

(Proverbs) ch.16:5 - 17:4

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of humility, fairness, and righteousness in our lives, and the dangers of pride and unrighteousness.

Duration: 1:00:21

Scripture: Proverbs 16:7-9, Proverbs 16:20-21, Proverbs 29:23

Topics: "Financial Integrity", "Sovereignty Of God"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of having a little bit of money gained honestly rather than accumulating great wealth through dishonest means. The fear of the Lord is what helps us understand this principle. The speaker also highlights that God wants us to make plans and seek His direction, but He does not always speak to us in the same way as in the Old Testament. As we grow in maturity, God expects us to take responsibility and make decisions based on His principles. The sermon also emphasizes the sovereignty of God over our enemies and the importance of departing from evil and being watchful in our walk with God.

Transcript

Let's turn to the book of Proverbs again. We'll turn to chapter 16. We concluded our last study in verse 4, where it says the Lord has made everything for its own purpose.

That means God is sovereign, that all of creation is in His sovereign hand, fulfilling the purpose that He has appointed for each one. This is why we believe that all things work together for good to those who love God and who are called according to His purpose. Because the sovereignty of God controls all people and all things, and even the wicked are in His hand finally to be judged in the day of evil.

And even we can apply that in relation to the day of evil that we as believers may face at the hands of wicked people while we are living on this earth. That even that evil which is done by wicked people to us, we have to see that the Lord has made even that wicked person for the day of evil to accomplish some purpose in allowing us to be tempted so that we can be overcomers. Now we come to verse 5. Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord, assuredly he will not be unpunished.

Many people in the world do not consider pride as a sin, that is because of spiritual blindness. Murder, adultery, telling lies, stealing, these are considered sins, but the word of God speaks much more about God being the enemy of the proud. There is no verse in the whole Bible which says God is the enemy of

the adulteress or the enemy of the murderer or the enemy of the thief or the enemy of the liar.

But there is more than one verse that tells us that God is the enemy of the proud. And that is why you find that Jesus could forgive the adulteress and the thief on the cross, but he told the Pharisees that they were bound for hell because of their arrogant pride. And spiritual pride is no different from any other type of pride.

Anyone who has spiritual pride in him because of what God has done in him, he can go to this verse and find out that he is an abomination to the Lord. He is an abomination. God is his enemy.

Satan is already his enemy, but God also becomes his enemy when he becomes puffed up. And that is why we have to fear pride more than we fear almost anything else. Assuredly, he will not be unpunished.

The reason why many, many believers do not get the grace of God in their life fundamentally is due to this fact that they are proud of something or the other in their life. They are proud. And that is why the grace of God is withheld from them in their time of need.

Verse six, by loving kindness and truth, or we can say through mercy and truth, iniquity is atoned for. And by the fear of the Lord, one keeps away from evil. We can say that that verse has got two parts.

First is God's part, because God alone can atone for our iniquity. We can never atone for our own iniquity. But by God's loving kindness and truth, Jesus came with grace and truth, mercy and truth have kissed each other.

As we read in the Psalms, iniquity is atoned for. That is already done on the cross, where God's loving kindness and truth completely atoned for all our sins when he offered Jesus a sacrifice through his loving kindness and his truth. Loving kindness, because that was love that sent him to the cross.

Truth, in the sense that God could not shut his eyes to our sins. He had to face up to the truth that we were sinners. And so he had to find a sacrifice.

So we find loving kindness and truth. We're both there on Calvary. But now comes our part.

By the fear of the Lord, one keeps away from evil. That is man's part. God has done his part.

Now our part is this, to keep away from that evil which Jesus died for on the cross. And that is why when a person comes to Calvary's cross, if he does not really repent and turn from his sin, we can say he hasn't understood that Jesus has died for his sins. Because he hasn't seen that it was all his sins which nailed Jesus to the cross.

So you cannot come to Calvary's cross without a true repentance. I mean any believing in Jesus without repentance is just a hoax. It's a deception of the devil.

Such a person has not seen that his sin crucified Jesus on the cross. Because once we see that, we cannot love that sin anymore. We turn away from it.

It's automatic. Verse 8, sorry, verse 7. And there are many people who will try to harm us in so many ways. But it says here, God who is in sovereign control of everything as we saw in verse 4, is able even to control our enemies and their reactions and actions, so that he can make even his enemies to be at peace with him.

That teaches us that God has got a sovereign control even over our enemies, over those who are seeking to harm us. He's got power over them. We must have faith to believe that if I leave all my enemies in God's hands, he'll take care of them, without exception.

Verse 8, let me read this to you in the Living Bible. A little that is gained honestly is better than great wealth gotten by dishonest means. Now, there are very few people in the world who really believe this, that a little bit of money with honesty is far better than accumulating a great treasure by dishonest methods.

But anyone who has the fear of the Lord understands that clearly. Verse 9, the mind of a man plans his way, or as the Living Bible says, we should make plans but counting on God to direct us. In other words, God wants us not to just sit down in an easy chair and say, Lord, show me what I should do.

That's good to pray that. But God does not always speak from heaven like he did in the Old Testament times through a prophet or through a voice. He now treats us not like babies but like son.

And you know the difference between small children, four or five years old, and grown up sons, four or five year old, when he crosses the road, you got to tell him, look to the left, look to the right, and be careful every step, brush your teeth, time to go to bed. But when a son is 20 years old, you don't tell him all that. I mean, you treat him like a mature adult.

And that's why we find that God gives sometimes specific direction to babies, but more we grow up, he seems to speak to us a little less in these specific matters and leaves it to us to decide, because he wants to treat us like mature adults. So don't envy the person who is always hearing some leading saying, go here, go there. That's not the highest way of guidance.

The highest way of guidance is where God trusts us to take right decisions, and so we must make plans. Of course, seeking the kingdom of God first and weighing spiritual factors, we make plans to do this, to do that, to go here, to go there, seeking his kingdom in all things, but in all those plans, like James says, we have to say, if the Lord wills, we shall go to the city tomorrow and do this. Everything is if the Lord wills.

And that's what it says, you're counting on God to direct us, and he may direct us by making us miss the train perhaps, or in some way hindering something, or some door which we tried to go in and closed and we couldn't get there, or we got turned down in that interview for a job. We make plans, we try to go in for that job, and God closes that door. Some marriage proposal doesn't go through.

We make plans, but we are to trust God to direct us by circumstances, and that is the way the Christian is guided. He seeks the kingdom of God first in his righteousness, and he makes plans, but in all of his plans, he says, Lord, I want your will. Block me where I'm not going in the right direction, and open the doors for me where I am going in the right direction.

Verse 10, a divine decision is in the lips of the king. His mouth should not make a mistake in judgment. And that's a very important verse, when a person has become a king, that means he's got a tremendous amount of responsibility, and he has sometimes to take decisions, like Solomon had to take that decision concerning that baby, as to which of the two women was the real mother of that baby.

And his mouth should not make a mistake in judgment. That teaches us that the more authority we have, the more careful we have to be with our words. It's all right for young people who've got no responsibility, no authority to speak carelessly and to say all types of things, because they don't have wisdom.

But the more authority we have, the king is the highest, but below the king there are so many other levels of authority, but the more authority we have, we have to be very careful with what we say. And we need wisdom in our decisions. For example, think of a father in a house.

A father can't talk in the stupid way that his children talk. No, a father has to, a father's got authority there. He can't even descend to the level of his wife.

No, he's got more authority. The more authority he has, the more he needs wisdom in a decision. Think of God gives a responsibility for leadership in a little local church.

Oh, one has to be extremely careful. And so, that's why I believe that God trains young people to see whether they're growing in wisdom, whether they're being careful with their lips before he can commit any responsibility to them. And this is the reason why God cannot commit responsibility to a lot of people, whether they're young, some who are even old, because they don't seem to be growing in wisdom.

They take all types of foolish decisions without waiting on God and seeking in humility for his guidance. So we have to be very careful. His mouth should not make a mistake in judgment.

The more responsibility we have, the more careful we have to be in decisions that we take. Verse 11, a just balance. In the Living Bible it says, the Lord demands fairness in every business deal.

He has established this principle. The Lord demands fairness in every business deal. There is a fantastic amount of sin in buying and selling.

And we have to be very careful, particularly when we are selling something. If somebody else cheats us, we don't have to worry. That's not so serious.

If we cheat another person, that's serious. If I cheated one person of one rupee, do you know that that is much more serious than another person having cheated me of one thousand rupees? But out in the world, they don't look at it like that. They get more concerned when somebody else cheated them of thousand rupees, and they are not at all disturbed when they have cheated somebody else of one rupee.

But for a true God-fearing Christian, it's exactly the opposite. He's more disturbed when he has cheated a person of fifty paisa, than if somebody else cheated him of one thousand rupees. A loss of one thousand rupees does not disturb him, as much as the fact that he took fifty paisa more from somebody than he should have.

Fairness. The Lord demands fairness. Let the people out in the world live as they like, but God's people have to go by this principle.

It says, He has established this principle. All the balances and the scales are the Lord's, and the weights in the bag are His. He wants to see that they are accurate.

He's talking about Christians who are doing business. Don't copy the other businessmen and do what they do. I remember a story of a cobbler who was a Christian, and who always did use the best leather to repair his shoes, unlike all the other cobblers who were using cheap leather, and one day his assistant asked him, Why do you do that? You're losing such a lot of money.

And he said, I believe that in the day of judgment, when I stand before Christ, there'll be a big pile of shoes there, all the shoes that I repaired, and Jesus will pick them up one by one and examine them, and say,

John, that wasn't a good job you did on this shoe. What will I answer to him? Can I say all the other cobblers did that? No. He says, I'm not living just to make a little, a few rupees more like the other cobblers.

I'm wondering what Jesus will say when He picks up that shoe in the day of judgment and examines it and asks me about my work. That was His work. He wasn't a preacher, He was a cobbler.

And as much as each preacher has to give an account for every sermon he preaches, each cobbler has to give an account for every shoe he makes, and whatever your job is, you have to give an account to God of that the way you have done your job. The Lord demands fairness in every business deal. He's established this as a principle, and that means that in every area where we are involved with money, buying or selling, we have to see that we are fair.

Fair to the other person from whom we are buying. After all, he also has to make some profit in order to live. Think of that.

He's not going around selling things as a social service. He's selling things because he has to earn a living and support his family. And I must think of that and be fair to him.

And also, I must be fair when I sell anything to the other person. As we have often said, if something is not working properly, we tell him frankly, this is not working here. So, you can fix a price for that.

Absolute honesty. And it's far better to get a little honestly than to get a little more dishonesty. These are the marks of a God-fearing man.

Verse 12. It is a horrible thing for a king to do evil. You see, this is connected with verse 11.

The Lord demands fairness. And you call yourself a king because Jesus has made us kings and priests unto God the Father. Well, if you're a king, it's a horrible thing for a king to be unfair in a business deal.

Think of that. That's terrible. It's an abomination for kings to go around cheating someone.

His right to rule in the millennium, when Jesus comes, depends upon his fairness now. His throne is established on righteousness. In other words, God doesn't give me the right to rule in the millennium if he found that during my time on earth I was not absolutely honest.

That's how a lot of people are going to lose their throne. There are many instances in the Old Testament of kings of Judah and Israel who lost their throne. God removed it from them, beginning with Saul.

And all this is written for our instruction that if we are unfaithful, God will take away the throne from us. No, we can't automatically assume that we're going to sit on the throne when Jesus comes. That throne is established on righteousness, it says.

And that's why he's testing on the earth today. In an unrighteous world, let me see who all will be righteous. Those are the people who are fit to rule in that new kingdom where righteousness is at home, as we read in 2 Peter 3. Verse 13.

Righteous lips are the delight of kings, and he who speaks right is loved. We can look at God as a king here. And that God delights, God as a king of the universe delights in righteous lips.

And he who speaks what is right is loved by the king of the universe. So that is something we can long for, that the king of the universe should love us. And he loves those who speak what is right.

Notice in the book of Proverbs how what a fantastic emphasis is placed on the tongue. There is no Old Testament book which speaks so much about the tongue as the book of Proverbs. And that's why I say this is like a new covenant book in the middle of the Old Testament.

There's a spirit of the New Covenant in it. That's why it tells us to seek wisdom. It's the book of wisdom.

And wisdom has such a tremendous amount to do with our speech. And that's why we've exhorted again and again the church, be careful with the words you say. Be careful with the words you say.

And I want to say that especially to sisters, because the New Testament says that women have a particular weakness in this area of becoming gossips and scandal mongers, going around carrying tales and stories. It's a particular weakness of women. I'm not saying that, the Holy Spirit has said it.

The creator who created man and woman has said that the woman's got a tendency that way. And when you see that, the woman's got to be more careful. Just like men are tempted more in the area of sex than women are, in the same way women are tempted much more in the area of their tongue.

That is their weak spot. And then you've got to be careful, just like the man's got to be careful with his eyes, the woman's got to be careful with her tongue. It's just another part of the body she's got to be more careful with.

But there are specific weaknesses like this in men and women. And so that's the word particularly that sisters should take care of. God loves those who have so disciplined their tongues as to speak what is right and good at all times.

Verse 14. And we can look at it like this, that the king you can say is your boss in your office, let's say. And a wise man will know how to handle a situation when the boss is angry.

Here's the wrath. You find your unconverted boss in the offices full of wrath one morning. Wrath as strong as messengers of death.

But if you're a wise man, that's where your wisdom is tested. You go there and you see him like this and God gives you wisdom to cool him down. Think of that.

Think of that ministry that we can have in the heathen offices in the city. That's a tremendous thing. You need to take that seriously.

A wise man will know how to quieten that wrath. That's wisdom. Verse 15.

There we see our need and our lack of wisdom. We can cry out to God. Verse 15.

And his favor is like a cloud with a spring rain. We can think again of God as the king of the universe. And in the light of his face, that means his favor and his presence.

And the fact that he looks upon us with favor, there is life there. And God's favor is like a cloud with a spring rain that waters the parched ground. Many believers are like the parched, dry fields.

They haven't got the rain. It's not green and fresh. But it says here, when God's favor is upon us as we stand in his presence, that's like the cloud with the spring rain, the latter rain, the freshness that comes through the rain of the Holy Spirit that makes us green, like green fields, fresh in the rain.

Verse 16. And to get understanding is to be chosen above silver. That teaches us what we have considered many times in the book of Proverbs, that true wealth is wisdom.

In other words, you want to know how rich you are? We're not to be so foolish as to calculate our bank account or our earthly assets to find out how rich we are. We are as rich as we have divine wisdom in our life. That is, purity, peaceableness, gentleness, mercy, willingness to yield, impartiality, freedom from hypocrisy and things listed in James 3.17, marks of divine wisdom.

As much as I have of those qualities in my life, I'm rich. That's why the Lord has to say to many believers, you do not know that you are poor and blind and naked. Because you have so much Bible knowledge and so much of ministry and so many gifts, able to do this, that and the other, so many talents, musical talent, other talent, you think that you are rich and you do not know that in terms of heaven's riches, you are a poor man.

That's a sad thing when we live in ignorance of that. Wisdom is the true wealth, it tells us here. Very few people understand this, that it is better to get wisdom than gold.

Better to choose wisdom than silver. Think of marriages in India, where people think in terms of money. How much money is the man earning? How much money will the woman bring in marriage? Even among believers, what does it show? They haven't understood this verse.

They don't think how much wisdom, divine wisdom does this man have? How much divine wisdom does this girl have? That's secondary. That is the blindness in Christendom today. And that is where the church stands like an island in the middle of this ocean of folly, of wisdom.

Seeing that these are not the main things. Verse 17 The highway of the upright is to depart from evil and he who watches his way preserves his life. The way of the upright is called a highway and it becomes a highway by departing from evil.

That's all there is to it. And here it says that we have to watch that we walk on this way. In other words, we have to be on the alert.

Jesus often used that word watch and pray. What does it mean to watch? It just means be on the alert. Don't go to sleep spiritually.

Be on the alert. Be sensitive. Where your conscience is pricking you about that thing.

Be alert. You may fall off the way altogether if you ignore that little prick of conscience in that decision you are taking. Be on the alert about the way and thus you can preserve your life.

Be alert about your walk. Verse 18 Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before stumbling. Before a man falls into sin you can be sure there is some pride in him.

Because if he didn't have pride and he was humble God would have given him grace in that temptation. God gives his grace to the humble. Why didn't that man get grace? Grace would have made him overcome sin.

Sin cannot have dominion over those who are under grace. Why didn't the man get grace in the moment of temptation? Because God saw, even if the man didn't realize it himself, some pride in him. And so we can say pride is the cause of falling into sin.

That's all it says here. Pride goes before that final destruction in hell and a haughty spirit before stumbling. Like someone has said, you know that gulf which Abraham told the rich man in hell and the rich man in hell you read about in Luke 16 saw Lazarus sitting in Abraham's bosom and Abraham told the rich man there's a big gulf between you and us.

You can't cross here and we can't cross there. And what is that gulf? That gulf is pride. That's the thing that sends people to hell.

Can't cross it. It's not that they killed, murdered and committed adultery. We'll be surprised to see the number of murderers and thieves and adulteresses in heaven.

And you'll be surprised I won't be when we see bishops in hell. I hope you won't be either. They're going to be there.

Lots of them. Archbishops and popes. By the hundreds.

There. Because of their pride in their religion. Pride goes before destruction.

And a haughty spirit. You see that haughty spirit even in so-called Christian leaders. It goes before stumbling.

That's why they lose their temper and can't get victory over lust. Defeated by sin. It's all because of their pride.

Their high thoughts about themselves. There's a thing that God detests in the universe. It's pride.

And it's worse when it is religious pride. Verse 19. It's better to be of a humble spirit.

Here's the contrast to that. It's better to be of a humble spirit with the lowly than to divide the spoils with the proud. In other words, brothers and sisters, mingle with the humble brothers and sisters.

Don't spend your time with all the proud, haughty people of the world. Mingle with the humble brothers and sisters. Now there's a false understanding of humble in the world.

Some people think humble equals poor. No. A lot of poor people are very proud.

There's no connection between humility and being poor. I mean materially poor. Mingle with the humble people.

With the lowly people. It is better to be of a humble spirit with the lowly. Those who have small thoughts about themselves.

Because we can get that spirit when we mingle with people. And we mingle with people who are proud. There's a wise man who has said that when you mingle with proud people, it's just like trying to touch tar.

You know the stuff you put on the road? You touch tar. It's so difficult to get it off your hand. Just try it sometime.

Get tar on your hand and try to take it off. It's a fantastic job to get rid of it. He says it's like that.

If you mingle with proud people, it'll rub off on you. And after sometime you get that spirit. So steer clear of these haughty, proud people in the world and this high society that people want to mingle in.

Avoid that. It affects your spirit. Mingle with the lowly people.

With the humble people of the world. God is with them. That's a good exhortation.

Then to divide the spoil with the proud means to go and sit there for the fantastic meals that the rich, proud people can offer. We don't want to spend our time with all this high society people and catch that spirit. It's an infection.

We've got to avoid it. And it says further here in verse 20, He who gives attention to the word shall find good. That means the one telling us the two main things.

The two main things of the New Testament. Trust and obey. That's what it says in the Living Bible.

God blesses those who obey Him. Obedience to His word. And happy is the man who puts his trust in the Lord.

God has given us His word basically for two purposes. That we might obey it and we might trust Him because of the promises He's given us in His word. If we have learned through His word to trust Him and to obey Him, we can say we are coming to know the Scriptures.

We can't say we're coming to know the Scriptures when I can quote a reference or when I have understood a doctrine. We can understand all the doctrines of the Bible and quote all the references of the Bible and be the devil himself in our character. Because the devil can quote all the references and he knows all the doctrines.

But God has not given us His word for that but that we might obey and trust Him. So the more we obey Him and the more we trust Him through His word, we can say the more I'm coming to know the word of God. That's it.

Then verse 21. Let me read that in the Good News Bible. It says here a wise, mature person is known for his understanding.

The more pleasant his words, the more persuasive he is. In other words, it's easier to convince people through pleasant words than through harsh words. And wisdom is manifested and maturity is manifested in the fact that we know how to speak pleasantly to people instead of getting upset and getting in a bad mood.

That is a mark of an immature, stupid, foolish person. But if we know how to be pleasant with our words, we can persuade people much more with pleasant words than with getting upset. That's the mark of wisdom and maturity.

Verse 22. It says here understanding is a fountain of life to him who has it. But the discipline of fools is folly.

Or as the Good News Bible says, trying to educate a foolish person is a waste of time. Or like Jesus said, don't cast your pearls before swine. Don't give that which is holy to the dogs.

Whenever we speak to people, we need to first discern. Does this person have some heart for the things of the Lord? If he does not have a heart for the things of the Lord, it's no use sharing spiritual things with him. It's an absolute waste of time trying to talk to him all types of spiritual things.

It's like throwing pearls before swine or giving that which is holy to a dog. Verse 23. The heart of the wise teaches his mouth and adds persuasiveness to his lips.

Notice the connection here, like we read in Romans 10 verse 9, that what man believes in the heart, he confesses with his mouth. And what Jesus said, out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. And like we read in Acts chapter 2 verse 4, that on the day of Pentecost, when they were filled with the Holy Spirit in the heart, the overflow came through the mouth, and speaking in other tongues, there's a very close connection between the heart and the mouth.

And you can't believe in the heart without confessing with your mouth. You can't be filled in the heart without overflowing through the mouth. And the heart of the wise teaches his mouth and adds persuasiveness to his lips.

And so, what this basically means is that I have to see that my heart is right if I want my tongue to be right. It's not just a question of controlling the tongue like a good Buddhist. It's a question of having a good heart.

And the heart teaches the mouth what to say. I think about what I say. I don't just pour out words without thinking.

That's how it must be. Verse 24 tells us about the type of words that should come out from a good heart. Pleasant words, it says here, are like honey.

Kind words. Sweet to the soul and healing to the bones. That is kind words.

They don't come naturally to us. We have to be kind in the heart before we can speak kind words to people. Basically, all of us have got a flesh in which kindness does not dwell.

Have we discovered that? Have we discovered that there's not one atom of kindness that dwells in our flesh? I'll tell you why. Because kindness is a good thing and the Bible says, in my flesh dwells no good thing. That means there's not one atom of kindness that dwells in our flesh.

What dwells in our flesh, then? Harshness, evil, unkindness. That's what dwells in our flesh. And all these things are all the time trying to get inside my heart.

And once they've got inside my heart, it'll begin to overflow through the mouth. The mouth is the overflow valve of the heart. And I know what got into my heart by seeing what's coming out from my tongue.

And then I find the unkindness or the evil and the harshness coming out of the tongue, then I know that something got into my heart. Even if I'm talking about victory and all that, it's got into my heart alright and it's coming out from my tongue now. And I really have to take up the battle there and see that God wants me to seek kindness.

Seek words of encouragement to people. Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones. Verse 25 There is a way which seems right to a man but its end is the way of death.

That is repeated earlier. In chapter 14 we considered it. That is the broad way.

The way whereby you don't have to go through the narrow gate. You don't have to take up the cross every day. Jesus said, if you want to follow me, you've got to take up the cross every day.

But out there in the world, there are even many Christians who think that they can follow Jesus without taking up the cross every day. That is one of the greatest deceptions that Satan has perpetrated on the Christian world today. To tell people that you can follow Jesus without taking up the cross every day.

You can't find that in the New Testament. They think it's alright, I'm doing good, I'm witnessing, evangelizing, I'm doing this, I'm sacrificing, I'm giving money to the Lord, I've become a full time worker. Well, it looks alright.

But Jesus said that it's impossible to follow him unless we take up the cross every day. That's clear. Luke 9, 23 is so clear.

But yet there is a way that seems right to a man. But in the end you will discover it is death. Because it is not the way of the cross.

The way of the cross, the way that leads to life. Verse 26, let me read this in the Living Bible. You know, hunger is good if it makes you work to satisfy it.

That means you shouldn't be lazy. If a man does not work, neither should he eat. We have to be careful that we don't encourage people who do not want to work to eat.

Because God's word forbids it. If a man is not willing to work, he should not eat. I feel there is an application here for in a country like ours where we have this fantastic problem of beggars.

And I see that there are two types of beggars. There are those beggars who are maimed, either lame or unable to work because of age, or maimed, or have leprosy. Well, such beggars deserve our kindness and our help.

But then there are others, small boys who are hale and hearty, who are just being sent out by their parents to beg. And there it's not at all a good thing to give them money for just begging. Far better to encourage a boy who wants to do some work, even if it's polish your shoes or look after the scooter or do something.

If they're willing to do some work, there we can give them something. Because that's the principle, which is not the complete solution to this problem, but it's a simple principle that is good for us to keep in mind. Hunger is good if it makes you work to satisfy it.

And in contrast, it says in verse 27, the Living Bible says, idle hands are the devil's workshop, and idle lips are his mouthpiece. Idle hands, they are the devil's workshop. And idle lips, they are his mouthpiece.

But there's something more in that verse, which I want to share. The Good News Bible puts it like this, that evil people are always looking for ways to harm others. Listen to this, even their words burn with evil.

Even their words burn with evil. Whose words? The words of evil people. Now, what I need to ask myself is not, first of all, am I an evil man? Am I an evil woman? Because every one of us will say, no, I'm not an evil man, I'm not an evil woman.

That's not where we must start. Start at the other end of the verse and say, do I ever speak words that burn? Other people. Then whether I know it or not, I am an evil person.

Start at the other end of the verse and work backwards and you discover you are an evil person. Because you are speaking words that are meant to burn something in that other person. We've discovered that we don't know our spiritual condition.

It's a mark of an evil person. Or as the NASB says, a worthless person digs up evil. Think of that.

And the word in the, I think it's the King James or Margin or somewhere, it says a man of Belial. That means a demonic man. Belial is the name for the devil.

A demonic man is one who digs up evil. That means the evil was buried. Somebody did something against you three months ago or six months ago.

Some revival meeting in the church two weeks ago. You decided to bury it. You finished with it.

You knelt down and said, Lord, I forgive that man. I finish with it. I forgive him.

But now the revival is all gone. You are back to normal now. And you are now digging out that thing which you said you buried two weeks ago.

Back again. That's a demonic man. God is forgiven.

You said before God that day you had forgiven. But still you look at that person and you dig up that time you said this and this other time you did that. Think of that.

Even husbands and wives sometimes dig up things which they said they forgave one another. They haven't forgiven one another. They are still digging it up.

They have a big fight and then they dig up everything. Man of Belial and a woman of Belial calling themselves believers. Demonic men and women.

The world is full of them. A worthless man digs up. Brothers and sisters, I pray that there won't be one man or woman of Belial in the church here who is so demonic as to be the accuser.

That's why he is demonic because Satan is the accuser of the brethren. To dig up what God has forgiven and what you yourself said you have forgiven. It's gone.

You buried it. Forget it now. Look at that person with the new mercies with which God looks upon you.

That's good. That's to be divine. A worthless man digs up evil and when he digs up evil and says his word become like a scorching fire.

Like James says, his tongue is set on fire with the fire of hell. It's amazing how one moment the tongue can be set on fire of hell. It says with the same mouth we bless God and that is the speaking in tongues and the tongue of fire which was on the apostles on the day of Pentecost.

Heavenly fire and then we come out and with the fire of hell curse our fellow men. How so? One time this fire and the other time that fire. It's some confusion.

It shouldn't be like that. It must always be that heavenly fire that purifies my speech. The words of the Lord are refined in the furnace seven times it says.

I've thought of it like this before you speak a word. Think about it. Think about it.

Put in the furnace. Take it out. Put in the furnace.

Take it out. Seven times. Lord should I say that? You may find after the fourth or fifth time God says no need to say that.

You don't say it. Because the furnace says no. The words of the Lord are pure words, purified seven times.

That's the word God wants us to say. Letters we write, words we speak must not be the scorching fire but the purity of the fire of heaven. It's very simple.

If we can just be a little patient before we speak those words, humble ourselves to the Lord. Let me put it in the Lord's furnace to see whether it's pure enough to speak to my brother or sister or my husband or wife or anyone. Then we'll find that we shall be saved from a fantastic amount of stupidity and folly, broken relationships and a thousand and one things.

Our life will be so glorious we'll only follow the simple rules. Verse 28. A perverse man spreads strife and a slanderer separates intimate friends.

Here is another mark of an evil man or an evil woman. They go to somebody's house and they say something about brother X or sister Y. And at the end of that half an hour of conversation about brother X or sister Y, you have to ask yourself this brother or this sister who visited this house, has he succeeded in bringing this family closer to brother X and closer to sister Y or little further away from them? Has he succeeded has she succeeded in making them love one another more or has he or she succeeded in making them despise that person a little more? There we can see so much of the conversation that goes on. It's just to paint a bad picture of another person.

Such a person is a perverse man, a perverse woman. Another man of failure. Another woman of failure.

He separates intimate friends saying something which is not good. Terrible, terrible when it is found in the congregation of the righteous. The word of God is very clear on these matters and we've got to be very careful that we don't fall into that category.

Verse 29 A man of violence entices his neighbor and leads him in a way that is not good. That means violent people it says in the Good News Bible deceive their friends and lead them to disaster. I believe that's something which particularly young people need to bear in mind.

Living Bible says wickedness loves company and leads others into sin. Be careful about the type of company you keep that they don't lead you into sin. It may begin with just dirty jokes and then gradually moves on to a little drink moves on to other things Bad company can lead into so many problems.

Steer clear of them and blessed are those young people who from their school days itself have known to stay away from those who are not seeking a godly life. Not saying don't talk to them but keep a little distance. Don't get too friendly with those who are worldly minded because they can lead you astray from God.

Beware of your company. And if you fellowship with an angry man you can get into trouble yourself one day when you are in his company. Beware of fellowship with violent angry people.

Verse 30 He who winks his eyes and does so to devise perverse things he who compresses his lips brings evil to pass. Or as the Good News Bible puts it Watch out for people who grin and wink at you they have thought of something evil. These are people who your friends you know they are grinning at you and winking at you they have something evil in mind.

Be careful about these people who try to act so friendly and are really seeking to get some company for their sin. And verse 31 A gray head is a crown of glory if it is found in the way of righteousness. And that means it's wonderful to grow old and for your hair to become gray for a brother or a sister it says it's a crown of glory.

Think of that. Who in the world doesn't want to have a crown of glory? But it says here a gray head is a crown of glory. All these men and women who dye their hair they don't believe that.

You know that. They don't believe it's a crown of glory at all they believe it's a disgrace. They all trouble the whole lot of people in the world.

They all like to look young. But here it says a gray head is a crown of glory. Not automatically.

No. A lot of gray headed 70 year old men still lusting after women. I'm sorry to say.

There's a lot of gray headed 70 year old women. Grumpy miserable. Making life miserable for everybody around them.

There's no glory there. There's just the gray hair. No glory at all.

But if it is found in the way of righteousness think of that. Think of a man who has wholeheartedly been gripped with the new and living way when he was young and faithfully faithfully faithfully walked it so that when he grows old he is so considerate. So desirous not to make himself a botheration to others because he spent his whole life trying to deny himself and live for the glory of God.

Think of a saint like that. What a glory there is there. What a glory that even young people want to be with such a man to know more of God.

That's a wonderful thing. I just want to say dear brothers and sisters when you see a grumpy miserable old woman somewhere sisters think of yourself one day you'll be like that if you don't deny yourself now when you're young. When you see a self-centered miserable critical old man brothers be careful you can end up like that if you don't stop denying yourself when you're young if you think you can start when you're 60 it's too late.

Start now so that you can grow old gracefully graciously. There's a glory in that. To see old people and when they're old they have so many aches and pains and weaknesses and physical infirmities insecurities so many things and with all that if you can see an older person, cheerful good natured kind, good not

complaining you can see that God has done a work in such a person that's wonderful to grow old like that the gray head is a crown of glory if it is found in the way of righteousness so that's a wonderful thing if you want to be wise later on it's good to start when you're young verse 32 he who is slow to anger is better than the mighty and he who rules his spirit than he who captures his city of the two conquerors this great conqueror who could conquer so many cities and the other man who could conquer the lust in his flesh he says the man who conquered the lust in his flesh is a greater conqueror in God's eyes it's easy to conquer a city more difficult to conquer your anger be a conqueror you can be a greater conqueror than Alexander the Great if you can conquer the lust in your flesh and overcome that vile temper to be patient to be slow to anger means to be patient a patient man is greater than a world conqueror and he who rules his spirit means in all circumstances he has control over his spirit calm better than any conqueror verse 33 tells us about the way they used to have guidance in the Old Testament times the lot is cast into the lap but it's every decision is from the Lord.

They did not have the Holy Spirit in those days to guide them the only way they had to find guidance was like people toss a coin today heads or tails they cast the lot into the lap to find out even before the day of Pentecost when they wanted to find out who was to be the 12th apostle they cast the lot and picked out that is not God's way after the coming of the Holy Spirit the last time that was done was Acts chapter 1 now God has given us the Holy Spirit and he leads us into all the truth through the word of God chapter 17 verse 1 this comes back to what we considered earlier about the type of food we eat in the house it's better to eat a dry crust of bread last time they were talking about herbs now we've got a dry crust of bread you know the crust itself is pretty hard and on top of

that when it's dry better to sit and eat a dry crust of bread in a house where there is quietness not many houses where there is quietness where there is no yelling and screaming I mean it's alright for children to do that, I mean they don't have wisdom but I mean the adults in the house yelling and screaming that's a terrible thing where there is quietness and where the adults know how to stop the little children also from yelling and screaming that's good where quietness than a house full of feasting with fantastic food and all that and strife and bitterness and quarrel between husband and wife what's the use of all this grand meal in the quarrel between husband and wife it's better to have a dry crust of bread with peace and that teaches us the great importance of peace great

importance of peace in one of the other translations it's called a house full of sacrifices it says in the margin here, sacrifices of strife that means religious sacrifice this is a religious house religious house but there is strife there argument in the middle of all their religion and their prayers and their bible reading that's a sad thing far better to eat a dry crust with peace great importance the bible places on having quietness and peace at home verse 2 a servant who acts wisely will rule over his son who acts shamefully in the old testament they were called servants in Galatians 4 verses 1-7 in the new covenant we are called sons you know there's a difference in your home between a servant and a son that's the difference between the old covenant and the new covenant you may care

for your servant there's a lot of difference between your care for your son and your care for a servant but let's not sit and think that we are greater than Abraham and Jacob and David and all these people because it says a servant who acts wisely will rule over a son who claims to be in the new covenant and then who acts more shamefully than that servant under the old covenant and there are lots of so called sons today who act disgracefully in a way in which Elijah and Elisha would cover their faces in shame when they see some new covenant believers the way they behave God and God was righteous to give that rulership to that other person the first will be last and the last will be first and that teaches us also in

the church right now as we have often considered somebody can have been in

the church for a number of years senior brother because he's been there so many years and some younger brother can overtake him spiritually because that man is not denying himself in his private life he's not humbling himself he's not judging himself, he's not walking in the light and it's a sad thing and that happens all over the world where those who come in later on, progress ahead of spiritually those who have been there from the beginning the servant overtakes that son and that son is the first to become last and the last to become first and the elders have now become youngers even though their age has grown today, haven't become wise or mature or more humble or more patient that's sad God is righteous, there's no partiality with him, he gives to all equally he doesn't look at a man

for his seniority in service no seniority in service in the kingdom of God especially in maturity and the fear of God and wisdom verse 3 the refining pot is for silver the furnace for gold, but the Lord tests the heart, God is called the God who tests the righteous Jeremiah 20 verse 12, he doesn't tempt us, but he tests us like he tested Abraham he tested Peter he tested David he tests us before he commits a responsibility to us that's why he puts us in the fire so that he can improve us he says the refining pot the refining pot is not for destroying the silver but for purifying that teaches us when the Lord tests us and puts us in the fire, it's not for destroying us it's for purifying us so that he can commit a ministry to us just like silver and gold are refined, the Lord refines the

righteous, he tests their heart verse 4 an evildoer listens to wicked lips and a liar pays attention to a destructive tongue, and that teaches us that gossipers listen to other gossipers evildoers birds of a feather flock together and the reason why gossipers come to your home and gossip is because whether you realize it or not you're a gossip yourself there's a law in the market as I've said that supply always matches the demand that means there's a demand for something that'll be supplied and so the reason why gossip is supplied in your house is because people sense that you like it

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