

TEXT — 17:1-10

1. Better is a dry morsel, and quietness therewith,
Than a house full of feasting with strife.
2. A servant that dealeth wisely shall have rule over a son
that causeth shame,
And shall have part in the inheritance among the brethren.
3. The refining pot is for silver, and the furnace for gold;
But Jehovah trieth the hearts.
4. An evil-doer giveth heed to wicked lips;
And a liar giveth ear to a mischievous tongue.
5. Whoso mocketh the poor reproacheth his Maker;
And he that is glad at calamity shall not be unpunished.
6. Children's children are the crown of old men;
And the glory of children are their fathers.
7. Excellent speech becometh not a fool;
Much less do lying lips a prince.
8. A bribe is as a precious stone in the eyes of him that hath
it;
Whithersoever it turneth, it prospereth.
9. He that covereth a transgression seeketh love;
But he that harpeth on a matter separateth chief friends.
10. A rebuke entereth deeper into one that hath understanding
Than a hundred stripes into a fool.

STUDY QUESTIONS OVER 17:1-10

1. What does "quietness" stand for in v. 1?
2. Cite the two contrasts in v. 2.
3. What does Jehovah do when He "trieth the hearts"
(v. 3)?
4. Why will a liar give heed to a mischievous tongue (v. 4)?
5. What are some common examples of laughing at calamity
(v. 5)?
6. Reproacheth whose Maker (v. 5)?
7. What is meant in v. 6 by "the glory of children are their
fathers?"
8. What is "excellent" speech (v. 7)?
9. What does "becometh" mean in v. 7?
10. What is the meaning of a bribe's being a "precious
stone" to its possessor (v. 8)?

11. What is the "it" in v. 8?
12. Covers his or somebody else's transgression (v. 9)?
13. What is "harping on a matter" (v. 9)?
14. What will help a man if one hundred stripes won't (v. 10)?

PARAPHRASE OF 17:1-10

1. A dry crust eaten in peace is better than steak every day along with argument and strife.
2. A wise slave will rule his master's wicked sons and share their estate.
3. Silver and gold are purified by fire, but God purifies hearts.
4. The wicked enjoy fellowship with others who are wicked; liars enjoy liars.
5. Mocking the poor is mocking the God who made them. He will punish those who rejoice at others' misfortunes.
6. An old man's grandchildren are his crowning glory. A child's glory is his father.
7. Truth from a rebel or lies from a king are both unexpected.
8. A bribe works like magic. Whoever uses it will prosper!
9. Love forgets mistakes; nagging about them parts the best of friends.
10. A rebuke to a man of common sense is more effective than a hundred lashes on the back of a rebel.

COMMENTS ON 17:1-10

V. 1. Because their bread was "dry", they dipped it in water and other softening fluids (Ruth 2:14; John 13:36). And having only a dry morsel to eat could be the sign of extreme poverty. So taken, the verse means that poverty and peace are to be preferred to prosperity and problems (such as "strife"). The rich have troubles and problems that the poor do not have. This statement should be a comfort to people who have only the barest of necessities. Prov. 15:17 is very similar.

V. 2. "Pulpit Commentary": "Here is intimated the supremacy of wisdom over folly and vice...Slaves were often raised to high honor and might inherit their master's possessions. Thus Abraham's servant...was at one time considered the patriarch's heir (Gen. 15:2,3); Ziba, Saul's servant, obtained the inheritance of his lord Mephibosheth (II

Sam. 16:4); Joseph was advanced to the highest post in Egypt." In European history when the sons of Clovis, king of the Franks, did not really care to rule but merely to enjoy the pleasures of the palace, they had "mayors of the palace" who did the actual ruling, and in time the mayors became the heirs of the throne itself. (For further reading consult the "Merovingian" and "Carolingian" dynasties in church history books or encyclopedias.) For "a son that causeth shame", see Prov. 10:5; 19:26.

V. 3. Just as men refine gold and silver (Prov. 27:21), so does God refine men. Through the Word (John 15:3), but especially through chastening :Isa. 48:10; Heb. 12:11) and persecution (I Pet. 1:6,7; Jas. 1:2,3; and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (II Cor. 3:18), does He refine us. Mal. 3:2,3 aptly predicted this refining in the Christian dispensation.

V. 4. It is common for perverse people to believe the wrong thing about others. They want to. They get enjoyment from it. They derive satisfaction in thinking the righteous are not really righteous. This verse is a case of Hebrew parallelism in which the second line restates the truth of the first statement. Thus the "liar" is the "evil-doer", "giveth ear" is the same as "giveth heed", and a "mischievous tongue" is the same as "wicked lips" The liar will have something more to lie about.

V. 5. Prov. 14:31 talked of oppressing the poor; this verse of mocking the poor. People mock the poor when they make fun of them, laugh at them, mimic them, and make life harder for them. God is the "Maker" of the poor as well as the rich (Prov. 22:2); when we mock them, we mock Him; when we give to them, we are making a loan to the Lord (Prov. 19:17). We should not be glad at any calamity, whether that calamity be poverty (as in this context) or any other. Job said he was free from this (Job. 31:29), but Edom wasn't (Oba. 12). God will punish us if we do (Prov. 24:17).

V. 6. When one's own health begins to fail, and it seems there is less and less purpose for one's earthly life, along come the births of grandchildren to inject a new dimension into one's living. They "crown" one's life near one's bowing-out years. The last statement shows that good children not only respect their parents but actually glory in them. How they will brag about them (sometimes even exaggerate concerning what he can do, what he knows, how much money he has, etc.).

For the blessing that children can be, see Psa. 127:3-5; 128:3.

V. 7. Excellent speech is speaking only the facts, speaking them at the right time, at the right place, to the right person, in the right spirit, and for the right purpose (to mention a few of its characteristics). As we don't expect good speech from a fool, neither should we expect bad speech from a ruler. It is a shame that so many of our present-day ruling-class, even though elected to their offices, are known for being "politicians" (policy-men) more than "statesmen" (doing what is right under all conditions).

V. 8. The various translations face the problem of whether it should be "bribe", "gift," or "stone of grace", and whether the "it" after "whithersoever" should be "it" or "he". Of all the translations the "New World" gives as understandable a message on this verse as any: "The gift is a stone winning favor in the eyes of its grand owner. Everywhere that he turns he has success." If the foregoing is correct, both Prov. 18:16 and 19:6 verify the truth of its statement. If "bribe" is correct, "Living Bible" has, "A bribe works like magic. Whoever uses it will prosper" and it adds this footnote: "This is a fact, but the writer strictly forbids this perversion of justice. See v. 23"

V. 9. "Septuagint": "He who concealeth injuries seeketh friendship." One's sense of love will cause him not to repeat many things he has heard, even if true, if they are not in the best interests of the one involved (Prov. 10:12). Harping on a matter is just the opposite of concealing it, for it utilizes every opportunity to bring it up, to mention it, or to ramble on and on about it. This can be the end of friendship.

V. 10. The contrast here does not mean to elevate "rebuke" (words of correction) and eliminate "stripes" (Physical punishments). It merely shows that some "words" do a wise man more good than "stripes" do a fool. What a pity that there are some whom neither words nor stripes will help! Peter was a man who was helped by rebuke, by both Jesus and Paul (Matt. 16:23; 26:75; Gal. 2:11-15).

V. 11. An "evil" man is one who will not be guided and governed by that which is right. He is a law-breaker, both in heart and in act. He seeks only rebellion against properly constituted authority (parents, school, government, manners, etc.). He, thus, is a liability and not an asset. Because he will not obey, will not respect the rights and property of others, he is often confined in prison at a great outlay of citizens' money. Better for society if he had never been born!

TEST QUESTIONS OVER 17:1-10

1. In v. 1 a "dry morsel" stands in contrast with, and "quietness" stands in contrast with
2. Cite instances illustrating the truth of v. 2.
3. Men work at refining gold and silver; God works at refining (v. 3).
4. Why do evil people give heed to wicked lips (v. 3)?
5. Cite the three parallels in v. 4.
6. Why is mocking the poor tantamount to mocking God (v. 5)?
7. What about being glad at others' calamities (v. 5)?
8. What is a great blessing of old age (v. 6)?
9. Comment on the fathers being the glory of children (v. 6)?
10. What is the double contrast in v. 7?
11. What is the problem of understanding v. 8?
12. What will love cause one to do concerning the faults of others (v. 9)?
13. Is v. 10 a contrast between rebuking and whipping or what?

TEXT — 17:11-19

11. An evil man seeketh only rebellion;
Therefore a cruel messenger shall be sent against him.
12. Let a bear robbed of her whelps meet a man,
Rather than a fool in his folly.
13. Whoso rewardeth evil for good,
Evil shall not depart from his house.
14. The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water:
Therefore leave off contention, before there is quarrelling.
15. He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth
the righteous,
Both of them alike are an abomination to Jehovah.
16. Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to buy
wisdom,
Seeing he hath no understanding?
17. A friend loveth at all times;
And brother is born for adversity.
18. A man void of understanding striketh hands,
And becometh surety in the presence of his neighbor.
19. He loveth transgression that loveth strife;
He that raiseth high his gate seeketh destruction.

STUDY QUESTIONS OVER 17:11-19

1. Rebellion against what (v. 11)?
2. What is a "whelp" (v. 12)?
3. Cite two Bible examples of people's rewarding evil for good (v. 13).
4. The lesson in v. 14 is "Don't begin lest it lead to"
5. The wicked are to be, not (v. 15).
6. The righteous are to be, not (v. 15).
7. Cite two Bible examples of justifying the wicked (v. 15).
8. Cite two Bible examples of condemning the righteous (v. 15).
9. Is "fool" in v. 16 one who is mentally deficient or one who does not use his head?
10. What kind of "friends" did the Prodigal Son have (v. 17)?
11. What is "surety" (v. 18)?
12. What is meant by raising high one's gate (v. 19)?

PARAPHRASE OF 17:11-19

11. The wicked live for rebellion! they shall be severely punished.
12. It is safer to meet a bear robbed of her cubs than a fool caught in his folly.
13. If you repay evil for good, a curse is upon your home.
14. It is hard to stop a quarrel once it starts, so don't let it begin.
15. The Lord despises those who say that bad is good, and good is bad.
16. It is senseless to pay tuition to educate a rebel who has no heart for truth.
17. A true friend is always loyal, and a brother is born to help in time of need.
18. It is poor judgment to countersign another's note, to become responsible for his debts.
19. Sinners love to fight; boasting is looking for trouble.

COMMENTS ON 17:11-19

V. 11. The "rebellion" here under consideration was anarchy against the existing government. With the monarchical form of government of those days, this was common and accounted for many assassinations (see the Northern Kingdom

history for numerous instances of this). When any such rebellion was detected, the rebellion was immediately put down ("a cruel messenger shall be sent against him").

V. 12. The fierceness of a bear who has lost her young ("whelps") is also referred to in II Sam. 17:8 and Hos. 13:8. One who is unfortunate enough to come along to become involved in some fool's folly may suffer all the way from embarrassment to being murdered. Thus, one may have his car pelted by rock-throwing children as he drives by, his tires slashed because he lives in a neighborhood of "no-goods", or his life taken by hoodlums who kill him to see what he had in his billfold.

V. 13. It is contrary to nature (an extreme wrong) to reward evil for good. It is bad enough not to receive thanks from those helped, but it is even worse for the blessed to repay evil to the giver of good. When this occurs, the promise is that "evil" will abide upon such a one and his house. Instances of repaying good with evil: I Sam. 25:21; Psa. 109:4,5; Jer. 18:20.

V. 14. "Clarke": "As soon as the smallest breach is made in the dike or dam, the water begins to press from all parts towards the breach; the resistance becomes too great to be successfully opposed, so the dikes and all are speedily swept away. Such is the beginning of contentions, quarrels, lawsuits, etc." "Pulpit Commentary" also interprets the statement "as when one letteth out water". It is possible, though, that the expression referred to is the plain type of talk that they used in those days, talk that our society does not look upon as acceptable. Regardless of the figure and its interpretation, its application is unquestioned: cut off strife before it gets started.

V. 15. In God's books the wicked are to be condemned and the righteous commended (Matt. 25:34-36; 41-43 and many, many others). V. 26 of this chapter says, "To punish the righteous is not good, Nor to smite the noble for their uprightness." Exo. 23:7: "The innocent and righteous slay thou not; for I will not justify the wicked." Prov. 24:24: "He that saith unto the wicked, Thou art righteous, People shall curse him, nations shall abhor him." Isa. 5:20: "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil."

V. 16. Why pay out money for books and then not read, study, or use them? Why pay tuition fees to go to school when one does not really want to study and learn? "Pulpit Commentary": "A fool thinks that there is a royal road to wisdom, and that it, like other things, is to be purchased with

money." One who has a heart for learning will treasure and value every opportunity for learning (books, lectures, films, travel, etc.), such as Abraham Lincoln, and they rise on the wings of acquired knowledge and bless others with the knowledge they have gained. But pupils are not all students, teachers soon discover.

V. 17. A "friend" is "one who loves". A true friend loves at all times, even in times of adversities and reverses and health-failures. They are contrasted with "fair-weather friends" such as the Prodigal Son had (Luke 15:13-16,30). Ruth represents inseparable love (Ruth 1:16). David and Jonathan also (I Sam. 18:1,4; II Sam. 1:26). Brothers may live at a distance and not get to see each other very often, but times of adversity bring them together to help each other. Prov. 18:24 speaks of the friend that is even closer to us than a brother.

V. 18. "Clarke": "Striking each other's hands, or shaking hands, was anciently the form in concluding a contract." This was just as binding as our "signing" our names to a contract today. "Surety" was when one obligated himself for the debts of others. Proverbs gives strong warnings against this (Prov. 6:1,2; 11:15).

V. 19. One who loves strife must "love" transgression for strife produces many violations of God's law (such as jealousies, envyings, evil surmisings, hatreds, anger, malice, evil speaking, etc.). Such is carnality: "Ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you jealousy and strife, are ye not carnal, and do ye not walk after the manner of man?" (I Cor. 3:3). Jas. 3:16: "Where jealousy and faction are, there is confusion and every vile deed." "Pulpit Commentary" on exalting one's gate and its consequent destruction: "He who builds a sumptuous house and lives in a way that his magnificent surroundings demand draws ruin on himself...The entrance to a Palestine house would usually be of humble dimensions and sparse ornamentation; any doorway of great architectural pretensions would be uncommon, and would be regarded as a token of extraordinary wealth or reprehensible pride...which he is unable to support or...provoke reprisals and injurious consequences." A saying: "One who makes an unusual success in life makes many false friends and true enemies." Build something great, and the world will not only notice it, but someone will try to destroy it. See Prov. 16:18 also.

TEST QUESTIONS OVER 17:11-19

1. What kind of "rebellion" does v. 11 have particularly in mind?
2. What existing form of government made that a rather common occurrence (v. 11)?
3. What fierce animal is better to run into than a fool in his folly (v. 12)?
4. What are some examples of personal danger involved in meeting a fool in his folly (v. 12)?
5. What two possibilities are there for the expression, "as when one letteth out water" (v. 14)?
6. What is the lesson of v. 14?
7. Why does God pronounce a woe upon any who condemn the righteous and commend the unrighteous (v. 15)?
8. Why does an opportunity for learning sometimes not profit a person (v. 16)?
9. What is the difference between a true friend and a fair-weather friend (v. 17)?
10. If brothers don't get together often, when are they the most apt to get together (v. 17)?
11. What warnings does Proverbs give about "surety" (v. 18)?
12. What are some of the "transgressions" that grow out of "strife" (v. 18)?
13. Why does exalting one's gate often lead to destruction even in this life (v. 18)?

TEXT — 17:20-28

20. He that hath a wayward heart findeth no good;
And he that hath a perverse tongue falleth into mischief.
21. He that begetteth a fool doeth it to his sorrow;
And the father of a fool hath no joy.
22. A cheerful heart is a good medicine;
But a broken spirit drieth up the bones.
23. A wicked man receiveth a bribe out of the bosom,
To pervert the ways of justice.
24. Wisdom is before the face of him that hath understanding;
But the eyes of a fool are in the ends of the earth.
25. A foolish son is a grief to his father,
And bitterness to her that bare him.

26. Also to punish the righteous is not good,
Nor to smite the noble for their uprightness.
27. He that spareth his words hath knowledge;
And he that is of a cool spirit is a man of understanding.
28. Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace is counted wise;
When he shutteth his lips, he is esteemed as prudent.

STUDY QUESTIONS OVER 17:20-28

1. What is a "wayward Heart" in v. 20?
2. What does "fool" mean in v. 21?
3. How can one's attitude affect one's health (v. 22)?
4. What is meant by "out of the bosom" (v. 23)?
5. Apply the last statement of v. 24 to the Prodigal Son.
6. A foolish son is what two things to his parents (v. 25)?
7. Cite Bible instances of smiting the noble or punishing the righteous (v. 26).
8. What does it mean to spare his words (v. 27)?
9. What does holding one's peace mean (v. 28)?

PARAPHRASE OF 17:20-28

20. An evil man is suspicious of everyone and tumbles into constant trouble.
21. It's no fun to be a rebel's father.
22. A cheerful heart does good like medicine, but a broken spirit makes one sick.
23. It is wrong to accept a bribe to twist justice.
24. Wisdom is the main pursuit of sensible men, but a fool's goals are at the end of the earth!
25. A rebellious son is a grief to his father and bitter blow to his mother.
26. How short-sighted to fine the godly for being good! And to punish nobles for being honest!
- 27,28. The man of few words and settled mind is wise; therefore, even a fool is thought to be wise when he is silent. It pays him to keep his mouth shut.

COMMENTS ON 17:20-28

V. 20. Another case of Hebrew parallelism in which the second statement is a restatement of the first, using different words. A "wayward heart" and a "perverse tongue" are two liabilities. The wayward heart is one that wandered out of the path

that God has intended; it will find no good (no blessing from God). It is not pure so it will not see God (Matt. 5:8). It does not think upon the things listed in Phil. 4:8 so it will not know the peace that Phil. 4:7 mentions. Look at Jer. 17:9's description of the wayward heart. The perverse tongue is perverted; that is, it is speaking contrary to God's intentions for it. Such will get itself and others into much mischief and wrong-doing. See Jas. 3:6,8 for the evil that the perverse tongue can cause.

V. 21. The behavior of one's children can greatly affect his own future happiness or sorrow (v. 25; Prov. 10:1; 19:13). Think of the sorrow that Cain brought to Adam and Eve by killing Abel, that Absalom brought to his father David when he tried to steal his throne, and that Hophni and Phinehas brought to their priestly father Eli.

V. 22. Those who have cheerful hearts and bright outlooks upon life have a physical blessing of health that others do not know. On the other hand "nothing has such a direct tendency to ruin health and waste out life as grief, anxiety, fretfulness, bad tempers, etc. All these work death" ("Clarke"). Other passages: Prov. 12:25; 15:13,15.

V. 23. "Clarke": "Above their girdles the Asiatics carry their purses." A wicked (not a righteous) man receives a bribe and perverts justice as a result. This was forbidden in Exo. 23:8. If officials are not to receive them, we should not give them in our desire to get some kind of preferential treatment.

V. 24. The contrast between the fool and the one with understanding in this verse is that the fool's eyes are a long way off (to the "ends of the earth"), but the wise man sees wisdom right where he is. The fool misses the opportunities at hand and is always supposing that somewhere else, something else, is really better. An old saying: "A rolling stone gathers no moss," meaning that one who is always moving about and not settled down will not accumulate much nor accomplish much. Remember the Prodigal Son in this connection (Luke 15)? See Prov. 6:11 also.

V. 25. V. 21 spoke of the sorrow that a fool brings to his father. This verse speaks of the grief and bitterness he brings to both his parents. It is a tragedy when a son brings "grief" instead of joy to his father, and when he brings "bitterness" instead of satisfaction to his mother. But children must be reared and trained, not merely begotten and born. Similar passages: Prov. 10:1; 15:20; 19:13.

V. 26. See v. 15, also Prov. 18:5. This represents corruption in government, a perversion of justice. God has ordained government, and He says, "Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise from the same" (Rom. 13:3). Both Jesus and Paul were smitten when innocent (Matt. 26:67; Acts 23:1,2).

V. 27. "Pulpit Commentary": "He shows his common sense, not by rash talk or saying all he knows, but by restraining his tongue." We are to be "slow to speak" (Jas. 1:19). "In the multitude of words there wanteth not transgression; But he that refraineth his lips doeth wisely" (Prov. 10:19). "Cool spirit" means not losing one's temper and is parallel to "slow to wrath" (Jas. 1:19) and is praised in Prov. 16:32 ("He that ruleth his spirit"). This verse teaches us the wisdom of both not being too talkative and not losing one's temper.

V. 28. This verse continues the thoughts begun in v. 27. Eccl. 5:3 connects a "fool's voice" with the "multitude of words". Job exclaimed to his rash critics, "Oh that ye would altogether hold your peace! And it would be your wisdom" (Job 13:5). An old saying: "Be silent, and they will think you are a fool; speak, and they will know it." Occasionally you will get acquainted with a fool who does not advertise it with his speech; it was his lack of talkativeness that caused you to think of him as a normal person until you got better acquainted with him.

TEST QUESTIONS OVER 17:20-28

1. What two things are condemned in v. 20?
2. How do they get their owner into trouble (v. 20)?
3. Cite some Bible examples of sons who brought grief to their parents (v. 21).
4. What is said to be a good medicine that does not come from the store (v. 22)?
5. What two people sin when a bribe is given (v. 23)?
6. What is the contrast in v. 24?
7. Give another passage that tells of the grief that children can bring to their parents (v. 25).
8. Cite a Bible example of one being smitten who was upright :v. 26).
9. Does the Bible commend or condemn talkativeness (v. 27)?
10. What does v. 27 say about one who has a "cool spirit"?
11. By what means is a fool sometimes counted among the wise (v. 28)?

CHAPTER 17

NOTICEABLE GROUPINGS IN CHAPTER 17

"Wisdom"--

"A servant that dealeth wisely shall have rule over a son that causeth shame, And shall have part in the inheritance among the brethren" (v. 2).

"Wisdom is before the face of him that hath understanding" (v.24).

"He that spareth his words hath knowledge" (v. 27).

"He that is of a cool spirit is a man of understanding" (v. 27).

"Fools"--

"Excellent speech becometh not a fool" (v. 7).

"A rebuke entereth deeper into one that hath understanding Than a hundred stripes into a fool" (v. 10).

"Let a bear robbed of her whelps meet a man, Rather than a fool in his folly" (v. 12).

"Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to buy wisdom, Seeing he hath no understanding?" (v. 16).

"He that begetteth a fool doeth it to his sorrow" (v. 21).

"The father of a fool hath no joy" (v. 21).

"The eyes of a fool are in the ends of the earth" (v. 24).

"A foolish son is a grief to his father, And bitterness to her that bare him" (v. 25).

"Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace is counted wise; When he shutteth his lips, he is esteemed as prudent" (v. 28).

"Strife"--

"Better is a dry morsel, and quietness therewith, Than a house full of feasting with strife" (v. 1).

"The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water: Therefore leave off contention before there is quarrelling" (v. 14).

"He loveth transgression that loveth strife" (v. 19).

"Wicked"--

"A servant that dealeth wisely shall have rule over a son that causeth shame" (v. 2).

"An evil-doer giveth heed to wicked lips; And a liar giveth ear to a mischievous tongue" (v. 4).

"An evil man seeketh only rebellion" (v. 11).

"A wicked man receiveth a bribe out of the bosom, To pervert the ways of justice" (v. 23).

PONDERING THE PROVERBS

“Evil speech”--

“An evil-doer giveth heed to wicked lips; And a liar giveth ear to a mischievous tongue” (v. 4).

“Much less do lying lips a prince” (v. 7).

“He that harpeth on a matter separateth chief friends” (v. 9).

“He that hath a perverse tongue falleth into mischief” (v. 20).

“Bribes”--

“A bribe is as a precious stone in the eyes of him that hath it; Whithersoever it turneth, it prospereth” (v. 8).

“A wicked man receiveth a bribe out of the bosom, To pervert the ways of justice” (v. 23).