

PROVERBS

Chapter 18

Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment. 2 A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion. 3 When wickedness comes, contempt comes also, and with dishonor comes disgrace. 4 The words of a man's mouth are deep waters; the fountain of wisdom is a bubbling brook. 5 It is not good to be partial to the wicked or to deprive the righteous of justice. 6 A fool's lips walk into a fight, and his mouth invites a beating. 7 A fool's mouth is his ruin, and his lips are a snare to his soul. 8 The words of a whisperer are like delicious morsels; they go down into the inner parts of the body. 9 Whoever is slack in his work is a brother to him who destroys. 10 The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe. 11 A rich man's wealth is his strong city, and like a high wall in his imagination. 12 Before destruction a man's heart is haughty, but humility comes before honor. 13 If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame. 14 A man's spirit will endure sickness, but a crushed spirit who can bear? 15 An intelligent heart acquires knowledge, and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge. 16 A man's gift makes room for him and brings him before the great. 17 The one who states his case first seems right, until the other comes and examines him. 18 The lot puts an end to quarrels and decides between powerful contenders. 19 A brother offended is more unyielding than a strong city, and quarreling is like the bars of a castle. 20 From the fruit of a man's mouth his stomach is satisfied; he is satisfied by the yield of his lips. 21 Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits. 22 He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the LORD. 23 The poor use entreaties, but the rich answer roughly. 24 A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

18:1 *isolates himself*. Those who declare themselves independent of community restraints, particularly from the congregation of the Lord, will give free rein to selfish drives and, as a result, make peaceful relations with others impossible. God's Word calls us away from our own opinions (18:2). Not only is it selfish to remove ourselves from the fellowship of God's people, but it is also inconsistent with true faith and love (Ac 2:42–47). (TLSB)

seeks his own desire. He is quarrelsome and hot-tempered (cf. 17:14; Gal 5:20). (CSB)

The loner cuts himself off from communication with others. He has no access to their sound judgment, as he pursues his selfish ends. We might apply this to church life, where we often see the sorry end of those who go it alone, without the fellowship of the rest of the congregation. (PBC)

sound judgment. *tushiyah* – This word refers to intellectual insight. Meaning to *substantiate*; *support* or (by implication) *ability*, that is, (direct) *help*, (in purpose) an *undertaking*, (intellectual) *understanding*:—enterprise, that which (thing as it) is, substance, (sound) wisdom, working.

18:2 *understanding* – *to-boo-naw'* – *intelligence*; by implication an *argument*; by extension *caprice*:—discretion, reason, skilfulness, understanding, wisdom.

Expressing his opinion. Cf. Ecc 10:3. (CSB)

Fools do not know enough to hide their lack of discrimination by silence. They reveal their stupidity by talking nonsense. (TLSB)

The fool also engages in another form of anti-social behavior. He doesn't physically cut himself off from others. Yet he cuts off communication by his unwillingness to listen. All he cares about is airing his ideas. (PBC)

18:3 *contempt ... dishonor ... disgrace.* Cf. Ps 31:19; Isa 22:18. (CSB)

Chemnitz: "The Lord puts to shame those who despise Him because their sins are their punishments for sins until finally the sinner comes into the abyss" (*LTh* 1:198). (TLSB)

All three words are synonyms. (PBC)

18:4 *deep waters.* Profound or obscure (cf. 20:5). (CSB)

Indicates the obscure nature of what lies within and proceeds out of sinful humans. The psalmist asks, "Who can discern his errors?" (Ps 19:12), indicating that a person's faults are more than even he or she can fathom (Mt 7:22–23; 1Co 2:11). In contrast, God has spoken clearly (Heb 1:1–2). In Him, we have the living water that wells up to eternal life in all who believe (Jn 4:10; 7:38; Rv 7:17). (TLSB)

Most of the time we talk in "small talk." Far beneath the surface run our real thoughts and feelings, which can only be drawn out with difficulty. The wise man is able to express those words and to draw them out from others. In this way wisdom is a "bubbling brook," coming to the surface. (PBC)

wisdom is a bubbling brook. A wise man's words are refreshing and a source of life. (CSB)

wisdom – *hokmah* – The most frequently used word for wisdom and refers to practical wisdom. Practical wisdom is the chief concept in Proverbs. (PBC)

18:5 *partial to the wicked.* Favoritism of any kind was condemned in the law (see Lev 19:15; Dt 1:17; 16:19). (CSB)

To favor those who do evil while depriving the righteous of justice. Representatives of God's authority must be impartial (Rm 2:11). To absolve the unrepentant is to make a mockery of both the Law, which aims to call sinners to repentance, and the Gospel, which forgives those who repent and want to do better. (TLSB)

to deprive the righteous of justice. See Mal 3:5. (CSB)

Wisdom teaches us simply to do God's will and establish justice. And let the chips fall where they may. (PBC)

18:6 *walk inot a fight.* A fool is quick to quarrel. (CSB)

The fool in his stupidity, like the mocker in his wickedness, gets into trouble when he opens his mouth. (PBC)

invites a beating. By a rod on his back. (CSB)

18:8 *words of a gossip are like choice morsels.* They are as pleasant as a wise man's words (cf. 16:21, 23), but they promote dissension (see 11:13; 26:20, 22). (CSB)

Gossips always have three victims: the one spoken about, the one speaking, and the one spoken to. (PBC)

they go down into the inner parts. Where they are thoroughly digested and so are carried about and live on and on. (CSB)

Choice bits of slander, eagerly gobbled up, leave a deep-seated impression. Gossip is a threat to the hearer who swallows it. (TLSB)

18:9 *who is slack in his work.* The lazy person is a brother to the destroyer. The one destroys property by plundering and burning it. The other destroys more slowly by letting things fall apart. (PBC)

18:10 *name of the LORD.* The "name" equals the person, since it expresses his nature and qualities. (CSB)

Only here does Pr use the phrase "the name of the LORD [Yahweh]." (TLSB)

strong tower. See Ps 18:2; 91:2; 144:2. (CSB)

God is "our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble" (Psalm 46:1).

18:11 *wealth is his strong city.* As walls of a fortified city provide safety against invasion, so wealth is protection against the hardships resulting from poverty. But when the rich put their trust in wealth rather than in the Lord (v 10), the protection they seek may turn out to exist only in their imagination. (TLSB)

Solomon addresses another form of false security – riches. When he speaks of "the rich," most of us could apply that word to ourselves. We enjoy a standard of living that most of the world's population only dreams of. And we have refined financial planning to a science. We have our Social Security programs, pension plans, life insurance, tax sheltered annuities, individual retirement account, the stock market, mutual funds. The list goes on. If we trust in this kind of thing as our "fortified cit," our imaginations have gotten the best of us. What good is any of that when we stand naked before our Maker? (PBC)

unscalable wall. But God can bring it down (see Isa 25:12). (CSB)

18:12 *a man's heart* – The word "heart" or "hearts" occurs almost 100 times in the Book of Proverbs, indicating how often Solomon directs our attention to the inner life. What's in our heart influences our outward behavior. But God looks straight past the outward appearance and into the heart (1 Samuel 16:7). (PBC)

humility. One must first learn to bow under the Lord's discipline if one is to have the right attitude to receive honor from others. (TLSB)

18:13 *gives an answer before he hears* – Did you ever find yourself so busy thinking about what you would say when the other person finished speaking that you weren't listening? It happens to all of us. But it's foolish and we should be ashamed of it. We all can work at being better listeners. (PBC)

18:14 *a man's spirit* – "Spirit" in this verse includes willpower and determination. The will to live enables people to come through severe physical hardships. But when the spirit is broken the will to live goes too. (PBC)

People can stand up under physical suffering; but once their spirit is broken, they collapse. (TLSB)

18:15 *knowledge* – *dah'-ath knowledge*:—cunning, know(-ledge), awares (wittingly). – Oh, how the wise love to learn! With their ears they listen attentively. Then they let it sink deeply into their heart. (PBC)

wise – *khaw-kawm'* From H2449; *wise*, (that is, intelligent, skilful or artful):—cunning (man), subtil, ([un-]), wise ([hearted], man).

18:16 *gift makes room for him*. A reference to the effectiveness of a bribe. (CSB)

Generous people make friends. The good will they create opens avenues for their advancement. (TLSB)

If the only way to get into the presence of "the great" is through gifts, then maybe the great aren't so great after all. While such generosity may eventually lead one into the society of great people, that is not the Christian's motivation. Rather, we give as God has given to us. (PBC)

18:17 A warning to judges to hear both sides of a case (cf. Dt 1:16), but applicable to many situations. – We shouldn't form hasty opinions. If we only hear one side of the case, we might come to the wrong conclusion. (PBC)

18:18 *the lot puts an end*. Though cast by human hands, God determines the decision it is to effect. Casting lots was a common way of making decisions. At certain times, God approved such a method of decision making. E.g., the high priest had the Urim and the Thummim (Ex 28:30). By the casting of lots, God instructed Aaron to divide the goats on the Day of Atonement (Lv 16:8). Casting lots was used for choosing in matters that were morally equal (using lots to choose whether to sin or not would be inappropriate). Lots were not a matter of chance but a divinely appointed means by which the Lord revealed His will (Jsh 18:8, 10; Ac 1:24–26). The NT does not give a promise that the Lord will operate through the same means today. He has given us His external Word by which to know His good and gracious will. (TLSB)

Today we might flip a coin. The point is that we can agree on a way to come to terms, short of heated arguments and all-out battles. We need to realize that when Solomon tells us to settle disputes, he is not calling on us to compromise the truth. He is speaking of areas where there is room for give and take. (PBC)

18:19 *brother offended*. Cf. Esau's anger because of the blessing Jacob received from Isaac (Ge 27:41). (CSB)

In a feud, reconciliation gets more difficult the closer the parties are related to one another. (TLSB)

Some of the deepest and longest lasting arguments develop between brothers or other close relatives. (PBC)

quarreling is like the bars of a castle. As bars of a castle prove unyielding, so do quarreling friends. In the heat of anger, repentance and forgiveness are often not sought, even among God's people. Cf Eph 4:26–27. (TLSB)

18:20 We reap what our words sow (12:14; 13:2; 18:21). Oratory skill, esp in a media-driven age, often brings profit and success. To speak well is a valuable gift. We may hear in this proverb a caution against those who would lie and deceive by God's name, profiteering by the Gospel or from false teaching. It is also true that laborers deserve their wages (1Tm 5:18), and godly and faithful pastors should receive their living from speaking the Gospel (1Co 9:14). Christians ought to share all good things with their instructors (Gal 6:6–7), adequately providing for the continuation of the ministry of Word and Sacraments in their midst. (TLSB)

This is verse is a colorful way of saying that we reap the rewards or punishments of what we say. Whenever we speak, we are planting. The hundreds and thousands of words that go out of our mouths each day are like seeds. Later we will reap the harvest and have to eat the fruit. (PBC)

18:21 *its fruits.* Found on a poster: "Oh, Lord, let my words be sweet and tender... for tomorrow I may have to eat them." (CSB)

18:22 *who finds a wife finds what a good thing.* He reminds us what a blessing she is. She is a lifelong companion, a lover, a mother. The last chapter of Proverbs offers a detailed description of the ideal wife (31:10-31). (PBC)

obtains favor from the LORD. Identical to 8:35, where finding wisdom brought such favor. (CSB)

Every good gift and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights" (Jas 1:17). Here is high esteem for God's favor received through a godly spouse; a recognition that in marriage God provides to a husband a wife to be defended with his life, and to a wife a husband in whom she may see the caring, tender headship of the Lord Himself (Eph 5:22–33). (TLSB)

11:23 *poor...rich* – Side by side we see misery and joy. We will see the sorrows all around us as opportunities to reach out to the needy with a Christ-like love. (PBC)

entreaties. Supplications for favor. The poor can do nothing but beg, while the rich have a boastful air. It is the poor in spirit who are blessed by the Lord with the gift of His kingdom (Mt 5:3), not because poverty is a virtue, but because they have no hope but that God is gracious and merciful and will give them the kingdom freely. Thus, the man who could not even raise his eyes to heaven was declared righteous, while the man who had something to boast about was declared unrighteous (Lk 18:10–14). (TLSB)

18:24 *man of many companions may come to ruin.* One must choose friends carefully. (CSB)

Some people will cut a friend to pieces if it is to their advantage. Such an experience, however, should not lead to cynicism. It is possible to find a friend who will remain loyal, no matter the

cost (17:17; 1Sm 18:1–3). Popularity does not always win friends in hard times. Even our Lord, who attracted crowds by feeding them fish and bread, watched them turn away from His hard saying regarding the eating and drinking of His body and blood (Jn 6:66). Not only the crowds but also His closest disciples abandoned Him in His hour of need. Although sinful people prove untrustworthy, our Lord remains faithful. He is our friend who sticks closer than any blood relation, who died for those who abandoned Him, and who prayed for the forgiveness of His enemies. (TLSB)

The word translated “a friend” is literally “one who loves.” We would translate “a loving friend.” (PBC)