

## TEXT — 26:1-9

1. As snow in summer, and as rain in harvest,  
So honor is not seemly for a fool.
2. As a sparrow in her wandering, as the swallow in her  
flying,  
So the curse that is causeless alighteth not.
3. A whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass,  
And a rod for the back of fools.
4. Answer not a fool according to his folly,  
Lest thou also be like unto him.
5. Answer a fool according to his folly.  
Lest he be wise in his own conceit.
6. He that sendeth a message by the hand of a fool  
Cutteth off his own feet, and drinketh in damage.
7. The legs of the lame hang loose;  
So is a parable in the mouth of fools.
8. As one that bindeth a stone in a sling,  
So is he that giveth honor to a fool.
9. As a thorn that goeth up into the hand of a drunkard,  
So is a parable in the mouth of fools.

## STUDY QUESTIONS OVER 26:1-9

1. What does "seemly" mean (v. 1)?
2. Restate the last clause of v. 2 in your own words.
3. What does Psa. 32:9 say that fits in with v. 3?
4. What does v. 4 mean?
5. Why would God give the instruction of v. 5 after what He said in v. 4?
6. What is meant by "cutteth off his own feet" (v. 6)?
7. What can happen to a parable in the mouth of a fool (v. 7)?
8. What is the comparison in v. 8?
9. What is the comparison in v. 9?

## PARAPHRASE OF 26:1-9

1. Honor doesn't go with fools any more than snow with summertime or rain with harvest time!
2. An undeserved curse has no effect. Its intended victim will be no more harmed by it than by a sparrow or swallow flitting through the sky.

3. Guide a horse with a whip, a donkey with a bridle, and a rebel with a rod to his back!
- 4,5. When arguing with a rebel, don't use foolish arguments as he does, or you will become as foolish as he is! Prick his conceit with silly replies!
6. To trust a rebel to convey a message is as foolish as cutting off your feet and drinking poison!
7. In the mouth of a fool a proverb becomes as useless as a paralyzed leg.
8. Honoring a rebel will backfire like a stone tied to a sling-shot!
9. A rebel will misapply an illustration so that its point will no more be felt than a thorn in the hand of a drunkard.

#### COMMENTS ON 26:1-9

V. 1. A fool receives no honor nor does he have a sense of honor. The two go together as poorly as snow and summer and as rain and harvest. How many times a fool shows that he is a fool with poor rearing or a poor set of values by not joining in with giving honor to those to whom honor is due. Such a one is a poor one to marry, for neither will he bestow honor on his wife as I Pet. 3:7 and Prov. 31:28,29 teach.

V. 2. The ancients feared a curse pronounced by another. The point of the verse is, Do right, and you have nothing to fear from people's curses. At times it seems that some birds are aimlessly flying, just for the sake of flying, actually going nowhere. Even so a false curse will aimlessly go nowhere. In keeping with this verse are two eastern proverbs: "The jackal howls: will my old buffalo die?" "The dog barks--still the caravan passes: will the barking of the dog reach the skies?"

V. 3. Those who have worked around animals often use a whip because animals don't always do what they want them to do by other means. So, a whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass, and a rod for the back of fools. We are told in Psa. 32:9, "Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding; Whose trappings must be bit and bridle to hold them in." Prov. 10:13 says, "A rod is for the back of him that is void of understanding."

V. 4. "Pulpit Commentary": "Do not lower yourself to the fool's level by answering his silly questions or arguing with him as if he were a sensible man...Instances may be seen in Matt. 21:23-25; 22:17-21; John 21:21,22."

V. 5. Since the writer of vs. 4,5 was inspired, and since their seemingly conflicting instructions are in successive verses, there is no possible charge of contradiction as disbelievers might urge if they were found in different chapters or in different books of the Bible. Being carried together they demand that we ascertain the "why" behind the two instructions. First of all, this verse shows that sometimes you answer a fool according to his folly, and v. 4 shows that sometimes you don't. In each instance you will have to be the judge when it is appropriate and wise to do so and when it isn't. Warburton says: "The reasons given why a fool should not be answered according to his folly is 'lest he (the answerer) should be like unto him'. The reason given why the fool should be answered according to his folly is 'lest he (the fool) should be wise in his own conceit'." As an example of this verse a certain preacher was asked a silly or useless or unanswerable question (like what were the names of Jesus' sisters), and he told the man he would find the answer in the second chapter of Jude!

V. 6. Prov. 25:13 speaks of the faithful messenger: "As the cold of snow in the time of harvest, So is a faithful messenger to them that send him; For he refresheth the soul of his masters." But this verse speaks of sending a message by a "fool". Chances are something will be bersirk: maybe he will never arrive with it; maybe he will get it all mixed up; etc. He will bring "damage" to the one sending him. By so doing he will "maim" (cut off the feet of) his business, prosperity, or self in some way. Prov. 25:19 warns about putting confidence in an unfaithful man.

V. 7. A lame man's legs are not sound and may be at least in part invalid, and so is a parable or a wise saying in the mouth of a fool. He will misapply the parable or the point of the saying. He will render the parable invalid.

V. 8. Most stones shot from a sling are more or less shot at random, actually wasted, reaching no vital destination (like killing a dangerous animal). "Clarke:" "It is entirely thrown away." Is not the same true of bestowing honor upon a fool? It is wasted upon one who does not appreciate it, does not know what to do with it, and will not be the better for it. To elevate a servant to a place of rulership is to bring trouble upon the world (Prov. 30:21, 22).

## TEST QUESTIONS OVER 26:1-8

1. What does a fool lack, according to v. 1?
2. How can a false curse and a flying bird be alike (v. 2)?
3. What about a horse or ass necessitates a whip at times (v. 3)?
4. Why should one not answer a fool according to his folly (v. 4)?
5. Why should one at other times answer a fool according to his folly (v. 5)?
6. What could happen by sending a message by a fool (v. 6)?
7. What about a parable in the mouths of fools (v. 7)?
8. Why should we not give honor to a fool (v. 8)?

## TEXT — 26:9-19

9. As a thorn that goeth up into the hand of a drunkard,  
So is a parable in the mouth of fools.
10. As an archer that woundeth all,  
So is he that hireth a fool and he that hireth them that  
pass by.
11. As a dog that returneth to his vomit,  
So is a fool that repeateth his folly.
12. Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit?  
There is more hope of a fool than of him.
13. The sluggard saith, There is a lion in the way;  
A lion is in the streets.
14. As the door turneth upon its hinges,  
So doth the sluggard upon his bed.
15. The sluggard burieth his hand in the dish;  
It wearieth him to bring it again to his mouth.
16. The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit  
Than seven men that can render a reason.
17. He that passeth by, and vexeth himself with strife be-  
longing not to him,  
Is like one that taketh a dog by the ears.
18. As a madman who casteth firebrands,  
Arrows, and death,
19. So is the man that deceiveth his neighbor,  
And saith, Am not I in sport?

## STUDY QUESTIONS OVER 26:9-19

1. What is the comparison in v. 9?
2. What do you understand from the comparison in v. 10?
3. Where is v. 11 quoted in the New Testament?
4. After many passages degrading fools, where does v. 12 place the conceited person?
5. Why was the sluggard saying what v. 13 says?
6. What does the sluggard do a lot of (v. 14)?
7. Can a person be so lazy that he is a burden even to himself (v. 15)?
8. Why would a sluggard be as v. 16 says?
9. How can the two actions of v. 17 be compared?
10. Who is a "madman" in v. 18?
11. What is meant by "in sport" (v. 19)?

## PARAPHRASE OF 26:9-19

9. A rebel will misapply an illustration so that its point will no more be felt than a thorn in the hand of a drunkard.
10. The master may get better work from an untrained apprentice than from a skilled rebel!
11. As a dog returns to his vomit, so a fool repeats his folly.
12. There is one thing worse than a fool, and that is a man who is conceited.
13. The lazy man won't go out and work. "There might be a lion outside!" he says.
14. He sticks to his bed like a door to its hinges!
15. He is too tired even to lift his food from his dish to his mouth!
16. Yet in his own opinion he is smarter than seven wise men.
17. Yanking a dog's ears is no more foolish than interfering in an argument that isn't any of your business.
- 18,19. A man who is caught lying to his neighbor and says, "I was just fooling," is like a madman throwing around firebrands, arrows and death!

## COMMENTS ON 26:9-19

V. 9. "Pulpit Commentary:" "There is here no idea of a drunkard's hand being pierced with a thorn...but rather of his being armed with it." "Lange:" "When a drunkard carries and brandishes in his hand a sweet briar..." Would it be dangerous

for a drunkard to get a branch of a thorn bush in his hand and began hitting people with it? Is a parable in the mouth of a fool not also dangerous in another way?

V. 10. "Pulpit Commentary:" "A careless, random way of doing business, taking into one's service fools, or entrusting matters of importance to any chance loiterer, is as dangerous as shooting arrows about recklessly without caring whither they flew or whom they wounded."

V. 11. The Bible here and in II Pet. 2:20 (which quotes it) calls upon one of the most obnoxious sights in nature to teach us a lesson: that of a dog who has just given up (vomited) what he had partaken of and then turning around and eating it again. This verse applies it to a fool returning to his acts of foolishness while II Pet. 2:20 applies it to a backslider returning to his former sins.

V. 12. "Pulpit Commentary:" "Nothing so shuts the door against improvement as self-conceit. 'Woe unto them,' says Isa. 5:21, 'that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight.' Such persons, professing themselves wise, become fools (Rom. 1:22)...Touching conceit, the Oriental speaks of the fox finding his shadow very large, and of the wolf when alone thinking himself a lion." Rom. 12:3 says, "I say...to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think." Rom. 12:16: "Be not wise in your own conceits." Gal. 6:3: "If a man thinketh himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself." This verse says there is more hope for a fool than for a conceited person; Prov. 29:20 says the same concerning a man hasty in his words.

V. 13. Prov. 22:13 says the same thing. Proverbs has much to say about laziness: 6:6-9; 10:4,5; 18:9; 19:15; 19:24; 20:4; 22:13; 24:30,31; 26:14; 26:16. That is a lot of material on the subject--more than any other Bible book gives to it.

V. 14. Just as a gate turns upon its hinges, so does the sluggard when aroused turn over (roll over onto his other side) for more sleep. Some of the other explanations given to this comparison are at least entertaining: the door turns on its hinges but goes nowhere; so does a sluggard upon his bed and goes nowhere; while the door opens to let the diligent go forth to their work, the sluggard turns upon his bed and sleeps on; the door creaks when moved, and so does the sluggard when aroused; etc.

V. 15. Prov. 19:24 says the same thing. It is hard for us to imagine people this lazy, but experience teaches one not to be too

surprised at anything!

V. 16. This verse sounds like what we call "park-bench authorities" and "sidewalk superintendents"--men who are doing nothing and who have no authority over a project, but who never question their judgment; they always know how it should have been done. Many times the uneducated who are lazy are cursed with the spirit of egotism. Ever try to tell them something? Quoting from your commentator's book, "Simple, Stimulating Studies in the Proverbs:" "Those men with just enough ambition to get up town to spend the day on some benches talking, whittling, and arguing have all the answers. They can tell the President how to run this country, yet nobody ever thought enough of their insight to have them put on any political ticket. They could tell the Secretary of Agriculture (whose problems relate to the corn farmer, the cotton farmer, the fruit farmer, the wheat farmer, the nut farmer, the hay farmer, the dairy farmer, the ranches, the poultryman, the nation's surpluses, and a hundred other large fields) just how to handle his job when they themselves cannot even have a respectable garden."

V. 17. Grabbing a dog by his ears is not recommended, for he will pull loose and turn on you. Nor is getting involved with other people's strife a good thing. Ever hear of the passerby who stopped to take a woman's part against her husband who was hitting her when she turned on her helper and beamed him over the head? This does not mean that one should never try to help those who are having trouble (How else could one be a peacemaker? Matt. 5:9). But this is a warning about meddling in other people's matters (I Pet. 4:15).

V. 18. This saying is different from others in Proverbs in that the dependent clause is in one verse and the independent in the next. The "madman" may be a man gone berserk or an insane man who gets hold of dangerous weapons and begins throwing them around and endangering the lives of his fellowmen.

V. 19. Just as the law will excuse an insane person for the damage he has caused (v. 18), so some whose mischievous conduct or wicked words have brought serious damage to another try to excuse themselves by saying, "I didn't mean to, I was just joking, etc." Too many people try to joke their way through life, and then if something happens that shouldn't, they say, "I didn't mean it."

## TEST QUESTIONS OVER 26:9-19

1. What verse in this chapter other than v. 9 spoke of a parable in the mouth of fools?
2. What is wrong about hiring just anybody (v. 10)?
3. How does II Pet. 2:20 apply to v. 11?
4. What does the Bible say about conceit (v. 12)?
5. Why does Proverbs have so much to say about laziness (v. 13)?
6. What are some of the ideas put forth concerning v. 14?
7. How lazy can a person get (v. 15)?
8. What kind of person do you visualize in v. 16?
9. What is like grabbing a dog by the ears (v. 17)?
10. What will a "madman" sometimes do (v. 18)?
11. How do some people try to excuse themselves from guilt in serious matters (v. 19)?

## TEXT — 26:20-28

20. For lack of wood the fire goeth out;  
And where there is no whisperer, contention ceaseth.
21. As coals are to hot embers, and wood to fire,  
So is a contentious man to inflame strife.
22. The words of a whisperer are as dainty morsels,  
And they go down into the innermost parts.
23. Fervent lips and a wicked heart  
Are like an earthen vessel overlaid with silver dross.
24. He that hateth dissembleth with his lips;  
But he layeth up deceit within him:
25. When he speaketh fair, believe him not;  
For there are seven abominations in his heart:
26. Though his hatred cover itself with guile,  
His wickedness shall be openly showed before the assembly.
27. Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein;  
And he that rolleth a stone, it shall return upon him.
28. A lying tongue hateth those whom it hath wounded;  
And a flattering mouth worketh ruin.

## STUDY QUESTIONS OVER 26:20-28

1. A whisperer is to contention like ..... to a fire (v. 20).
2. Are there people who are actually given to working

- trouble (v. 21)?
3. How are they like "dainty morsels" (v. 22)?
  4. Explain the comparison in v. 23.
  5. What does "dissembleth" mean (v. 24)?
  6. Why "seven" (v. 25)?
  7. Reword v. 26 into your own words.
  8. Is v. 27 a new thought or a continuation of v. 26?
  9. What is flattery (v. 28)?

## PARAPHRASE OF 26:20-28

20. Fire goes out for lack of fuel, and tensions disappear when gossip stops.
21. A quarrelsome man starts fights as easily as a match sets fire to paper.
22. Gossip is a dainty morsel eaten with great relish.
23. Pretty words may hide a wicked heart, just as a pretty glaze covers a common clay pot.
- 24-26. A man with hate in his heart may sound pleasant enough, but don't believe him; for he is cursing you in his heart. Though he pretends to be so kind, his hatred will finally come to light for all to see.
27. The man who sets a trap for others will get caught in it himself. Roll a boulder down on someone, and it will roll back and crush you.
28. Flattery is a form of hatred and wounds cruelly.

## COMMENTS ON 26:20-28

V. 20. For a fire to continue it must have fuel. When wood is no longer put on the fire, it will go out as soon as its present supply is consumed. Even so whispering (derogatory talking in privacy) will keep trouble brewing. Sometimes the whisperer moves away (Woe to the place where he or she moves! It too will begin experiencing trouble.), dies, may get converted, or is cornered, confronted, and quieted, and the contention ceases. The scoffer also is a cause of continual contention until he is cast out (Prov. 22:10: "Cast out the scoffer, and contention will go out").

V. 21. The "whisperer" of v. 20 is referred to here as a "contentious" man in this verse, which he is. He may say he doesn't want trouble, but he is one to make trouble. He may say he loves everybody involved and is only doing his duty in trying to get things right, but he doesn't really love (Rom. 13:10), he is not doing his duty (Rom. 14:19), and he isn't getting things

right but making things wrong (Prov. 16:28). The figure of the fire is continued in this verse: note "coals", "hot embers," "wood to fire," and "inflamm". Prov. 15:18 says, "A wrathful man stirreth up contention." The church needs to be stirred up all right, but not by contention!

V. 22. The same statement is found in Prov. 18:8. A "whisperer" is one who goes behind people's backs in talking about them, saying things that are not in the best interest of the ones being spoken about. The verse brings out the sad fact that people are willing to listen to such cowardly, wrong, reuous talk (they are "dainty morsels"). They are swallowed without question ("They go down into the innermost parts").

V. 23. "Pulpit Commentary:" "The next proverbs are concerned with hypocrisy...Silver dross (oxide of lead) is used to put a glaze on pottery...The comparatively worthless article (earthen vessel) is thus made to assume a finer appearance. Thus lips that seem to burn with affection and give the kiss of glowing love may mask a heart filled with envy and hatred. Judas kisses and words of friendship hide the bad feelings that lurk within."

V. 24. "Pulpit Commentary:" "The very word here used bears the meaning 'to make one's self unknown'...hence 'to make one's self unrecognizable'... The man cloaks his hatred with honeyed words...meditating all the time treachery in his heart." Adopting this as the mans allows the rest of the verse to flow and makes this verse go along with the other verses of this section.

V. 25. Yes, there are some people just this wicked; their hearts are full of abominations. Jer. 9:8 says, "There tongue is a deadly arrow; it speaketh deceit: one speaketh peaceably to his neighbor with his mouth, but in his heart he layeth wait for him." So we are not to believe everything some people say.

V. 26. Ultimately his sin will find him out as Num. 32:23 promises concerning sin ("your sin will find you out"). Somebody with influence, leadership, and wisdom will see through the "glaze" of deceit and will bring his actions out into the open, and the result is mentioned in v. 27.

V. 27. The pit or hole that such a one had been digging for someone else becomes the fate of the whispering, contentious deceiver himself. That this is often the deserved outcome of such perverted conduct, see Psa. 7:15,16; Psa. 9:15; Psa. 10:2; Prov. 28:10; Eccl. 10:8.

V. 28. In summary this verse affirms that this whispering

tongue was actually a "lying" tongue, actually hating those it was wounding, and that such a flattering tongue is calculated to work "ruin" to its victim. What a section of the misuse of the tongue we have just studied!

### TEST QUESTIONS OVER 26:20-28

1. Who is a "whisperer" (v. 20)?
2. What does a contentious man inflame (v. 21)?
3. Whose "innermost parts" (v. 22)?
4. What are "fervent lips" (v. 23)?
5. Adopting what meaning unlocks the sense of v. 24?
6. Why are we not to believe everything some people say (v. 25)?
7. By what means may people's true nature get brought out into the open (v. 26)?
8. Cite two other passages that teach the same as v. 27.
9. How does v. 28 summarize the matter of the previous verses?

### NOTICEABLE GROUPINGS IN CHAPTER 26

#### *Comparisons using "as"--*

"As snow in summer, and as rain in harvest, So honor is not seemly for a fool" (v. 1).

"As the sparrow in her wandering, as the swallow in her flying, So the curse that is causeless alighteth not" (v. 2).

"As one that bindeth a stone in a sling, So is he that giveth honor to a fool" (v. 8).

"As a thorn that goeth up into the hand of a drunkard, So is a parable in the mouth of fools" (v. 9).

"As an archer that woundeth all, So is he that hireth a fool and he that hireth them that pass by" (v. 10).

"As a dog that returneth to his vomit, So is a fool that repeateth his folly" (v. 11).

"As the door turneth upon its hinges, So doth the sluggard upon his bed" (v. 14).

"As a madman who casteth firebrands, Arrows, and death, So is the man that deceiveth his neighbor, And saith, Am not I in sport?" (vs. 18,19).

"As coals are to hot embers, and wood to fire, So is a contentious man to inflame strife" (v. 21).

"The words of a whisperer are as dainty morsels, And they

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go down into the innermost parts" (v. 22).

### *"Fools"--*

"Honor is not seemly for a fool" (v. 1).

"A rod for the back of fools" (v. 3).

"Answer not a fool according to his folly, Lest thou also be like unto him" (v. 4).

"Answer a fool according to his folly, Lest he be wise in his own conceit" (v. 5).

"He that sendeth a message by the hand of a fool Cutteth off his own feet, and drinketh in damage" (v. 6).

"The legs of the lame hang loose; So is a parable in the mouth of fools" (v. 7).

"As one that bindeth a stone in a sling, So is he that giveth honor to a fool" (v. 8).

"As a thorn that goeth up into the hand of a drunkard, So is a parable in mouth of fools" (v. 9).

"As an archer that woundeth all, So is he that hireth a fool" (v. 10).

"As a dog that returneth to his vomit, So is a fool that repeateth his folly" (v. 11).

"Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? There is more hope of a fool than of him" (v. 12).

### *"Sluggard"--*

"The sluggard saith, There is a lion in the way" (v. 13).

"As the door turneth upon its hinges, So doth the sluggard upon his bed" (v. 14).

"The sluggard burieth his hand in the dish; It wearieth him to bring it again to his mouth" (v. 15).

"The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit Than seven men that can render a reason" (v. 16).

### *"Tongue"--*

"Answer not a fool according to his folly...Answer a fool according to his folly" (vs. 4,5).

"So is a parable in the mouth of fools" (vs. 7,9).

"Where there is no whisperer, contention ceaseth" (v. 20).

"The words of a whisperer are as dainty morsels, And they go down into the innermost parts" (v. 22).

"Fervent lips and a wicked heart Are like an earthen vessel overlaid with silver dross" (v. 23).

"He that hateth dissembleth with his lips; But he layeth up deceit within him: When he speaketh fair, believe him not"

## CHAPTER 26

(vs. 24,25).

"A lying tongue hateth those whom it hath wounded"  
(v. 28).

"A flattering mouth worketh ruin" (v. 28).

### "Honor"--

"Honor is not seemly for a fool" (v. 1).

"As one that bindeth a stone in a sling, So is he that giveth honor to a fool" (v. 8).

### "Conceit"--

"Answer a fool according to his folly, Lest he be wise in his own conceit" (v. 5).

"Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? There is more hope of a fool than of him" (v. 12).

"The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit Than seven men that can render a reason" :v. 16).

### Comparisons using "like"--

"He that passeth by, and vexeth himself with strife belong not to him, Is like one that taketh a dog by the ears" (v. 17).

"Fervent lips and a wicked heart Are like an earthen vessel overlaid with silver dross" (v. 23).

### "Strife"--

"He that passeth by, and vexeth himself with strife belonging not to him, Is like one that taketh a dog by the ears" (v. 17).

"Where there is no whisperer, contention ceaseth" (v. 20).

"So is a contentious man to inflame strife" (v. 21).

### "Deceit"--

"So is a man that deceiveth his neighbor" (v. 19).

"He layeth up deceit within him" (v. 24).

"When he speaketh fair, believe him not; For there are seven abominations in his heart" (v. 25).

"His hatred cover itself with guile" (v. 26).

"A flattering mouth worketh ruin" (v. 28).

## PONDERING THE PROVERBS

### WISDOM COUCHED IN WISE SAYINGS

We are told in I Kings that Solomon spoke three thousand proverbs. Wise men of all ages have had their favorite sayings--all brief, but loaded with meaning and application. Paul in his writings talks of and coins sayings which he says are "faithful" or true and "worthy of all acceptance" or can be counted on.

Great truths are needed for everyday living, and they need to be well worded that they might always be remembered and used. The first verses of Proverbs tell us the purpose of proverbs: "The proverbs of Solomon, the son of David, king of Israel: to know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding; to receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity; to give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion. A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels: to understand a proverb, and the interpretation; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings" (1:1-6).