

The Pathway to Eternal Wisdom

[Part 23]

Proverbs 21:1 [NIV] *“The king’s heart is in the hand of the LORD; he directs it like a watercourse wherever he pleases.”*

The mind of the ruler as powerful as it may seem to humans, is directed by the Creator God as firmly as a human irrigator controls the channels along which the water flows to irrigate the fields.

Example of how the Creator God used human leaders to fulfil His will.

Assyrian King Tiglath-Pileser – **Isaiah 10:5-7**

Cyrus Persia ruler – **Isaiah 44:28**

Artaxerxes – **Ezra 7:21-23**

Pharaoh Rameses II – **Exodus 7:1-5; Exodus 10:1-2**

This principle is still in force today, as the Creator God prepares for the Second Coming to earth of His Son Jesus Christ.

Proverbs 21:2 [King James] *“Every way of a man is right in his own eyes: but the LORD pondereth the hearts.”*

People can find an excuse for doing almost anything but the Creator God looks behind the excuses to the motives of the heart. We often have to make choices in areas where the right action is difficult to discern. We can help ourselves make the right decision by seeking to identify our motives first then asking, *“would God be pleased when we realise the real reasons for our actions?”* For example, God is **not** pleased when we do good deeds **only** when we expect to receive something in return! [**Proverbs 16:2; Luke 16:15**]

Proverbs 21:3 [NIV] *“To do what is right and just is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice.”*

Many people deceive themselves with a conceit that outward ritual devotions will excuse unrighteousness.

God **cannot** be bribed. If our personal and business dealings are not characterised by love and justice, no amount of generosity to religious groups will make up for the lack of love for our fellow human beings. [**Isaiah 1:11-17; Hosea 6:6; Micah 6:7-8**]

Proverb 21:4 [Amplified Bible] *“Haughtiness of eyes and a proud heart, even the tillage of the wicked, or the lamp of joy to them, whatever it may be is sin in the eyes of God.”*

Every part of a wicked person’s life is sinful in the eyes of our Creator God. The Hebrew word translated “wicked” is “*râshâ*” meaning morally wrong and ungodly.

This is describing a person whose arrogant lifestyle is that of lofty unconcern for other human beings and has **no** fear of the Creator God.

Psalms 14:1 [Amplified Bible] *“The empty-headed fool has said in his heart, there is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable deeds, there is none that does good or right.”*

1 John 2:15-17 [NIV] *“Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world, the cravings of sinful man, the lust of*

his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does, comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives for ever.”

Everything that this world can offer us is very short-lived and of little value compared to what the Creator God is offering those who seek to fulfil His will on earth.

Proverbs 21:5 [NIV] *“The plans of the diligent lead to profit as surely as haste leads to poverty.”*

Those who are really diligent employ foresight as well as hard labour. The Hebrew word translated “*hast*” is “*ûwts*” suggests a “*get-rich-quick*” theme that may imply poor quality of work or product, or rashness.

The faithful completion of mundane tasks is a great accomplishment.

Such work carried out patiently and according to plan does not come naturally to most people, for it is the result of strong character. Don’t look for quick and easy answers in life, seek Godly Wisdom at all times before we make any final decisions.

Proverbs 21:6 [NIV] *“A fortune made by a lying tongue is a fleeting vapour and a deadly snare.”*

To seek wealth by unlawful practices is to seek death. This Proverb is a companion to **v5** and **v7** and all three should be considered at the same time. [**Jeremiah 22:13; James 5:4**]

Proverbs 21:7 [NIV] *“The violence of the wicked will drag them away, for they refuse to do what is right.”*

Injustice will return upon the sinner, and will destroy them now and for ever. [**Psalms 34:21; Psalms 140:11; Hosea 13:9; Romans 7:11; 1 Timothy 6:9**]

Proverbs 21:8 [Living Bible] *“A man is known by his actions. An evil man lives an evil life, a good man lives a godly life.”*

Ecclesiastes 3:16-17 [NIV] *“And I saw something else under the sun: In the place of judgment, wickedness was there, in the place of justice, wickedness was there. I thought in my heart, ‘God will bring to judgment both the righteous and the wicked, for there will be a time for every activity, a time for every deed.’”*

The human life that is without the knowledge or influence of the Creator God will only be divisive and full of pain and injustice.

Luke 16:10 [NIV] *“Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much.”*

The way we conduct our lives now tells our Creator God how we will be acting for all eternity, if He gives us the gift of eternal life.

Proverbs 21:9 [NIV] *“Better to live on a corner of the roof than share a house with a quarrelsome wife.”*

This Proverb is repeated in **Proverbs 25:24**. Same subject referred to in **Proverbs 21:19; Proverbs 19:13-14; Proverbs 27:15-16**.

What is given to us is a choice between solitude and intolerable society, in a noisy household.

Proverbs 21:9 [Amplified Bible] *“It is better to dwell in the corner of the housetop, on a flat oriental roof, exposed to all kinds of weather, than in a house shared with a nagging quarrelsome and faultfinding woman.”*

Proverbs 21:10 [NIV] *“The wicked man craves evil; his neighbour gets no mercy from him.”*

An important truth about depravity, people can sin **not** merely from weakness but eagerly and ruthlessly.

The Hebrew word translated “craves” is “*âvâh*” meaning to covert or lust after.

Isaiah 26:9 [NIV] *“My soul yearns for you in the night; in the morning my spirit longs for you. When your judgments come upon the earth, the people of the world learn righteousness.”*

Here we have a happier contrast where the same Hebrew word is used.

Proverbs 21:11 [NIV] *“When a mocker is punished, the simple gain wisdom; when a wise man is instructed, he gets knowledge.”*

What is being taught in this Proverb is the level of our teachability. It is usually better to learn from the mistakes of others than from our own. It takes a humble attitude of mind to learn from others by listening to their advice.

We always need to take counsel from others who have “*been there and done this,*” rather than plunging ahead and learning the hard way of personal failure.

Matthew 18:3-4 [NIV] *“And he said: ‘I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.’”*

A little child is humble and trusting until the influence of society catches up on them. They have a keen willingness to learn. [**John 9:36; Acts 8:31; Acts 9:6; Matthew 13:36; Mark 4:10; Mark 7:17; Mark 9:11, 28; Mark 10:10; Mark 13:4; Luke 3:12; Luke 11:1; Luke 18:18; John 6:28**]

Proverbs 21:12 [NIV] *“The Righteous One takes note of the house of the wicked and brings the wicked to ruin.”*

The reference to righteous needs to be **only** to God for this Proverb to make sense, referring to the insecurity of the wicked. [**Psalms 73:18; Matthew 7:26-27; Ecclesiastes 8:10; Jeremiah 6:15; Jeremiah 8:4; Hosea 4:14; Amos 8:14**]

Proverbs 21:13 [NIV] *“If a man shuts his ears to the cry of the poor, he too will cry out and not be answered.”*

We should work to meet the needs of the poor and protect their rights. The ultimate comments by God on this subject are found in the teaching of our Saviour, Jesus Christ. [**Luke 16:19-31; Matthew 25:31-46**]

The Creator God has a special concern for the poor and needy. [**Psalms 82:3; Jeremiah 22:16; Psalms 41:1; Matthew 19:21; Galatians 2:10**]

Proverbs 21:14 [NIV] *“A gift given in secret soothes anger, and a bribe concealed in the cloak pacifies great wrath.”*

Here the neutral term “*gift,*” Hebrew “*mattân*” a neutral term meaning a gift or present, is coupled with the bad term “*bribe,*” Hebrew “*shâchad*” which is a reminder that the boundary between the two is very thin at the best of times. What determines the difference is the motivation behind what is given. [Please download and study our article ‘*When Does A Gift Become A Bribe?*’ listed under heading ‘*Bribes*’ for a full study on this subject.]

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

The Hebrew word translated “*justice*” is “*mishpât*” meaning verdict, pronounced sentence. For the righteous person the final judgement will be eternal, joy-filled life in the presence of the Creator God, in total contrast the final judgement of the evil person is the terror of facing the Lake of Fire. [**Psalms 16:11; Revelation 20:15; Revelation 21:8**]

Proverbs 21:16 [NIV] “*A man who strays from the path of understanding comes to rest in the company of the dead.*”

The spiritual impact of straying from God’s Way is deadly. This Proverb is charged with irony. The rebel who must roam his own way at will, is only hastening to lose their mobility and independence, even their life.

Ezekiel 14:5 [NIV] “*I will do this to recapture the hearts of the people of Israel, who have all deserted me for their idols.*”

Anything that takes us off the path that the Creator God wants us to walk is an idol.

Matthew 15:8 [NIV] “*These people honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.*”

We can express ourselves with “*spiritual*” sounding words, perform religious rituals, yet **not** surrender our lives to our Creator God to use as He wills.

2 Peter 2:15 [NIV] “*They have left the straight way and wandered off to follow the way of Balaam son of Beor, who loved the wages of wickedness.*”

The idol that causes us to go astray could be the love of money. [**1 Timothy 6:10**]

Matthew 8:22 [NIV] “*But Jesus told him, ‘Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead.’*”

Those who were still dead in their sins yet still alive physically. [**Ephesians 5:14; Colossians 2:13; 1 Timothy 5:6; Revelation 3:1**]

Proverbs 21:17 [NIV] “*He who loves pleasure will become poor; whoever loves wine and oil will never be rich.*”

“*Pleasure*” is the same Hebrew word as “*joy*” in **Proverbs 21:15**. The two sayings contrast two ways of life.

The just person seeks to act fairly, and finds joy as they do so, the pleasure-lover seeks joy itself and finds poverty.

Between these two Proverbs is a grim warning showing that there is more than pleasure at stake.

Isaiah 47:8-9 [Amplified Bible] “*Therefore now hear this, you who love pleasures and are given up to them, who dwell safely and sit securely, who say in your mind, I am mistress and none else besides me, I shall not sit as a widow, nor shall I know the loss of children. But these two things shall come to you in a moment, in one day, the loss of children and widowhood. They shall come upon you in their full measure in spite of the multitude of your claims to power given you by the assistance of evil spirits, and of the great abundance of your enchantments.*” [**Revelation 18:7-8**]

This great desire for physical pleasures can lead us into dangerous and painful situations both physical and spiritual. [**Luke 8:14; Luke 12:19; 1 Timothy 5:6; 2 Timothy 3:4; Titus 3:3; James 5:5**]

Proverbs 21:20-21 [NIV] “*In the house of the wise are stores of choice food and oil, but a foolish man devours all he has. He who pursues righteousness and love finds life, prosperity and honour.*”

These verses teach us a similar lesson to **verse 17**, both materially and spiritually. The plenty obtained by prudence, industry and frugality, is desirable. But the foolish misspend what they have upon their lusts.

True repentance and faith will lead a person to rely on the mercy of God in Jesus Christ, and to follow after righteousness and mercy in their own conduct. [**Matthew 6:33; Micah 6:8**]

This is how we can be “filled” with joy and contentment. [**Matthew 5:6**]

Proverbs 21:18 [NIV] *“The wicked become a ransom for the righteous, and the unfaithful for the upright.”*

The truth behind this Proverb is that God being our Creator and Sustainer often uses people who do not know or accept Him to bring about His will for those who do acknowledge Him and look to Him as their Saviour.

Isaiah 43:3-4 [NIV] *“For I am the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour; I give Egypt for your ransom, Cush and Seba in your stead. Since you are precious and honoured in my sight, and because I love you, I will give men in exchange for you, and people in exchange for your life.”*

This is an example of how God caused the fall of nations to clear the path of Cyrus to Babylon and the liberation of Israel, these nations were a kind of ransom for Israel.

Another example of God using a ruler and nation is Pharaoh and Egypt. [**Exodus 7:1-5; Exodus 10:1-2; Exodus 11:1-3; Exodus 14:1-31**]

Luke 13:1-5 [NIV] *“Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. Jesus answered, ‘Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish. Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them, do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.’”*

Jesus Christ warns us against reading all events in human history in the same terms.

Mark 10:45 [NIV] *“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”*

There can be a reverse of roles where the righteous are a ransom for the sinner. [**1 Peter 3:18**]

1 Timothy 4:10 [King James] *“For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.”*

When doing God’s work we can suffer reproach from those who still are in a state of darkness as far as salvation is concerned. [**Luke 6:22; Hebrews 10:33; Hebrews 11:26; Hebrews 13:12-13; 1 Peter 4:13**]

Proverbs 21:22 [NIV] *“A wise man attacks the city of the mighty and pulls down the stronghold in which they trust.”*

Wisdom may succeed where brute force fails. [**Proverbs 24:5-6**]

This Proverb has many applications, **not** least in our spiritual warfare, which is a realm where earthly wisdom avails nothing. [**2 Corinthians 10:3-5; Ephesians 6:10-18**]

Those who have Godly Wisdom often do great things, even against those who have confidence in their own intellect and strength.

Proverbs 21:23 [NIV] *“He who guards his mouth and his tongue keeps himself from calamity.”*

To control our tongue is a major part of maturing in Godly character.

James 1:26-27 [NIV] *“If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless. Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.”*

Any religious acts or rituals are worthless if we are unable to control our tongue. To look after orphans and widows involves action not just words. [**1 Peter 3:10; James 3:6; James 4:11; 1 Peter 2:1**]

Job 13:4-5 [NIV] *“You, however, smear me with lies; you are worthless physicians, all of you! If only you would be altogether silent! For you, that would be wisdom.”*

If we are unable to say anything good about a person it is wisdom to keep our thoughts to ourselves. [**Psalms 39:1-13** – the Psalmist comes to realise that life is far too short to allow our tongue to cause us to sin by its misuse.]

Proverbs 21:24 [Amplified Bible] *“The proud and haughty man, scoffer is his name, deals and acts with overbearing pride.”*

Isaiah 13:11 [NIV] *“I will punish the world for its evil, the wicked for their sins. I will put an end to the arrogance of the haughty and will humble the pride of the ruthless.”*

Such pride will in the end be humbled by God because of the violence and oppression it causes for other people. The prime example of such pride is Satan, [**Isaiah 14:12; Ezekiel 28:12-17**]. Originally named Lucifer, the light bringer, but pride caused him to become Satan an enemy of the Creator God. [**Revelation 20:1-5, 10**]

Proverbs 21:25-26 [NIV] *“The sluggard’s craving will be the death of him, because his hands refuse to work. All day long he craves for more, but the righteous give without sparing.”*

Desire, as a verb and noun, dominates these two verses. The sluggard lives in a world of wishing, which is the substitute for working. This attitude of mind will ruin them materially and imprison them spiritually, for they can neither motivate themselves to escape from their way of life.

In contrast notice the out-flowing interest and energy of the righteous person.

Proverbs 21:27 [NIV] *“The sacrifice of the wicked is detestable, how much more so when brought with evil intent!”*

The kind of worship [“*sacrifice*”] described in this Proverb is no better than a bribe.

How do people try to bribe God?

They go to church services, tithe, or volunteer, **not** because of their love or devotion to the Creator God, but because they hope God will bless them in return. Some churches have encouraged this with a “*health and wealth gospel message*.”

What the Creator God is really seeking from us all is a merciful attitude like He has [**Hosea 6:6**], a humble spirit and contrite heart [**Psalms 51:17; Isaiah 57:15; Psalms 34:18**], and to tremble at His Word [**Isaiah 66:2**]. A sacrifice of thanksgiving. [**Psalms 107:22; Psalms 116:17; Amos 4:5; Philippians 4:6; Colossians 2:7**]

Proverbs 21:28 [King James] *“A false witness shall perish: but the man that heareth speaketh constantly.”*

The false witness is to lie about a certain thing and is being influenced by the spirit of Satan. [**John 8:44**] God who cannot lie [**Titus 1:2**] hates lying, as it destroys all trust between people.

The person who listens to God by studying His Word, the Christian Bible, or to what others say before he or she speaks, is a person worth listening to.

Proverbs 21:29 [King James] *“A wicked man hardeneth his face: but as for the upright, he directeth his way.”*

The wicked person is stubborn in their thoughts and actions but the righteous will be thoughtful as to how they speak and respond, considering what is best for all concerned.

Proverbs 21:30 [NIV] *“There is no wisdom, no insight, no plan that can succeed against the LORD.”*

The Creator God is in total control of all that happens and no human wisdom or power will alter His purpose.

Isaiah 14:24 [King James] *“The LORD of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand:”*

As Creator and Sustainer of all things physical and spiritual, His plans will come to total fruition.

Proverbs 21:31 [NIV] *“The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but victory rests with the LORD.”*

Verse 30 warns us **not** to fight against the Creator God, this Proverb warns us not to fight without Him. It condemns reliance on physical earthly resources.

Isaiah 31:1, 3 [NIV] *“Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, who rely on horses, who trust in the multitude of their chariots and in the great strength of their horsemen, but do not look to the Holy One of Israel, or seek help from the LORD.” ... “But the Egyptians are men and not God; their horses are flesh and not spirit. When the LORD stretches out his hand, he who helps will stumble, he who is helped will fall; both will perish together.”*

If we look to other people for assistance in our fight both they and we will fail.

In our spiritual warfare we have to look to spiritual armour and weapons, for the battle we wage is at the speed of thought. [**Ephesians 6:10-12**]

Only God-given armour and weapons can enable us to remain standing against such an onslaught. [**Ephesians 6:13-18**]

Note that our only offensive weapons are the sword of the Holy Spirit [**Hebrews 4:12**] and prayer; this is how we resist and overcome Satan and his demons. [**Revelation 12:9-11**]