David

Don't judge things by their present appearance

The only right judgment is the judgment of the end - when all is said and done and God has spoken the last word

This is one of the great errors we make in life - is by judging too quickly

When life seemingly turns over on us and we find ourselves in the midst of great disappointment or trial, we tend to call God's love and grace into question

We must learn to not judge by the present appearance

We have all come through difficult times and looking back can see so clearly what God did and was doing

Hindsight, they say, is 20-20.

In this day, when it seems evil is growing and prospering and the wicked are getting away with their sin while the righteous are suffering tremendously - don't lose heart
Keep the end in sight -

The evil will bow before the good, And the wicked at the gates of the righteous

{Prov 15:8-9} The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, But the prayer of the upright is His delight.

{9} The way of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, But He loves him who follows righteousness.

God hates sin - specially when it is cloaked in the pious robes of religion

Jesus told a story to the people one day that raised the ire of the religious leaders at the same time that it encouraged the common people to come to God

It was the time of prayer - and two men went to the temple to pray

One was a Pharisee, a man who was a member of a religious movement who were fastidious about their observance of the law and the traditions

This man was scrupulous in his observance of even the minutest details of the law

And he was so good at it, that he was proud

He wore the special garments and religious paraphernalia that signaled him as a pious man of God

The other man was a publican, a tax collector as a matter of fact - one of the most hated of all people
 He was a turncoat Jew who had hired himself out to the Romans to collect taxes from his fellow Jews
 Both men arrived at the temple at the same time - both ostensibly came to pray
 They stood a short distance apart, each locked in his own thoughts
 Looking at them from behind - there couldn't have been a greater contrast, a bigger gap between them
 Though just a few feet, the social distance was light years
 One man was the epitome of piety
 The other the penultimate of perversion
 The Pharisee glanced over to see who was sharing his space, and realized it was the hated tax collector
 The horror gave way to a deep sense of gratitude for his own moral superiority
 Without the slightest sense of pride, the Pharisee said, "God, I thank You that I am not like other men; extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess."
 In his mind, this wasn't pride, it was fact. He was a better man!
 The tax collector's thoughts were running in a much different vein
 He was so overwhelmed by his sin and moral failure that he wouldn't even lift his eyes to heaven, which was the posture of the Pharisees and all good Jews when they prayed
 No - he was too ashamed to raise his eyes - he wasn't worthy
 Instead, he beat his chest, not in penance, but in a remorse so deep it had to be expressed in something other than mere words,
 Then he said, 'God, be merciful to me. I'm a sinner!'
 Let's face it - if you and I were there to witness this and were to assign genuine piety and declare who it was that bore the blessing and approval of God, we would likely chose the Pharisee
 He's a good, church going man
 He sings in the choir - pays his tithe - and never is caught in scandal
 He is a walking picture of godliness
 The tax collector - well, we all know about him
 His parties are well known
 And he makes his money by ripping others off!
 Certainly, not one like that pleases God!
 We would be shocked to hear Jesus say, "I tell you the truth, the tax collector went away justified rather than the Pharisee; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Let me read it again . . .

{Prov 15:8-9} The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, But the prayer of the upright is His delight.

{9} The way of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, But He loves him who follows righteousness.

God looks at our hearts - not our clothes, tithes, or religious service
 God knows if we're just playing a game
 And he hates religion just held as a show

But the one whose heart is sincere is God's delight, even if they don't have every area of their life in perfect alignment with God
Given some time, the Spirit will conform them to the image of Christ and those things will be brought under his control
We can be sure that tax collector didn't just go back to life as it had been
His prayer delighted God, and that delight ushered in a new day for him

{Prov 28:6} Better is the poor who walks in his integrity Than one perverse in his ways, though he be rich.

Solomon hits on the subject of priorities and values
What's more important - a sterling character, or sterling silver?
What's of great worth - integrity or investments?
We must never sacrifice our character on the altar of wealth

{Prov 28:13} He who covers his sins will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.

One of the hardest things we will ever do is be honest in the realm of our own faults and failures
Pride would keep us from confessing our sin
And the more we resist confession, the stronger pride exerts its death-grip over us
One of the most important things we can do to slay the evil giant pride is to be in the habit of confessing our sins to God
And notice I said "sins" not "sin"
As we look back over the day, we should ask the Holy Spirit to remind us and convict us of the specific moral failures that have marked our day
Once enlightened - take them to God
Besides confessing them to Him, if they are sins that have harmed or influenced others, we should go to them for forgiveness as well

8 year old Johnny's mommy told him not to eat any more chocolate cookies
He had already had 3 and any more would ruin his dinner
So he left the kitchen and went outside to play with his friends
But after several minutes, he noticed that his mother went next door to visit the neighbor
So he ran back inside the house and snatched a couple more cookies from the cookie jar
He got one down and was just starting the second when he heard his mother coming in the door
He ran into the den and plopped down on the couch just as she passed by on her way back in to the kitchen
She could immediately tell he had eaten another cookie - tell tale cookie residue was all over his mouth, cheeks, and chin
"Johnny, did you eat another cookie?"
Pausing to swallow the last gulp of cookie, he managed to get out a timid "No."
His mother came over and sat down on the coffee table in front of him
Johnny, "I'm going to ask this one more time and I want you to be very careful about your answer. Did you eat another cookie?"
The wounded look of hurt for being distrusted fills his little face as he musters up all the sincerity he can and says, "No, mom!"

Every time we sin, we get cookie residue on our faces
There is no way to hide our sin from God

And as long as we ignore or cover over our sin, we will remain out of fellowship
with God

It is only was confess and repent that we find mercy
We are all going to fall - even the wise and righteous fail
The question is not how hard we fall or even how often
The question is, when we fall, how long will we stay down?