

**Proverbs 15:8–9** “**8** The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to Yahweh, But the prayer of the upright is His delight. ”**9** The way of the wicked is an abomination to Yahweh, But He loves one who pursues righteousness.”

The wicked can abound in sacrifice, yet they continue to walk in their wickedness, demonstrating that their hearts were not repentant or worshipful. The mere external practice of sacrifice and observance of feasts was detestable to God. This is what He says to Israel through the prophet Isaiah,

**Isaiah 1:11** “**11** “What are your multiplied sacrifices to Me?” Says Yahweh. “I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams And the fat of fed cattle; And in the blood of bulls, lambs, or goats I take no pleasure.”

On the other hand, the Lord delights in the prayers and supplication, in the words of the upright. In verse 26, Solomon reveals again what the Lord abhors,

**Proverbs 15:26** “**26** Evil thoughts are an abomination to Yahweh, But pleasant words are pure.”

What matters is the heart, which is the seat of one’s thoughts, desires, and emotions. The prayers, the sacrifices, the acts of worship that come from a heart that hates God and His Way is an abomination. But He is pleased by the prayers of the pure, and he hears them, vs. 29,

**Proverbs 15:29** “**29** Yahweh is far from the wicked, But He hears the prayer of the righteous.”

So then the wise one makes their father and mother glad by working with diligence, living with integrity, measuring themselves rightly, seeking out discipline, desiring what is good, avoiding what is right in their own eyes, and understanding the power of his tongue.

## B. The Lord and His King (Proverbs 16:1-22:16)

### 1. The Wise are Ruled by the Lord and Rules in Righteousness (16:1-33)

This second section of Solomon’s instruction to the future king of Israel begins by focusing on the rule and sovereignty of THE KING, vs. 1,

**Proverbs 16:1–4** “**1** The plans of the heart belong to man, But the answer of the tongue is from Yahweh.”

In the man’s heart, he may have the first word when making preparations, but YHWH has the last word. Good arguments and effective replies come from thought-through plans and logical arrangements, but ultimately, they require divine direction to be effective. Even the effectiveness of one’s answer depends on God, Who uses it to advance His decree. The answer itself is *from YHWH*, indicating that the ultimate responsibility for good and effective speech falls upon God’s grace. As Paul speaks of his gospel ministry in 1 Corinthians,

**1 Corinthians 3:6–7** “**6** I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. ”**7** So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth.”

The effectiveness of our evangelism does not depend on our skill more than it did upon Paul’s. It is God who causes growth. Christ used this truth to encourage the disciples in Matthew 10,

**Matthew 10:19–20** “**19** “But when they deliver you over, do not worry about how or what you are to say; for it will be given to you in that hour what you are to say. ”**20** “For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.”

Think of the testimonies of the martyrs, who, while being led to their execution or even while the smoke of their pyres rose around them, spoke the most memorable and powerful words of their lifetimes.

Solomon continues to dwell upon divine sovereignty in verse 9,

**Proverbs 16:9** “9 The heart of man plans his way, **But Yahweh directs his steps.**”

Notice the contrast here between way and steps. Man can plan out his general pathway. He can set out in a particular direction, but YHWH directs every footfall as He sees fit. Also, notice that both of these verses use the covenant name of God. This implies that every act of divine intervention upon each word or step is done out of covenant love and faithfulness to His covenant promises. We, children of God, can rest in this reality that He guides every word and every step to carry out His most excellent and good plan for us. As Paul says in Ephesians 2,

**Ephesians 2:10** “10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, **which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.**”

And yet, we are responsible for thinking, speaking, and walking in faithful obedience to Him. This is undoubtedly true for God’s King, vs. 10,

**Proverbs 16:10–12** “10 **A divine decision is in the lips of the king; His mouth should not err in judgment.** ”11 A just balance and scales belong to Yahweh; All the weights of the bag are His work. ”12 **It is an abomination for kings to commit wickedness, For in righteousness a throne is established.**”

God’s king ruled God’s people in God’s Promised Land. He was the human figurehead for Israel’s Divine KING. Therefore, the king could not err in upholding justice and establishing his rule in righteousness. In God’s kingdom, justice and righteousness are established in His Law. The king must rule and reign in submission to that Law. Anything less would be a sinful abomination.

This responsibility to uphold God’s Law did not fall upon the king’s shoulders alone, vs. 17,

**Proverbs 16:17-19** “17 **The highway of the upright is to turn away from evil; He who guards his way keeps his soul.** 18 Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before stumbling.”

The way of the righteous is to turn from evil as defined by God. As long as we stay on His path, humbling and submitting to His rule, we will not stumble. The one who has this self-control and wisdom is better than the mightiest of kings, vs. 32

**Proverbs 16:32** “32 **He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, And he who rules his own spirit, than he who captures a city.**”

## 2. The King Must Rule with Wisdom and Justice (17:1-28)

The emphasis on royal justice continues in chapter 17. In verse 3, we see that every action of the King is judged by the KING, vs. 3,

**Proverbs 17:3** “3 The refining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold, **But Yahweh tests hearts.**”

With this reality in the mind of his son, Solomon instructs him to be careful to guard his ears from the falsehood of the wicked, vs. 4,

**Proverbs 17:4** “4 An evildoer gives heed to lips of wickedness; A liar gives ear to a destructive tongue.”

Likewise, the king must also guard his own lips from the falsehood of the wicked, vs. 7,

**Proverbs 17:7** “7 Excellent lips are not fitting for a wicked fool, Even less are lying lips for a noble man.”

In executing justice, the king must not only keep himself from false words but also from false riches, vs. 8,

**Proverbs 17:8** “8 A bribe is a charm in the eyes of its owner; Wherever he turns, he prospers.”

Throughout Proverbs, bribes are mentioned within the context of the courts. To do so was expressly forbidden by the Law,

**Deuteronomy 16:19** “19 “You shall not distort justice; you shall not be partial, and you shall not take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and perverts the words of the righteous.”

Which is why Solomon condemns the receiver of a bribe as a wicked man, vs. 23,

**Proverbs 17:23** “23 A wicked man receives a bribe from the bosom To thrust aside the paths of justice.”

In contrast, the king is to judge according to God’s standard of wickedness and righteousness, vs. 15,

**Proverbs 17:15** “15 He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous, Both of them alike are an abomination to Yahweh.”

To let the guilty go unpunished is to counteract the will of God, which is ultimately futile, for Proverbs 11,

**Proverbs 11:21** “21 Assuredly, the evil man will not go unpunished, But the seed of the righteous will escape.”

To pervert God’s justice is declared “not good” by Solomon vs. 26,

**Proverbs 17:26** “26 It is also not good to punish the righteous, Nor to strike the noble for their uprightness.”

Think of wicked Ahab and Jezebel using their power to persecute and pursue the prophet of God. Such a thing is not good –an evil abomination to the Lord.

### *Christ Connection*

If the wicked cannot be justified. If evil will not go unpunished, then how is that YHWH is just by not punishing us? As David declares in Psalm 103,

**Psalm 103:10** “10 He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities.”

How can YHWH require just judgment from his king yet remain just and not deal with us according to our sins? The answer is found in Romans 3,

**Romans 3:23–26** “**23** for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ”**24** and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ”**25** whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins in his divine forbearance. ”**26** It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.”

Our pardon for our sin; our justification is not in us. It was done for us. We have been justified through the redemption of Christ Jesus. His blood, poured out on the cross, is our propitiation - our sacrifice - satisfying God’s just wrath toward us and our sins. The Righteousness of God, that is, Christ, came to us, not to condemn us in our sins but to be their perfect Sacrifice – the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world with His innocent blood. In so doing, God becomes the Just Justifier of those who have faith in His Son.

John Piper comments on this verse, “*Why did Jesus die? It was “so that [God] would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.” To be righteous, and to reckon as righteous those who don’t have their own righteousness. These seem to contradict each other. God’s righteousness would dictate: pour out your wrath on sinners who exchange your glory for other values—that would be righteous. Or: have no wrath against the ungodly—that would be unrighteous. But if God wills that he demonstrate the infinite value of his glory and that he justify the ungodly, then someone—namely, Jesus Christ—had to bear the wrath of God to show that God does not take lightly the scorning of his glory. That’s why the word “propitiation” in verse 25 is so important. Christ bore the wrath of God for our sins, and turned it away from us.”*<sup>1</sup>

The King of Kings came to earth to justify us, sinners, by dying in our place and transferring His perfect righteousness to us so that we stand before the Just Judge of the Universe and He no longer sees our sin. We are no longer guilty, for He sees His Son’s perfect obedience when He looks upon our names in His Book of Life.

### 3. The Speech of a Fool vs. The Speech of the Wise (18:1-24)

In chapter 18, Solomon focuses on the tongue by comparing the fool's speech with that of the wise. First, we see that the unruly tongue brings strife and ruin, vs. 6,

**Proverbs 18:6–7** “**6** A fool’s lips come with strife, And his mouth calls for beatings. ”**7** A fool’s mouth is his ruin, And his lips are the snare of his soul.”

Moreover, the unruly tongue brings shame, vs. 13,

**Proverbs 18:13** “**13** He who responds with a word before he hears, It is folly and shame to him.”

Doing so in the courtroom perverts justice vs. 17,

**Proverbs 18:17** “**17** The first to plead his case seems right, Until another comes and examines him.”

On the other hand, the ruled tongue brings fruitfulness and life, vs. 20,

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<sup>1</sup> John Piper, [Sermons from John Piper \(1990–1999\)](#) (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God, 2007).

**Proverbs 18:20–21** “20 From the fruit of a man’s mouth his stomach will be satisfied; With the produce of his lips he will be satisfied.” 21 Death and life are in the power of the tongue, And those who love it will eat its fruit.”

The tongue of the fool is a raging fire, a restless evil, and full of deadly poison. But the tongue of the righteous has the power to bring life, to heal, and to bring satisfaction and joy. This is what we see in the very next verse, vs. 22,

**Proverbs 18:22** “22 He who finds a wife finds a good thing And obtains favor from Yahweh.”

Finding a wife requires the effectiveness of a wise tongue. This wife is declared to be good and a blessing, which sets her in contrast with the wife of a foolish man who is contentious (21:6) and destructive (14:1). The language here parallels the words of Lady Wisdom from chapter 8,

**Proverbs 8:35** “35 For he who finds me finds life And obtains favor from Yahweh.”

The connection that Solomon intends for his son is this: the pursuit of Lady Wisdom, especially with one’s tongue, will yield the fruit of finding a wife in a lady of wisdom. Such a find is a true gift from God, as we will see in the next chapter.

#### 4. The Wisdom Gained from Poverty (19:1-22)

Naturally, the son of Solomon would be raised amid great wealth and affluence. So, in this chapter, Solomon instructs his son to look to the wisdom gained in poverty. In verse 1, we see that poverty can reveal the integrity and endurance of faith,

**Proverbs 19:1** “1 Better is a poor man who walks in his integrity Than he who is crooked in lips and is a fool.”

Often, we come across opportunities to get rich wrongly. Either by lying or cheating, we can steal riches for ourselves. Walking in integrity, avoiding that crooked path, sometimes leads to loss. You can lose out on the payout or lose your job when you refuse to do your boss’s sinful bidding. But it is better to be a poor man who keeps his integrity. It is better to be willing to work a lesser job, lose out on an opportunity, or burn a bridge than to be a man or woman who lies to earn dishonest gain.

This proverb is tied directly to the next with the word “also” in vs. 2,

**Proverbs 19:2–3** “2 Also it is not good for a person to be without knowledge, And he who hurries his footsteps sins.” 3 The folly of man subverts his way, But his heart rages against Yahweh.”

Here, the fool rushes to make money without acquiring knowledge. When his ruin comes, who does his heart rage against? The Lord. Such a thing is not good.

In vs. 4, we see that poverty shows the faithfulness of friends.

**Proverbs 19:4–7** “4 Wealth adds many friends, But a poor man is separated from his friend.” 5 A false witness will not go unpunished, And he who breathes out lies will not escape.” 6 Many will seek the favor of a noble man, And everyone is a friend to a man who gives gifts.” 7 All the brothers of a poor man hate him; How much more do his friends distance themselves from him! He pursues them with words, but they are no more.”

Wealth adds superficial friends. But it is hard to tell who's real. On the other hand, when poverty and destitution descend, everyone usually deserts you, even your siblings. Those who are there when there is nothing to gain when the times get tough are revealed to be faithful.

Ultimately, true riches are a gift from the Lord, vs. 14,

**Proverbs 19:14** "14 House and wealth are an inheritance from fathers, **But a wife who has insight is from Yahweh.**"

Material success and wealth can come by human blessing, but to marry a lady of wisdom is a divine blessing of true and infinite wealth. This is contrasted with the poverty of a broken home, vs. 13,

**Proverbs 19:13** "13 A foolish son is destruction to his father, **And the contentions of a wife are a constant dripping.**"

Dysfunction in parental and marital relationships brings about the worst type of poverty. Therefore, marry wisely, discipline with diligence, vs. 18,

**Proverbs 19:18** "18 **Discipline your son while there is hope,** And do not direct your soul to put him to death."

Not only does God grant true riches. He defines what is truly desirable, vs. 22,

**Proverbs 19:22-23** "22 **What is desirable in a man is his lovingkindness, And better is a poor man than a man of falsehood.** "23 **The fear of Yahweh leads to life, So that one may sleep satisfied, not visited by evil.**"

Poverty and riches define status in man's eyes. What God desires is faithful, loyal love, and truth. Doing so leads to life and the serenity of satisfying sleep.

## 5. The King Must Execute Justice Against the Foolish (20:1-30)

In chapter 20, Solomon returns to kingly instruction by teaching his prince that the King must exact justice against the foolish. This is especially seen in the first eight verses where Solomon begins by describing the righteous king's roar of wrath against the wicked, vs. 2,

**Proverbs 20:2** "2 **The terror of a king is like the roar of a lion;** He who provokes him to anger sins against his own soul."

Then, in verse 8, Solomon bookends this section by describing the just king's right and responsibility to cleanse his kingdom of all evil,

**Proverbs 20:8** "8 **A king who sits on the throne of justice Disperses all evil with his eyes.**"

The surrounding verses catalog these evildoers. The King is to execute justice against the drunkard (vs. 1), the brawler (vs. 3), the sluggard (vs. 4), the conniver (vs. 5), and the hypocrite (vs. 6).

Failure to judge foolishness and wickedness and instead judge with differing standards and favoritism is an abomination, vs. 10,

**Proverbs 20:10** "10 Differing weights and differing measures, **Both of them are an abomination to Yahweh.**"

On the other hand, the wise king judges justly by executing his wrath rightly, vs. 26,

**Proverbs 20:26** "26 **A wise king winnows the wicked, And turns the threshing wheel over them.**"

## 6. Living Righteously in Light of the KING's Sovereignty (21:1-31)

In the last lecture of this unit in Proverbs, Solomon ends how he began by looking at God's sovereignty and instructing on how to live righteously in light of it. Look at verse 1,

**Proverbs 21:1** "1 The king's heart is like channels of water in the hand of Yahweh; He turns it wherever He pleases."

Like today, in the Ancient Near East, farmers developed canals and dams to direct the natural flow of a stream or river directly into their fields. Similarly, the Lord is the Farmer; the king's heart is His canal, and He waters whichever fields He pleases. Solomon bookends this chapter with His second statement on God's sovereignty vs. 30,

**Proverbs 21:30-31** "30 There is no wisdom, there is no discernment And there is no counsel against Yahweh. "31 The horse is set for the day of battle, But salvation belongs to Yahweh."

If the king's heart is in the hand of YHWH, what scheme of man or might of an army could ever thwart His purposes?

Therefore, what must the son do? Verse 3,

**Proverbs 21:3** "3 To do righteousness and justice Is chosen by Yahweh over sacrifice."

Righteousness and justice. This is what the Lord desires, even above sacrifices of worship. A life dedicated to the Lord is more desired than an offering of total dedication.

In the following verses, Solomon contrasts the wise man's pursuit of righteousness and justice with the fool's perversion of it. In verses 4-6, we see that fools pursue wealth unrighteously because of their prideful heart (vs. 4), their impulsiveness (vs. 5), and their deceitfulness, vs. 6,

**Proverbs 21:6** "6 Working for treasures by a lying tongue Is a fleeting breath, by those who pursue death."

For this reason, their destruction is sure, vs. 7,

**Proverbs 21:7-8** "7 The destruction of the wicked will drag them away, Because they refuse to do justice. "8 The way of a guilty man is perverse, But as for the pure, his work is upright."

This is not the case with the upright. He is pure, and so is his work.

In verses 10-13, Solomon observes how the wicked pervert justice, vs. 10,

**Proverbs 21:10-13** "10 The soul of the wicked craves evil; His neighbor finds no mercy in his eyes. "11 When the scoffer is punished, the simple becomes wise; And when one considers wisdom, he receives knowledge."

The wicked crave evil. Evil is not just their nature; it is their appetite and ambition, and they have no mercy for their neighbor and refuse to hear their cries for help. For this reason, when the ruin of the wicked comes, and they cry for help, they will be ignored. Why? Verse 12,

**Proverbs 21:12-13** "12 The Righteous One considers the house of the wicked, Turning the wicked to ruin. "13 He who shuts his ear to the outcry of the poor Will himself also call and not be answered."

The Righteous One, the just judge, referring to the King and the KING, has turned their house into ruin. And this punishment, when properly understood, can make the simple wise. Their

ears and hearts are closed to the neighbors in need, but their hands are always open to receive a bribe, vs. 14,

**Proverbs 21:14** “14 A gift in secret averts anger, and a concealed bribe, strong wrath.”

This secret perversion of justice will not go unpunished by the Righteous One. His strong wrath will be poured out. On the other hand, doing justice will bring joy to the righteous king’s heart,

**Proverbs 21:15** “15 When justice is done, it is a joy to the righteous but terror to evildoers.”

It is key to note that two verses break up the subunits of this chapter, and they both deal with the contentious or quarrelsome wife, vs. 9,

**Proverbs 21:9** “9 It is better to live in a corner of a roof Than in a house shared with a contentious woman.”

**Proverbs 21:19** “19 It is better to live in a desert land Than with a contentious and vexing woman.”

First, notice the similarities: It is better to live in the most inhabitable places, to endure the elements and all their dangers than to live with a quarrelsome wife. Second, notice the addition in verse 19: She is contentious *and* vexing. Contention denotes conflict with others, and vexation denotes conflict within, in this case, the husband’s heart. He is faced with fights on the outside and filled with grief and turmoil on the inside. This quarreling comes from a place of arrogance and pride, Proverbs 13:10,

**Proverbs 13:10** “10 With arrogance comes only quarreling, But with those who receive counsel is wisdom.”

In James's New Testament wisdom book, we see deeper into this source of contention.

**James 4:1–2** “1 What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? ”2 You lust and do not have, so you murder. You are envious and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have to because you do not ask.”

Here again, Solomon warns his son to marry well by marrying a lady of wisdom. Failing to do so brings life-altering, peace-shattering, and sometimes life-threatening consequences. As Solomon said in Proverbs 17:1,

**Proverbs 17:1** “1 Better is a dry morsel and tranquility with it than a house full of feasting with strife.”

Life in the desert, foraging for a morsel of food and a drop of water, is better than finding yourself married to a foolish spouse.

In contrast, there is peace and satisfaction in the house of wisdom,

**Proverbs 21:20–21** “20 There is desirable treasure and oil in the abode of the wise, But a foolish man swallows it up. ”21 He who pursues righteousness and lovingkindness Finds life, righteousness, and glory.”

Where the foolish find no fulfillment and constant craving, the wise enjoy the fruits of their pursuits. The wise seek wisdom and righteousness and receive what they desire from the Lord and then some. Notice that the wise do not seek out treasure or luxury. They pursue godliness. They pursue what God declares to be right, abstain from what he declares sin, and love others as He loves. Lovingkindness – hesed – a loyal love and kindness based on covenant faithfulness.



When God reveals His glory to Moses, He declares that lovingkindness is a part of His divine nature and character.

**Exodus 34:5** “5 Then Yahweh descended in the cloud and stood there with him, and He called upon the name of Yahweh.”

Solomon’s father, David (2 Samuel 9), lived out this godly characteristic, and it was one of his favorite themes to write about in the Psalms, which he used 127 times. David’s great-grandfather, Boaz, praised his bride for her lovingkindness upon him (Ruth 3:10). Therefore, lovingkindness was to be the constant companion of the wise Davidic King,

**Proverbs 3:3** “3 Do not let lovingkindness and truth forsake you; Bind them around your neck, Write them on the tablet of your heart.”

**Proverbs 20:28** “28 Lovingkindness and truth will guard the king, And he upholds his throne by lovingkindness.”

### Christ Connection

This same lovingkindness filled the ultimate Davidic King. The New Testament equivalent of *hesed* would be *charis* – *grace*,

**John 1:14–16** “14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” 15 (John bore witness about him, and cried out, “This was he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me. 16 For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.”

### 7. Conclusion: Fear the Maker of All (22:1-16)

Solomon concludes this 2<sup>nd</sup> unit of proverbs by again calling on his son to fear the Lord and walk in wisdom,

**Proverbs 22:2–5** “2 The rich and the poor meet together in this— Yahweh is the Maker of them all. ”3 A prudent man sees evil and hides, But the simple pass on, and are punished. ”4 The reward of humility—the fear of Yahweh— Is riches, glory, and life. ”5 Thorns and snares are in the way of the crooked; He who keeps his soul will be far from them.”

Even though the rich rule the poor (vs. 7), in the end, they are all made and ruled by the YHWH. The humble heart is the heart that fears YHWH and the heart that seeks His righteousness and lovingkindness. This heart receives divine blessings of riches, glory, and life. The degree and nature of the physical aspects of these blessings pale in comparison to their spiritual counterparts,

**Ephesians 1:3** “3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,”

In this conclusion, Solomon also instructs his son to follow his example on two separate occasions,

**Proverbs 22:6** “6 Train up a child according to his way, Even when he is old he will not depart from it.”

Proverbs 22:15 “15 Folly is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of discipline will remove it far from him.”

It is essential to note the difference in the intentionally literal translation of the LSB and how it differs from what we are used to. In verse 6, we see that if a child is trained in *his way*, he will not depart from it. Remember what we learned in Proverbs 14,

**Proverbs 14:12** “12 There is a way which seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.”

Proverbs 22:6 is intended to be a warning: allow your child to be trained according to his way, what seems right in his own eyes (Prov. 12:15), and he will never depart from it. Why? Look again at the second parenting verse of chapter 22,

Proverbs 22:15 “15 Folly is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of discipline will remove it far from him.”

In the end, when folly is removed and replaced by wisdom, when the child is trained in how He should go, every godly parent hopes that he will not depart from it. But the warning still stands: children must be taught the way of wisdom, to fear the Lord and keep His commandments (Eccl 12:13).