



Proverbs 17

Tape #7225
Proverbs 17
By Chuck Smith

Let's turn now in our Bibles to the sixteenth chapter, or seventeenth chapter of Proverbs, as we continue through the Bible. Again the proverb was designed to give instruction, and wisdom. Putting these little gems of thoughts in a proverb so that they are sort of planted in our minds. So much of our training as we grew up was with proverbs. Your parents no doubt gave you a lot of proverbs, and you stop to think of some of the instructions that you received as a child growing up. Much of it came in the form of a proverb. It sort of sticks, it has a way of just sticking in your mind and then coming back to you when you've blown it, and then the old proverb comes back, and, "yeah", you know.

So beginning with chapter seventeen, we are dealing with many, many proverbs. Solomon wrote over three thousand, and these are some of them. First of all...

Better is a dry morsel, and quietness therewith, than a house full of sacrifices with strife (17:1).

Speaking of the beauty, and the glory, of a household that is united. A household where there is peace, there is love. Better to be poor, have nothing as far as worldly goods are concerned, but have love, a loving household. Just a dry morsel, not even any soup to dip it in, with peace, quietness, than to have a house full of sacrifices.

Now in those days, if you wanted to have meat for dinner, you would generally take the lamb or the ox down to the priest, and you would make a peace offering unto the Lord. A sacrifice. They would cut it, and butcher it, and they would burn the fat on the altar. They would take a portion for themselves, but then the rest was roasted and given to you. Thus when you talk about a house full of sacrifices, you're talking about a great barbecue. Or, you're talking about roasted meat, you're talking about a real feast. It's better to have just a dry morsel with peace, than your house filled with meat, sacrifices, but contention, strife.

A wise servant shall have rule over a son that causes shame, and shall have a part of the inheritance among the bretheren (17:2).

So the encouragement for the servant to exercise wisdom. Many times the servants became as a part of the family. They, they became a very integral of the family. They were the tutors for the children, so often. A lot of times the natural children brought heartache, brought sorrow, and the wise servant within the house was really a greater blessing at times, than some of the unruly children. So encouragement to the wise servant, "shall have rule, he will have more than a son that brings shame to his parents, and he shall share in the inheritance of the family with the brothers.

The fining pot is for silver the furnace for gold: but the Lord trieth the hearts (17:3).

Now the fining pot, the furnace, were used to purify the gold or the silver. The fining pot, where they would heat the silver to get out the impurities. The same with the gold, the furnace, the heat was to remove the impurities out of the gold. So the fires were purposed to take out the impurities.

Now even so, God puts us through the fires many times, to burn out the impurities in our hearts. It is interesting that Peter tied together the trials that we sometimes go through, as a part of a refining process that God puts us through, in order that there might be a purifying of our lives. "The trying of your faith, he said, "is more precious than gold", that is, tried in the fire. So, it is God's desire to remove from our lives those things that are destructive.

Now let me assure you that God doesn't want to take away from you anything that is good, anything that is beneficial for you, God has no desire of taking that out of your life. The only things that God wants to remove from your life are those things that are hurtful, those things that are damaging, and those things, if persisted in, will destroy you. God wants to purge those things out of your life. It is important for you that these things are gone. So God puts us through the fire, the refining process, in order to purify our lives.

Sometimes, and when we're going through the fire we have a tendency to scream. You know, we

wonder if God loves us, and why are we going through this horrible trial? It's just a part of that refining process, whereby God is taking out that which would destroy, in order to leave that which will enhance and make your life better. God is interested in your best.

But that's the thing that people don't always understand. They, they look at God's law many times as though God is trying to restrict them from something that is good, and beneficial. But that's the lie of Satan. That's the lie he came to Eve with in the garden! "Hath God said you can eat of all of the trees that are in the garden?" "Yes, except that one over there. God said we shouldn't eat of that, if we eat of it we'll die." "Ahh, do you believe that?" You see, God knows that in that tree, there's a lot of pleasure. "Look how beautiful it is! Look at that fruit! That's the most delicious of all! God knows that if you eat of that, you'll be wise like He is, and that's why He said, 'Don't eat it'. He's just trying to, He's not fair with you, He's not being fair with you. He's trying to hold you back from something that is good." That's the lie of Satan.

So often he holds up this forbidden fruit. As Solomon said concerning this vampish woman, she said, "Stolen waters are good". But stolen fruit can get you in a bad jam. God tries the hearts, and the law of the Lord is perfect. God is seeking to keep us from those things that will ultimately create hurt, and pain, and sorrow, and death. God is not against you, God is for you. God's not trying to hold back from you anything that is beneficial! God wants you to have every good thing.

Now sometimes we get impatient with God. We think, "Well, I've waited, and nothing has come along. I better act on my own", oh! Look at the problems Abraham had with that! Look at the problems Jacob got into because he tried to help God out! Verse four...

A wicked doer giveth heed to false lips: and a liar gives ear to a naughty tongue (17:4).

It's amazing how you can lose your sense of discernment when you turn away from God. It's amazing what people believe once they have rejected the idea of God. I am amazed, I'm constantly amazed, when a person rejects the truth of God, they believe every or any kind of silly hideously. Intelligent people do the most stupid things, once they have rejected the truth of God. Paul tells us that, "Because they did not have the love of the truth in their hearts, God gives them over to a delusion, that they'll believe a lie, rather than the truth".

We can see that manifested over, and over, and over again. In just looking around the world in which you live, and a lot of this new age stuff and all, the people are buying into, hook, line, and sinker. You say, "How can you believe that man? You know that a thirty five thousand year old Indian prince or something is channeling thorough this woman?" So she sits there and goes into this trance, and comes out with this deep voice and all, and starts giving, "You are god", you know and all this kind of stuff. People just sit there and they pay four hundred bucks to listen to that stuff.

You know, or you stand on the beach in Malibu, and you look out, and your coach is there, and he's saying, "Now say, I am God", and you know, and you say, "I am God". "No, no! Say it like you mean it!", and they coach you into, "I am God!!", and people believing this stuff! How can people believe that kind of stuff? It's because they don't have the love of the truth, and as the result, "you give heed to false lips, and you give ear to a naughty tongue". You know the best safeguard any of you can have, is just to have a love for the truth. Because, your love for the truth will protect you from a delusion, from deception. There's nothing more beneficial in guarding against a counterfeit, than to really know the genuine, and the feel of the genuine.

Many times in training tellers, they put them in a room, and let them for a week or so, just handle bills. Just shuffle bills, count bills. After a week or so of just counting bills all day long, you get the sense of the feel of a genuine bill, and then they'll put a counterfeit in, and as you're going through, the moment you touch a counterfeit, you can sense it. Because, you have such a feel for the genuine. So it is with the truth, you get that feel for the truth. The moment something counterfeit, the light goes on, you say, "Hey wait a minute. That doesn't feel right". You know, the love for the truth, the best defense that you can have against the counterfeits that Satan has in the world today.

Whoso mocks the poor reproaches his Maker (17:5):

Now Solomon, with all of his wealth, was aware of how God looked out after the poor. It is interesting that the bible more or less, all the way through, tells us that God is concerned for the poor, and He wants us

to have a concern for the poor. We'll come to another proverb soon that says, "He that lendeth to the poor, lendeth to the Lord". In other words, by your giving to the poor, you're really giving to the Lord. "Inasmuch", Jesus said, "as you've done it unto the least of these, you did it unto me." So, He wants us to have a concern for the poor, not to just ignore and neglect. So here, if you mock the poor, you're reproaching your maker.

and he that is glad at calamities shall not be unpunished (17:5).

I have a hard one, time with that one. Cause I have to admit that there are times when I am glad at calamities, and, and just my perverse nature. I was coming home from the conference center awhile back, and I'm amazed at how aggressive women drivers have become. This gal almost ran me off the road in trying to get around me, and it was a dangerous thing, a stupid move on her part. I had to throw on my brakes, and pull to the side, because a car was coming at me. It was just a poor place to pass, but you know, she was in a hurry no doubt, and just, you know, just whoosh! I was so upset, that she almost caused me to have an accident, I was really upset with her, very upset. So she went racing down the mountain, and when we got down to San Bernardino, there on Waterman avenue, you know, it finally levels out. I saw that she had got caught in a speed trap. There was a radar thing, and they caught her. I felt so good! I waved at her as I went by, with a grin that you could see, you know! I really rejoiced in her calamity. Yet, that's part of the old perverse nature. God will help me.

Grandchildren are the crown of old men (17:6);

And I can say Amen! I dare not get started in this one, because we've got several proverbs to go. But, what a blessing, what a joy, what a delight grandchildren are!

and the glory of children are their fathers (17:6).

What a great heritage a godly father is. What a blessing it is to grow up in a Christian home.

Excellent speech doesn't become a fool: much less do lying lips a prince (17:7).

There are two things that are inconsistent. That's a profound speech from a fool, or, and it's just as inconsistent for a prince to be uttering lies. They are both out of place.

A gift is as a precious stone in the eyes of him that hath it: whithersoever it turneth, it prosperity (17:8).

An interesting thing about a precious stone that has been cut, say a diamond, it has the many facets, and however you turn it, you get the sparkles, you get the twinkle out of it. A gift is like a precious stone in the eyes of him that has it.

He that covers a transgression seeks love (17:9);

Oh God help us! The Bible says that, "love covers a multitude of sins". Now you talk about grandchildren being the crown of old men! You know, they're not really naughty, they're cute. They're just expressing themselves in an interesting way. They scream, and beat their heads on the floor, and it's just a interesting way of expressing their frustrations. "Love, it covers a multitude of sin, and he that covereth a transgression is seeking love."

but he that repeats a matter can separate friends (17:9).

Better to just let it go. Better not to say anything, just in love, overlook it. Rather than going around and saying, "Did you know what he did? I couldn't believe it! I stood there just absolutely shocked!", you know. What you're doing, you can, you can just break up friendship. "Do you know what he said about you? Oh man! I was, I was surprised. I didn't believe that you were capable of doing the things he said you did!", and how we can split people. Or, how we can bring people together. Just in love, just pass it over.

A reproof entereth more into a wise man than a hundred stripes into a fool (17:10).

Solomon really didn't give much hope for fools. You know, you can beat em' but it won't change em'. So, "a hundred stripes will do less for a fool than just a, a rebuke to a wise man". Again, all the way through, Solomon is, in the proverbs, showing how that a wise person will accept reproof, or rebuke. It is the fool that hates instruction. So the wisdom of listening to other people, the things that you can gain from constructive criticism.

An evil man seeks only rebellion: therefore a cruel messenger shall be sent against him (17:11).

We must be careful in our attitudes towards God, when we find ourselves at odds with the command of God. If I find myself against the command of God, it is important that I not become rebellious against God,

and His commands. Because if I start rebelling against the commands of God, then I will be in the position of king Saul, when he refused to obey the command of God, concerning the Amalekites, and he brought back spoil from war, when he was to have destroyed it all. The old prophet Samuel said, when he offered his excuse, “We brought them back to sacrifice them to the Lord”, “To obey is better than to sacrifice, and to hearken is better than the fat of rams. Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and because you have not allowed God to rule over you, God has taken away from you the rule over the people.” Rebellion. Be careful of rebellion, it’s evidence of an evil man. The cruel messenger I believe is Satan, it comes against you, takes over your life, and it’s a spirit that can take control of your life. This one, again as I say, Solomon didn’t have much regard for the fool, and he said...

Let a bear robbed of her cubs meet a man, rather than a fool in his folly (17:12).

You’ll, you’ll be safer meeting a bear that’s just been robbed of its cubs, than meeting up with a fool in his folly!

Whoso rewards evil for good (17:13),

Have you ever had that happen to you? I’ve had that happen to me. You do something good, and, and, and evil is returned, but, “whoso rewards evil for good”...

evil shall not depart from his house (17:13).

Actually the Bible tells us to reward evil with good. That we are to bless those that curse us, pray for those who spitefully use us. We’re to reward evil with good. The other way around, rewarding evil for good, that’s, you’re gonna get in a trap, that you can’t get out of it.

The beginning of strife is as one letting out water: therefore stay away from contention, don’t meddle with it (17:14).

When we were children we used to love to build dams, earth dams, and dam up the streams. Getting a good head of pressure, and water, and then make a little break in the earth dike, and let the water start pouring out. It’s interesting, as the water starts pouring out, it makes it’s own channel, and then just you know, wipes the whole thing out, and just watch it just rush out. That’s basically what he is saying here. The beginning of strife is like letting out a little channel of water, but before long, that whole rush is going to just overwhelm you. “Therefore stay away from contention, don’t meddle with it.”

There is a tendency in people to meddle around with things that they have no business meddling with. I think of that one king in the old testament, Amaziah, who had come back from a victory over the Edomites, feeling tough and strong. He sent a message to the king of Israel, the northern kingdom, says, “Come on out, let’s fight”. The king of the north sent back a message to him, and said, “Hey, you had a victory, enjoy it! You know, just stay at home and enjoy the victory. Why should you meddle to your own hurt?”

But this young king wouldn’t listen to the older king, and he insisted on fighting, and so they came, and they met together in battle. The young king was defeated, and his troops. The king of the northern kingdom came to Jerusalem, he took the treasures out of the temple on back to Israel, he broke down the walls of Jerusalem, and took captives, took hostages. Just because this young king didn’t have enough sense not to meddle with things that he really had no business meddling with. He meddled to his own hurt.

I think today of how many people are meddling around with things that they have no business meddling with. Relationships that they shouldn’t be meddling with. Drugs, alcohol, that they shouldn’t be meddling with. But they start to meddle and these things can only bring hurt. Wrong relationships can only bring pain. “Why should you meddle to your own hurt?” Now, the result of the king meddling to his own hurt was, he lost a part of his treasure. Even as you, always lose a part of your treasure. His defenses were destroyed.

Once you get involved in these things, drugs, alcohol, it destroys your defenses. You lose the power to resist. That’s what creates alcoholism, that’s what creates a drug addict. You have no power to resist. It, you know, no one, I don’t believe intended to be an alcoholic when they were coaxed into drinking their first beer. No one intended to be a drug addict when they were encouraged to smoke the first marijuana cigarette. But once you meddle, a portion of your defenses are destroyed, and you become a hostage, you become a slave. So, stay away from contention, it’s not to be meddled with.

He that justifies the wicked, and he that condemns the just, they are both an abomination to the Lord (17:15).

I've heard people try to justify the wicked, and I have heard people condemning the just. We are living in an age where this is a very common practice. The holding up as idols, before the public, the wicked people. The putting down, making fun of, the just people. These things are an abomination to the Lord.

Why is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he has no heart to it (17:16)?

Why, why pay your tuition to go to college, when you have really no interest in learning? That's a question he doesn't answer, but he just asks the question, but it's an interesting one.

A friend loveth at all times (17:17),

That's one of the characteristics of friendship. They love you in spite of what they know about you, they love at all times. Now there are times when you are more lovely and easier to love. We all go through mood cycles, we all have our good days, and bad days. We all have those days when we're out of sorts, and we're hard to be around. But a friend loves at all times. They just learned to shut up in those days, and let you rant.

and a brother is born for adversity. A man who is void of understanding strikes hands, and becomes surety in the presence of his friend (17:17-18).

Now Solomon warned over, and over about this. Don't be a co-signer on a loan, don't guarantee someone else's debts. He talks about the, you know, how it can break up friendships if you sign someone else's, for someone's responsibility, take care of someone else's debts, you know, you're gonna guarantee that loan. Just, you better figure on paying it. So, he, he, several places in the proverbs, he warns against striking on it. Now that's the way we say, "Shake on it", and we shake hands. Well they would strike hands, sort of a high five. When they've made a deal they'll sort of high five the hands, they strike the hands.

You can watch them, even today, the custom is still prevalent today among the Bedouins, and so forth, when they are dickering over the price of a sheep, and they're arguing and yelling at each other, over the price and all. Finally when they come to an agreement, they just slap their hands. They strike their hands, and it means, "That's a deal". "Alright!", you know. The same thing, "Yeah I'll pay his debt", wham! And you strike the hands. That's sort of the, that's sort of the seal to the deal. It's sort of like signing, and well, they can't write their names, most of them are illiterate, so you strike your hands, it's like signing a contract. If you strike your hands to be a surety, to be a guarantor of someone else's debt, your void of understanding.

He loveth transgression that loves strife (17:19):

Now I, I am convinced there are some people who love strife. I've met them! I was reading a report of an anthropologist, who was when, in one of the primitive tribes, in the area of New Guinea. He was, this anthropologist, and sociologist, he was, he was studying the sociological aspects of this primitive community, and they, they loved to do that. They love to study their social practices, and get their Doctorate by writing on the social practices in the community, and they are fascinating to study, and they are fascinating to observe.

But this one tribal group that he was studying, every morning, when they'd get up, they'd have a big fight. Every morning without fail! There would be a big fight in the village. The whole village would gather together, and, and they would, they would be in this fight, they would be yelling, they would hit each other, and there would be this gigantic fight every morning in the community. After this big fight, then they'd all go off to work, but every morning, without fail, they'd gather in the center of the community for this giant brawl.

In trying to understand sociologically what was going on, he came to the conclusion that their diet was providing insufficient nourishment, to give them strength. So the only way that they could get enough energy to work during the day, was to get into a big fight, and get the adrenaline all pumped into their system, and with this adrenaline pumped into their system, then they had the energy to go out and work. Ha, ha! That was his conclusion why, every morning the tribe would gather together for this big confrontation with each other. I thought it was an interesting observation, it perhaps was true, who knows, but that's the conclusion he came to. "He that loves transgression, loves strife." There are people who do.

and he that exalts his gate seeks destruction (19:19).

So sort of a parallel proverb.

He that hath a froward heart findeth no good (19:20): [Or a perverse heart. The man with a perverse heart will not, cannot find good.] *and he that has a perverse tongue will fall into mischief (19:20).*

So watch out for that perverse heart, or perverse tongue. It's not gonna do you any good at all. Gets you into trouble.

He that begetteth a fool doeth it to his own sorrow: and the father of a fool has no joy (19:21).

Well, thank God I don't know about that! But, I can imagine it, it would be a problem. If you had a child that was just foolish, completely foolish, bring real sorrow. In contrast to that.

A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones (19:22).

It's an amazing thing, our human body, and how God has created us. Created little laboratories in our body, that are creating exotic chemicals, that they inject into your body. When you are happy, when you have a merry heart, you've got a little chemistry lab that starts producing good chemicals, make you healthy. "A merry heart, it's as good as a medicine."

There was a book written not too long ago about, "Laughing Your Way To Health", and the whole premise of this doctor was the importance of, of being happy. How that people with sicknesses, his therapy was to get them laughing, and laughing your way into health. Really sort of saying that the chemicals that your body produces when you're laughing, when you're happy, when you have a merry heart, are extremely beneficial for you. But yet, when you are sorrowful, when you are sad, then the chemical labs start producing chemicals in your body that can create all kinds of problems for you. Ulcers, and other related kind of problems. There is even an endeavor to relate cancer to emotions. Some kind of a break down of the immunal system as a result of sorrow, or great emotional trauma, and grief. How they, and Solomon said, "just dries up the bones".

Now it's interesting, Solomon was a biologist, and he wrote books on that subject. It is interesting that there are books being written on the same subject today, that sort of confirm what Solomon told us so long ago.

A wicked man takes a gift out of the bosom to pervert the ways of judgment (19:23).

We are told to beware of those who come bearing gifts. It is the way by which people often times seek to pervert good judgment. You know, they give you a gift, and then you feel obligated, then they come along with the real hook. You've taken the gift, and now you're sort of obligated. So it's a, it's a perverse way by which the wicked get the things that they want. "He brings a gift out of his bosom, in order to pervert the ways of judgment."

Wisdom is before him that hath understanding; [That is, if you have understanding, wisdom is right there, it's in front of you.] but the eyes of a fool are in the ends of the earth (19:24).

In other words, you know it's always in some complex, way out, kind of a far off way, to get the answers. But real wisdom is right, the answer is right there in front of you, whereas the fool searches to the ends of the earth.

A foolish son is a grief to his father, and he's a bitterness to her who bore him. Also to punish the just is not good, nor to strike princes for equity. And he that hath knowledge spares his words: [A man of few words.] and a man of understanding is of excellent spirit (19:25-27).

So, it brings us to this last one...

Even a fool, when he holds his peace is counted wise: and he that shuts his lips is esteemed a man of understanding (19:28).

That goes along with that other proverb, "Better to keep quiet and let people think you're a fool, than to open your mouth and remove all their doubts". That's basically what Solomon was saying here. "Even a fool, when he holds his peace is counted wise: and he who shuts his lips is esteemed a man of understanding." Just, just say, "Hmm, yes. Hmm.", you know. "It's amazing! Wow he really understands a lot!" "Hmm." "Man!" A man of understanding.

Well, looks like we're just sort of plodding through doesn't it? So we'll continue to plod next Sunday night, through this eighteenth chapter of the Proverbs. Gonna have to rev things up here before too long, or we'll never get out of this Bible.

I pray that God will give you a very special week. A time of spiritual growth and development. A time of coming into a clearer understanding of God's love, and God's grace. A time of rejoicing in the discovery of the goodness of God. That your heart might be filled with happiness and joy, and the understanding of

God's purpose and plan for your life. Truly may you have a merry heart this week! As God's Spirit draws you close to Jesus Christ.