

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 28

28.1. In Leviticus 26.17 the Lord declared to the disobedient, "I will set my face against you...and ye shall flee when none pursueth you." It is easy through fear to be afraid when there is nothing to be afraid of, but this is a set frame of mind imposed by the Lord on the disobedient and enforced through a guilty conscience. However, the Lord's people may triumph in the face of all sorts of adversities by the moving of the Holy Spirit in their hearts. He moves in events, creating faith and strength by faith to achieve the victory, enabling believers to be proactive in meeting every situation.

28.2. A state may be unified under a sole powerful but just ruler and its welfare increased. We have had occasion to consider 2 Samuel 23.3-4. Many are the contenders for the throne or for leadership, vying one with another, when a land lies under the judgment of the Lord. This proverb may also refer to the advantages of a united kingdom which, under the Lord's judgment, may disintegrate and be divided into political, sectarian or tribal factions.

28.3. You would expect people of like situation to support one another for their mutual advancement. When there is internal dissension in any organisation, or civil war in a nation, the seeds of disintegration are sown. When the poor, who have virtually nothing, fight over the little they have a desperate desolation will ensue. It is a well chosen picture. The sweeping rain flattens the crops and washes away the soil, leaving hunger in its wake until the next season or the arrival of external aid.

28.4. It is in the interests of the lawless to promote the destruction of law and order. They will promote and encourage every form of illegality, especially disobedience to the commandments of God, to attain their wicked, Satanic, agenda. Those who prize God's ways and are law abiding citizens are taught by this proverb not to allow the right way to suffer by default but do all in their means to oppose the wrong.

28.5. Psalm 119.98-100 expresses it well. "Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they (thy commandments) are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts." Those who turn

from the Lord do not understand judgment; whether to uphold and deliver justice or to understand the things that are coming to pass from the Lord in their own day.

28.6. Whether we are thinking of uprightness in a natural man or the righteousness of God which is by faith in a born again believer, either is better than this world's riches and gives more satisfaction to the inner man.

28.7. The joining of a gang mostly leads to the abandoning of those morals and standards inculcated at home and makes a parent ashamed of the chosen way of life adopted by a son.

28.8. The Lord will reverse all iniquity and this proverb reminds us that those who charge exorbitant interest, the "sharks" as we call them, will finally lose their ill-gotten gains and their wealth will be redistributed to the advantage of the destitute.

28.9. It is inappropriate for a man who despises the commandments of God, those fundamentals which are for the regulating of life, to expect anything from God by way of favour. Indeed, such a prayer may precipitate the Lord's anger against him.

28.10. Satan designs the fall of mankind and shall enter into everlasting destruction (Revelation 20.10). His minions will follow suit (Revelation 20.15). The reversals of fortune of Haman, Esther and Mordecai (Esther 7.10-8.1) are an excellent illustration of this proverb.

28.11. The expression "wise in his own conceit" (that is, wise in his own eyes) has come down into our language. His wealth gives him privilege or protection and the rich man may find he is so cushioned from much adversity as to think his own wisdom has caused this attainment. A poor but wise man will probe and lay bare the weaknesses of his reasoning when he has cause to take issue with him.

28.12. When good men govern well everybody benefits and shares the advantages. But when the wicked rule, political correctness rules also and those who love commonsense may find themselves having to keep a low profile.

28.13. Very often the first reaction to the committing of evil is to run away from the scene or deny what has been done. A child is taught to make a clean breast of his fault and that to do so is always best no matter what the consequences. Confessing of sins is not ultimately enough where victory over temptation is to be attained, especially in the life of a believer who will be more acutely aware of such things by the Spirit than ever he was in his natural days. The forsaking of them is the test of how much we prize our sins, how they lurk within and it may be an acute struggle to abandon them. The mercy of the Lord appears most attractive to a convicted, guilty sinner.

28.14. The hardening of the heart, as with Pharaoh, leads to destruction. Such hardening is oftentimes a judicial hardening of the heart by the Lord Himself,

“Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth” (Romans 9.18). In the case of Pharaoh it was so from beginning to end, for before the commencement of the plagues the Lord said, “I will harden Pharaoh’s heart” (Exodus 7.3); after the first it is written that the Lord hardened his heart (Exodus 7.13) and at the end likewise (Exodus 11.10) with examples in between. The fear spoken of is not a craven fear but reverential, filial fear; a combination of respect and awe.

28.15. The roaring lion walketh about seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5.8); the bear on the prowl makes people hide for safety. A wicked ruler terrifies the people seeking to despoil them. He even enters into their homes to remove them and confiscate their property in order to destroy all opposition and obtain wealth for his wicked purposes.

28.16. Such a prince-oppressor was Ahab. Read 1 Kings 21. Covetousness is idolatry (Colossians 3.5) and is therefore a transgression of the 2nd commandment. A ruler, or a pastor will serve the people of his kingdom, his pastorate best by seeking the wisdom which Christ freely bestows. Paul could truly say (with the tacit agreement of the Ephesian elders as he left them), “I have coveted no man’s silver, or gold, or apparel” (Acts 20.33).

28.17. The Lord graciously provided cities of refuge (Numbers 35) so that the person who had accidentally killed another could flee and be safe from the avenger of that relative’s blood. If the elders of the city of refuge found him to be guilty of deliberate murder rather than manslaughter then it was provided that they should turn him over to the avenger of blood. There was nowhere to flee for the murderer; his end would be the stoning pit and none, even of his nearest and dearest, should seek to withstand the sentence of death he so deserved. It is a terrible matter to have murdered and because nowadays nations have failed immediately to pass God’s sentence for murder upon such he must spend the rest of his days fleeing to the pit from his conscience. “No murderer hath eternal life abiding in him,” (1 John 3.15) but in his remaining days he may repent and begin abiding in eternal life.

28.18. The Lord will preserve the believer from the enemies of the gospel, even though it may mean death, which is but the entrance into life. Note the juxtaposition of these verses in Luke 21.16&18:- “Some of you shall they cause to be put to death...But there shall not an hair of your head perish.” Luke 12.4 is also to the point, “Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.” It is not so much the immediacy of destruction which is in mind as the unexpectedness, perhaps the suddenness, of it. The perverse man who says in his heart, “My Lord delayeth his coming” shall find that “the lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him” (Luke 12. 45-46). When Adam ceased to walk in obedience to God the change in him - his fear of God - was immediate, the sentence of death followed

shortly and death itself inevitably some years later. It is perverse in a believer to hate his brother and “he that loveth not his brother abideth in death” (1 John 3. 14-15).

28.19. The expression “poverty enough” is evocative, for sufficiency is normally associated with blessings. Working at our daily living is the Lord’s appointed way. Something has gone wrong in a nation when unemployment is so rife that a person cannot find work and it should be a matter of much prayer to right these wrongs. If the state cannot provide opportunities for work it must provide benefits and by so doing it encourages loungers and scroungers.

28.20. Just as we say that for a politician to be elected he must probably have lied; or for an evangelical to become a bishop he must probably have surrendered the heart of his evangelicalism so the man who gets rich quickly has probably cheated somewhere along the line.

28.21. Respect of persons, of course, means favouritism. Instead of dispensing justice it will lead someone to be susceptible to bribery and he will destroy his conscience for a pittance.

28.22. An evil eye means to look on somebody in such a way that the mere sight evokes hatred and stirs up such hard feelings that will admit of nothing but planning to harm him. It has connotations of casting a spell where the practice of magic is rife. The Lord Jesus Christ uses the expression on four occasions:- “The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!” (Matthew 6.22-23). (On a different occasion the Lord taught similarly in Luke 11.34.) “I do thee no wrong...Is thine eye evil, because I am good?” (Matthew 20. 13-15). “Within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries...an evil eye, blasphemies... (Mark 7. 7.21-22). How great is the darkness of the one who desires only to be rich in this world’s goods which must perish with the using as well as with his own demise; and finally with the perishing of this world. (Colossians 2.22; Psalm 49. 17-18; 1 Peter 1.7).

28.23. The most significant use of “afterwards” is probably Hebrews 12.11. “Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.” There are situations which after we have spoken necessary words of correction (perhaps to an individual child or a class) cause us grief while we pray over and think about what the outcome will be; but, if the Lord is kind to both parties, afterwards there is a profitable outcome and it is agreed on both sides, perhaps tacitly, that it had to be done.

28.24. Mark 13,9-13 is a relevant example of this proverb. To declare a thing “Corban” was to set it aside for the Lord instead of devoting it to other use. If it was an amount destined for a parent, then the question is raised by the Lord whether it is proper for a bright idea of ours to override a stated commandment of the Lord (the 5th) concerning the care of parents. There are those who to fund a habit or a pleasure do rob their parents and the iniquity of such a thing is here declared. It will probably break the parents’ hearts and so destroy them. There is just a hint (by the use of the word “companion”) that he might have been put up to it, that it might have been suggested by a companion with no conscience.

28.25. The contrast is between stirring and trusting. Troublemaking originates in an unregenerate heart. A believer is enabled to be at peace as he trusts in the Lord Jesus Christ to work all things out for good. Psalm 73,7 speaks of the wicked that “their eyes stand out with fatness” but here to be made fat is used in a good sense.

28.26. “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” (Jeremiah 17,9) That being the case, the very deceitfulness of the heart will betray the fool into a wrong conclusion about himself. If a believer, instead of walking confidently in his own prowess, turns to the Lord Jesus Christ for help, he/she will be wisely guided.

28.27. There are always those who have hit hard times through no fault of their own and merit our kind generosity. But what about those who have brought their own misery upon themselves? There would be much less need of doctors, hospitals or ambulances and all sorts of repairers if we were not to help one another when we have got ourselves into difficulty. If the thought enters our head that the one to whom we are about to give brought this poverty upon himself needlessly, and therefore withhold our hand, we should perhaps think again. If we give selectively, as we should, we must give prayerfully.

28.28. This is similar to 28,12. However it looks forward to the dawning of a new day when oppressors will cease from the land and righteousness flourish once again.