

TEXT — 3:1-12

1. My son, forget not my law;
But let thy heart keep my commandments:
2. For length of days, and years of life,
And peace, will they add to thee.
3. Let not kindness and truth forsake thee:
Bind them about thy neck;
Write them upon the tablet of thy heart:
4. So shalt thou find favor and good understanding
In the sight of God and man.
5. Trust in Jehovah with all thy heart,
And lean not upon thine own understanding:
6. In all thy ways acknowledge him,
And he will direct thy paths.
7. Be not wise in thine own eyes;
Fear Jehovah, and depart from evil:
8. It will be health to thy navel,
And marrow to thy bones.
9. Honor Jehovah with thy substance,
And with the first-fruits of all thine increase:
10. So shall thy barns be filled with plenty,
And thy vats shall overflow with new wine.
11. My son, despise not the chastening of Jehovah;
Neither be weary of his reproof:
12. For whom Jehovah loveth he reproveth,
Even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.

STUDY QUESTIONS OVER 3:1-12

1. Is remembering what parents said a part of obedience (v. 1)?
2. How desirable are the blessings of obedience mentioned in v. 2?
3. How would kindness and truth "forsake" one (v. 3)?
4. What Bible persons were said to have the favor of both God and man (v. 4)?
5. How would you relate the two statements of v. 5 to each other?
6. How can we "acknowledge" God (v. 6)?
7. What feelings does v. 7 reveal about those who are wise in their own eyes?

8. Apply the illustrations in v. 8.
9. Why does giving honor God (v. 9)?
10. Should God be given the first of our paycheck or what is left over from it (v. 9)?
11. What are "vats" (v. 10)?
12. Where is v. 11 quoted in the New Testament?
13. What motivates God to reprove (v. 12)?

PARAPHRASE OF 3:1-12

- 1-6. My son, never forget the things I've taught you. If you want a long and satisfying life, closely follow my instructions. Never forget to be truthful and kind. Hold these virtues tightly. Write them deep within your heart. If you want favor with both God and man, and a reputation for good judgment and common sense, then trust the Lord completely; don't ever trust yourself. In everything you do, put God first, and He will direct you and crown your efforts with success.
- 7,8. Don't be conceited, sure of your own wisdom. Instead trust and reverence the Lord, and turn your back on evil; when you do that, then you will be given renewed health and vitality.
- 9,10. Honor the Lord by giving Him the first part of all your income, and He will fill your barns with wheat and barley and overflow your vats with the finest wines.
- 11,12. Young man, do not resent it when God chastens and corrects you, for His punishment is proof of His love. Just as a father punishes a son he delights in to make him better, so the Lord corrects you.

COMMENTS ON 3:1-12

V. 1. In this and succeeding verses the material divides itself into 2-verse thoughts, the first verse giving the commandment and the second verse the promise or explanation. Check this for yourself. Too many children instead of not forgetting their parent's law and keeping the commandments get it backwards: they "keep forgetting" what they were told. If one remembers his father's instruction, his father should not have to keep reminding him of his duty. Remembering what one is told is a necessary part of obedience.

V. 2. The long life promised to the righteous is contrasted

with the shorter life of the wicked as set forth over and over again in Psa. 37. That it is natural to want to live is seen in the fact that people seek to extend their lives by medical and surgical means. "Peace" meant even more to them because of the warring world in which they lived. The blessings that come to the obedient, then, are major in importance.

V. 3. Being kind and always telling the truth would especially make for the life of peace promised in v. 2 (as far as the individual was concerned). If one loves, he is kind (I Cor. 13:4). "Brotherly kindness" is to be added to one's character (II Pet. 1:7; Eph. 4:32). Concerning "truth", "Pulpit Commentary" says it is that "absolute integrity of character, both in word and deed, which secures the unhesitating confidence of all." The son was to grace his life with them ("bind them about thy neck"), and he was to imbed them in the very fibre of his character ("write them upon the tablet of thy heart"). The heart is like a table or tablet on which can be written either good (II Cor. 3:3) or bad (Jer. 17:1).

V. 4. Both God and man will approve and appreciate one who follows kindness and truth. Concerning having the favor of both God and man, notice these passages: "The child Samuel grew on, and increased in favor both with Jehovah, and also with men" (I Sam. 2:26); "And Jesus advanced in favor with God and men" (Luke 2:52); "He that herein serveth Christ is well-pleasing to God, and approved of men" (Rom. 14:18). Man's greatest happiness is attained when he has the favor of God and the respect of his fellowmen.

V. 5. Other commands to trust Jehovah: "Trust in Jehovah" (Psa. 37:3); "Commit thy way unto Jehovah; Trust also in him" (Psa. 37:5). "Trust" means to rely upon, put confidence in. This we need to do toward God and not to suppose that we are self-contained and self-sufficient of ourselves. Man makes a grave mistake when he does not pray, does not commit his way to God, and does not depend upon God. So often, though, men turn earthly assets and strong-points into occasions of pride and as a result fail to think of God. Thus, Jer. 9:23,24 says, "Thus saith Jehovah, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he hath understanding, and knoweth me." And I Tim. 6:17 says, "Charge them that are rich in this present world, that they be not highminded, nor have

their hope set on the uncertainty of riches, but on God." See also Isa. 31:1; Psa. 20:7; Psa. 44:1-8; Psa. 118:8,9.

V. 6. "This expression covers the whole area of life's action...It guards against our acknowledging God in great crises and solemn acts of worship only...To acknowledge God is, therefore, to recognize in all our dealings and undertakings God's overruling providence" ("Pulpit Commentary"). "Begin, continue and end every work, purpose, and device with God. Earnestly pray for His direction at the commencement; look for His continual support in the progress; and so begin and continue that all may terminate in His glory...The great sin of the human race is their continual endeavor to live independently of God" ("Clarke"). Man's need of acknowledging God is well stated by Jeremiah in Jer. 10:23: "O Jehovah, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." By praying at the outset of the day, we acknowledge that a good day is dependent upon Him. By thanking God before we eat, we acknowledge that He has made the possession of food possible. By praying before we begin a trip, we acknowledge that His help is important in making the trip safely. And there are many other such examples of acknowledging Him in all our various ways, which carries His promise to direct our paths.

V. 7. Rom. 12:16 similarly warns, "Be not wise in your own conceits." Man doesn't have to possess very much knowledge, it seems, until it goes to his head: "Knowledge puffeth up" (I Cor. 8:1). Instead of thinking how great we are, we should be thinking of how great God is and how small we are and as a result "fear" Him and "depart from evil" instead of proudly living in sin. Job was one who "feared God, and turned away from evil" (Job 1:1). After enumerating some of man's sins in Rom. 3:10-17, the next verse (v. 18) seems to explain the whole matter: "There is no fear of God before their eyes". Verses 5-7 hang together: "trust" Jehovah (v. 5), "acknowledge" Him (v. 6), "fear" Him (v. 7) and don't lean on your "own understanding" (v. 5), don't be wise in your "own eyes" (v. 7).

V. 8. The results of obeying the parental instructions contained in vs. 5-7 are contained in those verses and in the 3 that follow: God will "direct" your paths (v. 6); you will "depart" from evil (v. 7); it will be "health" to you (this verse). The "marrow" in one's bones plays a very important part in

one's overall health. We may be ignorant of some lasting connection that the navel has with one's health after one's birth that it is spoken of so prominently. Could it here be used as a symbol of utter dependence upon God (raised in previous verses) that we must maintain in a spiritually healthy condition? "Clarke" explains the problem thus: "The central region of the body is taken as the representative of all the vital organs."

V. 9. "The injunctions also show that the honoring of God does not consist simply of lip-service, of humility and confidence in Him, but also of external worship, and incorporeal things" ("Pulpit Commentary"). Yes, God can be honored with substance (Material gain) if it be presented in the right spirit and in proportion to one's material blessings. Other passages on giving God the "first-fruits" of the harvest: Exo. 23:19; Deut. 26:1,2. Just as the Lord claims the first day of each week as His day (Rev. 1:10; Acts 20:7; I Cor. 16:2), even so He claims the first portion of man's produce and earnings. Abel's acceptable sacrifice was the "firstlings" and the "fat" of his flock (Gen. 4:4). People who spend and spend and spend out of their paychecks and then give "something" out of what is left to God are likely to dishonor rather than "honor" Him with their gift. Tithers always give of the "first-fruits" rather than of the "left-overs". Remember, too, that the first thing Noah did after the flood was not build a house for himself but an altar to God (Gen. 8:20); those who were scattered from Jerusalem are reported in their "preaching the word" rather than in their finding jobs for the support of themselves (Acts 8:1,4); and Jesus taught all of us to seek "first" the kingdom of God and its righteousness before what we are going to eat, drink, or wear (Matt. 6:31-33).

V. 10. Man is concerned about his own things and often leaves God out of his life and concerns or subordinates Him to an inferior place (second, third or fourth place). Here God promises to give man what he wants ("barns be filled with plenty...vats overflow") if he puts God first in his life. The "vats" were olive-oil vats or grape-juice vats. Similarly Deut. 28:8-12 says "Jehovah will command the blessing upon thee in thy barns, and in all that thou puttest thy hand unto...And Jehovah will make thee plenteous for good...in the fruit of thy ground...Jehovah will open unto thee his good treasure the heavens, to give the rain of thy land in its season, and to bless all the work of thy hand." In Mal. 3:10,11 God promised agri-

cultural blessings if they would honor Him with their tithes: "Bring ye the whole tithe into the store-house...and prove me now herewith, saith Jehovah of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall be not room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast its fruit before the time in the field."

V. 11. Immediately after telling of all the joyous blessings that God sends, we have another blessing listed, a blessing of a different nature, a blessing in disguise--chastening. Unlike the other blessings, it comes not because of obedience but disobedience; nor is it like other blessings, joyous at the time, but grievous, but it proves to be a blessing in the peaceful fruit that it brings to those who are corrected by it. "All chastening seemeth for the present not to be joyous but grievous; yet afterward it yieldeth peaceable fruit unto them that have been exercised thereby, even the fruit of righteousness" (Heb. 12:11); "For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed good to them; but he for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness" (Heb. 12:10); "We are chastened of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world" (I Cor. 11:32). Our verse is similar to Job 5:17 ("Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth: Therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty") and is quoted in Heb. 12:5,6. Solomon urges his son not to "despise" or belittle, not to disregard or misunderstand God's chastening nor to be weary of it, for it will bring blessings (Psa. 94:12).

V. 12. Satan tempts us because he seeks our destruction (I Pet. 5:8), and wicked people persecute us because they hate us (Luke 6:22), but God brings His hardship of chastening upon us because He loves us (this verse; Heb. 12:6; Rev. 3:19). His chastening is compared to the correction of our earthly parents (this verse; Deut. 8:5; Heb. 12:7-9). Solomon has to tell us that it is God's love that causes Him to chasten. People's idea of "love" is not always right. The preacher who forcefully condemns sin and falsehood is accused of having an unloving attitude (Yet he is working to save people). The parent who corrects his children is criticized as harsh and unloving, but both God who corrects His children and parents who correct theirs do so because of love and concern ("He that spareth the

rod hateth his son; But he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes"--Prov. 13:24).

TEST QUESTIONS OVER 3:1-12

1. What about the child who says to his parent, "I forgot that I was supposed to do that" (v. 1)?
2. What promises does v. 2 spell out for the obedient child?
3. To what is the heart likened in v. 3?
4. What two blessings come from being kind and always telling the truth (v. 4)?
5. In what does man have a tendency to trust instead of God (v. 5)?
6. What is the promise connected with acknowledging God in all our ways (v. 6)?
7. What does man often allow his little bit of knowledge to do to him (v. 7)?
8. What is the promise connected with fearing God and departing from evil instead of being wise in one's own conceit (v. 8)?
9. Comment upon v. 9.
10. What is the promise connected with giving God the first-fruits (v. 10)?
11. In what sense is chastening also a blessing (v. 11)?
12. Show how love is involved both in God's chastening of His children and in earthly parents' chastening of theirs (v. 12).

TEXT — 3:13-26

13. Happy is the man that findeth wisdom,
And the man that getteth understanding.
14. For the gaining of it is better than the gaining of silver,
And the profit thereof than fine gold.
15. She is more precious than rubies:
And none of the things thou canst desire are to be compared unto her.
16. Length of days is in her right hand;
In her left hand are riches and honor.
17. Her ways are ways of pleasantness,
And all her paths are peace.
18. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her:
And happy is every one that retaineth her.

19. Jehovah by wisdom founded the earth;
By understanding he established the heavens.
20. By his knowledge the depths were broken up,
and the skies drop down the dew.
21. My son, let them not depart from thine eyes;
Keep sound wisdom and discretion:
22. So shall they be life unto thy soul,
And grace to thy neck.
23. Then shalt thou walk in thy way securely,
And thy foot shall not stumble.
24. When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid:
Yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet.
25. Be not afraid of sudden fear,
Neither of the desolation of the wicked, when it cometh:
26. For Jehovah will be thy confidence,
And will keep thy foot from being taken.

STUDY QUESTIONS OVER 3:13-26

1. Why is the man who gets wisdom "happy" (v. 13)?
2. Why is the getting of wisdom better than the getting of treasures (v. 14)?
3. Give a synonym for "precious" as used in v. 15.
4. Compare the blessings mentioned in v. 16 with those mentioned in v. 2.
5. What two additional blessings of wisdom are promised in v. 17?
6. What is meant by "tree of life" in v. 18?
7. How is God's wisdom reflected in His creation (v. 19)?
8. What breaking up of depths is referred to in v. 20?
9. What does "keep" mean in v. 21?
10. Comment upon "grace" as used in v. 22.
11. What Hebrew parallelism do we have in v. 23?
12. What is there to fear about the night (v. 24)?
13. Why can a godly person be safe and secure from all alarms as the song, "Leaning on the Everlasting Arms" says (v. 25)?
14. Where is a godly person's confidence placed (v. 26)?

PARAPHRASE OF 3:13-26

- 13-18. The man who knows right from wrong and has good judgment and common sense is happier than the man who is immensely rich! For such wisdom is far more

valuable than precious jewels. Nothing else compares with it. Wisdom gives a long, good life; riches; honor; pleasure; and peace. Wisdom is a tree of life to those who eat her fruit; happy is the man who keeps on eating it.

19. The Lord's wisdom founded the earth; his understanding established all the universe and space.
20. The deep foundations of the earth were broken open by His knowledge, and the skies poured down rain.
- 21-26. Have two goals--wisdom--that is, knowing and doing right--and common sense. Don't let them slip away, for they fill you with living energy and are a feather in your cap. They keep you safe from defeat and disaster and stumbling off the trail. With them on guard you can sleep without fear; and you need not be afraid of disaster or the plots of wicked men; for the Lord is with you; He protects you.

COMMENTS ON 3:13-26

V. 13. Vs. 13-20 go together, bidding the son to get wisdom and understanding for the rich blessings they bestow and reminding him that the Highest Himself employed wisdom in laying out the universe. He who finds wisdom gets understanding, and the finding is not so likely by accident as by searching. The whoso "findeth" wisdom of Prov. 8:35 is the one who has heard "instruction" (Prov. 8:33). Yes, a wise, an informed, an understanding person is a "happy" person, for he is blessed with the light of knowledge.

V. 14. God would have men seek wisdom as they seek earthly treasures: "If thou seek her as silver, And search for her as for hid treasures: Then shalt thou understand the fear of Jehovah, And find the knowledge of God" (Prov. 2:4,5); "My fruit is better than gold, yea, than fine gold; And my revenue than choice silver" (Prov. 8:19). Especially is the knowledge of God's Word so valuable: "I rejoice at thy word, As one that findeth great spoil" (Psa. 119:162); "The ordinances of Jehovah are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold" (Psa. 19:9,10).

V. 15. A similar passage comparing rubies and the value of wisdom: "Wisdom is better than rubies; And all the things that may be desired are not to be compared unto it" (Prov.

8:11). "Pulpit Commentary": "There is nothing--neither silver, gold, precious stones, nor anything precious--which is an equivalent to wisdom in value...When everything is put before us to choose from...like Solomon at Gibeon, we should prefer wisdom (I Kings 3:11-13)!"

V. 16. Both hands are full of great things and are stretched out to the person of true understanding. "The two hands, the right and the left, signify the abundance of Wisdom's gifts" ("Pulpit Commentary"). Wisdom claims, in Prov. 8:18, to have "riches and honor" to bestow. Long life, then, can be a result of wisdom. Riches, then, can be a product of wisdom. Honor, then, can come to those with wisdom.

V. 17. Here are two more great blessings of wisdom: "pleasantness" and "peace". Add these to riches and honor and long life, and who could ask for more as far as earthly life is concerned? Contrast such a life with one's life that is void of wisdom and is characterized by foolish ways.

V. 18. Like "Fountain of Youth" in our language, so "Tree of Life" in Bible days stood for something very desirable. The name was first used for one of the trees in the midst of the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:9). God did not allow Adam and Eve to eat of this tree after they sinned (Gen. 3:22-24). In Rev. 2:7 it is said to be in the Paradise of God. The blessings of having wisdom are compared to eating from the tree of life! Our verse points out the importance both of laying hold upon (obtaining) wisdom and then of retaining it. Unfortunately, many never obtain it, and sadly some who have had it have not retained it later. So, we should work to possess it, and we should be careful not to let it get away from us. Even a small amount of folly can undo one's wisdom: "Dead flies cause the oil of the perfumer to send forth an evil odor; so doth a little folly outweigh wisdom and honor" (Eccl. 10:1).

V. 19. Always is man urged to be like God. The same is true concerning wisdom. After all these instructions on wisdom, Solomon now points out that God Himself is guided by wisdom. Other passages showing that God employed wisdom in creating the universe and life upon it: "O Jehovah, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all" (Psa. 104:24); Wisdom says, "When he established the heavens, I was there: When he set a circle upon the face of the deep, When he made the firm skies above, When the fountains of the deep became strong, When he gave to the sea its bound, That the waters

should not transgress his commandment, When he marked out the foundations of the earth; Then I was by him, as a master workman" (Prov. 8:27-30); "He hath established the world by his wisdom, and by his understanding hath he stretch out the heavens" (Jer. 10:12). The marvels of creation continue to mystify the greatest minds in their depth and accuracy.

V. 20. The watering of the earth, so necessary to its vegetation and its support of both human and animal life, is here under consideration. Only God would know how to lay out and operate such a vast, continual system. There may be an illusion to the breaking up of the deep at the time of the Flood (Gen. 7:11); if so, it would still be saying that only God would know how to do such.

V. 21. Both statements mean the same: "them" is identified as "sound wisdom and discretion", and "let them not depart from thine eyes" is boiled down to the word "keep". It was the father's strong desire that his son would always keep his eyes upon the way of true wisdom both as a young man growing up and as a grown man. This good verse introduces material that runs through v. 26.

V. 22. The rewards of living by wisdom dominate this 6-verse section. This verse mentions two: "life" and "grace." "Life is used here in an all-inclusive sense of embracing more than lengthy existence a blessed and a spiritual life here. Other passages on an ornamented neck: "They shall be a chaplet of grace unto thy head, And chains about thy neck" (Prov. 1:9); "Bind them about thy neck" (Prov. 3:3); "Tie them about thy neck (Prov. 6:21). Prominent men wore golden chains around their necks: Belshazzar said, "Whosoever shall read this writing, and show me the interpretation thereof, shall be clothed with purple, and have a chain of gold about his neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom" (Dan. 5:7); "Pharaoh took off his signet ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck" (Gen. 41:42).

V. 23. The promised rewards continue in this verse, this being a promise of safety and security. "As he who is accompanied by an escort proceeds on his way in safety, so you protected by God will pass your life in security; or, as Trapp, "Thou shalt ever go under a double guard, 'the peace of God within thee (Phil. 4:7) and the 'power of God' without thee (I Pet. 1:5)'" ("Pulpit Commentary"). Prov. 10:9 speaks similarly:

"He that walketh uprightly walketh surely". Psa. 37:31 says, "The law of his God is in his heart; None of his steps shall slide." But contrast the ways of the wicked: Their way shall be unto them as slippery places in the darkness" (Jer. 23:12).

V. 24. One's safety and the resulting peace of mind are again stressed. Other passages on this peaceful condition: "I will give peace in the land, and ye shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid" (Lev. 26:6); "In peace will I both lay me down and sleep; For thou, Jehovah, alone makest me dwell in safety" (Psa. 4:8. Such lying down in peace and safety is employing the figure of sheep (Psa. 23:2). Words of a song: "Anywhere with Jesus I can safely go to sleep When the dark'ning shadows round about me creep."

V. 25. Again the blessing of safety, peace, and lack of fear is emphasized. "Sudden fear" would be that which strikes instantly, immediately, without advanced warning. Their world, even more than ours, was one of uncertainty: anything could happen at any time. Psa. 91:5,6 tunes us in on some of their uncertainties: "Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night, Nor for the arrow that flieth by day; Nor the pestilence that walketh in darkness, Nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday." As Christians we can sing, "What have I to dread? What have I to fear? Leaning on the everlasting arms. I have blessed peace with my Lord so near; Leaning on the everlasting arms."

V. 26. Jehovah will be the One in whom the believer places his confidence--he commits his way unto Him (Psa. 37:5). All the great "heroes of faith" in Heb. 11 had this one thing in common: their faith, their confidence, was in God. One with true wisdom, such as is urged in the previous verse of this chapter, will include God in everything (vs. 5,6). If one is wise at all, wisdom will teach him not to trust in his own wisdom, strength, or perfection but in the guidance, help, and mercy of God. Can we not say that confidence in God is never misplaced, but confidence apart from Him is always a false confidence that in time will let us down? The promise of our verse: He will "keep thy foot from being taken" shows there are many traps and snares along the way that God will keep us from getting into. After saying, "My help cometh from Jehovah" (Psa. 121:2), the Psalmist goes onto emphasize the "Keeping" work of God: "Jehovah is thy keeper...Jehovah will keep thee from all evil; He will keep thy soul. Jehovah will keep thy going out and thy

coming in From this time forth and for evermore" (Psa. 121:5-8). God's promise again: "A thousand shall fall at thy side, And ten thousand at thy right hand; But it shall not come nigh to thee" (Psa. 91:7).

TEST QUESTIONS OVER 3:12-16

1. Who is said in v. 13 to be the happy person?
2. Comment upon v. 14.
3. When did Solomon himself show that he placed the value of wisdom above everything else that he might have desired (v. 15)?
4. What does the mentioning of both hands in v. 16 signify?
5. Contrast the blessings of wisdom mentioned in v. 17 with the life of one who lacks wisdom.
6. What two thoughts are set forth by the two verbs in v. 18?
7. What is the purpose of switching from talking about the wisdom that human beings need to the wisdom that God employed in creating the universe (v. 19)?
8. What great work is mentioned in v. 20 that only God could do?
9. V. 21 introduces material that runs through what verse?
10. What all does the word "life" in v. 22 embrace?
11. What great promise is contained in v. 23?
12. What is again stressed in v. 24?
13. What would cause "sudden fear" (v. 25)?
14. What passage in Psa. emphasizes God's "keeping" work (v. 26)?

TEXT — 3:27-35

27. Withhold not good from them to whom it is due,
When it is in the power of thy hand to do it.
28. Say not unto thy neighbor, Go, and come again,
And to-morrow I will give;
When thou hast it by thee.
29. Devise not evil against thy neighbor,
Seeing he dwelleth securely by thee.
30. Strive not with a man without cause,
If he have done thee no harm.
31. Envy thou not the man of violence,
And choose none of his ways.

32. For the perverse is an abomination to Jehovah;
But his friendship is with the upright.
33. The curse of Jehovah is in the house of the wicked;
But he blesseth the habitation of the righteous.
34. Surely he scoffeth at the scoffers;
But he giveth grace unto the lowly.
35. The wise shall inherit glory;
But shame shall be the promotion of fools.

STUDY QUESTIONS OVER 3:27-35

1. Where did Jesus teach that to withhold good is actually evil (v. 27)?
2. Why would one put off to tomorrow giving help that he is able to give today (v. 28)?
3. Should a neighbor's security be one of our concerns (v. 29)?
4. Who especially needs the instruction found in v. 30?
5. What is listed in v. 31 as a possible cause of strife?
6. How are the violent of v. 31 described in v. 32?
7. According to v. 33 what does God do to those who are wicked?
8. Where in the New Testament is v. 34 quoted?
9. What do the wise have to look forward to (v. 35)?
10. What do fools have to look forward to (v. 35)?

PARAPHRASE OF 3:27-35

- 27-32. Don't withhold repayment of your debts. Don't say, "Some other time," if you can pay now. Don't plot against your neighbor; he is trusting you. Don't get into needless fights. Don't envy violent men. Don't copy their ways. For such men are an abomination to the Lord, but He gives His friendship to the godly.
- 33-35. The curse of God is on the wicked, but His blessing is on the upright. The Lord mocks at mockers, but helps the humble. The wise are promoted to honor, but fools are promoted to shame!

COMMENTS ON 3:27-35

V. 27. Beginning with this verse Solomon discusses our relationship with those about us. First of all, he says we should pay what we owe just as soon as we are able to do so. But this

verse is not limiting the subject to paying debts: it is talking about doing "good" to those about us—a subject set forth in several important places in the Bible: "Do good"—Psa. 37:3; "As we have opportunity, let us work that which is good toward all men, and especially toward them that are of the household of faith"—Gal. 6:10; Jesus "went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil"—Acts 10:38. To learn the E, G, B, D, F, A lines of the musical staff, elementary teachers have long used the significant statement: "Every Good Boy Does Fine Always"—and it is true! A careful study of Mark 3:4 and its surrounding verses will show that it was "lawful" to do good on the Jewish sabbath (to heal a sick man) but harmful (or evil) not to. Jesus had the power to heal him, and He affirmed it would have been wrong not to do so. Everyone needs a growing conviction that what God has given him is to be used wherever needed and not merely squandered for his own selfish wants.

V. 28. This instruction refers back to v. 27. How many times people in urgent need have gone to someone of means and ability for help only to be put off until "tomorrow" or "next week" when it was only the slightest matter that could have been taken care of easily that kept them from giving the help that very day. God tells us not to dally with duty! We have a saying that says, "Don't put off to tomorrow what you can do today."

V. 29. At the bottom of every case of trouble, there is someone who got things mixed up or who purposely did wrong to begin it. Here is a commandment against purposely, knowingly devising evil and trouble for someone else. We have sayings that remind us to drive carefully and to live carefully, for the life we save may be our own. This verse, though, appeals strictly to our feelings of responsibility for the other person: take care of your neighbor, for he dwells securely through your dealings. But don't forget that trouble can be a two-way street: there is a sense in which you dwell securely by him.

V. 30. If everybody heeded this, there could be no strife except that which might arise from some misunderstanding. Remember that it takes somebody to start trouble before there can be trouble. Some people who seem to live in a state of strife really need this instruction, for they are chief offenders.

V. 31. Other similar passages: "Fret not thyself because

of evil-doers, Neither be thou envious against them that work unrighteousness" (Psa. 37:1); "I was envious at the arrogant, When I saw the prosperity of the wicked" (Psa. 73:3); "Be not thou envious against evil men; Neither desire to be with them" (Prov. 24:1). It is too bad that so many choose wrong models to follow. In this verse the father continues to warn his son about joining in with a life of violence (See Prov. 1:10-19; Prov. 2:12-15).

V. 32. One who "devises evil" against his neighbor (v. 20), one who "strives" with a man who has done him no wrong (v. 30), one who "envies" the wicked (v. 30) is said in this verse to be "perverted"—he is doing what God never planned for a person to do. This verse tells of two contrasting classes of persons (the "perverse" and the "upright") and of God's contrasting attitudes toward them ("abomination" for the perverse and "friendship" with the upright). Passages on God's pleasure with the righteous: "The friendship of Jehovah is with them that fear him; And he will show them his covenant" (Psa. 25:14); "Ye are my friends, if ye do the things which I command you" (John 15:14); "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, And his ears unto their supplication" (I Pet. 3:12). Passages on God's displeasure with the wicked: "Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore would be a friend of the world maketh himself an enemy of God" (Jas. 4:4); "Alienated and enemies in your mind in your evil works" (Col. 1:21); "He that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36).

V. 33. Another verse contrasting God's treatment of the wicked and the righteous. The law that they were under had a long list of curses in Deut.²⁷ 26:15-26 and a long list of blessings in Deut.²⁸ 27:3-6. God can send blessings upon people, or He can bring curses upon them. The basis on which God gives to each is set forth in Deut. 11:26-28: "Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if ye shall hearken unto the commandments of Jehovah your God...and the curse, if ye shall not hearken unto the commandments of Jehovah your God." Psa. 37:22 says, "Such as are blessed of him shall inherit the land; And they that are cursed of him shall be cut off." One's relationship to God and His consequent attitude toward us is the main issue of life.

V. 34. A double contrast: "scoffeth" vs. "giveth" and "scoffers" vs. "the lowly". Scoffers are those who act as if they "know it all"; the lowly are those who recognize their deficiencies and who, as a result, trust in God and do not lean to their "own understanding" but who "acknowledge Him" in all their ways (vs. 5,6). Jas. 4:6 refers to this verse ("He giveth more grace. Wherefore the scripture saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble" as does I Pet. 5:5 ("God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble").

V. 35. A double contrast: "wise" vs. "fools" and "glory" vs. "shame." "The wise shall inherit glory"—what an inheritance to come into! Abraham was wise in following God's directions, and think of the glory he inherited as a result! Daniel was wise in his decision concerning the king's wine and dainties, and think of the glory he had before the book of Daniel closed! The Christian is the wise builder who builds his house upon the rock (Matt. 7:24-25), and the resulting Christian life is one of glory ("Ye rejoice greatly with joy unspeakable and full of glory"—I Pet. 1:8), and he will have his eternity in glory! On the other hand "shame shall be the promotion of fools"—what a "promotion" to get! We detect irony in the use of "promotion" here. The fool has nothing to look forward to but "shame". A fool lives a shameful life, and his eternity will be one of "shame and everlasting contempt" (Dan. 12:2). That which both the wise and the foolish come to will be because God will make it so!

TEST QUESTIONS OVER 3:27-35

1. Where else besides v. 27 does the Bible talk about doing good?
2. What is v. 28 condemning?
3. What reason is cited in v. 29 for not devising evil against one's neighbor?
4. Who especially needs the instruction in v. 30?
5. Whom does the father not want his son to envy (v. 31)?
6. Cite the double contrast in v. 32.
7. What chapter of the Old Testament contained lists of both blessings and curses (v. 33)?
8. What is the double contrast in v. 34?
9. How is the word "promotion" used in v. 35?

PONDERING THE PROVERBS

NOTICING THE NEEDS OF THE NEEDY

29:7 says, "The righteous considereth ('taketh knowledge of'—R.V.) the cause of the poor: but the wicked regardeth not to know it." There are those who have never known what real shortage is. They have always had plenty. It is hard for them to realize how "hard put" people can be and how helpless they are before such conditions. So they go their ways, not bothering themselves to look into people's conditions. But, 29:7 says the righteous look into their cases.

It is too easy for some people to be like the priest and the Levite, who did not want to be bothered with the needs of the needy. It takes time, it takes money, and it may even give one a headache to get next to the condition of the needy. No wonder, then, that is "the righteous" who considers the cause of the needy.

In the fast pace of present-day living, let us not permit sickness to go on in our communities, and we not know anything about it. Let us not permit death to strike, and we not be there to help. Let us not permit tragedies to happen, and we not concern ourselves.

DISCRETION IN SPEAKING

I marvel not that some people have trouble. Their customary way of speaking is loud, thoughtless, and rough. Unless one controls his speech, the other person will have a time controlling his temper.

Listen to this great memory verse: "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger" (15:1). A "soft" answer is just the opposite of a "harsh" answer. Like the virtuous woman, "the law of kindness" should be in our mouths. Oh, the cutting things that people sometimes say to the man at the store! It may be a neighbor. It may be to some person in the church. And yet they claim to be Christians. There isn't much Christianity to a person who has an unbridled tongue.

All it takes sometimes to get into a real fight is to say the wrong word. Many times everything is all set for trouble, and if you do not guard your speech, you are going to stir up anger rather than turn it away.