

Proverbs 25:1-28

True revival is always accompanied by an interest *in*, a return *to* & a renewed zeal *toward* the word of God. Such was the case in the days of Hezekiah. He lived about 250yrs after Solomon & just prior to his reign the nation was at a real low (spiritually speaking). The epitaph over the life of Ahaz (Hezekiah's dad) is, "... he did not do what was right in the sight of the Lord his God," but when Hezekiah took the throne it was accompanied by a spiritual awakening.

We read that he *did what was right* in the sight of the Lord. He removed the high places of idolatry, broke the sacred pillars, cut down the wooden image & broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made because the children of Israel had begun to perceive it as a holy relic & were burning incense to it. Hezekiah said, "It's Nehushtan" (just a thing of brass), & he trusted in the Lord.

It was a great awakening in Israel as his heart turned to & trusted *in* the Lord. As the revival was taking place, coming along with it was a great interest in the word of God once again. & Anytime a people's heart begin to hunger & thirst more & more for the word of God, wherever there's a renewed concern for the word of God, you've got a revival on your hands. So Hezekiah's scribes began to search the scriptures & search *for* the scriptures (parchments, scrolls & such) & they found these proverbs (beginning here in Ch 25) & copied them so as to preserve them. So these proverbs (about 100 of them) were composed by Solomon but compiled/copied by the scribes of Hezekiah

Vs 1-2

In the book of Deuteronomy we read, "*The secret things belong to the Lord our God,*" **Deut 29:29** For as much as God has chosen to reveal to us I have no doubt that there is infinitely more that He has chosen not to. How much does man really know about the universe? What causes the heart to beat & why does it stop? We know *what* happens concerning the reproductive cycle, but *how* does it happen? Meaning how does life spring into existence upon the moment of conception? There's just so much complexity & variety in the world, marine life, animal life, insects, bacteria, birds of the air... all the different plants/trees & how each of them flourish/function... But all of those things are physical, what about the spiritual, how much do we know Vs how much we don't know?

God has said, "*For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.*"¹

¹ The New King James Version. (1982). (Is 55:9). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.
² The New King James Version. (1982). (Ps 144:3). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

So for all that we *do* know there's vast amounts more that we don't know. We simply can't comprehend it...

All that to say this; when we have a decision to make, we do well to search the matter out as thoroughly as we can. It's to the glory of kings *to search a matter out*, to investigate all that they can before drawing a conclusion.

& As we spoke last week, when it comes to the things we *can* know, we do well (as it pertains to the scriptures) to search it out. There are many times that we will call on a solid/mature brother or sister who we can trust to point us to God's word as it pertains to a certain matter. But even better (when possible) is to have a working knowledge of the word of God for ourselves, to search the matter out & see the scripture says & how the word instructs us on the matter at hand... Those things that God *has* revealed to us, we should study.

Vs 3-5

Vs 3, the heart of kings is unsearchable. A ruler is not responsible to divulge everything they know. As a matter of fact it would many times be unwise. For instance you don't want your President discussing his battle plans toward another nation w/the news media. It's best that we find out after the fact for the sake & safety of our own citizens.

They're responsible to investigate the issue & know what's going on to the best of their ability but we're to realize that they're making decisions based on things that they know that we don't. & That's true in every arena of leadership. C.E.O's are going to know things about their company that employees don't. Pastors are going to have information that the general church goer does not. Kings/Presidents are going to have classified information at their disposal that the average citizen doesn't. That's one reason we want to do our best to ensure that there are people in places of power that we believe we can trust. Because when they're making decisions that we don't understand, we trust that they have information that we don't & they've done the appropriate investigation before deciding what they did... Solomon says that we're just not always going to know everything going on in the heart of the king, the person in power.

In Vs 5-6 he makes an *observation* that silver becomes more valuable as the impurities are removed from it. In Vs 6 he makes an *application* saying in essence, "Even so, the rule of a king & his impact/influence upon the nation becomes more valuable (rooted in righteousness) when wicked men are removed from his advisory board."

Be aware of the people you surround yourself with. You want the right kind of people speaking into your life. People w/out personal agenda or trying to get their ideas done through you; you want people who are concerned for the glory of God. People who will want to see His ways done & His word honored.

Vs 6-7

Perhaps you remember that God exhorted Jeremiah (Ch 45) & said, “Do you seek great things for yourself? Do not seek them...” Better to identify w/the lowly & be called up than to try & put yourself in a high position & be knocked down.

Now if this passage sounds somewhat familiar it’s probably because Jesus made an application of this very principle in Luke’s gospel when He was observing how everyone who’d been invited to a feast were scrambling to get the best seats. & He said, when you are invited to a feast, don’t sit down in the best place, lest one more honorable than you be invited; and he who invited you and him come and say to you, ‘Give place to this man,’ and then you begin with shame to take the lowest place. But when you are invited, go and sit down in the lowest place, so that when he who invited you comes he may say to you, ‘Friend, go up higher.’ Then you will have glory in the presence of those who sit at the table with you.

Then He promoted this principle; He said, *“For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”*² The idea is that of not being overly ambitious to get ahead, don’t push yourself into a position... Do what God has called you to do, lead a life of humility & trust that God will promote you & see that the appropriate people recognize you in due time.

Don’t promote yourself in the presence of the one whom you think can get you where you want to be. Wait until the Lord causes their eyes to come upon you, then you’ll receive honor in front of everyone. For God *resists* the proud, but gives *grace* to the humble. I don’t know about you, but as for me the *last thing* I need is for God to resist me, I need His grace abounding toward me.

Vs 8-10

Don’t go hastily to court... Be careful about making snap decisions, things aren’t always as cut & dry as they appear to you (or to me). There are times we will put too much weight into our suspicions & not really know the facts of the matter & that will always come back to ensnare us & we really don’t want to be put to shame in a public way.

² The New King James Version. (1982). (Lk 14:11). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Back in the previous Vs Solomon was talking about being careful not to promote ourselves in the eyes of people who have the power/capacity to put us in certain positions. This might be an example of arrogantly pleading our case only to have it snap back on us having been too quick to go to court thinking we had the line on something when in reality our neighbor (the other guy) wasn't in the place we thought he was in at all...

This is something else Jesus picked up on when He said, "Hey, when your brother has sinned against you, go to him & discuss the matter (just you & him) alone. Try to work it out privately *before* you try to expose something publicly." It's just wisdom on a # of levels. It prevents character assassination, it protects a person's reputation, it's a show of kindness & compassion... Plus it protects you should you be wrong about the issue, you don't come across as a judgmental/arrogant individual. The whole thing is put to rest privately & never even comes to light publicly.

Unfortunately, most people go to everyone *except* the person they have the problem with 1st. But accusing people publicly can be risky business, because you never know what that person may know about you that he unveils to your own shame.

Of course it's easier to talk *about* others than it is to talk *to* others, but the word of God says, "Don't do it, go to the person 1st."

Vs 11

A word "fitly" spoken is the right word at the right time. It's a beautiful thing. Tension can be rising, a fight may be on the brink of breaking out, but then someone comes along & says the right thing & diffuses the whole situation.

Most of us have the gift of the right time & the *wrong words* & we stir the pot making matters even worse ☺! There are times when it's best to say *nothing* rather than something (especially when we have a knack for putting our foot in our mouth). But we'd do well to pray that the Lord would give us the sensitivity to His Spirit, having a word in due season. The right word at the right time bringing about a beautiful result...

Vs 12-13

The key word we're looking for here in Vs 13 is the word, "faithful". It's refreshing to have a faithful person in your life. We all like to have faithful people around us. A man wants a faithful wife, a woman wants a faithful husband, parents want faithful children. An employer wants faithful employees, a pastor wants a faithful staff, people want a faithful pastor & a pastor wants a faithful congregation.

Everywhere & on every level people appreciate faithfulness, loyalty; it's an invaluable quality. Like a cold drink on a hot summer day, it's refreshing to have someone with us who will be faithful to us.

Vs 14

The opposite of faithful is one who is false... A farmer looks *for* & counts *on* the rain. He sees clouds, feels the wind, it seems rain is on the way, but then it just blows over... Pretty frustrating, pretty irritating, disillusioning & disappointing. When someone says they'll do something, or give something (their time, their finances, a commitment of some type) & then they don't follow through... frustrating, irritating, disillusioning & disappointing. Jesus said, "Let your 'yes' be 'yes'". We're to be people of our word, better not to commit than to commit & not follow through.

Vs15

That's an interesting phrase isn't it? "A gentle tongue breaks a bone". The idea here is that if you're seeking to influence someone (Solomon speaks of a person in power), it's going to take time/patience & gentle words.

We don't typically win friends & influence people by being harsh. When he says that "a gentle tongue breaks a bone" the idea a softly spoken word can overcome great difficulty. So we shouldn't seek to be pushy, we should be patient & speak gently to people. Influence is much more readily received in that manner.

Vs 16-17

Don't overdo, too much of a good thing can sour the situation. Too much candy (honey) will make you sick, too much time at your friend's house will make him sick of you 😊. Familiarity breeds contempt. We're to be careful not to wear out our welcome.

Vs 18-19

Vs 13 gives us the faithful messenger, Vs 19 gives us the unfaithful man. A bad tooth & a foot out of joint is a painful problem to have & they complicate matters. That's what confidence in an unfaithful man will get you; painful complications.

In Vs 18 we see what smear campaigns or false testimony is like... It's like a club, a sword or an arrow, it can crush a person, divide them against you or pierce them through. Lying can wound a person's character & destroy their life every bit as effectively as a weapon.

Vs 20

There is an appropriate & an inappropriate way to approach or encourage someone when they're down. Paul told the Romans, *"Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep."*³

You find someone who is down or discouraged, maybe depressed, they have a heavy heart... it's probably not the time to try & sing them a happy song 😊. It's like taking someone's coat in cold weather, or pouring vinegar on baking soda, it'll probably invoke a violent reaction. It'll accomplish the opposite of what you're seeking to do. It does more harm than good to be insensitive & unsympathetic.

Vs 21-22

There's some debate as to exactly what this means, but we can rest assured that what it doesn't mean is something negative 😊. The point here is that if I will help the one who has hurt me, if I do good to my enemy, that's how hearts are changed.

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus spoke of loving your enemy, doing good to those who speak evil of you & spitefully use you. It's said that if in that day a person's fire went out in their home than perhaps they would borrow live coals from a neighbor so as to rekindle theirs so they could cook their food or whatever. Of course in the middle east people carry things in vessels on their head (they still do that to this day).

So again, it's not revenge that should characterize the people of God, but rather kindness & compassion, even toward our enemies.

Vs 23

Listen, not all anger is sin. Paul told the Eph to be angry & not sin... There is a righteous anger against sin & the point here is that if a gossip would be met by a stern look rather than an eager ear he/she would go away.

Vs24-25

Things like cars, jet planes, internet & email didn't exist back at that time. It took a minute to get the news you were waiting on & again he says that good news from a far country is refreshing. It does the soul good.

Vs 26

How many of you realize that our lives, our lifestyles doesn't only affect us but it affects everyone around us? Now we know that we won't be perfect until we see Jesus face to face, we're going to sin, we're going to stumble.

³ The New King James Version. (1982). [Ro 12:15]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

But the idea here is that when the Christian enters into compromise, it “pollutes” your spring (your well). It’s hard to give someone a drink of pure water when the spring you draw from is murky.

Remember Jesus rebuked the Pharisees because their “vessels” looked so clean on the outside but they were polluted on the inside. It disqualified them from being able to truly minister effectively to anyone.

So purity in our lives isn’t something we do only for our own sake (though that’s a huge part of it), but it also is for the sake of anyone else w/whom we may come into contact or have the opportunity to minister to. A righteous person who finds himself in sin will disappoint & disillusion others who may come to him or seek to “drink” from him.

Vs 27

Both bring problems

Vs 28

Back in that day, walls around a city was it’s primary source of protection & defense against enemy attacks. When you/I lack self-control we are vulnerable to enemy attack, we’re vulnerable to trouble... we invite danger.

As a believer “self control” is part of the fruit of the Spirit in our lives (Gal. 5:22). The Holy Spirit is looking to cultivate this attribute in our lives therefore we need to make it a point to yield to Him rather than resist Him.

Having said that, there’s no “magic formula” that I’m aware of that will relieve us from personal responsibility in our spiritual walk. The Holy Spirit is there to fill us, willing to fill us, He will give us the power & capability therefore in Him we have a responsibility to exercise self-control. Be it over anger, or something like financial irresponsibility, other sins that we may find compulsive... in Christ we’re w/out excuse. So let’s pray & ask the Lord to help us walk in the Spirit, exercise self-control that we falter, but rather stand firm in the Lord & in the power of His might.