

Over the last few chapters of Proverbs we have seen more and more emphasis on the King.  
Think of what we have seen in the last couple chapters:

“The terror of a king is like the growling of a lion,  
but his favor is like dew on the grass.” (19:12)  
“Steadfast love and faithfulness preserve the king,  
and by steadfast love his throne is upheld.” (20:28)  
“The king’s heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD...” (21:1)

Here in Proverbs 22, as this collection of the Proverbs of Solomon draws to its end,  
we hear how this connects to us:

*<sup>11</sup> He who loves purity of heart,  
and whose speech is gracious, will have the king as his friend.*

What would it mean to have the *king* for your friend?

Remember what we’ve seen about friendship in the book of Proverbs.  
Friendship is not primarily about being “buddies.”  
Friendship is primarily about *being there* for each other.

Your friend has your back.

So if the *king* has your back – that is just about the best friend you can imagine!

The apostle Paul tells us that this is one of the main purposes of government!  
In Romans 13:3-4, Paul says:

“For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad.  
Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority?  
Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval,  
for he is God’s servant for your good.  
But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain.  
For he is the servant of God,  
an avenger who carries out God’s wrath on the wrongdoer.”

People sometimes ask me why I seem so oblivious to dangers of our eroding democracy.

The reason is simple: God tells me not to fear the one who is in authority!

Now, a good response would be:

“But pastor, Nero had Paul executed!”

Yup.

And yet still, Paul says to us –

Roman emperors, British monarchs, Soviet dictators, and American presidents

are the servants of God,  
avengers who carry out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.

If you do what is good, then you may live without fear.  
That doesn't mean that Nero won't kill you!  
It means that Nero *shouldn't* kill you –  
and if he does, then he is acting contrary to his own best interests!

So what if American descends into tyranny?  
That is what has happened to every other republic in human history!

Paul says "Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority?  
Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval."

What matters more to us?  
Freedom? Or Jesus?

Paul says that the *gospel* is what matters more than anything else!

And he gets that idea from Proverbs.

### **1. The Sovereignty of God and Wealth (v1-9)**

Chapter 22 has two basic parts – verses 1-9 talk about the sovereignty of God and wealth;  
and verses 10-16 talk about wealth and moral instruction.

In other words – remember who God is –  
live that way – and teach it to your children!

#### **a. A Good Name Is Better Than Riches (v1)**

Verse 1 starts off with one of those neutral sounding proverbs:  
*A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches,  
and favor is better than silver or gold.*

If you have to choose between riches and a good name – choose the good name.  
After all, if you have lots of money – and a bad reputation –  
that's not a good place to be.

What is a good name?

It's not *just* your reputation.  
A devious man can have a good reputation in spite of being a bad person.  
So perhaps I should point out that in Hebrew, the word "good" isn't there.  
It's simply "a name is to be chosen rather than great riches."

We supply the word “good” in English,  
because we don’t really think about *names* the same way they did!

We do have *some* sense of this.

For over a hundred years after the American Revolution,  
people would name their sons after George Washington  
Thomas Jefferson, and other founding fathers..  
There was George Washington Carver – the African American botanist.  
George Washington Adams (son of president John Quincy Adams)  
Robert *Jefferson* Breckinridge...

In those days, the common practice was to give children *family* names.

Your first son would be named after one (or both) of his grandfathers.  
(Hence *Benjamin Breckinridge* Warfield –  
the story is that after he was born,  
the two grandfathers had a long conversation –  
after which the parents found out what they were to name the boy!).

It was very unusual to step outside the family names.

Girls, as well as boys, would have family last names as their middle names  
There are so many Sally Campbell Prestons –  
that it can take me a while to figure out  
who is the author of a letter!

(RJ had a daughter, three nieces, and a mother-in-law by that name!)

And that practice goes back a long way.

When Elizabeth tries to name her son “John” –  
everyone objects that there is no one in the family by that name!

For most of human history *your name* connects you to your family.

And so *a name* is to be chosen rather than great riches.

The implication is that it is a “good name” (because who would choose a bad name?!).

Bruce Waltke says that “A good name represents a person’s good character and his memory.”

(Waltke, 199)

That is certainly true.

How you live will shape your name.

Benjamin *Breckinridge* Warfield knew that his grandfather had given him a name.

The Breckinridge name was an honorable one – but also a contentious one!  
Breckinridges were known for being hotheads!

B. B. Warfield deliberately chose to cultivate a much gentler path.

He still stood boldly for truth (“Lion of Princeton” was his nickname) –

but without his grandfather's prickly personality.

Your name is something that is given to you – but your name is also what you make of it!  
And that's why Solomon says, "A name is to be chosen rather than great riches,  
and favor is better than silver or gold."

Now, think about how verse 1 fits in the context of verses 1-4:

**b. The LORD's Sovereignty Does Not Remove Human Responsibility (v2-4)**

<sup>2</sup> *The rich and the poor meet together;  
the LORD is the Maker of them all.*

<sup>3</sup> *The prudent sees danger and hides himself,  
but the simple go on and suffer for it.*

<sup>4</sup> *The reward for humility and fear of the LORD  
is riches and honor and life.<sup>[a]</sup>*

Why is a good name better than riches?  
Because the rich and the poor meet together before their Maker!

We'll see in verses 7-9 how inequality is a daily fact of life.  
But verses 2-4 start off with our basic equality before God.

Everyone stands before God.  
The rich and the poor alike stand before their Maker.  
And indeed, the reward for humility and fear of the LORD  
is riches and honor and life!

You can acquire riches in all sorts of ways.  
But in order to acquire a good name you need virtue.

Riches come and riches go...  
but a good name endures.

Actually this theme was among the first themes we looked at in chapter 10!  
10:2 – "Treasures gained by wickedness do not profit,  
but righteousness delivers from death."  
10:7 – "The memory of the righteous is a blessing,  
but the name of the wicked will rot."

What do you want to happen to your name?  
Do you want your name to be a blessing to others?  
When others think of *your name* – what will they think?  
The name of the wicked will rot.  
The name "Adolph" was once a noble German name.

But now?  
Ever since a guy named Hitler destroyed it –  
it has joined Cushan-Rishathaim in the dustbin of historical names!

And if you focus on maintaining a good name:

<sup>4</sup> *The reward for humility and fear of the LORD  
is riches and honor and life.<sup>[a]</sup>*

Humility means recognizing that you are *not* self-sufficient!  
You can't "handle it"!  
Humility says "I need Jesus!"  
And the reward for humility – the reward for fearing God –  
is riches and honor and life.  
Namely – a good name *and riches – and life!*

Chapter 22 now concludes this central section of Proverbs by coming back to the opening theme  
and urging you to teach this to your own children!

**c. Therefore Teach Your Children the Right Path (v5-6)**

<sup>5</sup> *Thorns and snares are in the way of the crooked;  
whoever guards his soul will keep far from them.*

<sup>6</sup> *Train up a child in the way he should go;  
even when he is old he will not depart from it.*

Thorns and snares are in the way of the crooked.  
So stay away from that path!

Guard your soul.

Guard your heart.

If there are temptations that tend to ensnare you –  
then think through what are the places and times  
where things tend to go wrong.  
Change your habits – change your patterns – change your path –  
so that you can protect your soul from those temptations!

If you struggle with road rage –  
but you still have to drive! –  
then before you turn the engine on,  
take two minutes to pray,  
and ask God to guard and guide you.

And then teach your children these things:

<sup>6</sup> *Train up a child in the way he should go;  
even when he is old he will not depart from it.*

The word translated “train” is usually translated “dedicate” –  
as in the dedication of the temple in 1 Kings 8 or 2 Chronicles 7.

So it is probably better to translate it “dedicate a child in the way he should go.”

The ongoing training is important –

but at the root of that ongoing training is a commitment on the part of the parent.

The term “youth” (or child) is used regularly in Proverbs  
of one who is on his way to becoming a fool.

A child *will* become a fool – unless *someone* dedicates him to God  
and devotes himself to training him in the way of wisdom!

The habits that children establish have a long-term effect.  
So help your children establish good patterns!

I remember a young lady in my father-in-law’s church who came home from college,  
she came over to see him and to thank him for teaching them the catechism.

She said,

“I never liked it is a kid –

but in college, when my friends would invite me to do stuff –

at first, I’d want to do it –

but then a catechism answer came to mind –

and I’d realize that God said not to.

Thank you for making me learn the catechism!”

Proverbs 22:6 is what catechesis is all about.

Establishing a pattern – a path – a way of life –

that helps our children to learn to love the straight path.

**d. Because the LORD Rewards the Generous and Condemns the Unjust (v7-9)**

Verses 7-9 then provide another one of those segments that really needs to be read together!

<sup>7</sup> *The rich rules over the poor,  
and the borrower is the slave of the lender.*

If you just read this one verse, you will miss the point of the text.

(And yes, this means that Dave Ramsey generally takes this verse out of context.

Dave Ramsey often quotes the second half of verse 7

as a reason why you should never borrow money.

But even the first half of the verse makes it clear

that this verse is not saying what *should be* – but what *is!*)

The borrower is the slave of the lender.

This is a factual statement.

If I borrow money from you, then I am your slave.

How does it make me your slave?

Because my labor is no longer my own.

My labor belongs to you.

If you loan me \$1,000 –

then that means that I have *your* thousand dollars.

And I need to pay you back.

How can I pay you back?

By working for you.

Now, I might choose to work somewhere else –

but I still have that thousand dollars of yours.

So as long as I have your thousand dollars, I am bound to you  
(according to the terms of our contract).

But Proverbs is not passing judgment on anyone in verse 7.

This is the factual statement that sets up the judgments in verses 8-9.

Since we live in a world in which the rich rule over the poor –

since we live in a world in which the borrower is slave to the lender –  
what does that mean for us?

<sup>8</sup> *Whoever sows injustice will reap calamity,  
and the rod of his fury will fail.*

<sup>9</sup> *Whoever has a bountiful<sup>[b]</sup> eye will be blessed,  
for he shares his bread with the poor.*

Notice that the focus is on the rich – and on the lender.

Those who sow injustice will reap calamity.

If you are a lender – be careful how you treat your borrowers!

If you are wealthy – be careful how you use your wealth!

If you use your wealth to sow injustice – you will reap calamity!

In contrast, in verse 9, the one who is generous (the one who has a “good eye”) will be blessed,  
because he shares his bread with the poor.

If you have wealth, you are called to *use it* for the good of others.

I have a friend who isn’t all that wealthy –

but he uses what little wealth he has to invest in houses and fix them up.

Rather than become a “flipper” who is simply interested in making a profit,

or becoming a slum lord who takes advantage of the poor,

he tries to look for people who need a little help to get ahead.

He makes a small profit (to enable him to keep doing it!) –  
but there are several people today who are now homeowners in South Bend  
because of him.

He has a “good eye” – a generous eye.

And he shares his bread with the poor in such a way  
that they are able to build wealth and get out of poverty.

Therefore, he will be blessed!

## 2. Wealth and Moral Instruction (v10-16)

The second half of our passage then focuses on wealth and moral instruction.

Just as verse 9 ended the first half with a blessing on the one who shares with the poor,  
verse 16 will end the second half

with a warning against the one who oppresses the poor.

If you think about wealth as a means of providing for yourself and your family  
then you are thinking in a very foolish way.

The characters in these verses may sound familiar:

the scoffer (v10)

the traitor (v12)

the sluggard (v13)

and the forbidden woman (v14).

At first this may seem out of place in the middle of all this discussion about wealth –

but if you think about it, all of these foolish ways have economic impact:

the scoffer can destroy a business because he creates a toxic work environment;

the traitor will cost you!

the sluggard – doesn't work...

and the forbidden woman...

we don't like to think about the economic component of sex –

but if she has a baby – oh yeah, that's going to be expensive!

And for that reason, most human societies have had penalties for adultery.

### a. How to End Quarreling and Become the King's Friend (v10-11)

<sup>10</sup> *Drive out a scoffer, and strife will go out,  
and quarreling and abuse will cease.*

Verses 10-11 contrasts the scoffer with the pure of heart.

The scoffer stirs up strife wherever he goes.

Paul uses the term “reviler” in 1 Corinthians 5 –

and he puts the reviler in the same category as the adulterer

and the drunkard, and the idolater.

Here's how Paul says it:



<sup>11</sup> *But now I am writing to you not to associate  
with anyone who bears the name of brother  
if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed,  
or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—  
not even to eat with such a one.*  
<sup>12</sup> *For what have I to do with judging outsiders?  
Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge?*  
<sup>13</sup> *God judges those outside. “Purge the evil person from among you.”*

Paul is saying exactly what Proverbs says:

“drive out a scoffer, and strife will go out, and quarreling and abuse will cease.”

Verbal abuse is a problem.

No, it is a sin.

And it is a sin on the same order as sexual immorality or drunkenness.

Scoffers – revilers – those who use words to tear down and destroy –  
have no place in the church of Jesus Christ!

I remember one job I had when I was young.

It was a miserable place to work because this one guy was a bully.

Because of the way he treated others –

there was a pattern that others fell into as well.

When he got fired – it was interesting to see how the place changed.

People could relax... they didn't have to be afraid of the verbal beating.

Scoffers must be driven out!

Now, the *preferred* way of driving them out  
is through repentance.

If you realize that you are playing the scoffer –

if you are using words to control and to tear down –  
then you need to repent!

Because if you don't repent – you gotta go!

The contrast is seen clearly in verse 11:

<sup>11</sup> *He who loves purity of heart,  
and whose speech is gracious, will have the king as his friend.*

Gracious speech comes from a pure heart.

But notice the way it says it!

“He who *loves purity of heart* and whose speech is gracious”

How does speech become gracious?

Because of what we love.

If we love our own pleasure – our own prosperity – our own power –

then we will not be characterized by gracious speech.  
Our words will always tend to further what we love.  
We are prophets – you might say – who speak on behalf of our god!

Whoever or whatever you serve is who you will speak for!  
If you love purity of heart – if you love a heart that is pure before God –  
then you will have gracious speech as well –

and thus you will have the king as your friend!

Of course, remember who is speaking –  
these are proverbs of Solomon.  
If you love purity of heart – and have gracious speech –  
then the Son of David will be your friend.

The Messiah will have your back!  
What a friend we have in Jesus!

#### **b. The LORD Subverts Treacherous Words (v12-14)**

Verses 12-14 then remind us that the LORD is the one whose verdict matters.  
Here we have the traitor – the sluggard – and the forbidden woman –  
and in all three verses the focus is on *words* –  
the *words* of the traitor...  
the sluggard *says*...  
the *mouth* of forbidden women...

<sup>12</sup> *The eyes of the LORD keep watch over knowledge,  
but he overthrows the words of the traitor.*

<sup>13</sup> *The sluggard says, “There is a lion outside!  
I shall be killed in the streets!”*

<sup>14</sup> *The mouth of forbidden<sup>[c]</sup> women is a deep pit;  
he with whom the LORD is angry will fall into it.*

The LORD overthrows the words of the traitor.

This is a reminder that human words do not rule.

Think of the LORD’s high priest – Caiaphas –

who spoke against Jesus – saying that Jesus should die in place of the nation!

The eyes of the LORD kept watch over knowledge –

and he overthrew the words of his treacherous high priest –  
giving them a meaning that Caiaphas did not intend!

Verses 13-14 then give two examples of treacherous speech.

The sluggard is tempted by easy money.

The forbidden woman offers easy sex.

The sluggard won't go to work because he is afraid of what might happen.  
Obviously lions did not roam the streets of Jerusalem – or any other town!  
The whole point is that he is lazy!  
And he will use any excuse for not working.

The forbidden woman also betrays you:  
her mouth is a deep pit –  
like the grave.

We haven't heard about the forbidden woman since chapter 9 (the woman Folly).  
Why does she appear again here?  
Because she reminds us that sexual immorality is not just a sin.  
It is also a judgment of God *against* those who refuse to repent.

When God gives up on a person – or a nation –  
he hands them over to what they want.

“He with whom the LORD *is angry* will fall into it.”  
This is why you need to *love* purity of heart!  
If your heart is focused on Jesus –  
if your life is oriented around the fear of the LORD –  
then you will have Jesus for your friend –  
and he will protect you from the foreign woman!

And this is why you should

**c. So Teach Your Children to Forsake Folly in Their Economic Dealing (v15-16)**

<sup>15</sup> *Folly is bound up in the heart of a child,  
but the rod of discipline drives it far from him.*

Folly is bound up in the heart of a child.  
You sometimes hear people say that children are innocent.  
Ha!  
Sin is endemic in the human population.  
It is a pandemic that started in the days of Adam and Eve –  
and will not be fully cured until the return of our Lord Jesus Christ!

We are supposed to seek *purity of heart* –  
but purity is not found in a child's heart.  
No – folly is bound up there.

How do you get it out?

You cannot eliminate Folly simply by wishing it away!

The rod of discipline drives it far from him.

Moral education requires physical punishment as well as spiritual teaching.

I suspect that this is one of the greatest problems with modern pedagogy.

We don't seem to realize that our bodies and souls are connected...

Bodily discipline is of some use – and that doesn't change when you grow up!

As Waltke puts it, “Bodily harm without heals the moral rot within.” (216)

Because if you don't deal with the foolishness when they are young –  
then you will wind up with verse 16:

*<sup>16</sup> Whoever oppresses the poor to increase his own wealth,  
or gives to the rich, will only come to poverty.*

If you are willing to trample others in order to get ahead –  
or if you seek to curry favor by giving gifts to those who are already rich –  
then you will come – in the end – to poverty.

As our government looks like it will be giving us another round of “stimulus” –  
I would urge you to consider using that money *not* for yourselves –  
but for the good of others –  
and particularly for the good of the poor.

Sure, part of me wishes that they wouldn't give me all that money.

I don't need it.

But since the object is to stimulate the economy,

I see it as an opportunity to do precisely that –

you are being given the resources to help those in need!

By now we should see the eschatological echoes in the language of “will come to poverty...”

Whatever may happen during your lifetime –

those who are not generous – those who are selfish –

will only come to poverty.

That is where they will end up –

because that is the destination that they have set for their feet.

Lord, have mercy upon us!