

HEAVENLY TRUTH, PRINCIPLES FOR UNITY, CONCORD AND PEACE IN THE LAST DAYS

Wisdom's Closing Message, Meditations on Proverbs chapter 25

INTRODUCTION

Proverbs, no less than all Scripture, is an orderly, consistent unfolding of truth, inspired by the Spirit of God, using Solomon, a man given unparalleled wisdom of God disclosing the mind of Christ for these last and difficult days.

This proverb is one of Solomon's that the men of Hezekiah copied out for all to read.

If **Chapter 24** shows the field and the vineyard in ruins and the slothfulness of them that should be maintaining it, then what follows is God's answer to the godly in the very face of a ruined testimony. See **Prov. 24:24-27**.

Hezekiah came to the throne at such a time, when mere spiritual sloth and faithlessness would have weakly given in to the prevailing corruption. He could not possibly bring all Israel back to her former state, but he could apply God's principles in the sphere in which God had placed him. It is evident then that these proverbs beginning with chapter 25 have peculiar value for the days of Hezekiah, which are so aptly described in his own words. "This day is a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and blasphemy: for the children are come to the birth, and there is not strength to bring forth" (**2 Kings 19:3**).

Who can doubt the similarity of our own day? And this being so, is it not wise that we carefully search out the precious instruction specially suited to our own circumstances? We should fully expect to find similarities to **2 Timothy** - a book of provision for days of disorder, - and this is certainly the case.

It should be evident also to the careful reader that there is admirable moral appropriateness in the last two chapters; the 30th showing the vanity of all mere human character and work, with evidence of God's victory over evil; and the 31st the blessed fulfillment in the grace of God's counsels concerning His Son, the true King, and His purchased bride. What unspeakable comfort in all this for the heart of him who sorrows with godly sorrow for the grievous departure and disobedience of the Church publicly. The Lord make it so to every Christian heart!

Chapter 25 affirms the basic principles of true unity, which are absolutely essential when all around is ruin. For departure from the truth is the very breeding-ground of divisions, which have so rent the testimony of God and bear witness to our own shame. There is no unity without a solid foundation. Mere union of those still apart in heart is hypocrisy, and would only in the end more glaringly expose an actual disunity. This chapter gives us this good, solid basis upon which all unity according to God is to be established. The entire chapter furnishes excellent practical instruction as to how to "maintain the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace".

God has seen fit to completely reveal His will, so that provision for the entire history of the Church was made at its very beginning. But it has been neglected and ignored, and we are sorely broken and in reproach. Yet that same Word has already made provision for recovery, where hearts are concerned about holding fast. Let us then have energy of faith, not to devise new methods or expedients for such a day, but to "copy out" what is already written, and apply ourselves to obey it. This is to "have knowledge of the times," and to have true fellowship with God in that which is His special work in a day of evil.

Moreover, at this time only Judah recognized God's centre, - Jerusalem, - so that only in this limited sphere could any measure of recovery take place. Hezekiah's faith however embraced all of Israel also, for in **2 Chronicles 30** we read of his inviting all Israel to come to Jerusalem to keep the Passover. Some responded, others only mocked. How similar to any day in which God begins revival among His people!

VERSE BY VERSE THOUGHTS:

Verse 2

"It is the glory of God to conceal a thing, but the honour of kings is to search out a matter."

When "difficult times" are present, it is imperative that we look beneath the surface of things. Answers to problems will not be found without real exercise of soul. God intends faith to be exercised and developed; therefore in infinite wisdom He so presents the truth in His Word that mere natural wisdom will not discern it: these things are hidden from the wise and prudent, **Mt.11:25**.

Nor will an easy-going, complacent attitude find the precious hidden treasures of the counsels and guidance of God. But it is a work of kingly dignity to search out the truth of God and to ascertain His mind, especially so when truth has been "trodden in the streets" and treated as of no account, **Mic. 7:10**. How deeply urgent the responsibility of every child of God to find out the truth for himself. "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine", **John 7:17**. Kings were anointed with oil, and we have been anointed with the Spirit of God, by which understanding of "all things" is possible: let us therefore practise this kingly privilege. "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a Workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth", **2 Tim. 2:15**.

Verse 3

"The heaven for height, and the earth for depth, and the heart of kings is unsearchable."

Things higher than natural wisdom become the normal food and delight of him who is led by the Spirit of God. And "the deep things of God," unintelligible to the natural man, are no problem where the Spirit of God is the Interpreter, **1 Cor. 2:9, 10**. Indeed, whether heavenly things, or earthly things, "he that is spiritual discerneth all things." His perception of natural things as well as spiritual, is more accurate than that of the natural man. "Yet he himself is discerned of no man", **1 Cor. 2:15 JND**. The spiritual man is a strange enigma to the world. His wisdom and understanding is evident, but his attitude is a cause of wonder and bewilderment to those who have not the Spirit: "the heart of kings is unsearchable." "The world knoweth us not because it knew Him not", **1 John 3:1**.

Verse 4

"Take away the dross from the silver, and there shall come forth a vessel for the finer."

A true searching of the Word of God by the Spirit will both give a positive knowledge of what is good and pure; and separate from it all that is false and dross. In **2 Timothy 2:15, 16**. If verse 15 insists on our "rightly dividing the Word of truth," then verse 16 as strongly commands: "But shun profane and vain babblings, for they will increase unto more ungodliness." Two men are then referred to as "saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some." This evil doctrine must be refused: it is dross that must be separated from the silver; and teachers who persist in such falsehood must not be tolerated. "The Finer" is certainly God Himself, Who seeks vessels suited to His own character, and only by separation from evil will such a vessel be formed, - "a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, prepared unto every good work", **2 Tim. 2:21**.

Verse 5

"Take away the wicked from before the king, and his throne shall be established in righteousness."

The thought in verse 4 is continued. Is it becoming that a wicked man should have any fellowship or influence in the king's presence? And how much less in the presence of Him Whom we know is King of Kings. If one is falsifying the King's word, how solemn should be his punishment, no matter how pleasant a personality he may have. Therefore a fundamentally false teacher must be allowed no fellowship among the people of God. For the

house of God "is the church of the Living God, the pillar and ground of the truth", **1 Tim. 3:15**. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers", **2 Cor. 6:14** is a warning constantly repeated throughout the Word of God, an urgent necessity if truth is to be maintained in purity. In days such as ours, this becomes a most serious test of the actual devotion of the saints of God.

Verse 6, 7

"Put not forth thyself in the presence of the King, and stand not in the place of great men: for better it is that it be said unto thee, Come up hither; than that thou shouldest be put lower in the presence of the prince whom thine eyes have seen"

How matchlessly precious becomes "the presence of the King," when we take to heart the truth that evil has no place in His presence. How subduing to the soul, how awesome and holy: and how marvelous the privilege of being allowed - nay actually welcomed - in that presence. But if so, then certainly all selfish seeking of position and honor there is utterly unbecoming. Only One is to be exalted there. The Lord Jesus Christ is the blessed Center and Object of all adoration and praise. None else has the slightest right to exalt himself. May we learn deeply the sweetness of such a gathering of the Church of God, with no one having any position of authority or prominence, but each and all exercised to see that the Lord Himself receives every honor.

Yet, where godliness, lowliness, and true spiritual growth are found, the Lord will so order things that such persons will take the lead in the assembly in matters of order and government, and of course in the exercise of various gifts. This is normal, proper growth. Such men will not seek in any way to assume the lead. but by virtue of lowly devotion and knowledge of the Word of God will have this eventually placed upon their shoulders by the Lord Himself. How good to remember that in all assembly activity and in the exercise of every spiritual gift, we are "in the presence of the Prince whom our eyes have seen." What sanctifying power this realization would have over our entire service for Him!

Verse 7

"Go not forth hastily to strive, lest thou know not what to do in the end thereof, when thy neighbor hath put thee to shame."

If the presence of the King is most blessed indeed, yet we shall be faced with many things contrary to the purity of this, - things that will deeply try the spirit of one who loves the truth. These things are only multiplied in a day of decline. How are we to meet them? "The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves", **2 Tim. 2:24, 25**.

We must remember we are but servants, responsible to obey the truth ourselves and to present it to others as from God. But the messenger is not called upon to enforce his message. Striving is unbecoming: mere argument will not produce results for God, however right we may be. A proper restraint is vitally necessary in any testimony for God. The truth itself, which we seek to defend, will suffer by our contentious attitude, for our "neighbor" will attribute our "hasty striving" to our doctrine: we shall be put to shame, and be embarrassed as to how to free ourselves from such a predicament. Peter is a striking example here: his taking the sword to cut off the ear of the High priest's servant may have appeared to be bravery, but it led only to his humiliation, **John 18:10**. "If a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned except he strive lawfully", **2 Tim. 2:5**. How important not only to stand on the side of truth, but to act rightly in so standing.

Verse 9, 10

"Debate thy cause with thy neighbour himself; and discover not a secret to another: lest he that heareth it put thee to shame and thine infamy turn not away."

How guarded must be the doors of our lips! Now that disagreement, discord, ill-feeling has come between neighbors, is it to be settled by spreading it elsewhere? Let us have grace and honest courage of heart to face our neighbour in a spirit of meekness and true concern, that a proper understanding may be obtained. How painful the innumerable cases of offense that have never been settled, but only aggravated, by selfish, thoughtless gossip, when but a word of simple apology might have dismissed it forever. But if I carry it to another, how many things might happen. It may lead to the others so repeating it, as from me that I myself am shown in the most shameful light. This area of things is extremely delicate, and requires a real energy of communion with God to have wisdom to act rightly; for in certain cases there may be facts that others should know, and where to draw the line is a matter for serious exercise; but I must be careful not to be guilty of putting my neighbor in a wrong or bad light; and always before speaking, to judge in myself any feeling of personal grievance.

Verse 11

"A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver."

On the other hand our lips may be used in a most refreshing and profitable way. The succeeding verses of this chapter seem to dwell greatly upon the principles of ministry among the people of God. In marked contrast to "a multitude of words," this is but "a word," but spoken in the proper time and place to meet a particular need. Apples are well known for their health-imparting qualities, and gold is a lovely symbol of the glory of God manifested in the Person of Christ. Is it not precious to see this type immediately the subject of ministry is introduced? Moreover, it is seen in a setting of silver, a type of the work of the Lord Jesus in redemption. What a basis is all of this for the ministry of the Spirit of God among His saints! When Paul writes to Timothy of proper behavior "in the house of God, which is the church of the Living God, the pillar and ground of the truth," he immediately adds that which is the basic truth to which the church is responsible to bear witness: "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into Glory", **1 Tim. 3:15, 16**. The glory of the Person of the Lord Jesus and the perfection of His finished work is thus our precious burden of ministry. How fruitful it is to speak of this, - and how honoring to our God and Father. Moreover, what an antidote for the distress so commonly caused by unprofitable words!

Verse 12

"As an earring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise reprovener upon an obedient ear."

True ministry must necessarily reprove evil, whether it may be privately or publicly. Lowly wisdom is urgently needed here, and the ministry must be given in the spirit of serving the need of souls, for the Lord's sake. This will have a real and precious effect upon every "obedient ear".

The "earring of gold" would speak of that influence that stirs in the soul those motives of concern for the glory of God, rather than self-interest, self-justification or self-pleasing. How precious that ministry that directs souls altogether to the Lord and His own glory. As well as an earring of gold, it is "an ornament of fine gold," not only influencing the ear, but an adornment of the person.

Verse 13

"As the cold of snow in time of harvest, so is a faithful messenger to them that send him: for he refresheth the soul of his masters."

This appears to refer to snow stored over from a previous winter, providing cooling refreshment in the heat of harvest. Here then is a messenger whose faithful message proves, not warming, comforting, tranquillizing, but invigorating, refreshing. Faithful ministry must avoid mere "good words and fair speeches", **Rom. 16:18**, and

rather stir hearts and consciences to true labor in God's great harvest field. Yet observe here that nothing is said about refreshing his hearers; but rather: "he refresheth the soul of his masters." Can we not easily apply this to the delight of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in all ministry that faithfully represents the Word of God? It is true also that warming, comforting ministry is most necessary at certain times, specially of trial, distress and sorrow; but in the heat of labor how needful is that cooling, reviving ministry of the Spirit of God by the lips of a faithful messenger. May we all seek by this to refresh the soul of our Master."

Verse 14

"Whoso boasteth himself of a false gift is like clouds and wind without rain."

Ministry and gift is not without its dangers also. Imitations of what is good will certainly soon raise their heads, and the saints of God must be on their guard. Promising outward signs may be there, - the clouds and wind, - but no rain, no vital ministry of the Spirit of God to actually meet the need of souls. One may appear earnest and serious as the clouds, his words as strong and forceful as the wind; but yet be lacking so far as any true gift from the Spirit of God is concerned, so that he provides nothing for the thirst of souls. Paul's warnings to Timothy we must not ignore: "Shun profane and vain babblings, for they will increase unto more ungodliness." "Foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes", **2 Tim. 2:16, 23.**

Verse 15

"By long forbearing is a prince persuaded, and a soft tongue breaketh the bone."

If the servant of the Lord is not to strive, he is to "be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves", **2 Tim. 2:24, 25.**

Faithfulness does not mean a peremptory declaration of the truth; but involves dealing wisely with souls by the giving of the truth needed by the soul at the time. It does not look for immediate results, but trusts God for eventual fruit. It acts with becoming restraint and forbearance, and is not discouraged by many rebuffs and setbacks. Happy indeed is that man who has learned how to rightly use his tongue. It may seem to accomplish nothing with some souls, but if one is a "prince," possessing the dignity of a child of the King, a proper presentation of the Word of God to him will have its real effect, in time. A soft tongue is more potent than it appears: in time it will break the bone, the strength of stiff resistance.

Verse 16

"Hast thou found honey? Eat so much as is sufficient for thee, lest thou be filled therewith, and vomit it."

The connection here is preserved perfectly. Honey is gathered by all the worker bees for the benefit of the whole hive. How precious a picture of the unity of the church of God, each individual working for the blessing of all. The honey would speak then of the sweet ministry of the Word of God, the sharing of that which each saint gathers through diligent searching of the Word of God. But we must realize that all human ministry has its limitations. We cannot live entirely from what others gather. and however deeply we may enjoy the ministry of a man of God, we must be careful not to saturate ourselves with his thoughts. We must rather get to the Word of God ourselves. Scripture itself will never sicken us, though man's thoughts about it may do so. The Word is "sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb", **Psa. 19:10.** It stands far above all ministry. Indeed it is bread, milk, solid food, water: that which is necessary and satisfying for every day's need, and nothing can substitute for it. If we dare to give ministry the place that the Word itself should have we shall soon begin to vomit it. But honey is good indeed when used with bread or other solid food, yet used in moderation.

It may be remarked that honey has to be excluded from the offerings. In this case, the sweetest thoughts of man about the offering must be allowed no place in the offering itself, no more than leaven (corruption) was to be

allowed, **Lev. 2:11**. Yet in the case of Jonathan, honey could enlighten the eyes, a little being taken on the end of his rod, **1 Sam. 14:27**. How good and how precious ministry is in its proper place but true ministry always gives the Word of God the prior place. "Stir up the gift of God which is in thee"; "Preach the Word", **2 Tim. 1:6; 4:2**. When Canaan is spoken of as a land flowing with milk and honey this is beautifully typical of our present blessing as "in heavenly places" where the Word (milk) and the ministry (honey) give abundant provision for the need of saints. In **Song of Songs 4:11** the lips of the Bride "drop as the honeycomb," - the sweet expression of the knowledge of the Word of God.

Verse 17

"Withdraw thy foot from thy neighbor's house: lest he be weary of thee, and so hate thee."

We are not so created as to enjoy one another's conversation all the time, nor the company of one another. This can never be the case in our seeking the Lord's company; but sober wisdom is necessary that we should know how to rightly serve our neighbor, and pass on our way. However gifted I may be in ability to instruct him, I must remember that it is not my presence he needs, but the presence of the Lord. How good to just give him enough help to send his soul back into the Lord's presence, there to learn deeply and properly, as he could never learn from me. And if with the very best intentions and the best material to present, I may blunder in spending too much time in my neighbor's house, how much more damage shall I do if the intentions are poor and my conversation empty. Consider the warning to young widows in **1 Timothy 5:13**.

Verse 18

"A man that beareth false witness against his neighbor is a maul, and a sword, and a sharp arrow."

Then proceeds the consideration of the positive harm one may cause by lending his lips to falsehood, the utter antithesis of the pure ministry of the truth of God. The commonness of such evil does not lessen its seriousness. But how dreadfully serious among saints of God who have sought to act upon the recovered truths of the unity of the body of Christ and of Himself as the One Center of gathering. How extremely careful ought we to be that we both care for the real unity of the Spirit of God, and that we know facts thoroughly before speaking, and especially if anyone is to be put in a bad light through our words. If guilty of false witness, one is "a maul" - crushing; "a sword" - cutting; and "a sharp arrow" - piercing. Let us consider how dreadfully in such a case the neighbor is wronged.

Verse 19

"Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is like a broken tooth, and a foot out of joint."

Trials, troubles of many kinds will test us, and how urgently is faithfulness needed then. It is with very real reason that Paul tells Timothy, "The things which thou hast heard of me among many witnesses the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also", **2 Tim. 2:2**. When things are not right, let us earnestly seek grace from God to speak rightly for Him and of Him, and to act wisely in His fear. These are tests, and will prove whether we are steadfast in continuance, stable and solid in the face of the storms, maintaining unshaken faith in the Living God, by which others are strengthened and encouraged. If one has confidence in us, and finds that in the acid test we withdraw, give up, become lax or weakened, resort to human reasoning in place of wholesome faith, then he shall find this confidence "a broken tooth," which with its nerve exposed, is significant of a distressing hindrance to feeding upon the truth of God; and "a foot out of joint, --a painful inability for a walk with God. Let us be most careful, if we are going to have confidence in any man, to be sure he is a faithful man, one consistently steadfast in the path of obedience to the Word of God.

Verse 20

"As he that taketh away a garment in cold weather, and as Vinegar upon nitre, so is he that singeth songs to a heavy heart."

In verse 19 it is a "time of trouble" that is contemplated and in verse 20 it is rather heaviness of heart. If one is thus badly affected by trouble of whatever kind are we prepared to meet his need with the proper ministry? Sadly, a common characteristic of the last days is a shallow, frivolous spirit that seeks to dismiss spiritual exercise of soul with assumed feelings of happiness or excitement. Singing songs to a heavy heart will not meet the need of that heart. It might rather expose him to the cold winds of unbelief, like the taking away of a garment. For if he is given to understand that Christianity is merely a sentimental, emotional appeal to the material senses, then he will deduce that it does not hold the answer to the real need of his soul: he is left exposed in the cold. Or, "as vinegar upon nitre," - not what is termed "nitre" now, but a mineral soda of Palestine. This combination would effervesce, giving an appearance of activity, but empty as foam. By this kind of thing the distress of the heart would only be increased. True joy in the Lord is real and precious, but an appearance of joy is false if the need of the soul is not met. "[Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses](#)" by imitations of the truth and Hymeneus and Philetus by falsehood "[overthrew the faith of some](#)", **2 Tim. 3:8; 2:17, 18**. These stand as salutary warnings to us.

Verse 21, 22

"If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat: and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: for thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the Lord shall reward thee."

Does this not teach us that the true, solid, fruitful ministry of Christ is to go on in spite of all adverse circumstances? Did the Lord Jesus Himself not do this very thing when He multiplied the loaves and fishes? He provided for all the tired and hungry crowd, many of whom proved to be His enemies, and He knew it. May we learn this deeply, that whether in temporal things or spiritual, we who have the bread that men need ought to be ready always to willingly give it to them when in their time of need they are willing to receive it. As coals of fire on the head, so such treatment should burn into the conscience of an enemy, whether he may be converted by it or not. But the Lord will reward such reality of faith.

Verse 23

"The north wind driveth away rain: so doth an angry countenance a backbiting tongue."

While the west wind in Palestine brings rain from the sea, the cold clear north wind will drive it back. Rain is, we know, a necessity at times, and it has already spoken to us of the ministry of the Word of God by the Spirit. But on the other hand, one may use his ability of speech in a thoroughly improper way, as we have also seen, and this becomes like a pelting, vicious cloudburst. "A backbiting tongue does harm rather than good. Let us deeply consider that all evil comes from using God-given abilities and blessings in wrong ways. But we must not listen to a backbiter. He is worthy only of the cold anger of the north wind. If we treat him in this decided way, it may stun him, but it will drive away his evil speaking. The first manifestation of discord and disunity is in our words, as is seen in 1 Corinthians 1, where the apostle urges the saints "[that ye all speak the same thing](#)" etc. **verse 10**. But, the need being present, Timothy is told, "[Reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine](#)", **2 Tim. 4:2**.

Verse 24

"It is better to (dwell in the corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman in a wide house."

Backbiting, if not judged, may become a habit, a veritable chronic disease that renders the guilty offender unmanageable and quarrelsome. How much better to dwell in quietness in a small and despised place than in

large and imposing circumstances with such a woman. But there is a most striking analogy here. if we compare **2 Timothy 2:20-22**. "But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honor, and some to dishonor. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, prepared unto every good work." That which, in **1 Timothy 3** is called "the house of God, the Church of the Living God" has in **2 Timothy** so degenerated as to include not only true believers (vessels of gold and silver), but of wood and of earth. Vessels to dishonor. Who can deny this unseemly public character of the professing church today? It is as though a beautiful mansion, once prepared for one family only, has fallen into a state of disrepair and ruin, and has become a rooming house for not only the family, but for strangers also, with a contentious woman occupying a large amount of space, who may want everyone boarding at the same table, agreeing to disagree, attempting a show of unity while only discord and loud words prevail. How sad, but true, a description of the public state of that which professes to be the church today, - "a brawling woman" instead of "a chaste virgin", espoused to the Lord Jesus, **2 Cor. 11:2**.

But every professing Christian is in this "great house," and cannot leave it. What then is the exercised child of God to do? He is to purge himself from fellowship with this mixture. Better to have a clean place "in the corner of the housetop" not boarding with the ungodly, but rooming in quiet separation from this, though making full room also for fellowship "with them that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart." Wonderful provision of grace. Though the place may seem very small, and fellowship limited, yet in being truly gathered to the Name of the Lord Jesus, with those similarly attracted by His blessed Person, the unity will be precious, much as we may sorrow over the fact that all God's saints are not concerned for and enjoying the proper unity of the Spirit of God.

Verse 25

"As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country."

Our chapter continues with a precious word of brightest hope! When the sad state of ruin and shame in the church has called us to a path of real separation amid trial and reproach, with no hope of the recovery of the true witness of the church, how much more precious becomes the "good news from a far country." If all on earth has failed, how much more does the soul thirst for heaven! Is this verse not a very evident reference to the coming of the Lord Jesus? And in the path of separation, the ministry concerning the coming of the Lord will be vital, living, refreshing, as cold waters to a thirsty soul. Outside of that path we can expect that souls will rather tend to settle down in the world, in whatever measure. The Lord stir our souls by this good news!

The ministry of the coming of the Lord and that of the Gospel of grace will have a very real place in proportion as we walk with God in true separation from evil. As we long for the coming of the Lord, so shall we long for the salvation of precious souls.

Verse 26

"A righteous man falling down before the wicked (or giving way to the wicked) is as a troubled fountain, and a corrupt spring."

The believer, in receiving the Gospel, finds "in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life", **John 4:14** ; and certainly there is to be a resulting flowing out of the water in blessing of others, **John 7:37, 38** - the ministry of the Spirit of God. Shall we allow this spring to be clogged or corrupted by unfaithfulness to our blessed Master? Jacob's unseemly "falling down before" Esau, and cringing as a menial before him, was a false representation (**Gen. 33:3**) of the God he served. Indeed God had said, "The elder shall serve the younger." But a bad conscience produced this abject weakness, rather than a calm dignity of faith that could stand face to face with his brother and bear a true witness for God. The spring did not bring forth what it ought to have. Let us apply it to present day conditions. Ungodly men have crept into places of prominence and dignity in the professing church. Christians have allowed them this place, showing them thorough deference and bowing to their authority, in lesser or greater measure. How unbecoming to a child of the Living God! To bow to the spiritual authority of an

unbeliever will effectively stop the lips from ministering the pure water of the Word of God. Let us deeply respect the authority of God, and bow to it absolutely. But in doing so, we shall not give way to the pride of man and to what is contrary to the blessed truth of God. Only as we "take forth the precious from the vile" shall we be as God's mouth, **Jer. 15:19**. Courteous respect of others is good, but giving way to evil is bad. Let our lips be always ready to minister only what is pure and unadulterated, as a fresh, living spring.

Verse 27

"It is not good to eat much honey: so for men to search their own glory is not glory."

We have seen that honey is typical, not of the Word of God itself, but of the ministry of the Word of God by his saints. This must have a limit, though it is good. If it should lead to one being preferred above another, this is mere glorying in men, and **1 Corinthians 4:6, 7** is how strong a protest: "And these things, brethren, I have transferred to my-self, and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye may learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another. For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?"

Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received? Very commonly, it is only our own pride that places a gifted man on a pedestal and if we thus eat to his pride also, this is not true glory. The Lord keep us from allowing any gift of ministry to become an occasion of glorying in the flesh. In the path of faith, how many dangers prevail in every direction; but the eye honestly fixed on Christ will be preserved.

Verse 28

"He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls."

The servant of the Lord must know how to practise a proper restraint, a godly, sober balance. For, while it is true that the Spirit of God gives special gifts to the saints of God, and we may count upon His power and grace in the exercise of that gift, yet our own spirits have a decided and important part in this. God has so ordained it that His Spirit works in conjunction with the true subjection of those whom He uses. If this is lacking, the gift will be abused. Scripture is plain: "the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets", **1 Cor. 14:32**. If we neglect true self-judgment, self-restraint, and proper discretion, we shall be exposed and deprived of our defense, as a city without walls; and given up to disorder, as a city broken down. Methods of this kind have been too often used to bolster a weak and failing testimony, but the results are such as to make disorder out of weakness, rebellion out of failure.

Even in this day of terrible ruin Scripture supplies every remedy for every situation, and it is imperative that we learn well its precepts. This surely turns us back to verse 2: if things are apparently concealed, a true and noble faith will search them out. May we meditate beloved brethren on this chapter before the Lord.

Adapted from gleanings from the past.