



Proverbs chapter 28:1-29:27

Taught at our Sunday evening service, 5th December 2021 @ Deal Christian Fellowship

Reading: 1 Kings 3:16-28

Good evening. Let's pray.

Introduction

Tonight, as we approach the end of the book of Proverbs, we'll conclude the third section of this incredible book, with the first 9 chapters having contrasted wisdom and folly, chapters 10–24 being written and set in order by Solomon, and now chapters 25–29 having been written by Solomon, but being set in order by men of Hezekiah.

- Wisdom and folly contrasted, Chapters 1–9
- Proverbs of Solomon, Chapters 10–24 — (Written and set in order by himself)
- **Proverbs of Solomon, Chapters 25–29 — (Set in order by men of Hezekiah)**
- Oracle of Agur, Unknown Sage, Chapter 30
- Proverbs of a Mother to Lemuel, Chapter 31

Themes in chapter twenty eight

A more random chapter than some... but themes to watch out for in chapter 28 are:

- Leadership
- Correction
- Our love for the poor

Themes in chapter twenty nine

And then in chapter 29 we'll see...

- Righteousness
- Honouring parents
- Leadership

Chapter twenty eight

So then, let's take a look at chapter 28, verse 1:

Proverbs 28:1

The wicked flee when no one pursues,
But the righteous are bold as a lion.

Why is this? The conscience. When you know you have done nothing wrong, even if only in that situation, you truly can be bold in what you say and do. But the guilty party often, well, acts guilty.

I think we see this trait in a couple of places in our day to day lives - sure, the criminal might be continually looking over their shoulder. And the drug carrying driver may speed away at the sight of a Police car. But more often than that, I have a feeling we see it in the workplace - maybe in ourselves. Let me ask you... have you ever quickly closed your shopping window or game of Solitaire when your boss walked into the office? Even though your boss wasn't walking in to check on that, your conscience convicts you - and you don't want to get caught. The same might happen if you're looking at something inappropriate on your phone, and someone walks by - they are not coming to check - but you don't want to be caught, right?

But a second situation we see, is that many people don't want to be around church, or Christians. Why? Because they don't like the idea that their sin is actually sinful. And it seems better to run.

Yet the righteous can be bold as a lion - whether like Elijah on top of Mt Carmel, or Stephen preaching in front of the Jewish leaders, or Paul being willing to go to Jerusalem regardless of risk, or Peter and John toward the Jewish leaders in Acts 4, where we read:

Acts 4:19-20

But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

...

Proverbs 28:2

Because of the transgression of a land, many are its princes;
But by a man of understanding and knowledge
Right will be prolonged.

We see this throughout history, that where wicked men rule, they are often quickly replaced, often by more wicked men in depositions, and coups. Yet with a good ruler comes stability.

Proverbs 28:3

A poor man who oppresses the poor
Is like a driving rain which leaves no food.

In other words, just as the rain should help crops to grow, rather than destroy them, so the poor should understand exactly what others in their situation are going through, and not inflict even more difficulty on them.

Yet, there is spiritual application here - remember Jesus parable in Matthew chapter 18 of the man who was forgiven his debt, but then threw into jail someone who owed him. Well, we were in desperate need of Jesus forgiveness. So then, having it, we must forgive others. Or we're doing what Solomon warns about.

Proverbs 28:4

Those who forsake the law praise the wicked,
But such as keep the law contend with them.

The onus here is not on the wicked - but on us, to ensure that we don't praise wicked people, but rather call them out, regardless of how many qualifications, titles, awards, Grammys, or Oscars they have.

Proverbs 28:5

Evil men do not understand justice,
But those who seek the LORD understand all.

While evil people do not comprehend or even agree with justice, those who are honest can not only see where others are in error, but admit when they are themselves in error. And this is key in accepting the good news of what Jesus has done for us - for we'll never understand that we need a Saviour until we can see our sin for what it is.

Proverbs 28:6

Better is the poor who walks in his integrity
Than one perverse in his ways, though he be rich.

Integrity is that much better than riches!

You'll know by now that I have often referenced Finnis Dake's Bible commentary while studying Proverbs, and one thing he is great at compiling is lists of related verses - and one such list is of the 17 better things that Proverbs notes, concluding with this verse.

And I think it's helpful to read this list to you:

1. Wisdom is better than gold (Prov. 3:14; 8:19)
2. Wisdom is better than silver (Prov. 3:14; 8:19)
3. Wisdom is better than rubies (Prov. 3:15; 8:11)
4. A despised man is better than one who honours himself (Prov. 12:9)
5. A little with the fear of God is better than treasures with trouble (Prov. 15:16)
6. A dinner of herbs with love is better than a feast where hatred is (Prov. 15:17)
7. A man slow to anger is better than a hot tempered mighty man (Prov. 16:32)
8. A man who rules his spirit is better than an intemperate hero (Prov. 16:32)
9. A morsel of bread with quietness is better than a feast with strife (Prov. 17:1)
10. An honest poor man is better than a fool with perverse lips (Prov. 19:1)
11. A poor man is better than a liar (Prov. 19:22)
12. It is better to dwell alone in a small place than in a large one with a brawling woman (Prov. 21:9; 25:24)
13. It is better to dwell in the wilderness than with an angry and contentious woman (Prov. 21:19)
14. It is better to be exalted than to be abased before men (Prov. 25:7)
15. An open rebuke is better than secret love (Prov. 27:5)
16. A near neighbour is better than a far-off brother (Prov. 27:10)
17. A righteous poor man is better than a wicked rich man (Prov. 28:6)

May we desire the better things!! Now, in verse 7 we read...

Proverbs 28:7

Whoever keeps the law is a discerning son,
But a companion of gluttons shames his father.

You know, the choices we make can honour or shame our parents. But likewise, our choices can bring honour or disrepute to God's name - and may we only seek to bring honour to His name.

Proverbs 28:8

One who increases his possessions by usury and extortion
Gathers it for him who will pity the poor.

This speaks of those who treat the poor wickedly - be it through high interest loans, or lending to the vulnerable - but their gain will not last long, and will in turn be used by others to do good - though that was never the intent of, or justification for the wicked man.

Proverbs 28:9

One who turns away his ear from hearing the law,
Even his prayer is an abomination.

Wow, this is a big deal, and we should pause here for a few moments.

Prayer is incredibly important. In fact, it is essential in the life of a Christian. But for those who are unsaved, they would do better to ask their Christian friends to pray for them, than to pray themselves. As J Vernon-McGee puts it, "It is just sentimental twaddle to talk about the prayers of the godless man being answered in time of trouble."

Indeed, we Peter quotes Psalm 34 in his first letter, saying:

1 Peter 3:12

For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous,
And His ears are open to their prayers;
But the face of the LORD is against those who do evil."

That's important to know. But also, we should note that the prayers of the Christian are not guaranteed to be heard. "What?!" You may say! Well, it's true, and I know that because the Bible tells us so. We read in Psalm 66...

Psalm 66:18

If I regard iniquity in my heart,
The Lord will not hear.

That is crystal clear. If you or I let the thoughts of sin fester and sit on our hearts, God will **not** hear our prayers.

Furthermore, Husbands, if you do not treat your wife well, that will not only damage your love life, but your prayer life and relationship with God. A little earlier than a moment ago, Peter wrote:

1 Peter 3:7

Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honour to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.

And ultimately, coming back to this verse in Proverbs - if you don't listen to and obey what God says to you via His Word, He won't listen to what you say to Him in prayer. Again, if you want God to hear you, you must hear Him first.

Proverbs 28:10

Whoever causes the upright to go astray in an evil way,
He himself will fall into his own pit;
But the blameless will inherit good.

You are not just responsible for how you act, but how you cause others to act too. I'm reminded of what Jesus warned:

Matthew 18:6

"But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

. . .

Proverbs 28:11

The rich man is wise in his own eyes,
But the poor who has understanding searches him out.

Oh, the arrogance and self-reliance of riches. Better to be poor and smart, than rich and stupid. Now if you are rich, that's OK, but be sure to remain humble.

Proverbs 28:12

When the righteous rejoice, there is great glory;
But when the wicked arise, men hide themselves.

I wonder, how do people feel about you? And I ask that in the work context, especially if you are a manager or in a position of authority - do people hide from you or keep quiet when you're around because of how poorly you treat people, or do they love working for you or with you?

Proverbs 28:13

He who covers his sins will not prosper,
But whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.

That is, the person who refuses to acknowledge their sin, will still be held to account for it, but the one who admits their sin and repents of it, will have the mercy that is only possible by a loving Saviour paying for their sin.

Proverbs 28:14

Happy is the man who is always reverent,
But he who hardens his heart will fall into calamity.

Right back in Proverbs chapter 1 we were told that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge", in chapter 9, we're told "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom", in chapter 10 "The fear of the Lord prolongs days", in chapter 14 that "In the fear of the Lord there is strong confidence", and in chapter 19 that "The fear of the Lord leads to life". No wonder that the man who is always reverent - that is the one who shows utmost respect and adoration for God - is a happy man. But the opposite is true for the one who hardens his heart toward God.

Consider Pharaoh, who time after time hardened his heart toward Him. Who refused to let Israel go. He is certainly an example of one who fell into calamity. And it's a warning for us.

Proverbs 28:15

Like a roaring lion and a charging bear
Is a wicked ruler over poor people.

Neither animal, especially in their roaring and charging states, is known for their mercy. So neither is a wicked ruler. And we read...

Proverbs 28:16

A ruler who lacks understanding is a great oppressor,
But he who hates covetousness will prolong his days.

So, the leaders we want, are not ones who are seeking to serve themselves. The ones who are desperate for power, money, influence, possessions, or fame, will do so at the expense of those they should be leading and serving. So in any sphere of life, let us seek to elect and support leaders who hate covetousness.

Proverbs 28:17

A man burdened with bloodshed will flee into a pit;
Let no one help him.

It must be a terrible thing to live with something as grievous as murder on your conscience. And for some it is too many - leading to a confession of sin out of the blue, many years later, and some like Judas Iscariot who took his own life because of the awful thing he had done.

Of course, the imperative is that we should not be responsible for bloodshed in the first place.

Proverbs 28:18

Whoever walks blamelessly will be saved,
But he who is perverse in his ways will suddenly fall.

There's no getting away from it - if you are perverse, if you are unreasonable, disobedient, or rebellious, you're headed for problems.

Proverbs 28:19

He who tills his land will have plenty of bread,
But he who follows frivolity will have poverty enough!

Once again, we're warned of the perils of laziness, procrastination and following after silliness. In other words, don't seek to do the minimum, or you'll get little out. Rather, we are to be diligent and faithful in everything - including our work, and our ministries. What we reap, we sow - always.

Verse 20 continues...

Proverbs 28:20

A faithful man will abound with blessings,
But he who hastens to be rich will not go unpunished.

So, this is a warning against getting rich at any cost. For doing so will usually mean trampling over people, and compromising on character. As has been well said, treat people well on the way up, as you may need them on the way down.

Proverbs 28:21

To show partiality is not good,
Because for a piece of bread a man will transgress.

That is, when you treat people well for what you can get out of them, you're on shaky ground, for they may in turn treat you favourably for what they can get from you! It will come back to bite you.

Proverbs 28:22

A man with an evil eye hastens after riches,
And does not consider that poverty will come upon him.

So the one we read of in verse 20, that is pursuing their get-rich-quick scheme, is lacking in prudence, for the riches he covets are not the type of riches he needs.

Now, in verse 23 we read:

Proverbs 28:23

He who rebukes a man will find more favour afterward
Than he who flatters with the tongue.

And this is comforting given all we've read about needing to correct! Yet, this is the long term view of it. For no-one likes being corrected in the moment. But the person who is willing to speak the truth, will gain more favour in the end than the person who flatters an ego.

Proverbs 28:24

Whoever robs his father or his mother,
And says, "It is no transgression,"
The same is companion to a destroyer.

God takes how you treat your parents seriously - in word, and in conduct. And you should neither raid their house for food and supplies without permission, or sell what they have for your profit without their agreement and knowledge.

While we may think that unlikely, I've known of both examples - from parents finding food missing from their fridge, to coming home to find their furniture gone. And we read here that God does not take kindly to it - just as Jesus called out the scribes and Pharisees as hypocrites in Matthew 15 for their mistreatment of their parents.

Proverbs 28:25

He who is of a proud heart stirs up strife,
But he who trusts in the LORD will be prospered.

Indeed, you can't say "no, Lord" and mean both words. It's either *Thy* will OR *my* will be done.

Proverbs 28:26

He who trusts in his own heart is a fool,
But whoever walks wisely will be delivered.

That is, you have **LEAD** your heart, not follow it. For as we read in Jeremiah, our hearts are desperately wicked.

Proverbs 28:27

He who gives to the poor will not lack,
But he who hides his eyes will have many curses.

In other words, don't turn a blind eye to the poor and suffering in this world. You may ask, "how much should we help?" I'm sure the answer is always more. And so we shouldn't turn our eyes away, but rather keep our eyes open for who we can help, and how we can help. We read this warning in 1st John chapter 3...

1 John 3:17

But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?

...

Proverbs 28:28

When the wicked arise, men hide themselves;
But when they perish, the righteous increase.

Such is the effect of evil men. So let us do all we can to raise, encourage and support good men, and good women.

Chapter twenty nine

As we start chapter 29, we come back to the topic of correction, and we read:

Proverbs 29:1

He who is often rebuked, and hardens his neck,
Will suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.

Note that it is not the regular rebuking that causes the problem, but the hardening of his neck. And so our warning here is to not be stiff-necked or stubbornly fastened to our sin. For we have plenty of examples of the damage that does - whether those that Noah preached to, but didn't listen, or Pharaoh who refused to let Israel go, or Israel who were taken into captivity after ignoring warning after warning.

If you have been warned even once about sin in your life - listen to that warning. Don't laugh at it. And certainly don't keep ignoring the repeated warnings. For it may reach the point of disaster for you, with no return.

Proverbs 29:2

When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice;
But when a wicked man rules, the people groan.

This is obvious with governments around the world and in history, where cruel dictators and regimes have caused much groaning of the people. But what is to be desired is not necessarily those that are right, but those that are righteous to be in authority. That is, it matters less that a politicians fiscal policy or organisational decisions are to your preference, than it does that they stand for what is right in the sight of God, and won't be moved on that.

Proverbs 29:3

Whoever loves wisdom makes his father rejoice,
But a companion of harlots wastes his wealth.

I can't help but think of the parable of the prodigal son here, and how sad it is to see the son waste his fathers wealth. Yet let us consider what we do with the riches and blessings that our Heavenly Father has given us - from our freedom to our families and friendship. Do we waste those things? Or do we use them for His purposes, and His glory?

Proverbs 29:4

The king establishes the land by justice,
But he who receives bribes overthrows it.

This is the sad reality, that a lot of good can be undone by wicked men. And the different results of impartial judgement vs corruption.

Proverbs 29:5-6

A man who flatters his neighbour
Spreads a net for his feet.
By transgression an evil man is snared,
But the righteous sings and rejoices.

That is, he flatters solely for his own selfish benefit, but in doing so can be seen through, and will set the net that catches him out as insincere. His sin finds him out, and there is much sadness.

But contrast that to the righteous, who will sing and rejoice. We continue...

Proverbs 29:7

The righteous considers the cause of the poor,
But the wicked does not understand such knowledge.

That is, the the wicked miss out on the joy that comes from helping others, for they make no attempt to see or understand their needs, in contrast to the righteous man who does look out for them.

Proverbs 29:8

Scoffers set a city aflame,
But wise men turn away wrath.

We are told in Titus 3...

Titus 3:1-2

Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men.

So we are to be peaceable.

I believe that clearly tells us that Christians should have no place in riots, unrest, or be gluing themselves to motorways, or chaining themselves to gates. That doesn't mean a peaceful protest is wrong, but it does mean we are to be peacemakers - we are to be the ones to calm things down. Not to stir things up.

However, you won't please everyone...

Proverbs 29:9

If a wise man contends with a foolish man,
Whether the fool rages or laughs, there is no peace.

While you can't win - doesn't mean you shouldn't confront. For this is a reflection on the fool, not the wise man.

Proverbs 29:10

The bloodthirsty hate the blameless,
But the upright seek his well-being.

This links back to what we read earlier in 28:1 - that the wicked flee when no-one pursues... why? Because their conscience convicts them. They feel uncomfortable around the righteous. And if you live right, be prepared that people will hate you for doing so.

But as for us, we should want other's good, not their downfall.

Proverbs 29:11

A fool vents all his feelings,
But a wise man holds them back.

We've seen many times through the book of Proverbs how important our words are, and indeed how sometimes we're better to be silent. And Solomon warns here that the person who has no control over their words is a fool - especially when it comes to their feelings.

And there is great wisdom in this, because our feelings come and go, and situations change, and we can be left quite red-faced because of something we shouldn't have said.

I think we'd do well to follow Mary's example, who we read in Luke 2, rather than speaking everything on her mind, "kept all these things and pondered them in her heart".

Proverbs 29:12

If a ruler pays attention to lies,
All his servants become wicked.

That is, those in authority should be especially careful of who they listen to. They should be careful who they are influenced by, for they have great influence on others.

Proverbs 29:13

The poor man and the oppressor have this in common:
The LORD gives light to the eyes of both.

We all too easily forget that God is our maker, and our responsibility first and foremost, is to Him.

Proverbs 29:14

The king who judges the poor with truth,
His throne will be established forever.

Again, those who are in authority should use it well. And those that do that, will reap the benefits. We've read similar to this before in chapter 20...

Proverbs 20:28

Mercy and truth preserve the king,
And by lovingkindness he upholds his throne.

And how true this is of the King of kings whom we read of in Psalm 72:

Psalm 72:11-13

Yes, all kings shall fall down before Him;
All nations shall serve Him.
For He will deliver the needy when he cries,
The poor also, and him who has no helper.
He will spare the poor and needy,
And will save the souls of the needy.

In verse 15 we re:

Proverbs 29:15

The rod and rebuke give wisdom,
But a child left to himself brings shame to his mother.

As we all know, you don't need to teach a child to sin. Rather, you do need to discipline them because they are naturally sinful. So correct them. Love them. Indeed, those who never receive these things, are the biggest indictment on their parents failure to raise them right.

Proverbs 29:16

When the wicked are multiplied, transgression increases;
But the righteous will see their fall.

So find a way to stop the wicked multiplying - not by preventing offspring, but preventing men becoming wicked. If we want our country to head in the right direction, our churches must head in the right direction.

An old quote about America that is often attributed to Alexis de Tocqueville, but quite possibly wasn't said by him, captures this thought well...

I sought for the key to the greatness and genius of America in her harbors...; in her fertile fields and boundless forests; in her rich mines and vast world commerce; in her public school system and institutions of learning. I sought for it in her democratic Congress and in her matchless Constitution. Not until I went into the churches of America and heard her pulpits flame with righteousness did I understand the secret of her genius and power. America is great because America is good, and if America ever ceases to be good, America will cease to be great.

We need righteousness in our churches, before we have a hope of seeing it in our nation.

Proverbs 29:17

Correct your son, and he will give you rest;
Yes, he will give delight to your soul.

This is contrary to how we might feel, that it's easier just to let children have their way - but this verse says it's not! Rather, building on verse 15, Solomon instructs that rather than leaving a child to themselves, you need to correct them. And when you do, the reward will be high.

Proverbs 29:18

Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint;
But happy is he who keeps the law.

Now, vision, or direction is important in any kind of leadership - but more importantly we need to have eternal perspective of where everything is headed, and to hold fast to God's Word.

It's been well said you that you can't lead if you don't carry the torch - for the pastor, that torch, that light which we are to bear, is Christ!

Proverbs 29:19

A servant will not be corrected by mere words;
For though he understands, he will not respond.

Now this verse, in honesty, I find a harder one to understand. But given it's proximity to the previous verse, I just wonder if the point made here is that words without actions, without example, won't mean much. Indeed if we want people to listen to what we say about how to live, including our children, they need to see it modelled in us.

Proverbs 29:20

Do you see a man hasty in his words?
There is more hope for a fool than for him.

Likewise, we read earlier in chapter 18:

Proverbs 18:13

He who answers a matter before he hears it,
It is folly and shame to him.

That is, we are to carefully consider each situation that we come across, and not rush in firing words in every direction. And Solomon was a man who exemplified this, as we saw in our reading from 1 Kings chapter 3 this evening.

So, don't be in a rush to just say some thing. But in careful consideration, seek to say the right thing. Or perhaps even no thing.

Proverbs 29:21

He who pampers his servant from childhood
Will have him as a son in the end.

Well, you know, I think we can make good application from this as to how we treat our employees, or those that report to us. Simply put, treat your employees well. I've had some great, and terrible, managers. But the best ones? Friends for life.

Proverbs 29:22

An angry man stirs up strife,
And a furious man abounds in transgression.

If only there was a way to avoid being that man?! There is. As Christian's, as we walk closely with the Lord, and His Spirit lives in us, we will begin to show the fruit of the Spirit, including gentleness, and self-control. But like walking requires you to get up off your sofa, so your walk with the Lord requires you to actively walk with Him. A Bible on your shelf will not help you.

Proverbs 29:23

A man's pride will bring him low,
But the humble in spirit will retain honour.

We've read much about pride as we've gone through this book - of note, in chapters 11, 15, 16 and 22. But the Bible warns us elsewhere too - including in Luke's gospel and James chapter 4, where we read this simple instruction:

James 4:10

Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.

...

Proverbs 29:24

Whoever is a partner with a thief hates his own life;
He swears to tell the truth, but reveals nothing.

Therefore, don't associate with the wrong people, but choose your friends carefully. I've seen this play out in real life, with a colleague who was fired after she mixed with the wrong people and started shipping products to herself for free. Others can have a very good, or very bad effect on us. We need wisdom to choose the right friends!

Proverbs 29:25

The fear of man brings a snare,
But whoever trusts in the LORD shall be safe.

It's hard, but we must not be frightened of doing the right thing. Yet none of us are immune to these fears - just look at Elijah in 1 Kings 19, who immediately after the victory on Mt Carmel, sinks to despair when his life is in danger.

Proverbs 29:26

Many seek the ruler's favor,
But justice for man comes from the LORD.

We MAY see justice done in our lives here - we live in a great country - however ALL WILL see justice done in the end by God. It's His opinion that really matters!

In the final verse of this chapter we read:

Proverbs 29:27

An unjust man is an abomination to the righteous,
And he who is upright in the way is an abomination to the wicked.

So, don't expect agreement between the righteous + wicked - we can't all just get along. While we are to be gentle to all, that doesn't mean we should agreed with all.

Summary

In closing this week, there are 3 application questions I have for us to ponder in our hearts:

Application questions

- Are we choosing the better things described in Proverbs?
- Are we turning a blind eye to the poor?
- Is there anything in our hearts that would harm our prayer life?

Let's pray.