

Proverbs 13 – It is All About Relationships

Every day, we feel the tug of culture pulling us away from the things of God. We are living in a culture that says: the external matters more than the internal, what is popular matters more than what is right, my way matters more than God's way, the temporal matters more than the eternal, and my definition of truth matters more than any other definition of truth.

How, then, can we possibly make wise decisions, maintain a right perspective, and guard our lives from being subverted or twisted by wickedness? What can keep us from a life of compromise?

According to Proverbs 13:6, the answer is to walk in integrity. Sin will constantly try to pull us away and tear us down. But by integrity, we can walk securely in the truth and peace of God. Integrity is a big deal! Integrity means our public lives line up with our private lives. It means what we say lines up with what we do. It is a lifestyle that honors God. And integrity begins on the inside.

What dangers are people of integrity guarded from?

I. WARNINGS IN THE WORD

The idea is to keep the main theme in mind: In every chapter, every proverb, we need to ask, "What does this tell me about godly wisdom?"

A. Do Not Ignore Instructions

¹A wise son heeds his father's instruction, but a mocker does not respond to rebukes.

The reason why so many will not regard instruction, and listen to rebuke with meekness, is, that they think challenges their good sense. But the truth is none of us are infallible. All of us need reproof. All of us error and sin.

It is an unkind father who never checks the behavior of his children. Eli's sons disregarded the discipline of their father. Their father was punished for his leniency, and they were destroyed for their disregard of his advice. If a wise person heeds the instructions of their father, it is an indication that how they will accept the discipline of their Heavenly Father.

²From the fruit of their lips people enjoy good things, but the unfaithful have an appetite for violence.

Trees are often planted by one man and tended by another, and eaten and enjoyed by a third. The righteous is a tree of life yields its most precious fruits to themselves. One

enjoys the comfort, and credit, and gracious acceptance of their own holy life. These fruits are produced, not once a year, but every day. But the tongue of unrighteous is like a poisonous tree, that bears fruit often hurtful to others and to themselves.

B. Guard Your Mouth

³ Those who guard their lips preserve their lives, but those who speak rashly will come to ruin.

Recently, a young woman was talking to her friend about a woman speaking to a friend about the current obsession with dieting. The friend responded, "These days, I'm more concerned with what comes out of my mouth than what goes into it." There's a world of wisdom in those words. We must not only avoid speaking evil, but beware of speaking good when it is inappropriate. An untamed tongue often destroys its owner.

Nabal had almost ruined his whole family by his refusal to share food with David and his men. 2 Samuel 25. The fallout was prevented by his wife, Abigail. Why should a wise man insist on controlling his tongue? Because the tongue is a most unruly member. If you desire ruin and misery, give your tongue free rein. Give a loose rein to your tongue. Who desires peace and happiness? Don't say anything that you will repent of.

⁴ A sluggard's appetite is never filled, but the desires of the diligent are fully satisfied.

Laziness tends to lead to misery. When we are lazy, the desires of our mind and heart, grow with no way to satisfy them. People who enjoy happiness – manage their appetites within reason and are willing to work to achieve them.

⁵ The righteous hate what is false, but the wicked make themselves a stench and bring shame on themselves.

We cannot say that a righteous man never lies. David lied more than once, and yet we could say that he hated lying. Though he lied to Abimelech the priest, and to the king of the Philistines, he hated sin.

A righteous man hates lying in all its forms, because it is contrary to the nature of God, and an abomination to him. God hates all liars. Whatever respectable qualities we may possess, they are overshadowed by the lack of a principle of truth and honesty. A liar is detestable to God and man and will soon come to disgrace.

⁶ Righteousness guards the person of integrity, but wickedness overthrows the sinner.

Remember when Abraham told Pharaoh that Sarah was not his wife. God protected Sarah and Abraham in this case. We should ignore the path of duty, or allow ourselves to sin, even when we believe it brings us safety. In the case of Abraham, he ignored the scripture - what God hath joined together, let no man put asunder; what God hath put asunder, let no man attempt to join.

C. The Pursuit of Riches

⁷ One person pretends to be rich, yet has nothing; another pretends to be poor, yet has great wealth. ⁸ A person's riches may ransom their life, but the poor cannot respond to threatening rebukes.

Poor men pretend to have riches and rich men hide them for the purpose of keeping them safe. But we should remember that there are issues with hiding riches and poverty. Some who have nothing live in a way that others may believe them to be very rich. Such persons naturally accumulate debts which they cannot pay. The rich also walk contrary to God's providence. They have earthly and spiritual riches, sufficient to meet their need but they hide them so they can keep God's riches for themselves.

Divine providence makes us either rich or poor. Let us remember Jesus became poor for our sakes, and had no where to lay his head, while providing us true riches. If we are rich, let us be rich in good works, and remember that we are stewards, and must give an account.

⁹ The light of the righteous shines brightly, but the lamp of the wicked is snuffed out.

The righteous have the light of comfort in their souls, the light of God's face shining upon them, and sometimes the light of prosperity. Their light fills them with joy. Clouds may sometimes block their light, but it cannot be put out. The Lord shall be their everlasting light. The wicked have something that may be called light, but it soon expires.

¹⁰ Where there is strife, there is pride, but wisdom is found in those who take advice.

Strife come out of anger and envy. But it is more than that, it is pride. Pride and ambition made the disciples to dispute among themselves which of them should be the greatest. Pride hides the mind to one's own faults and the virtues of others. On the contrary, pride represents one's own virtues and the faults of others in a very false and aggravated light. It produces contempt of others, and provoking speeches and behavior. We can never live in peace unless we subdue our own pride.

The proud despise the advice of others, and are enemies to their own peace. Abraham let Lot chose his choice of pasture, though Abraham could have claimed the right of choosing to himself! But Lot was soon obliged to flee the fields of his choice.

D. Avoid Dishonesty

¹¹ Dishonest money dwindle^s away, but whoever gathers money little by little makes it grow.

What is dishonest money: money gotten by stealing and cheating, or cards and dice, or by the exercise of professions against the interests and morals of society. Any money where the blessing of God does not reside will be consumed like snow before the sun. But what we gain through our labor increases. It is not enough to not steal and to work, but we must work that which is good – everything we do we must do unto the Lord.

¹² Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life.

Nothing about us is more human than our ability to imagine the future and to be distressed or blessed by its outcome. One of the great gifts of the gospel is its hope which never lets us down (Rom. 5:5). The wise teachers knew the satisfaction of hope as well as the need for it.

They understand that "hope" is the strong line that pulls us out of the pit of boredom or despair. We can cope with the anguish of today because we know that better things will come our way in due season. When that hope is not rewarded on some reasonable schedule, we become sick of heart.

E. Do Not Disrespect The Word of God

¹³ Whoever scorns instruction will pay for it, but whoever respects a command is rewarded.

It was evident that Esau despised his birth right, when he sold it for a morsel of meat. When we disregard the Word of God we express our own disrespect for it.

A sound and strong tree branches can be broken by a strong wind, but a rotten tree easily breaks at just a small gust of wind. A strong temptation may prevail against a sound and lively Christian; but someone who is not sound in the Word will fall at every temptation.

F. The Fountain of Life

¹⁴ The teaching of the wise is a fountain of life, turning a person from the snares of death.

Water is valuable in the desert. So are the instructions of a wise man valued in this world. Instructions that line up with the word of God are worth their weight in gold.

In this world, there are innumerable pits spread for us by the enemy, who goal is to trap us for our destruction. It is by the word of God that we must keep ourselves from the clutches of Satan; and the word of God is able to highlight these pitfalls and guard against them.

By the advice of the prudent wife of Nabal, David was preserved from bloodshed; and by the instructions of Nathan, he was delivered from a dangerous situation he was already entangled. We should value the friendship and counsels of a wise man, as a means of consistency in our spiritual life and comfort.

¹⁵ Good judgment wins favor, but the way of the unfaithful leads to their destruction.

Those with good judgment find favor in the sight of God and men. It is the grace of God that gives a good understanding to men, and grace is multiplied through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord.

God has the hearts of all men in his hand. He gives favor in the sight of enemies, so that they are enriched at the enemy's expense. God favored Joseph and Daniel in their captivity when they were hated by the rulers of the nation. Let us keep ourselves in the love of God, and the respect of men follow.

¹⁶ All who are prudent act with knowledge, but fools expose their folly.

The wise man does not hide his talents, but makes use of his knowledge to direct his choice and pursuits, and every part of his behavior in life. Knowledge buried in the head is like money, locked up which is of no use. But knowledge that is joined with discretion, enhances every discourse and every action.

Those, on the contrary, who live at random, are constantly rushing into situations, cannot distinguish between what is bad and what is good. Fools DO NOT have sense enough to keep their thoughts to themselves; but they presume that they are wise, and talk of things they know little about and they meddle in things that are above their knowledge. It is through pride and ignorance that they think themselves as wise.

¹⁷ A wicked messenger falls into trouble, but a trustworthy envoy brings healing.

Persons under authority, often think that they do no wrong when they carry out the commands of their employer. If the commands are unlawful – then the consequences fall to those who gave and carried out the commands.

The servants of Nebuchadnezzar, that cast the three Hebrew children into the fire died themselves as a result. Such was Hazael, who indeed obtained his master's throne by his treachery (murder); but his new dignity led him into crimes, which will cause his name to be abhorred forever. Such also was Haman (plotted to kill the Jews), whose mischievous designs so backfired on him.

Corrupt ministers, who fall into the ditch, and draw others along with them, to add to their eternal disgrace and torment. But a faithful ambassador is an instrument of advantage and comfort such was Mordecai in the king's court; Paul in the gospel ministry; and Joseph in the house of Potiphar and Pharaoh. Let us work for the Lord faithfully in all that we do.

¹⁸ Whoever disregards discipline comes to poverty and shame, but whoever heeds correction is honored.

Persons who think they are above correction is the problem. A man who accepts correction shall be honored because he is covered in humility.

¹⁹ A longing fulfilled is sweet to the soul, but fools detest turning from evil.

The pleasures that fools think they enjoy is a means of hardening them in their sinful courses. Their minds are under an infatuation, from the influence of the pleasures of sin, and the god of this world. So they hold on to the idea that their sin brings them happiness. No satisfaction of desire can give long-lasting happiness to a sinful man. The pleasures lie in illusion, rather than enjoyment. Sin poisons every enjoyment.

G. The Impact of Relationships

²⁰ Walk with the wise and become wise, for a companion of fools suffers harm.

Wisdom is so valuable, that those who know the worth of it, will take advantage of every opportunity to use it. He who talks with the wise will learn wisdom from their words and example, which will have a powerful tendency to produce in him a resemblance to their goodness. For this reason we ought to make the wise our companions and friends.

For the same reason, we ought to attend worship with God's people. Thomas would have been cured of his unbelief sooner, and recovered had he been present with the rest of the apostles when the Lord first appeared to them.

But a companion of fools shall be corrupted, or destroyed. Bad company still has stronger influence than good. Lot chose the neighborhood of Sodom, because it afforded pleasant pasture. He forgot that the Sodomites were sinners, but he soon found that daily grief was all he got. The grace of God kept him unstained; but he had to flee for his life, and to leave his possessions and his flocks behind him, so he could escape their punishment.

²¹ Trouble pursues the sinner, but the righteous are rewarded with good things.

Mischief persevere in sin. We do not always feel their misery and danger, but think ourselves secure. But assures us, that misery pursues us just like a hound pursues his prey.

If sinners desire to escape, they must go to the Savior, and repent of their transgressions. "But to the righteous good shall be repaid." Imperfect as their goodness is, not a single instance of it shall lose its reward.

²² A good person leaves an inheritance for their children's children, but a sinner's wealth is stored up for the righteous.

A good man is ever righteous and merciful. He is blessed and his children and grandchildren are blessed after him. He leaves to them the good-will of men, and many precious promises; the influence of his example and instructions. David left an inheritance to his children for seventeen generations.

But is this always true? Good men, by their goodness, have forfeited this blessing to their children, which was the case with Eli. Does divine wisdom have some better method of showing the kindness which God has for them.

Every believer will acknowledge, that a single promise in the Bible is far better than a large estate. Parents who are anxious about their families after their own death will better off leaving them an estate of God's promises.

Posterity may fail, or be reduced to poverty; for the wealth of the sinner is laid up, not for his posterity, but for the just. Riches are still changing masters, according to the direction of God, who made the wealth of the Egyptians and Canaanites become the Israelites.

²³ An unplowed field produces food for the poor, but injustice sweeps it away.

Some are ruined by the lack of integrity. They try to increase their wealth by dishonest means that bring the curse of God into their lives. Their wealth melts like the manna before the rising sun.

Others are brought to poverty by indiscretion. Self-denial and financial restraint must be joined with hard work. Our Lord could feed men by miracle, and yet he would not allow the leftover pieces of bread to be thrown away – he had the disciples collect them. The seven years of extraordinary plenty could not have preserved Egypt if Joseph had not stored the corn for time of famine.

²⁴ Whoever spares the rod hates their children, but the one who loves their children is careful to discipline them.

Parents chastise their children because they love them. Christ also does not spare his correcting rod: *“Whom I love, (says he) I rebuke and chasten.”* Hebrews 12:6 The fondness of indulgent parents is called parental love; but the Spirit of God calls it hatred. That affection is detrimental to the spiritual interests of children.

A parent is said to hate his child, if he allows the child to have a knife and that child stabbed himself and died. He deserves to be called a hater when he indulges his child and damns him to hell.

But he who loves his son disciplines him as soon as he begins to discover mischief in his heart. He will not discipline him with blows, when words are sufficient; but he will discipline with the rod, when words have no impact. The early days of childhood are the right season for correction, because mischief has not taken deep and firm root in the heart.

H. Righteous Living

²⁵ The righteous eat to their hearts' content, but the stomach of the wicked goes hungry.

God's blessing gives to a righteous man food and contentment, but the wicked man wants one or both of them. The family of Jacob were well fed, while the Egyptians almost starved; and Elijah had food, when Ahab and his men traveled the country for food for their cattle.

In contrast, the righteous man sometimes lives on little while the wicked has plenty. But Daniel was happier with his diet than the luxuries of the royal table. The family of Christ, too, enjoyed more pleasure in their barley-loaves and fishes, than the rulers who ate sumptuous meals. So if a righteous man has little, that little is better than the riches of many wicked. The wicked is often reduced to little by his own vices, and the judgment of God upon him.