

Living Wisely

July 19, 2020

Proverbs 14:8-15

In our text today on wisdom, we will study pairs of verses that exhibit the literary style known as a chiasmus. The chiasmus is an arrangement of words in what's called an "A-B-B-A" structure.

First, we review Solomon's instruction on Prudence and Foolishness (vv. 8, 15). As discussed in earlier lessons, wisdom has a moral dimension, as does foolishness. To be a fool is not simply to be dumb; it is to be immoral.

Next, Solomon speaks of Recompense and Reward (vv. 9, 14). Fools laugh at the idea of making restitution for their wrongdoings (verse 9), but they will one day *"be fully repaid for their ways"* (verse 14). By contrast, the righteous, who make amends when they harm others, experience God's favor and will be rewarded.

The next verses make an astute observation about human emotion, Heartache and Joy (vv. 10, 13). No one really can know for certain what someone else is feeling (verse 10), and even apparent joy can be a mask for sadness and pain (verse 13).

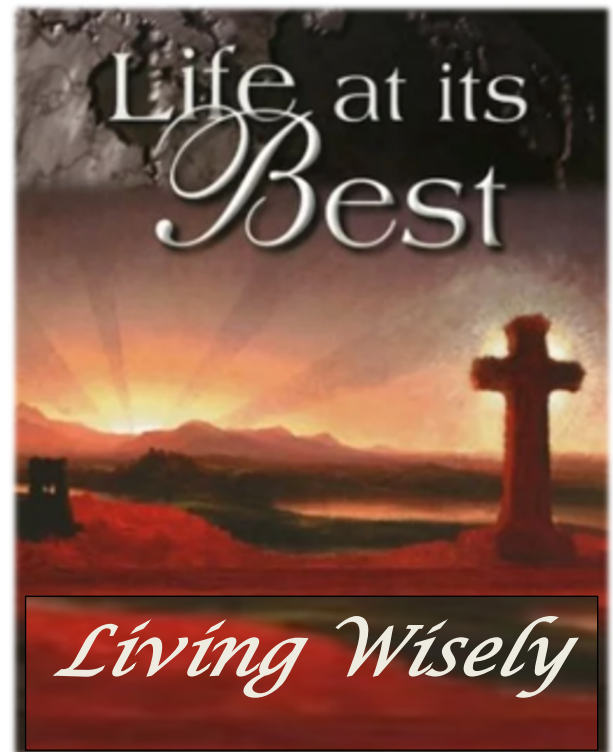
In the chiasmus style, the main point is at the center of the passage instead of the end. The central focus is found in verses eleven and twelve, Life and Death: *"The house of the wicked will be overthrown, But the tent of the upright will flourish. There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death"*. Prov. 14:11-12. The "right thing to do" often is difficult to discern, and what appears righteous may in fact prove to be evil. What then shall we do?

As Christians, we must walk with humility and prayerfulness, holding our convictions with an open hand and being willing to change our minds. If we ask God for wisdom, he surely will give it to us. Learning to live wisely depends on hearing and following wisdom — which is the voice of God. God's words are, "life to those who find them" (Prov. 4:22). [excerpts by Joshua Sharp]

Prudent (Proverbs 14:8,15)

- Prudence involves thinking through an opportunity or a challenge carefully before drawing a conclusion and coming to a decision.
 - We are wise to seek the Lord's direction and discern the way He wants us to take.
- In contrast, foolish people don't take time to think through a situation.
 - They make quick decisions and dive headlong into their choices.
- The foolish believe every word - think of the danger in an era of 'fake-news'.
- The wise count on the Lord to shed light on the path before us.
- Prudence helps us think about our next steps to prevent us from doing something that will turn out to be foolish or get us into trouble.
 - **How do you discern the 'right thing to do'? Do you listen to others or to God?**
 - **Are you patient in making decisions?**

The prudent sees danger and hides himself, but the simple go on and suffer for it. Proverbs 22:3



**I, wisdom
dwell with
prudence
and I find
knowledge
and
discretion**
Proverbs 8:12

And so they are evil

• **Proverbs 10:23** –
“Doing wickedness is like sport to a fool, and so is wisdom to a man of understanding.”



• **Proverbs 14:9** –
“Fools mock at sin but among the upright there is good will.”

Content (Proverbs 14:9,14)

- **“Fools mock at making reparation”**
 - The sin (or trespass) offering was one of five major sacrifices in the Israelite sacrificial system.
 - When an individual’s actions resulted in another person’s loss the guilty party was required to repay the amount of the loss plus 20%. (Leviticus 5:16)
 - The reparation payment was in addition to the sacrifice given as an offering to God.
 - Fools scorn the idea of giving any of their wealth to other people.
 - They conceive themselves above the law and accountable to no one, not even God.
 - God’s people (the upright or righteous) respond to sin in an entirely different way.
 - They do not hesitate to make restitution in keeping with God’s law.
 - They find favor with God and experience true contentment in life.
- **Have you been perplexed over people who appear to get away with sinful behavior?**
- **What brings contentment in your life?**

Joyful (Proverbs 14:10,13)

- The heart stores a range of emotions that others may not know. Relationships develop as we share our heart with others. Sometimes our hearts are burdened by unshared grief.
 - **“The heart knoweth his own bitterness”**
 - We do well not to confuse happiness with joy.
 - Happiness depends on our circumstances – a gift received, and good doctor’s report.
 - Joy defies circumstances and abides consistently in our hearts. Joy doesn’t fade when conditions change. Joy comes from a relationship with the Lord.
 - Happiness and laughter are fleeting (temporal) feelings and emotions.
 - Laughter sometimes covers a heart that is drowning in sorrow.
 - A heart full of joy comes from an intimate relationship with God.
- **How would you describe joy from the Lord to non-believers?**

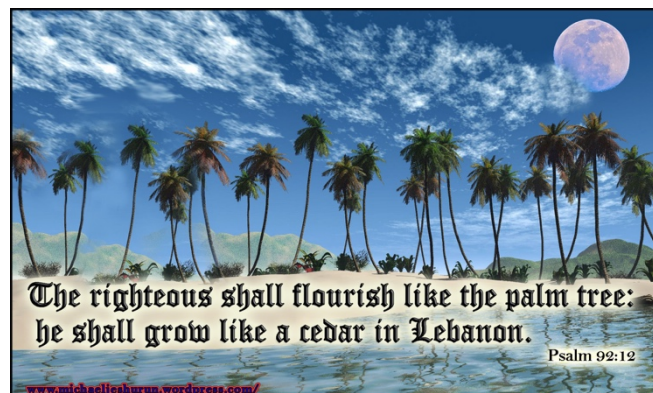
*be joyful
always*
1 Thessalonians 5:16

Thriving (Proverbs 14:11,12)

- Now, we come to the central point of this passage in Proverbs.
 - Wisdom and foolishness are now compared in terms of outcomes.
 - **What happens to someone who chooses a foolish path?**
 - Wicked people reject the Lord and refuse His wisdom. They have built a house on the foundation of their own thoughts, preferences, philosophies and prejudices.
 - **“The house of the wicked shall be overthrown”**
 - **“The way which seemeth right to man, but in the end it leads to death.”**
 - **What happens the person who chooses to take the path provided by God’s wisdom?**
 - **“The tabernacle (life) of the upright shall flourish”**
 - Without God, people do not have the wisdom they need to make the best choices with their lives.
- **How can you consistently follow God’s wisdom?**

Biblical Truth: Following God’s wisdom leads to joy, while failing to do so leads to grief.

Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is. Ephesians 5:15-17



**The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree:
he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.**

Psalms 92:12

www.michaeljoshua.wordpress.com/