

Proverbs 6:1-19 and (2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1)

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Heavenly Father, open our eyes and ears this morning that our hearts may be transformed by your wisdom and that we may fear you for our good and your glory. We ask this in Jesus' Name. AMEN.

As a reminder, Proverbs is a compilation of wise sayings beginning with King Solomon, and it remains in the possession of God's People to pass on from generation to generation. Chapters 1-9 continues our introduction to Lady Wisdom with Four Poems that demonstrate we live in a moral universe and that the proper fear, reverent, loyal and humble obedience to the Lord who created the universe means "living along the grain of the universe" which God created (Bible Project).

Also with these introductory chapters, we have Ten Speeches from a father to a son, which reveal that God's Wisdom for proper living comes from parents, elders and authorities we should listen too. This is also God's invitation for us to learn that proper wisdom brings about virtue and generosity resulting in success and peace whereas folly cultivates selfishness and pride that lead to shame and destruction. We have seen these "father-to-son speeches" which I have previously called a "Paternal Pattern of Instruction", and this is present here with God as our Father instructing us, so we may avoid the negative consequences of living foolishly.

Today, we are being warned about three forms of Folly, their consequences, and God's view of them. As we will see, such foolishness can ensnare you, make you poor, and turn you into a deceitful false witness hated by God and destroyed.

So, we are instructed today to avoid [being]:

1. Verses 1-5 Imprisoned by an Imprudent Pledge (Crazy Cosigning)

- a. Verses 1-2 **If** you put up security, make a pledge and trapped by your words... Verses 3-5 ...**Then** do not rest until you have freed yourself through quick, humble, and persistent means.
- b. Being generous is one thing, but being foolish with finances to help someone else who is foolish with finances is Folly. If we have rushed into such folly, even with the good intentions of helping someone in a financial bind, and realize it, we need to quickly admit we were wrong, humble ourselves, and do everything we can to get out of the financial arrangement in which we have become ensnared.

- i. This is applicable in our day because of the many ways we indiscriminately and foolishly make financial pledges with people and companies unknown to us. An obvious example is all the fast cash loan places, but there are many socially acceptable (even if foolish) ways to enslave ourselves to people, possessions and money.
 - c. So, the warning is against foolishly investing or pledging our financial resources, and the virtue of wisdom being extolled is **Responsibility** (along with hasty humility) when we realize we have been financially foolish, so we can be delivered from the traps in which we have ensnared ourselves.
 - i. What impact may this have upon you and your financial burdens? Consider, however, that there is not really a cut and dry formula to apply here. What is required is Wisdom; wisdom from the Lord Who we honor and desire to obey, so we seek His Wisdom in prayer and in His Word, the Bible.
 - ii. A probing question to ask may be: “Are you a slave to a particular financial burden that restrains you from properly loving God and your fellow Christians with the resources with which you have been blessed?”
 - d. This leads us to our next topic; because, it is possible that you want to help someone out financially, even if it could compromise your own financial stability. However, you must first discern if such a person requesting financial backing or support from you is simply a victim of his or her own foolishness in the form of laziness. Such discernment is better facilitated the more you know the person. Is the family member, friend or mere acquaintance a victim of their own laziness? Are they...
2. **Verses 6-11 ...Impoverished by a Sluggish Slumber (Lazy Living)**
- a. We need to be responsible and faithful stewards with our finances, so we may use them wisely for God's glory and the genuine good of others. However, we are not helping anyone if we give them financial support when their core problem is folly in the form of sluggishness and slumbering that have resulted in missed opportunities for them to work and be productive. If laziness and apathetic indecision has contributed to poverty, money will never be the solution; because, poverty for such a person (not for all

people in poverty) is the mere symptom of the deeper disease of laziness which is folly.

- b. Verses 6-8 “Consider the Ant” (*pretty humbling*) Verses 9-11 “Will you lie there until poverty comes upon you?” The warning here for us is to avoid being lazy, inactive, and indecisive. The wise virtue taught is for us to look for and take advantage of **Opportunities** to engage in meaningful and productive work; as imperfect, undesirable and difficult as such opportunities may be. Taking advantage of God-given opportunities enables us to, not only be self-sustaining, but, in the end, to glorify God and serve others with our resources.
- c. We all know those who, rather than gaining any form of meaningful work, put more effort into living off of others and government systems. While we, as Christians, must certainly support and care for our Brethren in genuine need so they do not become dependent on government social services, we, as Christians, must also not be lazy and unproductive members of society at-large nor within the Church. Such laziness damages God’s People and makes them unable to serve the genuine needs of those unable to financially meet their basic needs; needs, not wants.
 - i. When was the last time you served God and others with your time and resources?
 - ii. While we may have legitimate excuses to bypass opportunities for productive work, we must also, especially as Christians, not overly identify with illnesses and dysfunction. This can unnecessarily incapacitate us and actually become self-defeating behavior based on self-deceiving thinking that must be destroyed with the Gospel confidence of who we are in Christ. May we have faith in who we are in Jesus and not fall victim to self or Satanic deceptions that would tell us the lie we are not valuable Members of Christ’s Body who have nothing to contribute.
- d. Since we are considering deception, let us turn from how we may deceive ourselves by our thinking to consider deliberate deception toward others that creates division and destroys **Unity**.

3. Verses 12-19 Worthless and Wicked People Headed for Disaster (Devilish Divisiveness)

- a. Verses 12-15 “Duplicitous Deceit is Dangerous” and Verses 16-19 “God hates false witness who create conflict.”
- b. Here, we are warned not to deceitfully and deliberately cause conflicts; because, they result in divisions and “the troublemaker and villain”, or “the worthless and wicked person”, will be overtaken by disaster. The wisdom, especially for those of us who have been Blood-bought by Christ, is that we must strive for the Unity we have in Jesus by the Spirit through humbly denying ourselves for the good of others.
 - i. The NIV uses the word “troublemaker” in *verse 12*, and the ESV uses the phrase “worthless person” to translate “man of Belial”, and we read about Belial, who is the opposite of Christ, in *2 Corinthians 6:15* this morning. Belial was a name used for Satan, and he is certainly known for... **READ verses 14 and 19.**
- c. Verses 16-19 Literary Devise in Wisdom Literature
 - i. The Lord hates and is disgusted by: pride, lies, murder, evil acts, deceit, and divisiveness.
 - ii. Commentators have indicated that this “+1” literary devise is intended to draw attention to the last, 7th, item which is key to understanding the preceding 6 items. **READ verse 19 (ref. verse 14).**
 - iii. So, what we have here is a “Devilish Description of Divisiveness” ending in deceptive false testimony.
 1. Being such a false witness; a false accuser; a worthless *satan*, has severe and destructive consequences in the Bible. **READ Deuteronomy 19:16-21 (Exodus 20:16 “The Ninth Commandment”)**

Today’s passage is clearly instructing us to avoid being foolish: 1). by offering collateral for another’s risky loan, 2). by being too lazy to work, and 3). by being deceitfully divisive like the Devil which is detestable to the Lord. While we have discovered the consequences of such folly, the question remains of “*how*” we avoid these things.

The truth is, for most of us at various times, instead of using money to God's glory, we become ensnared by our foolish use of it. Instead of taking opportunities

to expand God's dominion over creation, we must learn how to be industrious by observing an ant. Instead of being the unified People we are in Jesus by His Spirit, we, in our arrogant self-interests, cause hurtful divisions within the Church, and God hates this. It is an abomination to Him, and we risk swift and sudden destruction by our divisive spirits.

How do we avoid being foolish and facing these negative consequences? *How* do we develop the virtues of wisdom being extolled here? We **Rely** on God's **Resources** of Word and Spirit that He has given to His Church. By His **Resources**, we are enabled to **Remember** who we are in Christ. We may **Repent** of our folly, and we may **Revere** our Lord Jesus with a desire to obey Him. Only in Christ do we gain such wisdom and receive the power to be delivered from the negative consequences of our foolishness. By **remembering** who we truly are in Christ by grace through faith, we may thankfully **repent** of folly and turn to Jesus in prayer. His Spirit works in and through us to avoid folly, so we may grow in wisdom by **revering** Him as our Lord. We fear our Lord. We love, revere, and obey Him; because, we believe that His instruction is good for us; therefore, we desire to be nourished by His Word, the Bible, and we are led by His Spirit in fellowship with one another. Do we believe this!? **READ 2 Corinthians 6:16b**? If so, then...
READ 2 Corinthians 7:1 (6:16b-18)

Unbelieving non-Christians are among the covenant community of Christ engaging in deceitful divisiveness. They are unclean, and the true people of God must separate ourselves from them and their practices. In mercy, we must pray for them; discipline them; and excommunicate them, so they may repent and be saved, restored and assured of the promises we have in Christ.

Believers in Christ have God in our midst by the Holy Spirit; therefore, we are holy, set-apart, and pure. In Jesus, we are the adopted sons and daughters of the LORD Almighty who is our loving Father offering us these wise warnings today, so we may avoid folly for our own good. As Christians, we do not arrogantly affirm our affections about what we "feel" is right and wrong, good or bad, wise or foolish. Rather, we submit our affections, our feelings of what we think are wise and foolish, to our Lord, Master and Teacher Jesus so that, by His Word and Spirit, we may transcend foolish feelings and be transformed into His image and likeness. Because we have and believe in these promises as Christians, God's Word and Spirit enable us to purify ourselves from everything that contaminates us and to perfect our holiness through our fear of the LORD, Who is our wisdom for us.
AMEN.