

Proverbs 17

1 Better a dry crust with peace and quiet than a house full of feasting, with strife.

The crust is "dry" because there is nothing to dip it in such as olive oil, vinegar, sauce or in our case, no butter.

"feasting with strife" is literally in Hebrew "strife-offering" or "sacrifices of conflict".

The typical time for feasting and eating meat were at religious festivals where sacrifices were offered and then eaten. According to the Law of Moses a peace offering was accompanied by feasting and rejoicing as a family.

This is referred to in Deuteronomy 12:7:

"There, in the presence of the LORD your God, you and your families shall eat and shall rejoice in everything you have put your hand to, because the LORD your God has blessed you. . . .11 Then to the place the LORD your God will choose as a dwelling for his Name there you are to bring everything I command you: your burnt offerings and sacrifices, your tithes and special gifts, and all the choice possessions you have vowed to the LORD. 12 And there rejoice before the LORD your God, you, your sons and daughters, your menservants and maidservants, and the Levites from your towns, who have no allotment or inheritance of their own. . . .15 Nevertheless, you may slaughter your animals in any of your towns and eat as much of the meat as you want, as if it were gazelle or deer, according to the blessing the LORD your God gives you. Both the ceremonially unclean and the clean may eat it. . . .18-you are to eat them in the presence of the LORD your God at the place the LORD your God will choose you, your sons and daughters, your menservants and maidservants, and the Levites from your townsman you are to rejoice before the LORD your God in everything you put your hand to." (also, 1 Sam. 9:12-13, 22-24; 20:6, 29)

This proverb points out true priorities. It is better to have peace in your home life than wealth. Both, peace and wealth are attainable, but never forget which one is the most desirable.

Warning: Do not envy the wealthy that are overcome with lives filled with strife.

2 A wise servant will rule over a disgraceful son, and will share the inheritance as one of the brothers.

This proverb tells us plainly what is true in both the spiritual and temporal worlds. Ultimately, the position and the power go to those who are capable and qualified, and not always to the favored.

Remember, these proverbs are not laws.

Proverbs are tendencies that occur in life.

They are not absolute laws.

Proverbs are principles that can be used to guide your life in wisdom and righteousness.

Solomon's son, Rehoboam, lost 10 of the 12 tribes of Israel, to one of Solomon's construction foremen, named Jeroboam. (1 Kings 11:28)

Amos 9:7, "Are not you Israelites the same to me as the Cushites?" declares the LORD. "Did I not bring Israel up from Egypt, the Philistines from Caphtor and the Arameans from Kir?"

Matthew 8:11-13,

"I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Then Jesus said to the centurion, "Go! It will be done just as you believed it would." And his servant was healed at that very hour."

Like the verse before true priorities and values are pointed out: Wisdom is greater than son ship

Yet, it was not customary for a servant to rule over a son.

- Proverbs 19:10, "It is not fitting for a fool to live in luxury - how much worse for a slave to rule over princes!"
- Proverbs 30:22, "Under three things the earth trembles, under four it cannot bear up: a servant who becomes king, a fool who is full of food, . . ."

The concept that a slave would receive a portion of the family estate is outrageous in Israel.

Even in the face of customs and social standards a persons virtue and wisdom count for more than social, economic and family standing.

If nothing else, this proverb is meant to teach the son that his character and wisdom are more important than his family position.

3 The crucible for silver and the furnace for gold, but the LORD tests the heart.

The second half of the verse alone would give God the appearance as being only the examiner or the one to crush us.

The first half of the verse lets us know that this testing and crushing are constructive. We are purified like gold or silver.

Jeremiah 6:27-30,

"I have made you a tester of metals and my people the ore, that you may observe and test their ways. 28 They are all hardened rebels, going about to slander. They are bronze and iron; they all act corruptly. 29 The bellows blow fiercely to burn away the lead with fire, but the refining goes on in vain; the wicked are not purged out. 30 They are called rejected silver, because the LORD has rejected them."

Jehovah is to the heart what the smelting-pot is for silver.

"Tests" is the word that means "to grind, to try by grinding,

In Proverbs 27:21 we see this testing that comes from God, may come through men:

"The crucible for silver and the furnace for gold, but man is tested by the praise he receives."

The Lord will examine us and expose our weaknesses so that we (along with him) may make corrections as in Psalm 139:23-24:

" Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. "

Job 23:10, "But he knows the way that I take; when he has tested me, I will come forth as gold."

1 Corinthians 4:4, "My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me."

1 Peter 5:6, 7,

"In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. 7These have come so that your faith of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed."

4 A wicked man listens to evil lips; a liar pays attention to a malicious tongue.

Living Bible: "Wrongdoers listen to wicked talk; liars pay attention to destructive words."

The wicked person takes evil gossip, which are lies, and spreads the destruction.

Like many of the proverbs the first half of the verse sheds light into the second half and vice-versa.

So here the wicked man in the first half is the same man who is the liar in the second half.

The evil lips in the first half are the same source as the malicious tongue in the second half.

So then the first half speaks of words that are evil.

The second half describes those words as lies and destructive.

The words then are gossip that is not true, it is evil and it is a falsehood whose purpose is to destroy someone.

If you find yourself involve in something like this, either speaking or listening, realize this is the practice of the wicked and the liars and the result is the destruction of an innocent character.

You can be judged by who you listen to and by who listens to you.

Words are again identified as affecting the community.

Words (listened to or spoken) reveal your character and effect your community (build or destroy)

5 He who mocks the poor shows contempt for their Maker; whoever gloats over disaster will not go unpunished.

This is the attitude of a heartless person.

The care of the poor is a theme that runs throughout the Bible.

Care of the poor is seen as an expectation of the righteous person and as an indication of their righteous heart.

6 Children's children are a crown to the aged, and parents are the pride of their children.

Each group is an inspiration to the other group. Children to their grandparents, parents to the children

7 Arrogant lips are unsuited to a fool— how much worse lying lips to a ruler!

"Fool" is the word "nabal". He is one who knows what is right but is not self-disciplined enough to do it.

"Fool" is described throughout the Bible as crude, godless, and overbearing.

"ruler" is "nadib" and is also translated "nobleman".

"arrogant" is a word that means "lofty, excellent, or fine". It has the idea of excess. The LXX translates it "reliable".

Even the NIV corrects "arrogant" in its footnotes to "eloquent."

The Massoretic Text (Hebrew Text of the Jews) has the literal "lip of excess (or surplus)" instead of arrogant.

So, this verse could be saying that "lofty" words do not fit a fool, but it is even a worse fit for a nobleman to lie.

Point: Your words match your character.

Or, "It is not suitable to hear an abundance of words from a fool, but even worse to listen to a noble man lie.

Point: Fools shouldn't speak; Nobleman shouldn't lie.

Isaiah 32:5 describes the kingdom of God when it arrives and the fool of the world is de-throned. Here we find a good description of a fool:

" No longer will the fool be called noble nor the scoundrel be highly respected.

6 For the fool speaks folly, his mind is busy with evil: He practices ungodliness and spreads error concerning the LORD; the hungry he leaves empty and from the thirsty he withholds water.

7 The scoundrel's methods are wicked, he makes up evil schemes to destroy the poor with lies, even when the plea of the needy is just.

8 But the noble man makes noble plans, and by noble deeds he stands."

Isaiah compares the fool and the noble man.

The noble man has a noble heart (plans) and does noble things (deeds)

8 A bribe is a charm to the one who gives it; wherever he turns, he succeeds.

Living Bible: "A bribe seems to work like magic for those who give it; they succeed in all they do."

"charm" is "stone of favor" and so describes the apparent "magical" powers of a bribe, thus the NIV word "charm."

"wherever he turns" could be translated "whenever he uses it".

It would then read "whenever he uses it, he succeeds."

Point: Money talks!!

Bribery in Proverbs:

17:23, "A wicked man accepts a bribe in secret to pervert the course of justice."

6:35, Here a bribe will not work

21:14, "A gift given in secret soothes anger, and a bribe concealed in the cloak pacifies great wrath."

9 He who covers over an offense promotes love, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends.

"close friends" is a single Hebrew word.

First half promotes the advantage of silence. To refrain from speaking here is an indication of love. Second half reveals the problem with speaking. In this case sharing information can destroy a deep bond of friendship.

Point: If you are going to have deep relationships with people there are going to be times when you do not say everything. Sharing gossip about a friend or revealing an offense the friend committed must not occur.

10 A rebuke impresses a man of discernment more than a hundred lashes a fool.

A character trait of wisdom is a willingness to be corrected.

A character trait of a fool is their inability to perceive their error or their unwillingness to change.

"100 lashes" is meant to be an example of excessive efforts to communicate with a fool. Nothing works.

11 An evil man is bent only on rebellion; a merciless official will be sent against him.

Living Bible: "Evil people seek rebellion, but they will be severely punished."

The Hebrew for "evil" is "akmeri"

The Hebrew for "merciless" is "akzari" thus making a play on the sound of the two words.

Evil people will always rebel against the established authority and institutions of God such as:

- a) marriage,
- b) family,
- c) government,
- d) nationalism

Because these authorities are established by God, evil people will always be met with merciless judgment.

12 Better to meet a bear robbed of her cubs than a fool in his folly.

It is better to have your life in danger, than to cross pass with a fool who is acting out is foolish thoughts, words of deeds.

Danger is better than a fool in action.

13 If a man pays back evil for good, evil will never leave his house.

David himself experienced this in his home after he had mistreated the very faithful and honorable Uriah by stealing his wife and having him killed.

1 Peter 3:9-12,

"Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. 10 For, "Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech. 11 He must turn from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it. 12 For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."

14 Starting a quarrel is like breaching a dam; so drop the matter before a dispute breaks out.

Once a dam cracks it is going to develop into the disaster of the whole system. Likewise a quarrel. A small quarrel is going to spread further than the original disagreement.

A person cannot predict the damage, control the event or retrieve what was damaged.

Point: Stop a quarrel at the very beginning.

15 Acquitting the guilty and condemning the innocent— the LORD detests them both.

God hates injustice.

Throughout the prophets injustice within a national system of government is promised to be judged by God
Also, in personal lives and decisions God expects fairness and justice.

16 Of what use is money in the hand of a fool, since he has no desire to get wisdom?

Living Bible: "It is senseless to pay tuition to educate a fool who has no heart for wisdom."

Lack of money is not the fool's problem, because even if he had money he could still not buy wisdom.

Wisdom is not acquired by money.
There is no charge for wisdom.

Job 28:14

"But where can wisdom be found? Where does understanding dwell? 13 Man does not comprehend its worth; it cannot be found in the land of the living. 14 The deep says, 'It is not in me'; the sea says, 'It is not with me.' 15 It cannot be bought with the finest gold, nor can its price be weighed in silver. 16 It cannot be bought with the gold of Ophir, with precious onyx or sapphires. 17 Neither gold nor crystal can compare with it, nor can it be had for jewels of gold. 18 Coral and jasper are not worthy of mention; the price of wisdom is beyond rubies. 19 The topaz of Cush cannot compare with it; it cannot be bought with pure gold. 20 "Where then does wisdom come from? Where does understanding dwell? 21 It is hidden from the eyes of every living thing, concealed even from the birds of the air. 22 Destruction and Death say, 'Only a rumor of it has reached our ears.' 23 God understands the way to it and he alone knows where it dwells, 24 for he views the ends of the earth and sees everything under the heavens. 25 When he established the force of the wind and measured out the waters, 26 when he made a decree for the rain and a path for the thunderstorm, 27 then he looked at wisdom and

appraised it; he confirmed it and tested it. 28 And he said to man, 'The fear of the Lord—that is wisdom, and to shun evil is understanding.' "

17 A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.

This proverb mentions the two great relationships: a) friendship, b) family

18 A man lacking in judgment strikes hands in pledge and puts up security for his neighbor.

Living Bible: "It is poor judgment to co-sign a friend's note, to become responsible for a neighbor's debts"

19 He who loves a quarrel loves sin; he who builds a high gate invites destruction.

Living Bible: "Anyone who loves to quarrel loves sin; anyone who speaks boastfully[a] invites disaster."

[a] "Speaks boastfully" is "who builds up defenses". The Hebrew reads "who makes a high gate".

A person who loves to quarrel also loves sin.

The "high gate" is used to keep people out.

Quarreling with people is an indication of a sinful man on the road to destruction.

So, also, keeping people out and being unsocial will destroy a person.

"destruction" could be translated "broken bones."

"building a high gate" may refer to "keeping people out".

There is no reason it must be interpreted to mean arrogance

20 A man of perverse heart does not prosper; he whose tongue is deceitful falls into trouble.

21 To have a fool for a son brings grief; there is no joy for the father of a fool.

22 A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.

Living Bible: "A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a broken spirit saps a person's strength."

23 A wicked man accepts a bribe in secret to pervert the course of justice.

Here a bribe is evil because it has perverted justice.

24 A discerning man keeps wisdom in view, but a fool's eyes wander to the ends of the earth.

The wiseman knows where wisdom is and stays focused.

The fool does not understand wisdom and ends up looking in all the wrong places for it

This literally says that wisdom is "straight in front of" the discerning man.

This means a) he sets his face towards wisdom. b) he can not miss it.

25 A foolish son brings grief to his father and bitterness to the one who bore him.

26 It is not good to punish an innocent man, or to flog officials for their integrity.

Living Bible: "It is wrong to fine the godly for being good or to punish nobles for being honest!"

27 A man of knowledge uses words with restraint, and a man of understanding is even-tempered.

The wise use words with restraint.

"even tempered" is literally in the Hebrew "cool of spirit".

This person calmly considers and thinks about what to say

28 Even a fool is thought wise if he keeps silent, and discerning if he holds his tongue.

Living Bible: "Even fools are thought to be wise when they keep silent; when they keep their mouths shut, they seem intelligent."

This is the starting place for overcoming foolishness.

Once a fool can keep his mouth shut he is no longer a complete fool.