



## Proverbs chapter 26:1-27:27

Taught at our Sunday evening service, 28th November 2021 @ Deal Christian Fellowship

**Reading:** James 4:13-16

**Good evening. Let's pray.**

### Introduction

Tonight we're studying chapters 26 and 27 of the book of Proverbs, and as a reminder we're now in the section that was set in order by men under the authority of King Hezekiah, but these proverbs were still originally written by King Solomon.

Each week, there are always themes - some easy to spot, some harder to find. But this week there are few clear ones...

### Themes in chapter twenty six

In chapter 26 we'll look at the following themes:

- Foolishness
- Laziness
- Contentiousness
- Deceit

## Themes in chapter twenty seven

And in chapter 27 we'll see:

- Correction (v5-6)
- Friendship (v6, 9, 17)
- Diligence (v23-27)

## Chapter twenty six

So, as we begin chapter 6, we see around a dozen proverbs that talk about the fool. Starting with...

### Proverbs 26:1

As snow in summer and rain in harvest,  
So honour is not fitting for a fool.

That is, some things just seem out of place. Whether it be unusual weather for the time of year, or a fool that has been given honour of some kind, you are left scratching your head wondering how on earth that happened - because it just doesn't seem right. And that will lead us to verse 8 in a moment. But first, we read...

### Proverbs 26:2

Like a flitting sparrow, like a flying swallow,  
So a curse without cause shall not alight.

Now, those of you familiar with London Busses and the London Underground will be familiar with how the term alight is used to remind you to get off the bus or train, for example "Alight here for Earl's Court exhibition centre" - but it's wider meaning includes *to land*, or to *come to rest*, which is how it is used here, saying that just as sparrows and swallows dart around and never seem to land, neither will curses thrown at the innocent will not land or take hold on them.

And we see that happen in the case of Balaam's curses on Israel not coming to pass, nor Goliath's curses on Israel becoming reality.

Today, we still see this type of thing - I've been told by one individual that I'll be judged for not agreeing to their personal revelation from God, yet given that it has no foundation in or confirmation by the Bible, I'm not worried. What I am concerned with is teaching the Bible faithfully - for any failure to do that does carry severe implications.

But for all of us as Christian's, if we are living right before the Lord, we shouldn't concern ourselves with anything people try to curse us for or with, for as we read here, it won't take hold.

**Proverbs 26:3**

A whip for the horse,  
A bridle for the donkey,  
And a rod for the fool's back.

So, just like a horse or donkey needs much leading and goading to get them do their work, so real discipline is required to get the fool to attend to their work. Yet, even then it won't be easy - we read...

**Proverbs 26:4-5**

Do not answer a fool according to his folly,  
Lest you also be like him.  
Answer a fool according to his folly,  
Lest he be wise in his own eyes.

Indeed, it is hard to win with a fool. So what do we do? Well, I think we need a great deal of wisdom. As sometimes we need to speak, and sometimes be silent.

But I just wonder if what this is getting at is that on one hand we should not stoop to the level of a fool and be foolish ourselves in the **way** we respond to them, yet perhaps we should answer them by showing that using that same reasoning or logic as them, they could conclude something even they see as foolish.

**Proverbs 26:6**

He who sends a message by the hand of a fool  
Cuts off his own feet and drinks violence.

Like playing a game of Chinese Whispers, or Telephone as my American friends know it, sending an important message via a fool leaves you without a leg to stand on.

**Proverbs 26:7**

Like the legs of the lame that hang limp  
Is a proverb in the mouth of fools.

That is, a fool can make no use of wisdom - even if they can repeat it, they don't know what to do with it, such is their folly.

**Proverbs 26:8**

Like one who binds a stone in a sling  
Is he who gives honour to a fool.

So building on verse 1 that said honour is not fitting for a fool - we're now warned, *Don't be that person that gives honour to a fool*. For doing so is like giving a loaded gun to a monkey; it could go off at anytime and hit anyone. You're asking for trouble.

Today, I think it's fair to say we see this sometimes in politics - both this country and abroad - where great honour and power is given to those who frankly don't know what they're doing with it, so be careful who you vote for, for you don't want to elect a fool to office.

**Proverbs 26:9**

Like a thorn that goes into the hand of a drunkard  
Is a proverb in the mouth of fools.

That is, they've no idea how it got there!

**Proverbs 26:10**

The great God who formed everything  
Gives the fool his hire and the transgressor his wages.

And indeed God will see that all are rewarded as they deserve - except, of course, those whom Jesus has paid for all they deserved.

**Proverbs 26:11**

As a dog returns to his own vomit,  
So a fool repeats his folly.

Well, that's quite the picture. I'm sure you feel less like your dinner after hearing that. But it's unfortunately an accurate picture of what happens when someone backslides into their sinful ways, as quoted by Peter in chapter 2 of his second letter, when warning about false teachers...

**2 Peter 2:18-22**

For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage. For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: "A dog returns to his own vomit," and, "a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire."

Many fail or fall - that is one thing - but it is another to continually keep returning to your old sins, or even embrace them. That's what separates a true believer from a false believer.

**Proverbs 26:12**

Do you see a man wise in his own eyes?  
There is more hope for a fool than for him.

In other words, better to be wrong and know it, or even blissfully unaware, than to be wrong but adamant you're right. What is the antidote to this? To get good counsel as we read in Proverbs chapter 19...



**Proverbs 19:20**

Listen to counsel and receive instruction,  
That you may be wise in your latter days.

Jon Courson comments and says: The only person more hopeless than a fool is a person who thinks he's wise when he's not. When the chest swells, the brain shrinks. Puffing out your chest and thinking you're wise is actually worse than foolishness.

Next, we read 4 verses that deal with laziness, a topic Solomon has addressed before - indeed, you'll notice some repetition here:

**Proverbs 26:13**

The lazy man says, "There is a lion in the road!  
A fierce lion is in the streets!"

That is, the lazy man always has an excuse why he can't do something. Whether that is why he can't work, can't help, can't serve, or can't attend church meetings.

Of course, we may think that we'd never be that lazy - but Jesus knows when we are making excuses. In Matthew chapter 8, Jesus had given commandment to go to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, but we read...

**Matthew 8:21-22**

Then another of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." But Jesus said to him, "Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead."

You see, this man offered what seemed a legitimate reason why he couldn't follow. In fact, it may seem very reasonable to us too. Yet, Jesus clearly saw that this was being used as an excuse.

And whether we like it or not, following Jesus always comes at a cost.

I don't know what following Jesus will cost you. I know what it costs me - and part of that is giving up things I'd like to spend time doing. Even things that it is important to do. It means spending less time with Sian, and soon with our child, than I'd like to do. And that's hard.

But we get off lightly. Just this afternoon we head some friends that are serving as missionaries in Zambia won't get to see their parents who were due to visit this week, because of the new Covid restrictions. Ultimately that's not a cost of Covid, it's a cost of their decision to pack up their family and move to Zambia to do what the Lord has called them to.

I don't know what it will cost you - but I know that even if it means less time with your family, or less money in your bank account, or a smaller roof over your head, or more years of singleness, or even if it only costs you the effort of turning out for a mid-week meeting in the cold, wet and rain - the cost is worth it.

That's why we can sing "Jesus, everything I've lost, I have found in You. When I finally reach the end I'll say, You are worth it all".

We read...

**Proverbs 26:14**

As a door turns on its hinges,  
So does the lazy man on his bed.

Finnis Dake comments and says: Dake: As the door stays on its hinges and never goes any place, so the lazy man never moves from his bed to fill a useful place in life.

**Proverbs 26:15**

The lazy man buries his hand in the bowl;  
It wearies him to bring it back to his mouth.

I can picture this in the man who is too lazy to move to pick up the TV remote, so uses his feet or throws a shoe at it in an attempt to change channel. In the end, his slothfulness costs him that very thing he desires. Including a close relationship with the Lord.

**Proverbs 26:16**

The lazy man is wiser in his own eyes  
Than seven men who can answer sensibly.

I think we've gotten lazy in all areas of life. It's not that we want life to be harder, but every company, for good reason, works to reduce customer effort. And that does pander to our laziness.

And perhaps this proverb plays out in the one who feels wise because of his quick Google searches, than any number of people who have truly looked into a matter.

Now, next we come back to our words, specifically with warnings against arguments, gossip and deception...

**Proverbs 26:17**

He who passes by and meddles in a quarrel not his own  
Is like one who takes a dog by the ears.

Oh this is such a picture! It's not to say we wouldn't step in to stop the biting of injustice, but that we'd do well not to jump into the barking an argument that we know nothing of the background of.

**Proverbs 26:18-19**

Like a madman who throws firebrands, arrows, and death,  
Is the man who deceives his neighbour,  
And says, "I was only joking!"

This is talking more than mere practical jokes, but of lying, deception and dishonesty. And the warning is that when you have done wrong, you don't try and laugh it off with a joke, but rather admit you have crossed the line. For to make light of your wrong actions is like playing with fire.

Next we read a trio of verses that deal with gossip:

**Proverbs 26:20**

Where there is no wood, the fire goes out;  
And where there is no talebearer, strife ceases.

Quite simply, gossip will die out if it is not repeated. And you have a responsibility at work, at home and in this church, to not share gossip. If we ALL do that, we'll eliminate strife.

**Proverbs 26:21**

As charcoal is to burning coals, and wood to fire,  
So is a contentious man to kindle strife.

You may not have started the gossip, you may not be sharing it. But neither stir it by joining in with conversations about it. Yes, there are sometimes weighty matters to discuss in life, but be very careful to ensure that you're discussing what is needful, rather than gathering round the fire of gossip and stoking that.

**Proverbs 26:22**

The words of a talebearer are like tasty trifles,  
And they go down into the inmost body.

This repeats what Solomon said in 18:8 - that the words of gossip can make us feel sick to the stomach. Don't share it, don't stir it, don't start it.

Next, we're also warned about what others say. We read...

**Proverbs 26:23**

Fervent lips with a wicked heart  
Are like earthenware covered with silver dross.

That is, enthusiasm doesn't make up for saying or doing the wrong thing. Just because someone is enthusiastically telling you something, doesn't mean you should believe it - indeed, there are many who would speak deceptively to **us**. We're warned...

**Proverbs 26:24-26**

He who hates, disguises it with his lips,  
And lays up deceit within himself;  
When he speaks kindly, do not believe him,  
For there are seven abominations in his heart;  
Though his hatred is covered by deceit,  
His wickedness will be revealed before the assembly.

You see, it's not merely what someone says that is important, but what is in their heart. They will reap what they sow, as we read in the next verse...

**Proverbs 26:27**

Whoever digs a pit will fall into it,  
And he who rolls a stone will have it roll back on him.

And that's good news, but as we close this chapter we have one last reminder of the power of the tongue, and that it's not always harsh words that injure us.

**Proverbs 26:28**

A lying tongue hates those who are crushed by it,  
And a flattering mouth works ruin.

You'll hopefully recall how James gives us such a clear example of how damaging the tongue can be - but that danger includes something we often drop our guard on, and that is flattery. For while encouragement seeks to keep you doing what you're doing, flattery seeks to build your ego, and especially, favour with the one who is flattering you. So, carefully consider which you're listening to, and how you're responding to it.

## Chapter twenty seven

**Proverbs 27:1**

Do not boast about tomorrow,  
For you do not know what a day may bring forth.

Indeed, life can change in a moment - and the things we thought we could rely on; our jobs, our finances, even our friendships and family, can disappear overnight. That doesn't mean we shouldn't make plans, but that we should always remember we're subject to what God prescribes or permits - for He is the only one in control. We read in James chapter 4:

**James 4:13-16**

Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit"; whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that." But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.

Verse 2...

**Proverbs 27:2**

Let another man praise you, and not your own mouth;  
A stranger, and not your own lips.

Humility is always a good quality to have. And one reason why, is that we don't always make a fair assessment of ourselves. Yes we might be willing and able to perform a task, or a ministry, but we might not be ready. And that's often because of the issue or risk of pride. For this reason Paul warned Timothy when writing about the qualifications for elders, that they should not be a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil.

**Proverbs 27:3**

A stone is heavy and sand is weighty,  
But a fool's wrath is heavier than both of them.

That is, while these can be difficult to work with, they are at least predictable - unlike the angry fool who may do anything!

**Proverbs 27:4**

Wrath is cruel and anger a torrent,  
But who is able to stand before jealousy?

We'd do well to think back to Proverbs chapter 6 where we read:

**Proverbs 6:34-35**

For jealousy is a husband's fury;  
Therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance.  
He will accept no recompense,  
Nor will he be appeased though you give many gifts.

That is, the husband or wife that is cheated on, is not only rightfully upset with their spouse, but with the "other woman" or "other man" - for they are, if they indeed knew that person was married, equally to blame in causing and providing the opportunity for that spouse to yield.

**Proverbs 27:5**

Open rebuke is better  
Than love carefully concealed.

It's not that open rebuke is always right - indeed last week we looked at the need to talk 1:1 first - but Solomon says the pain or embarrassment of an open rebuke is better than someone who never put their love into action. And this makes me think of how typically wonderful things are said of someone following their death, yet how often were those things told to their face when they were alive? Don't flatter for gain, but equally don't conceal your love.

**Proverbs 27:6**

Faithful are the wounds of a friend,  
But the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.

But here's the flip-side - we need to correct in love too.



Yet furthermore, we need to be prepared to be corrected in love - knowing that what friends say may bruise us, not because of their intent, but because of our pride and our hearts. I think it was Napoleon who lamented how his friends never said anything to restrain him, and in doing so allowed him to go too far. So, let us be good friends to each other, being prepared to have the difficult conversations, and allowing our friends to have those difficult conversations with us.

**Proverbs 27:7**

A satisfied soul loathes the honeycomb,  
But to a hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.

There are a few takes I've read on this verse, but one thing continues to jump at me - which is that a hungry soul is happy to eat spiritual junk food - they don't care what they eat. But the one that is fed with God's Word, has no need of the delicacies this world has to offer for they are already satisfied.

**Proverbs 27:8**

Like a bird that wanders from its nest  
Is a man who wanders from his place.

Dake comments on this, noting; the man who leaves his own home, family, and relatives to seek fortunes elsewhere will often find misery and hardships.

**Proverbs 27:9**

Ointment and perfume delight the heart,  
And the sweetness of a man's friend gives delight by hearty counsel.

I love this phrase - hearty counsel - and we need that. But those kinds of conversations don't come from casual acquaintances, but from friendships - and I believe we really need to cultivate those in this church family. For there is so much benefit from spending time with other Christians - we'll read more on that in a moment.

**Proverbs 27:10**

Do not forsake your own friend or your father's friend,  
Nor go to your brother's house in the day of your calamity;  
Better is a neighbour nearby than a brother far away.

That is, those that are closest to us are those that are best placed to help us. So again, invest in the relationships you have around you.

**Proverbs 27:11**

My son, be wise, and make my heart glad,  
That I may answer him who reproaches me.

It's a joy for a parent to have a wise child, but note that it takes more than saying "be wise" - and Solomon was someone who had invested in his son.

**Proverbs 27:12**

A prudent man foresees evil and hides himself;  
The simple pass on and are punished.

Repeated from Proverbs 22:3 - and you may wonder, why are some proverbs repeated? Yet, surely this is for the same reason that motorway signs are often repeated - for we often miss the first one!

So let us remind ourselves of the need for prudence - to think through each situation, and the likely outcome of our actions, that we might not find ourselves regretting them later.

**Proverbs 27:13**

Take the garment of him who is surety for a stranger,  
And hold it in pledge when he is surety for a seductress.

Again this is repeated from Proverbs 20:16, guiding us to take security or a deposit from strangers, to ensure they meet their obligations.

**Proverbs 27:14**

He who blesses his friend with a loud voice, rising early in the morning,  
It will be counted a curse to him.

I think Solomon realised not every person is a morning person! Yet, again we should take note to be wary of the man or woman who flatters us. Extravagant public praise is always suspicious.

**Proverbs 27:15-16**

A continual dripping on a very rainy day  
And a contentious woman are alike;  
Whoever restrains her restrains the wind,  
And grasps oil with his right hand.

Once again we are reminded. Reminded of what? Well, it depends on who you are...

- If you are a single man - be careful in choosing a wife.
- If you are a wife, don't be contentious.
- And if you're a single lady who wants to marry, give thought to how contentious you are!

**Proverbs 27:17**

As iron sharpens iron,  
So a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.

This is what we should do as Christians! Do we sharpen each other up?

Well, are we friends? If not, how do we foster such friendships? From my experience, I suggest serving the Lord together is the best way to do that. My friendship with Pete is a good example - before serving together on the youth team, we knew each other - but were not close friends, but through serving together week in week out, we ended up having lots of deep conversations, lots of time spent with each other, and became good friends as a result.

#### **Proverbs 27:18**

Whoever keeps the fig tree will eat its fruit;  
So he who waits on his master will be honoured.

That is, don't saw off the branch on which you're sitting! But rather serve your early masters as if serving your Heavenly master - just as we read in Colossians

#### **Colossians 3:22-24**

Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.

. . .

#### **Proverbs 27:19**

As in water face reflects face,  
So a man's heart reveals the man.

ALL our problems start in the heart. I think that's why people don't want to acknowledge their conscience, because it deals with our hearts - who we really are.

#### **Proverbs 27:20**

Hell and Destruction are never full;  
So the eyes of man are never satisfied.

A millionaire was once asked, "what do you need to be satisfied?" He answered; "More".

Let us read again from 1 Timothy:

#### **1 Timothy 6:6-10**

Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

. . .

**Proverbs 27:21**

The refining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold,  
And a man is valued by what others say of him.

What do others say of you? Your real value comes in how you act, what you say. Not what you have on your CV, or what's in your bank account, or companies sales figures.

In my professional work I've seen two Christian men in similar roles - one universally loved and spoken of as the best manager people have had. And the other still criticised to this day for how unkind, and harsh they were to work for or with.

The world IS watching. Let us set an example of how Christian's should be!

**Proverbs 27:22**

Though you grind a fool in a mortar with a pestle along with crushed grain,  
Yet his foolishness will not depart from him.

In other words, even pressure will not remove foolishness from the fool.

Courson warns: Although foolishness in a child can be driven out by the rod of correction (Proverbs 22:15), even a mortar and pestle will not drive it from an adult. That is why child-rearing is at once an awesome privilege and responsibility.

Now, as we close this chapter we come to 5 verses that we should tackle in one sitting. We read...

**Proverbs 27:23-27**

Be diligent to know the state of your flocks,  
And attend to your herds;  
For riches are not forever,  
Nor does a crown endure to all generations.  
When the hay is removed, and the tender grass shows itself,  
And the herbs of the mountains are gathered in,  
The lambs will provide your clothing,  
And the goats the price of a field;  
You shall have enough goats' milk for your food,  
For the food of your household,  
And the nourishment of your maidservants.

This is practical prudence - including knowing the state of your finances. That is, don't agonise over them, don't serve them. But be diligent, and they'll serve you. Living for now is the inclination, but need to consider long term - just as it is in our spiritual lives.

But also be diligent in your work, and ask yourself if you really know if what you're doing is good work? Ideally, of course, that's feedback you'll get. But be wise enough to ask - ask your manager or peers how you can improve - not to seek compliments, but to improve, to be diligent. Sometimes it's very hard to give someone feedback without them asking for it - whether because of their attitude, or seniority. So ask. Learn. Be diligent.

Both to know the state of your flocks - and to do - to attend to them.

## Summary

In closing this evening, I have a few application questions for us to ponder this week:

## Application questions

- Are we being the friends we should be?
- Are we able to receive, as well as give correction?
- Are we lazy in our work, home life or service of God?

**Let's pray.**