

# PROVERBS

## Chapter 13

**A wise son hears his father's instruction, but a scoffer does not listen to rebuke. 2 From the fruit of his mouth a man eats what is good, but the desire of the treacherous is for violence. 3 Whoever guards his mouth preserves his life; he who opens wide his lips comes to ruin. 4 The soul of the sluggard craves and gets nothing, while the soul of the diligent is richly supplied. 5 The righteous hates falsehood, but the wicked brings shame and disgrace. 6 Righteousness guards him whose way is blameless, but sin overthrows the wicked. 7 One pretends to be rich, yet has nothing; another pretends to be poor, yet has great wealth. 8 The ransom of a man's life is his wealth, but a poor man hears no threat. 9 The light of the righteous rejoices, but the lamp of the wicked will be put out. 10 By insolence comes nothing but strife, but with those who take advice is wisdom. 11 Wealth gained hastily will dwindle, but whoever gathers little by little will increase it. 12 Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a desire fulfilled is a tree of life. 13 Whoever despises the word brings destruction on himself, but he who reveres the commandment will be rewarded. 14 The teaching of the wise is a fountain of life, that one may turn away from the snares of death. 15 Good sense wins favor, but the way of the treacherous is their ruin. 16 Every prudent man acts with knowledge, but a fool flaunts his folly. 17 A wicked messenger falls into trouble, but a faithful envoy brings healing. 18 Poverty and disgrace come to him who ignores instruction, but whoever heeds reproof is honored. 19 A desire fulfilled is sweet to the soul, but to turn away from evil is an abomination to fools. 20 Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm. 21 Disaster pursues sinners, but the righteous are rewarded with good. 22 A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children, but the sinner's wealth is laid up for the righteous. 23 The fallow ground of the poor would yield much food, but it is swept away through injustice. 24 Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him. 25 The righteous has enough to satisfy his appetite, but the belly of the wicked suffers want.**

**13:1** *a wise son* – The early chapters of Proverbs consisted of discourses to “my son.” Interspersed throughout the First Collection of Solomon’s Proverbs (10:1-22:16) are reminders of those opening chapters. It’s as if Solomon is saying, “Are you paying attention, son?” (PBC)

*hears his father’s instruction. moo-sawr’* – properly *chastisement*; figuratively *reproof*, *warning* or *instruction*; also *restraint*:—bond, chastening, chastisement, check, correction, discipline, doctrine, instruction, rebuke. (QV)

Verb is supplied from the second line and does not actually appear in the Hbr text. This proverb accentuates the responsibilities of both son and father. To the same degree that a son must heed his father’s instruction, a father is also responsible for imparting wise instruction to his son. (TLSB)

This is another key concept in Proverbs. It is that quality of being able to follow through and apply our God-given wisdom. We might call it self-discipline. The ancient Jewish rabbis had a saying, “The wicked are under the control of their impulses, but the righteous have their impulses under their control.” - Self-discipline is especially important for us to keep in mind, since our society encourages just the opposite. In a thousand different ways we are told, “If it feels good,

do it!” Proverbs does not deny emotions their due. Joy and self-satisfaction have their place. But they are fully realized only when kept within the limits of God’s Word. God sets up rules for living, not to make us unhappy, but to bring us real, lasting happiness. (PBC)

*scoffer does not listen to rebuke.* Correction that is expressed passionately and loudly. But the scoffer ignores all correction, no matter how forcefully it is expressed. (TLSB)

The mocker goes his own way. (PBC)

**13:2** *fruit of his mouth.* Wise words of correction and encouragement. (TLSB)

Because they have listened and learned, the wise can speak wisely. With words of correction, they help the erring. With words of kindness, they uplift the needy. (PBC)

*desire for violence.* The ungodly continue on their own way. Not having listened to rebuke, they pursue their own way, a way that treats others with disregard and violence. (PBC)

**13:3** *guards his mouth preserves his life.* The ability to control the tongue is one of the clearest marks of wisdom. “The tongue has the power of life and death” (18:21; see 10:19; 21:23; Jas 3:2). (CSB)

*he opens wide his lips comes to ruin.* The wicked are unable to control their passion for violence, they can’t control their tongues either. Their end is ruin. (PBC)

**13:4** *sluggard.* This is one of many warnings against laziness and its consequences. Simply because one craves something doesn’t mean he’ll get it. The lazy have no reason to expect they’ll get anything. (PBC)

*craves and gets nothing.* Is never satisfied, yet refuses to work (see 21:25–26). (CSB)

*soul of the diligent is richly supplied.* Diligence yields a profit. (CSB)

The proverb is also another recommendation for hard work and God’s blessings upon it. “Fully satisfied,” is rendered as “abundantly gratified” or simply “satisfied” in other translations. Solomon is not saying that hard-working people have their every last whim satisfied. Doing the work God has placed before them and trusting God’s providence, they find full satisfaction in knowing he will give them what is best. (PBC)

**13:5** *the righteous hates* – Righteous people reflect their Lord’s attitude toward evil. It is not an attitude of mere indifference and ignoring what is wrong. (PBC)

In contrast to the attitude of indifference so prevalent today, the righteous, like their Lord, hate all falsehood (Jn 8:43–44). (TLSB)

*brings shame and disgrace.* Like a lazy or ungrateful son (10:5; 19:26). (CSB)

Some become so hardened in immorality that “their glory is in their shame” (Philippians 3:19). That is, they boast about their sins. (PBC)

**13:6** This contrast repeats the thought of 2:21–22; 10:9; 11:3, 5 (see notes); cf. 21:12; Ps 25:21. – The sinful way of the wicked will bring about the final ruin of sinners. “Their destiny is

destruction” (Philippians 3:19). Protected by God’s power, the righteous are kept safe, in time and for eternity. (PBC)

**13:7** *pretends*. Concise observation that things are not always as they appear. (TLSB)

Both pretenses are folly and lead to folly (see 14:8 and note; see also 11:24; 12:9). – Truth is often stranger than fiction. By borrowing and putting purchases on credit. Some people are able to give a pretence of wealth, when in reality they have nothing. Others who live very humbly, are very wealthy. (PBC)

**13:8** Could mean that the rich are often victims of blackmail or kidnapping because they are able to pay a ransom to their tormentors who, however, do not find it profitable to make threatening demands of the poor. Cf Ec 5:12–13. (TLSB)

*ransom of a man’s life is his wealth*. Has the means to pay off robbers or enemies.. (CSB)

Hbr *kopher*, commonly used for atoning for or covering sins, but here it refers to a bribe or a ransom paid to a kidnapper. (TLSB)

The issues here is not whether or not one possesses wealth, but value it has. Wealth often brings more anxiety, rather than the hope for security. In Ecclesiastes, Solomon remarked, “The sleep of the laborer is sweet, whether he eats little or much, but the abundance of a rich man permits him no sleep” (Ecclesiastes 5:12) (PBC)

*poor man hears no threat*. Even poverty has its advantages. –(CSB)

The Hbr words are identical with the close of v 1: “does not listen to rebuke.” (TLSB)

If you are poor, no one will hold you up for ransom. (PBC)

**13:9** *light ... lamp*. Symbols of life. (CSB)

Metaphorical expressions denoting the eternal condition of the righteous and the wicked. Cf Dn 12:2–3. (TLSB)

Job put the two together in poetic parallelism: “Why is light given to those in misery, and life to the bitter of soul?” (Job 3:20). For one’s light to shine brightly meant long life, and one’s lamp being snuffed out meant death. (PBC)

*lamp of the wicked be put out*. His life will end (see 20:20; 24:20; Job 18:5; 21:17).

**13:10** *insolence*. Our sinful human pride doesn’t like to take advice. (PBC)

**13:11** *wealth gained hastily will dwindle*. Such as wealth gained by extortion (Ps 62:10) or deceit (Pr 21:6). (CSB)

**13:12** *Hope deferred makes the heart sick*. Cf. Ge 30:1. (CSB)

Waiting for a long time drains one of life and energy. When Rachel waited and waited to have a child, she became discouraged and said to her husband Jacob, “Give me children or I’ll die!” (Genesis 30:1) (PBC)

*desire fulfilled is a tree of life.* It revives and strengthens. (CSB)

Not just random wish fulfillment, but here reflecting the ultimate desire of all the righteous for the gift of eternal life with God, which corresponds to the “tree of life” in paradise (Rv 2:7). *tree of life*. Compare to “fountain of life” in v 14. (TLSB)

When one’s hope is finally realized, its like having a new lease on life. (PBC)

**13:13** *whoever despises the word brings destruction on himself.* Including esp God’s Word, the Holy Scriptures. God’s Word and breath create and sustain life (Gn 1:3; 2:7). Cf Lk 11:28. (TLSB)

This verse is appropriate today, when there is so much disrespect for authority in government, schools and the church. Those who snub their noses at the instruction and commands of teachers and officials will pay. They will find out the hard way that they should have paid attention and that they can’t be a law unto themselves. (PBC)

*who reveres the commandment will be rewarded.* Respect and obedience bring the rewards of friendship, contentment, and peace of mind. (PBC)

**13:14** *fountain of life.* Like the tree of life in verse 12, the fountain of life in this verse brings to mind pictures of paradise. The last chapter of the Bible speaks of “the river of the water of life” and “the tree of life” in heaven (Revelation 22:1,2).

*from the snares of death.* The end of God’s wisdom is eternal life and deliverance from eternal death in hell. (PBC)

**13:16** The prudent man – the man of understanding – “acts out of knowledge.” That knowledge is based on the Scriptures. The fool goes through life with no higher guide than his own passions. It’s evident that he is stumbling along. (PBC)

*flaunts his folly.* Spreads it out like a merchant displaying his wares. (TLSB)

**13:17** *falls into trouble.* Perhaps by misrepresenting those who sent him. (CSB)

The wicked messenger might be getting into trouble because he misrepresents those who sent him. (PBC)

*brings healing.* His tactful, honest approach benefits both parties (see 25:13; cf. 12:18; 15:4). (CSB)

The trustworthy envoy is dependable. The “healing” he brings probably means that everyone involved in his activities reaps the benefits of his reliability. What applies to messengers and envoys, we can apply to employees in general. God wants us to be reliable and trustworthy workers. (PBC)

**13:19** *desire fulfilled.* This line describes the sweet satisfaction of having a goal and reaching it. The best explanation seems to be that goals are such strong motivations that people will do anything to reach them. Jesus’ goal was the salvation of the world, so “for the joy set before him (he) endured the cross, scorning its shame” (Hebrews 12:2) (PBC)

*turn away from evil is abomination to fools.* Cf. their hatred of correction in 5:12. (CSB)

This line says that fools don't want to turn from their course of action. The fool sets his heart on wealth (or fame or pleasure) and nothing can turn him from his evil drive to get it. (PBC)

**13:20** *who walks with the wise becomes wise.* Choose your friends with care (see 2:20; 12:26). (CSB)

The company one keeps, whether wise or foolish, is always influential. Companions should be chosen carefully. (TLSB)

Birds of a feather flock together. If weren't like them before, we tend to become like those we associate with. Choose your friends carefully. (PBC)

**13:21** General observation concerning the consequences of behavior. Timing of both disaster and reward is left to God. (TLSB)

The Book of Proverbs deals with general truths. One of those truths is that sin doesn't pay, in this world or the next. While the wicked may attain a degree of prosperity, and even become rich and famous, the fact remains that "misfortune pursues the sinner." This misfortune may come in the form of family troubles, envy and hatred from those he has mistreated, pangs of conscience and remorse, anxiety over the ever-present possibility of losing one's wealth. (PBC)

**13:22** *good man leave an inheritance to his children's children* – While the righteous may not become fabulously wealthy, God blesses them sufficiently with food, clothing, and contentment to enjoy what they have. That is real prosperity. The good man also has something to pass on to his children. Often through hard work he has saved up some material goods or money. More important, he passes down the spiritual heritage of God's Word. (PBC)

*is laid up for the righteous.* Job agrees that this is often what happens to a wicked man's possessions (Job 27:16–17; cf. Pr 28:8). (CSB)

In a sense, because the ungodly live in fear of losing their wealth, they never fully possess what they have. But the godly possess the entire world, since God gives them contentment to enjoy all things. The thought is similar to Jesus' words in the Beatitudes: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5). (PBC)

**13:23** *injustice sweeps it away.* Probably a case of the rich and powerful oppressing the poor (cf. Ps 35:10). (CSB)

As king of Israel, Solomon would have been concerned with abolishing all forms of injustice, as injustice most frequently victimizes the poor and powerless. (TLSB)

**13:24** *who spares the rod hates his son.* Parents are encouraged to apply the rod of punishment to drive out folly (22:15) so that the child will not follow a path of destruction (19:18; 23:13–14). The rod "imparts wisdom" (29:15) and promotes a healthy and happy family (29:17). Discipline is rooted in love. (CSB)

*rod.* Probably a figure of speech for discipline of any kind. (CSB)

The rod is not to be confused with child abuse. Nor should parents be so strict as to “exasperate” their children (Ephesians 6:4). (PBC)

Appropriate discipline from parents is always an expression of love. Conversely, parents who do not discipline create lasting pain and difficulty for their children. “We must hold the commandment before them, and constantly teach it, so that we bring them up not only with punishment, but also in reverence and fear of God (Ephesians 6:4)” (LC I 61). Although giving and receiving discipline is sometimes difficult, parents and children can look to our heavenly Father, who also disciplines those He loves (3:11–12). Cf Heb 12:4–11. (TLSB)

**13:25** This verse extols the earthly blessings of a godly lifestyle. While there might be exceptions to the rule, the general truth stands. David wrote, “I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread” (Psalm 37:25) (PBC)