

A Guide To The Reader

Pastor recommends that to obtain maximum benefit from his comments you read in full from the Bible every reference whenever one appears. Otherwise the reading of the comments is simply a skimming over the surface. They are rather designed to make you stop and meditate and even look up further references as the Holy Spirit guides you. Do pray before you read that the Holy Spirit will be your Tutor and that the time you spend will be time spent with Him.

Proverbs 13

13.1. A father may be able to advise his son not only in childhood, but in youth, young manhood and even in the maturest of years. If the son listened when a child, it is likely that such a relationship will have been established that will welcome advice at all times which a father would willingly continue to give. That could only be a good thing. Sometimes a son does not welcome advice immediately, but upon reflection, with calmer emotions, sees the wisdom of it. “Son, go work today in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went” (Matthew 21. 28-29). A scorner heeds no one, and mocks even well-meaning efforts to reform him.

13.2. This is a stunning illustration from the act of eating. What someone digests will be beneficial and flavoursome because his kind words will have prompted generosity. But the stomach of a transgressor will be fed violence. The words of Galatians 6.7 are a variation upon this theme, “whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”

13.3. This verse completes the couplet, the subject being disciplined speech, once again. This is such an important discipline, that a believer should be circumspect with words. If we are careful with words it shows that we are careful also with our thoughts. As the Lord Jesus Christ observed, “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things” (Matthew 12.34-35). It will be the delight of a good man but the death of the evil. It was not true of Job, of whom it was alleged falsely that “he doth open his mouth in vain” because “he multiplieth words without knowledge” (Job 35.16). But those of whom it is true shall meet disaster.

13.4. Daydreaming will not get us anywhere. Hard work fulfils our dreams. A believer will be helped by the wisdom of Christ to develop a good work ethic. This is not inconsistent with taking time out to refresh our minds and refurbish our creative skills. As the old adage says, “a man does not defraud his master when he pauses to whet his scythe.”

13.5. God hates lies because it comes from the Father of lies, Satan, His opponent and the opponent of all things true and right. A righteous man will therefore hate lying

too. Lying is just one expression of wickedness. All wickedness will bring its perpetrator to shame.

13.6. Indeed the Saviour's righteousness will justify the good man and keep him on the paths of holiness. The wickedness of the sinner will be his downfall.

13.7. There are a number of proverbs which commence "there is that..." We have had one already (11.24) and the expression is an arresting and memorable introduction to the parable which ensues. Both these parables have to do with riches and poverty and encourage a generousheartedness with our use of resources. The very vagueness of the introduction "there is that..." encourages us to think of ways in which the proverb might be true without giving us the answer. One answer might be that the man who has gained his riches by fraud has ruined his character, and the loss of character cannot be offset by the gain of riches. Whereas a shopkeeper who impoverishes himself by not opening on the Lord's Day may lose his profit but will gain in the wellbeing of God's approval, which is much more to be desired.

13.8. A rich man can afford to pay a ransom, provided it is tailored to his ability to pay. A poor man will not be targeted and, if captured with a view to setting a ransom for him, will, as likely as not, be released when it is realised that he is so poor. Or, looked at another way, when the rich are being threatened the poor man takes no notice. This is one advantage of being poor.

13.9. The full force of the picture language is achieved on the realisation that the light is a lantern but the lamp a candle, which, of course, is so easy to snuff out. The understanding of a righteous person is clear and steady, opening up the way of life with great pleasure. The wicked walk in darkness. The Lord Jesus Christ said, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8.12).

13.10. Imagine a committee, a cabinet meeting, a privy council. From the highest to the lowest disagreements result from pride; the loftier the pride the sharper the dissension. However, "in the multitude of counsellors is safety" (Proverbs 11.14), given that they give good advice to their convenor or chairman in all humility and in dependence upon almighty God.

13.11. The obtaining of riches is a constantly recurring theme. Though the book of Proverbs may be studied thematically, the constant recurrence of life's most necessary instruction is missed without a verse by verse study. We miss the pleading force of the Spirit's repeated warnings unless we ask each time, "Lord, is it I?" (Matthew 26.22). Wealth may vanish as quickly as it came, a risk that even a good man takes. But he shall recoup under the guidance and by the grace of the Lord. "Vain" and "vanity" in

the scriptures mean “empty” and “emptiness.” This proverb refers to wealth obtained by unprincipled means.

13.12. Another very famous proverb. “Hope deferred maketh the heart sick.” When delays in answering prayer are long this promise will give ease, for the Lord does not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men (Lamentations 3.33) by delaying without good reason. He observes all our homesickness, lovesickness and whatever sickness of heart we may feel and when the answer comes the joy of it will strengthen and embolden the pilgrimage of the believer.

13.13. Here is a very severe warning to those who disregard the Bible, the word of God. Disobedience to the law may not now in our day invoke capital punishment, but it might well have done in times past. Those who are diligent in keeping the law will be safe in a well-regulated society and may well, if obedience be matched with ability, receive promotion.

13.14. “This do, and thou shalt live” (Luke 10.28) said the Lord Jesus Christ to a lawyer who ostensibly was asking the Lord how he might be saved. It was a snare in him that he desired to justify himself, something which often stands in the way of many really hearing the good instruction they are being given. Heed Christ’s wisdom and we will be kept in the way of life.

13.15. The Lord’s favour makes the understanding of spiritual things to appear easy and the result is favourable to a believer’s attainments in life. Hard knocks and having constantly to retrace one’s footsteps and repeatedly experiencing setbacks are the sorts of things which are the lot of transgressors.

13.16. A wise believer bargains well but fairly, whereas a fool makes silly suggestions and, if men will deal with him at all, he will come off worst.

13.17. To be a messenger is to be entrusted with important, perhaps life-preserving, even state-preserving information. He should guard it with his life and deliver it promptly. An ambassador keeps hidden his own private views, should they differ, and only pleads the cause of his masters, and the country he has the honour to represent. We see an example of a fine messenger in Genesis 24 (to get the full impact do read the whole chapter). Abraham’s servant prays to God for a good outcome (verses 12-14) and when the success of his journey unfolds beyond his expectations he renders thanks to God again. And then in a most memorable statement (verse 33) says, “I will not eat, until I have told my errand.” Subsequently (verses 54,56) he begs “send me away unto my master” and “hinder me not, seeing the LORD hath prospered my way; send me away that I may go to my master.” His master’s work came first and foremost.

Paul was a wonderful ambassador for Christ. He speaks in the plural, meaning himself and every preacher of the gospel, every Christian while witnessing for Christ. “Now

then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us..." (2 Corinthians 5.20).

A wicked messenger may be measured by failing in the standards these good men set. What a healthy outcome is achieved by such a faithful messenger as Abraham's servant.

13.18. This is not the first time this theme has been set before us by the Spirit of Christ. Again the refusal to heed warnings and instructions is a very ingrained characteristic of the human heart, and the remnant of it is often brought over into the believer's life. So it has to be frequently dealt with. We do not find it easy to eat humble pie. But if we learn from our mistakes and put them behind us we may yet have a lifetime of honourable Christian service before us.

13.19. We had "desire" in verse 12. There it was bestowed; here it is earned, achieved. It may take years, but a fixed purpose to which we have dedicated our lives, or a substantial portion of them perhaps, gives a great sense of satisfaction when realised and, if there is to be no pride, causes us to give all the glory to our heavenly Father. All that the foolish can think of is what pleasures they're being deprived of if there is homework, or overtime to be done or unsociable hours to be worked.

13.20. Apprenticeships enable us to learn and work alongside the masters of a trade and observe at first hand, and learn to achieve, their high standard of skills. The best way for a young tenor to learn tenor parts is to be with the tenors in a choir. The principle is well accepted in all sorts of spheres. Seek good company. A young believer should seek the company of mature believers as often as is humanly possible. That way he will become one himself. Join the local gang and you will get caught or hazard even your life.

13.21. How relentless the devil is in pursuing his quarry. Bad habits that he has induced are like a vice or the grip of a biting wild animal. They are hard to be freed from and do much damage. The repayment of the righteous is generous, as we have noticed before from Luke 6.38.

13.22. Psalm 49.16-17 reminds us, "Be not thou afraid when one is made rich, when the glory of his house is increased; for when he dieth he shall carry nothing away." To the man who asked the Lord Jesus Christ to intervene in a dispute concerning the division of an inheritance between him and his brother, Jesus replied (among other things) "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" (Luke 12.20). By the Lord's grace and in answer to prayer generation after generation shall benefit from the faithful industry of a righteous man. The sinner's goods will be taken from him and his family receive no benefit. Above all, a believer should so seek to teach his children and grandchildren

and live such a loving and true life toward them as will provide an “inheritance” of Biblical truth in this life and treasures in heaven (Matthew 6.20).

13.23. Here is the third of the “there is that...” proverbs. However impoverished a person is, there is sufficient goodness in the soil to provide nourishment and income sufficient for his family. Despite that, there will be those who out of misplaced priorities whether they be laziness, or pastimes, or gambling or secondary businesses shall see no fruitful crops; and such effort as they have belatedly attempted destroyed.

13.24. This will not be the last time that the theme of chastening will be referred to, for we often need as sinners to be reminded of it, and therefore we should now read again Hebrews 12. 5-11. Received wisdom says that because we love our children we will spare them physical punishment because it will make them cry. It is said to be demeaning. But better to face immediate punishment and it all be over and done with and the lesson swiftly learned than to grow up unchecked because unhurt and ever repeating those things as a young person and an adult which are selfish, cruel and demeaning to others. To permit our offspring to grow up like that is to hate him truly.

13.25. There is a satisfaction, a good conscience which is the gift of God in good, honest and helpful living. Starvation may truly come upon the one who wickedly wastes his substance as with the prodigal son (Luke 15.13-16).