

Adam Clarke:

Introduction

We must not despise correction. The prudent king. The flatterer. The just judge. Contend not with a fool. The prince who opens his ears to reports. The poor and the deceitful. The pious king. The insolent servant. The humiliation of the proud. Of the partner of a thief. The fear of man. The Lord the righteous Judge.

Verse 1

Hardeneth his neck - Becomes stubborn and obstinate.

Verse 3

But he that keepeth company - ם״ח״ח״ (roeh), he that feedeth harlots, ם״ח״ח״ח״ (yeabed), shall utterly destroy his substance. Has there ever been a single case to the contrary?

Verse 4

He that receiveth gifts - This was notoriously the case in this kingdom, before the passing of the Magna Charta, or great charter of liberties. Hence that article in it, Nulli vendemus justitiam; â€œWe will not sell justice to any.â€ I have met with cases in our ancient records where, in order to get his right, a man was obliged almost to ruin himself in presents to the king, queen, and their favourites, to get the case decided in his favor.

Verse 5

Spreadeth a net for his feet - Beware of a flatterer; he does not flatter merely to please you, but to deceive you and profit himself.

Verse 9

Whether he rage or laugh - Coverdale translates, â€œYf a wyse man go to lawe with a foole, whether he deale with him frendly or roughly he geteth no rest.â€

Verse 11

A fool uttereth all his mind - A man should be careful to keep his own secret, and never tell his whole mind upon any subject, while there are other opinions yet to be delivered; else, if he speak again, he must go over his old ground; and as he brings out nothing new, he injures his former argument.

Verse 12

If a ruler hearken to lies - Wherever the system of espionage is permitted to prevail, there the system of falsity is established; for he who is capable of being a spy and informer, is not only capable of telling and swearing lies, but also of cutting his king's or even his father's throat. I have seen cases, where the same spy received pay from both parties, and deceived both.

Verse 13

The poor and the deceitful man - It is difficult to fix the meaning of ם״ח״ח״ח״ (techachim), which we here render the deceitful man. The Targum has, â€œThe poor and the man of Little Wealth.â€ The Septuagint, â€œThe usurer and the Debtor.â€ The Vulgate, â€œThe poor and Creditor.â€ Coverdale, â€œThe poor and the Lender.â€ Others, â€œThe poor and the Rich;â€ â€œThe poor and the Oppressors.â€ I suppose the meaning may be the same as in Proverbs 22:2 (note): â€œThe rich and the poor meet together; the Lord is the Maker of them all.â€ Where see the note.

Verse 16

When the wicked are multiplied - That, in the multiplication of the wicked transgression is increased, requires no proof; but an important doctrine attaches to this. On this account wicked nations and wicked families are cut off and rooted out. Were it not so righteousness would in process of time be banished from the earth. This will account for many of the numerous instances in which whole families fail.

Verse 18

Where there is no vision - My old MS. Bible, following the Vulgate, translates: Whan prophecye schal failen, the peple schal ben to scatered. Where Divine revelation, and the faithful preaching of the sacred testimonies, are neither revered nor attended, the ruin of that land is at no great distance.

But he that keepeth the law, happy is he - Go how it may with others, he shall be safe. So our Lord: â€œBlessed are they who hear the word of God, and keep it.â€

Verse 21

He that delicately bringeth up his servant - Such persons are generally forgetful of their obligations, assume the rights and privileges of children, and are seldom good for any thing.

Verse 22

An angry man stirreth up strife - His spirit begets its like wherever he goes.

And a furious man aboundeth in transgression - His furious spirit is always carrying him into extremes, and each of these is a transgression.

Verse 23

A man's pride shall bring him low - A proud man is universally despised, and such are often exposed to great mortifications.

Verse 24

Hateth his own soul - *וְשׂוֹנֵא נַפְשׁוֹ* (naphsho), his life, as the outraged law may at any time seize on and put him to death.

He heareth cursing - *וְשׂוֹנֵא אֱלֹהִים* (alah), the execration or adjuration, (for all culprits were charged, as before God, to tell the truth), *וְשׂוֹנֵא אֱלֹהִים* (velo yagpid), but He will not tell it. He has no fear of God, nor reverence for an oath, because his heart is hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

Verse 25

The fear of man bringeth a snare - How often has this led weak men, though sincere in their general character, to deny their God, and abjure his people! See the case of Peter; and learn from this, O reader, that where the mighty have been slain, thou wilt fall, unless thou call on the Strong for strength, and for courage to use it. Be not ashamed of Jesus nor of his people, nor of his cross. Glory in this, that thou knowest him, art joined to them, and art counted worthy to bear it.

Verse 26

Many seek the ruler's favor - To be screened from the punishment determined by the law; but should he grant the favor sought, and pardon the criminal, this takes not away his guilt in the sight of God, from whom all just judgment proceeds.

Verse 27

And he that is upright in the way - *אֲשֶׁר יֵשֶׁת׃* But as for those that be in the right way, the wicked hate them. - Coverdale.

To this verse the Vulgate adds the following: *Verbum custodiens filius extra perditionem erit; The son that keeps the word shall not fall into perdition.* This is not in all copies of the Vulgate: but it was in that from which my old MS. Bible was made, where it is thus translated: *The sone keping the worde schal ben out of perdicyon.* I believe verbum here is intended for the Divine word; the revelation from God.