

PROVERBS

Chapter 29

A man who remains stiff-necked after many rebukes will suddenly be destroyed—without remedy. ² When the righteous thrive, the people rejoice; when the wicked rule, the people groan. ³ A man who loves wisdom brings joy to his father, but a companion of prostitutes squanders his wealth. ⁴ By justice a king gives a country stability, but one who is greedy for bribes tears it down. ⁵ Whoever flatters his neighbor is spreading a net for his feet. ⁶ An evil man is snared by his own sin, but a righteous one can sing and be glad. ⁷ The righteous care about justice for the poor, but the wicked have no such concern. ⁸ Mockers stir up a city, but wise men turn away anger. ⁹ If a wise man goes to court with a fool, the fool rages and scoffs, and there is no peace. ¹⁰ Bloodthirsty men hate a man of integrity and seek to kill the upright. ¹¹ A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man keeps himself under control. ¹² If a ruler listens to lies, all his officials become wicked. ¹³ The poor man and the oppressor have this in common: The LORD gives sight to the eyes of both. ¹⁴ If a king judges the poor with fairness, his throne will always be secure. ¹⁵ The rod of correction imparts wisdom, but a child left to himself disgraces his mother. ¹⁶ When the wicked thrive, so does sin, but the righteous will see their downfall. ¹⁷ Discipline your son, and he will give you peace; he will bring delight to your soul. ¹⁸ Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint; but blessed is he who keeps the law. ¹⁹ A servant cannot be corrected by mere words; though he understands, he will not respond. ²⁰ Do you see a man who speaks in haste? There is more hope for a fool than for him. ²¹ If a man pampers his servant from youth, he will bring grief in the end. ²² An angry man stirs up dissension, and a hot-tempered one commits many sins. ²³ A man's pride brings him low, but a man of lowly spirit gains honor. ²⁴ The accomplice of a thief is his own enemy; he is put under oath and dare not testify. ²⁵ Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is kept safe. ²⁶ Many seek an audience with a ruler, but it is from the LORD that man gets justice. ²⁷ The righteous detest the dishonest; the wicked detest the upright.

29:1 *stiff-necked after many rebukes.* Eli's sons died because of their stubbornness (see 1Sa 2:25; cf. Dt 9:6, 13). (CSB)

This label was the OT's vivid way of describing stubborn, willful people. (PBC)

will suddenly be destroyed—without remedy. Identical to 6:15. Cf. the fate of the mockers in 1:22–27. (CSB)

What a warning this like presents! God's patience wears out when people continually rebel against His will. There comes a point of no return. (PBC)

Obstinate resistance to reproof is an alarming indication of approaching ruin. (CB)

29:2 *When the righteous thrive, the people rejoice.* See 11:10 and note. (CSB)

when the wicked rule, the people groan. See 28:12 and note; see also Jdg 2:18. The Israelites groaned in Egypt (Ex 2:23–24). (CSB)

Since the welfare of a state depends upon the character of its rulers, it is the duty of all who exercise the elective franchise to prefer the righteous above the wicked, and to elevate to office able men; such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness. (CB)

29:3 *man who loves wisdom brings joy to his father.* See 10:1 and note. (CSB)

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

Jesus is the perfect example of the wise son bringing “joy to his father.” Of Him God the Father declared, “With Him I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17). (PBC)

companion of prostitutes squanders his wealth. See 5:10; 6:26 and notes. (CSB)

29:4 *By justice a king gives a country stability.* See note on 16:12. (CSB)

bribes. See note on 17:8. (CSB)

exact gifts. Is guilty of corruption, using public resources for private purposes. (TLSB)

This term usually referred to parts of the sacrifices assigned to priests. For kings to dip into religious contributions was especially reprehensible. (PBC)

These were given to pervert judgment. (CB)

29:5 WHOEVER FLATTERS...SPREADING A NET – Commentators have understood this verse in either of two ways. With his smooth talk the flatterer spread a net for his neighbor’s feet, or he spreads it for his own feet – that is, he gets caught in his own scheming. Both approaches fit with other passages in Proverbs. Solomon may intentionally have left this ambiguous. Flattery is wrong on both counts. Insincere flattery ends up hurting the flatterer or the neighbor or both. (PBC)

Weaves a web of flattery that traps him. (TLSB)

29:6 *snared by his own sin.* See 1:18 and note; 22:5. (CSB)

Wicked people are never really at ease. They live with a troubled conscience and the awareness that at some time their evil will catch up with them. Not so the righteous man. Knowing God's grace, he sings God's praises and faces the future confidently. (PBC)

29:7 *The righteous care about justice for the poor.* Like Job (Job 29:16); cf. v. 14; 19:17; 22:22. (CSB)

A recent survey of Americans found that sixty-three percent agreed that "when it comes down to it, your first responsibility is to yourself." How far the "me generation" has departed from what God's Word teaches in this verse. (PBC)

29:8 *Mockers stir up a city.* See notes on 6:14; 11:11; see also 26:21. (CSB)

set a city aflame. Stir up trouble. (TLSB)

Literally, "fan a city [into a flame]." (PBC)

"Bring a city into a snare." (KJV) – Set it on fire; fill it with strife and faction. (CB)

Mockers. See 1:22 and note. (CSB)

wise men turn away anger. See Jas 3:17–18. (CSB)

Bring peace to disputes. (TLSB)

The wise seek peace, as St. Paul says, "Live in peace with each other" (1 Thessalonians 5:13). (PBC)

29:9 WISE – *khaw-kawm'* (that is, intelligent, skilful or artful):—cunning (man), subtil, ([un-]), wise ([hearted], man).(QV)

A wise person avoids legal entanglements with the fool. (PBC)

the fool rages and scoffs. Like an angry bear (17:12) or the tossing sea (Isa 57:20–21). (CSB)

When Proverbs speaks of a fool, as in this verse, it means the morally foolish person who is trying to live without God. Such a person can bluster and rage like "a bear robbed of her cubs" (17:12). (PBC)

No controversy is more profitless than that which is carried on with one who cannot feel the force of sound arguments. (CB)

29:10 *Bloodthirsty men hate a man of integrity.* Their schemes are described in 1:11–16; cf. Ps 5:6. (CSB)

Because truthful people point out wicked men's sin, the wicked want to get rid of the upright. Hence, killing and deceit go hand in hand. God despises both, as the psalmist writes, "You [O Lord] destroy those who tell lies; bloodthirsty and deceitful men the Lord abhors" (Psalm 5:6). (PBC)

29:11 *gives full vent to his anger.* See v. 9; 14:16–17. (CSB)

Fools express their opinions and emotions whenever they please. They also commit sinful deeds without restraint. (TLSB)

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

keeps himself under control. See note on 16:32. (CSB)

There is a healthy way to vent emotions. We can talk about how we feel and share our frustrations. (PBC)

29:12 *all his officials become wicked.* Cf. Isa 1:23. (CSB)

Most officials will tell their leader what he wants to hear. If he doesn't want the truth, but would rather hear lies and phony flattery, that's what he will get. Since they don't have the backbone to tell the truth, his officials become liars and flatterers in the process. (PBC)

29:13 POOR MAN AND OPPRESSOR – The oppressor and the poor seem to be at opposite poles, since the former tends to take advantage of the latter. But God can equalize things. The Lord can give the oppressor sight to see his sin and repent of it. To the poor he gives sight to find a way to endure his poverty. (PBC)

the LORD gives light to the eyes of both. All people are God's creatures and servants and, therefore, receive His blessings. As this proverb is advice for kings, it reminds those who are in a position of power that they are to be impartial in their dealings with their subjects. (TLSB)

29:14 See note on 16:12; see also v. 4; Isa 9:7. (CSB)

established forever. Reputation of the ruler will continue as an example for other rulers to emulate. All will welcome the leadership of the ruler's descendants. (TLSB)

When the poor can't take any more oppression, they eventually rise up against unjust rulers and overthrow them. The ruler who seeks to help the poor and treat

them fairly doesn't face this danger. So while the poor may seem to be insignificant, they really are quite influential. (PBC)

29:15 *rod of correction.* See note on 13:24. (CSB)

Luther: "When a child is permitted to do what it pleases, and parents say: Whatever our little daughter does is good, that girl is certainly headed for prostitution. And later on shame rests on the father and ignominy on the mother. This is their penalty for having neglected to train their child. God wants youth to be ruled and coerced by discipline, for this age is very weak and inexperienced and thinks only of foolish, childish, and harmful things. Accordingly, [the child] cannot rule itself and cannot see what is good for itself" (WLS § 5078). (TLSB)

While the rod of correction can include spanking when called for, it can also refer to verbal correction. It does not include child abuse. Solomon could have written this verse yesterday, since it speaks so directly to today's parents. When children are left by themselves at home night after night with nothing but television as their companion and a TV dinner to fix for themselves... You complete the story. (PBC)

What a priceless gift children are! We have only a few years to train them before they grow up. How are we parents going to use that time? May God help us to use it wisely. (PBC)

No child becomes wise and virtuous by pursuing his own inclinations, but only by faithful instruction and discipline. (CB)

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

29:16 *When the wicked thrive.* See v. 2; 11:11; 28:12, 28. (CSB)

Cf 28:28; 29:2. (TLSB)

righteous will see their downfall. See 10:25 and note; 14:11; 21:12. (CSB)

In this verse Solomon repeats a theme he has treated several times. We can't have wicked people in positions of power in business, government, entertainment, and communication and not expect evil to spread throughout the land. But when God's people stand up for what is right, the Lord will bless their efforts. (PBC)

29:17 *Discipline your son.* Teach him and train him (see 13:24 and note; 22:6). prophet; a prophetic vision (see 1Sa 3:1; Isa 1:1) (CSB)

Parents who discipline their young children reap a blessing in the future, esp when their children are grown and independent. (TLSB)

In this verse describes one of the joys of raising children with loving discipline. Later in life they will bring peace, literally “rest.” (PBC)

29:18 *revelation*. A message from God given through a pro 8:11–12). (CSB)

Hbr *chazon*, revelation from God, which has been preserved in the Scriptures. The Lord moved the prophets to preach His Word lest the people circumvent and distort the moral law through sinful reasoning. Secular moral philosophy cannot sustain a nation. (TLSB)

Vision in KJV is really revelation of divine truth. The faithful dispensation of divine truth is the only hope of a nation. Where this is wanting the people will sink into ignorance and corruption, till their destruction becomes inevitable. (CB)

people cast off restraint. Possibly an allusion to the sinful actions of the Israelites while Moses was on Mount Sinai (see Ex 32:25 and note). (CSB)

When Moses went up on Mount Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments, the Israelites built the golden calf and then “sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry ..the people were running wild” (Exodus 32:6, 25). That’s the kind of thing that happens where God’s revelation is absent. People will get out of control and lose themselves in self-indulgence. (PBC)

The KJV uses perish instead of restraint. The Hebrew may be rendered, made dissolute. (CB)

blessed is he who keeps the law. See 28:4 and note; see also 8:32; 28:14. (CSB)

29:19 *cannot be corrected by mere words*. Servants, like sons (vv. 15, 17), must be disciplined (see note on 22:6). (CSB)

Physical punishment or removal of privilege is needed. (TLSB)

Like sons (15 & 17), servants also need discipline. Reasoning alone is not enough. Imagine what an army would be like, if an officer had to explain every order in the heat of battle! There are times when one in authority must simply lead, and the one under authority must accept that leadership. (PBC)

UNDERSTANDS – DISCERNING – *bene* A primitive root; to *separate* mentally (or *distinguish*), that is, (generally) *understand*:—attend, consider, be cunning, diligently, direct, discern, eloquent, feel, inform, instruct, have intelligence, know, look well to, mark, perceive, be prudent. (QV)

29:20 *who speaks in haste.* See 10:19; 17:27–28; Jas 1:19. (CSB)

Speaking without thinking of the meaning or possible consequences. (TLSB)

In Proverbs only two kinds of people rank lower than the fool. One is the person who is “wise in his own eyes” (26:12). The other is mentioned in this verse, the “man who speaks in haste.” Why is speaking in haste such a serious wrong? Probably because this person never receives any input. He can’t learn, since he is always blurting out whatever comes to his mind. (PBC)

There is more hope for a fool than for him. Identical to 26:12. (CSB)

29:21 *pampers his servant.* See v. 19.

The thought in this verse is not far from that of verse 19. The thought of someone taking charge and being in authority may be difficult for people to accept in our day, when we tend to downplay authority and level out all role distinctions – whether at work, in the home, or in government. Nevertheless, authority is necessary. The person in authority is not to “pamper” the one under him. Carrying out discipline can and should be done in a firm yet caring way. (PBC)

We may understand this proverb of the careful training of a servant of superior worth, so that in the end he takes the place of a son to his master. (CB)

will ... find him his heir. LXX reads, “he will have grief over himself.” Those who pamper their servants from their youth will cause grief to themselves later on in life, for the slaves will not possess the wisdom to serve their master well. (TLSB)

29:22 *angry man stirs up dissension.* See note on 6:14; see also 15:18. (CSB)

As this verse indicates, many troubles and sins are connected with unbridled anger. Among them are dissension, cursing, violence, and revenge. (PBC)

29:23 See 15:33 and note; see also 18:12. (CSB)

There is an old saying: “he who runs after honor, honor flees from him; he who shuns honor, honor pursues him.” Instead of thinking, “What’s in it for me? How can I gain glory for myself?” We should think of doing God’s will, using our God-given talents, and helping others. Then, let whatever honor there is to be take care of itself. (PBC)

29:24 *he is put under oath.* He will be held responsible for failing to testify (cf. Lev 5:1). (CSB)

According to the Mosaic law: “If a person sins because he does not speak up when he hears a public charge to testify regarding something he has seen or learned about, he will be held responsible” (Lev. 5:1). Under this system, the “accomplice of a thief” was caught in a no-win situation. Even though he may not have actually committed the theft, he could not refuse to testify; and yet to testify would be to condemn himself. Getting ourselves involved with wrongdoers only puts us in no-win situations. It is wisdom to flee from evil. (PBC)

discloses nothing. During legal proceedings, such a person is found in contempt of court for not testifying. (TLSB)

29:25 *Fear of man.* Cf. 1Sa 15:24; Isa 51:12; Jn 12:42–43. (CSB)

Those who fear men will find themselves in one compromising situation after another. The solution is clear. Don’t be afraid of men. Trust in the Lord. (PBC)

He who is swayed by the opinions of his fellow-men, rather than by God’s Word, will be betrayed into innumerable sins and errors, which will prove a snare to his soul. It is only by faith in God that we can overcome the fear of man, and pursue with steadfastness a course of integrity. (CB)

whoever trusts in the LORD is kept safe. See 18:10 and note; cf. 3:5–6. (CSB)

29:26 *Many seek an audience.* See 1Ki 10:24. (CSB)

it is from the LORD that man gets justice. God controls a king’s actions (see note on 21:1) and defends the cause of the poor and the just (cf. Job 36:6). (CSB)

Reminds rulers that many people will attempt to influence them. Also instructs subjects of human authorities that, although their secular officials are responsible for ensuring peace and justice, real justice and righteousness comes from God. God is the final arbiter over all people throughout history. A more profound truth is revealed here as well: not only is God the ultimate judge, dispensing justice when and where He sees fit, but He is also the ultimate advocate. (TLSB)

This verse expands on verse 25. Many look for security and justice from earthly power-that-be. The real power resides in God’s hands. As Jesus told the Roman governor Pilate, “You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above” (John 19:11). Solomon, who himself was a great king, tells us where to take our prayers and in whom to put our trust – the Lord. (PBC)

29:27 THE RIGHTEOUS..THE WICKED – The righteous and the wicked are lined up against each other in poetic parallelism. Throughout this collection we’ve seen that we are either on God’s side or the side of the unbelieving world

and Satan. The two cannot be reconciled. Jesus says, “He who is not with Me is against Me” (Luke 11:23), and, “If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated Me first” (John 15:18). Were it not for Christ, we would still be enemies of God and friends of this world. (PBC)

The whole history of the world from the beginning is but a fulfillment of the original declaration in Eden: “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed.” (CB)

Chs 25–29 Israel was not holy, or set apart, because of their own greatness but because of God’s extraordinary kindness in calling them to be His people, the people from whom the future Messiah would be born. By crushing the work of Satan, this Messiah would deliver the final blow to the catastrophic effects and consequences of sin upon humanity (Gn 3:15). This establishes the necessary context for reading these proverbs and instructions on human righteousness. For the righteousness of rulers and their subjects is borne out of the divine righteousness reckoned to human beings through faith in God’s promises. The righteousness that saves is a righteousness that *only* comes through faith in God’s promise; Christ’s righteousness was substituted for our wickedness. • We thank You, O Lord, for Your greatest act of justice, the sending of Your own Son to die on our behalf! In assurance and eternal hope, enable me to freely serve my neighbor, community, and authorities. Amen. (TLSB)