

## **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 29**

29.1. Of course, the Pharaoh of Exodus 7-14, is a perfect example of this proverb. Eventually, if after many efforts to reclaim a person it is to no avail, then we must give up attempts at correction and leave a person to his own fate, praying that the Lord might yet in some other way change him. There will come a time, without repentance, that the evil will have been done once too often, and it will be too late. For its inevitability once that occurs there is no medicine. From that destruction there will be no appeal.

29.2. Although fallen human nature does not like to be restrained, nevertheless there is that remaining image of God within that appreciates parameters of behaviour to which we do well to conform. When there are national and international laws in accordance with the Lord's commandments and true justice is dispensed then countries prosper under His blessing and the people, for the most part, recognise the rightness of it.

29.3. The story of the prodigal son (Luke 15) illustrates the truth of this proverb and while Solomon may not have been involved with harlots he did have many wives of other religions and may have felt some tinge of conscience himself in this matter. He did not live to see his son's rejection of wisdom when Rehoboam "forsook the counsel of the old men, which they had given him, and consulted with the young men which had grown up with him" with devastating results (1 Kings 12.8).

29.4. Again, personal experience as a prosperous monarch under the hand of the Lord would have led Solomon to reflect much on the methods of wise governance. Once bribery is admitted at court all absolute standards are overthrown and it will be replicated at every level throughout the land with destabilising results.

29.5. The intention may be good, but so deeply ingrained is pride that the neighbour will jump to wrong conclusions of himself, and even misinterpret the "kind" words of his neighbour, and it may lead to his fall. There is no escaping the entrapment of a net and it renders the victim powerless.

29.6. A snare is a trap, and might be a net. One transgression leads to another on a downward spiral and even the first step on that downward path may trap the wrongdoer. A clear conscience is a liberating thing, setting the heart free to sing and rejoice. “Be filled with the Spirit...making melody in your heart to the Lord” (Ephesians 5. 18-19).

29.7. We use the expression even today, “we don’t want to know.” We do know, but we pretend not to. We see this attitude displayed at Luke 10.32 where the Levite, more so than the priest before him, “when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.” It is good to go to the root of a problem and seek to solve it, or alleviate it, fundamentally.

29.8. The very first psalm opens with this allusion to what was evidently a very prevalent attitude among the Jews:- “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.” Pouring scorn is never a kind way of opposing a person’s views. If that scorn is poured upon a person’s faith it is debilitating and must be said to be pouring scorn upon God Himself. “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matthew 25.40).

29.9. There are some who, terrier like, will never let a matter rest and it is a foolish thing to do. No matter how a wise man handles it, there will never be a satisfactory conclusion. It is likely to prove a waste of time.

29.10. How the Saviour exemplifies this proverb! The wicked sought His life because He told them the truth. “But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth” (John 8.40), He said. But, in willing obedience to the Saviour’s invitation, the just seek Him that they might live by faith. “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matthew 11. 28-30).

29.11. There are many situations in which it is not wise to reveal all one’s thoughts. In the discipline of negotiating; in marshalling an argument; in hearing a matter from another side and in many other ways it is wise to keep silent until the matters are well introduced.

29.12. As we have seen in 29.4. once a principle of evil is admitted it opens the way to all manner of other errors and vices. If there were to be just the smallest evil in God Himself, it would be the end of Him. It is precisely because He is absolutely holy that He is from everlasting to everlasting (Psalm 90.2) and none can stay His hand (Daniel 4.35). As a ruler, so His court. Unfortunately “like people, like priest” (Hosea 4.9) was

the norm, at one period of Israel's history at least, when it should have been the other way round; but only when the priest is godly.

29.13. When all is said and done we shall all die. As we sometimes say, "life is too short for animosity." "They shall lie down alike in the dust" (Job 21.26). "All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked." (Ecclesiastes 9.2). The thought here is not of death, but of life; that all men receive natural light from the Lord, that is to say sight and ordinary understanding. Spiritual understanding, like faith, is not given to all men (2 Thessalonians 3.2).

29.14. This conveys the opposite of 29. 4,12. As long as there is natural justice and good laws, so long will the Lord perpetuate the life of that nation.

29.15. It is a mark of loving care to impart discipline. "If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not. But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons" (Hebrews 12.7-80).

29.16. However much evil may seem to triumph on all sides it will be relatively short lived. It seemed a long time to the psalmist to contemplate the prosperity of the wicked but at last he understood their end, How are they brought to desolation, as in a moment!" (Psalm 73.3,17,19).

29.17. The early discipline of life lays down the parameters of behaviour which the child, as the father of the man, will always be disposed to follow.

29.18. Supremely, that vision is imparted by the gospel of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. It inspires so to live as to inherit eternal life. In lesser matters also the principle always holds good that to work for some desired end a leader must convincingly and glowingly present the advantages of whatever is being aimed at to those who labour.

Law is contrasted with vision and by inference the first five books of the Bible (the law) with prophecy. By this verse the Holy Spirit would thus reveal that the Old Testament scriptures were still in the state of composition, as there might be no contemporary, relevant revelation. (Such was the case in the four hundred years at the conclusion of the writing of the Old Testament and the commencement of the New - the people perished with a terrible destruction.) A speaking prophet (such as David's Nathan) or a writing prophet (Samuel and David himself) and the later writing prophets also, would, if heeded, keep the nation looking to their God and thereby inspire them to new and higher attainments and understanding. This is what Solomon's father David did by his psalms and what Solomon was aware of doing. Failing this, and indeed always and everywhere relevant, to keep such scriptures as were already available would be sufficient for the day to keep a believer on the right path.

29.19. Surly servants were the bane of any society which was dependent upon them and here the scene envisaged is bringing a slave to book for his action. Guilty he may be, but he is not going to answer. Paul rejoices in the phrase, “a servant of Jesus Christ” (for example Romans 1.1) and the Lord Jesus Christ kindly puts our whole relationship with Him (though we serve Him) on the wonderful footing of friendship, as he did Abraham. “Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known to you” (John 15. 14-15).

There is a link between this and the previous verse. Our Prophet, the Lord Jesus Christ, has set before us His words not only to correct us but as our vision and inspiration, lifting us by such a high, upward calling to things above (Philippians 3.14).

29.20. Believers must strive to choose their words carefully and with forethought not speaking rashly in hastiness, temper or criticism. It is difficult to withdraw words once uttered and, in some situations, long after we have forgotten them, they will still rankle with the one who was hurt. One rash moment brought upon Moses, meek though he normally was, the punishment of not being allowed to enter the promised land (Numbers 20.12).

29.21. If the privileges of the intimacy of sonship are bestowed upon the child of a slave, as they might be if brought up with a man’s own children, or if he has no heir, whether intentionally (in the latter case) or unintentionally he will take over. Such is human nature that even in a church fellowship there are those who “given an inch will take a mile” as we say and usurp such offices or duties for which, maybe, they are not suited, by default. That is not quite what is envisaged in this proverb where a person (unsuitable by rank but not necessarily by ability) is unintentionally, perhaps, trained to be above his station. In the Lord we are all gifted for one place or another in the church and we should seek to fulfil that ministry and that ministry only (1 Corinthians 12. 14-27,31; Ephesians 4.16).

29.22. A believer should never in the church or in his private capacity stir up strife or abound in transgression. It therefore follows that he/she should neither be angry nor furious.

29.23. Pride and honour are here contrasted. It is very wonderful that the Lord honours His servants. “Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name...I will deliver him, and honour him” (Psalm 91. 14-15). But the Lord sets His face against all forms of pride. I select just one verse from among many, for it is a vein that runs throughout the whole Bible. “He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts” (Luke 1.51).

29.24. To be a thief is to be in breach of the 8<sup>th</sup> commandment (Exodus 20.15) and there is no way that a person may flout one of the ten commandments without endangering his own soul. Whether the cursing he hears is that of his even more debased partner when things go wrong or because it is his normal way of speech (so low has he descended to have such a partner) or whether the cursing is that of the people he has harmed as he escapes or overhears subsequently matters not. He knows what is said about him or in his company, keeps it to himself, and there it festers in his soul. May it bring us, should we be in that situation, to conviction of sin, confession of our sinfulness and the forsaking of our past life!

29.25. The Gospel writer John gives two very good examples of the fear of man bringing a snare. It is a trap which detains them from following the Lord fully and puts them at the mercy of His opponents. “He is of age; ask him: he shall speak for himself. These words spake his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue. Therefore said his parents, He is of age; ask him” (John 9.21-23). “Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God” (John 12.42-43). The margin gives “set on high” as an alternative to “safe.” Once again it is apposite to read Psalm 91.14.

29.26. It is possible that the quotations from John above are an illustration of this proverb. Here were people (in a bad sense) seeking the favour of the ruling party at the expense of their true wellbeing and it will turn out to be the judgment of the Lord against them. However, this proverb might be intended in a good sense that there is a time to seek the favour of those in authority and that the Saviour, who is our wisdom (1 Corinthians 1.30) imparts that ability to make the distinction of the appropriate time.

29.27. Whose side are you on? The same behaviour will appear approved or anathema according to whose side we are on. If we are believers then, however much the haters of the Saviour’s cause may be disposed to like us personally, for His sake they will hate us. Just how abominable the upright in his way is to the wicked is seen today, for example, in the outbursts of those who are for redefining marriage against those who uphold it. It was never more fully seen than in the opposition to the Saviour of the religious leaders of His time. “Pilate said unto them, Why, what evil hath he done? And they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify him” (Mark 15.14).