

PROVERBS

Chapter 3

Trust in the LORD with All Your Heart

My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments, 2 for length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you. 3 Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you; bind them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart. 4 So you will find favor and good success in the sight of God and man. 5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. 6 In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. 7 Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil. 8 It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones. 9 Honor the LORD with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce; 10 then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine. 11 My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline or be weary of his reproof, 12 for the LORD reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights.

3:1–20 The third address to a son. (TLSB)

This third address in Proverbs 1–9 from a father to a son is divided into two parts. Prov 3:1–12 is the father's teaching to his son in six sayings with promises attached to each command. Prov 3:13–20 is a meditation on the surpassing benefits of Wisdom. These two parts function together to impress upon the son his father's teaching. It is the second part that brings balance to the entire address. If the first part is read by itself, the reader might conclude that obtaining blessings from God is simply a matter of following instructions. However, the second part reminds the reader that Wisdom comes before obedience to the commands. Wisdom was with God from the beginning (3:19–20), as Solomon will reveal more fully in 8:22–31. Moreover, Wisdom grants life and makes it pleasant (3:17–18). This description transcends a personification; here Wisdom is a hypostasis, the second person of the triune God. The preexistent Son and eternal Word was the agent of creation and is incarnate in Jesus Christ. (CC)

Solomon wants his readers to see that Christ, God's Wisdom, grants the blessings of understanding and life—now and forevermore. The promises attached to the commands in the first part of this address are not to be regarded as things that people can achieve by their own efforts or earn by their merit. Rather, they are gifts from God, received by grace alone as the Holy Spirit works faith and grants increasing knowledge of Christ. The promises portray the blessings of wisdom as it is lived out in the lives of those who respond to the Gospel. This divine wisdom is lived out in the lives of those who respond to the Gospel. These commands, therefore, ultimately are not demands of the Law, but invitations of the Gospel. Wisdom gives the reader the power to respond to the invitations in the first section of this address. This third address involves the Gospel and the power it bestows to follow God's Law (FC Ep VI 6–7; FC SD VI 17–21). (CC)

Six Commands and Promises (3:1–12)

The first part of this address consists of six main commands, each with a promise that follows:

<i>Verse</i>	<i>Command</i>	<i>Verse</i>	<i>Promise</i>
3:1	Do not forget my	3:2	Lasting, whole life

	teaching		
3:3	Do not allow mercy and truth to leave you	3:4	Favor before God and people
3:5	Trust in Yahweh	3:6	Straight paths
3:7	Do not consider yourself wise, but fear Yahweh	3:8	Health
3:9	Honor Yahweh	3:10	Prosperity
3:11	Do not reject Yahweh's discipline	3:12	Yahweh loves you as your Father

3:1 my son – This third discourse (3:1-35) speaks of the devout life. As we look at this life, we see three distinct aspects to it: (1) its inner quality, submission to God (3:1-12), (2) its foundation, the eternal wisdom of God (3:13-20), and (3) its external expression, relationship with one's self (3:21-26) and with others (3:27-35). (PBC)

your heart – The heart to the Hebrews was not merely the place of emotions. It included a person's inner life of thoughts, will, emotions, and personality. In other words, divine wisdom is to be a part of our entire inner life. We take it in, think about it, absorb it, and let it permeate us. (PBC)

commandments. In keeping with the Fourth Commandment, Solomon asks his son to honor him by adhering to the wisdom he has been taught, God's holy will (the Ten Commandments). (TLSB)

וּמְצִוֹתַי יִצָר לְבָבְךָ—Since יִצָר is parallel to the negative command, אַל־תִּשְׁכַּח, in the preceding clause, this form of יִצָר probably is jussive: “let your heart keep,” serving as an exhortation. יִצָר generally means “keep watch, watch over” or “protect, preserve” (HALOT, 1, 2). The father is not simply exhorting his son to keep the father's teaching in his heart, but also to be vigilant about preserving that teaching since it is designed to give the son Wisdom and is a revelation of God's holy Word (cf. 2:6). This verb occurs nineteen times in Proverbs (including the Qere in 23:26), and Solomon exploits its semantic range, bringing out its various nuances. It can be a synonym of the more common verb שָׁמַר, “keep, guard,” and occur together with it, as in 2:8, 11. But it can have other meanings, as in, for example, 27:18, where it means “tend” a fig tree. Thus it is translated with several different words, depending on context. However, it always implies diligence and vigilance. (CC)

This first section's coherence is emphasized by the mentioning of the “son” at its beginning in 3:1 and twice at its end in 3:11–12, and by the use of כִּי, “because,” to introduce only the first and last promises (3:2, 12). This inclusio or bracketing technique helps the reader to see that these commands are all versions of the same thought: place Yahweh at the center of your life. Prov 3:1 opens with the father urging his son to obey his commands and internalize them through faith. The promise connected with this is long life (3:2), which by God's grace endures beyond the grave into eternity. (CC)

3:2 for *length of days and years of life*. Fear of the Lord (10:27; 19:23) brings health to the body (v. 8) and “adds length to life” (10:27; see also 9:10–11). (CSB)

Staying close to God and His Word often brings earthly blessings, such as a long and peaceful life. (PBC)

לְךָ אֲרֵב יָמִים וְשָׁנִים וְשָׁלוֹם יוֹסִיפוּ לְךָ—The three divine gifts—the direct objects—are emphasized by placing them before the verb, literally, “because length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you.” The implied subject (“they”) of the verb probably is both of the feminine nouns in 3:1, the singular הַיְהוּדָה, “my teaching,” and the plural הַמִּצְוֹת, “my commandments,” even though the verb here, יוֹסִיפוּ, is masculine. (CC)

The construct phrase יָמֵי אֲרֵב, “length of days,” occurs twice in this chapter (3:2, 16) and seven times elsewhere in the OT (Deut 30:20 [with a suffix]; Pss 21:5 [ET 21:4]; 23:6; 91:16; 93:5; Job 12:12; Lam 5:20). It denotes long life under God’s grace and blessing and has the eschatological nuance of eternal life in God’s presence (Pss 21:5 [ET 21:4]; 23:6). Similar in meaning are expressions with the Hiphil (H) of the verb אֲרֵב and the object יָמֵי, “to prolong (one’s) days,” that is, to enjoy long (and everlasting) life, in divine promises in Prov 28:16 and also, for example, Ex 20:12; Deut 4:40; 5:16, 33; 6:2; 32:47. (CC)

The construct phrase שָׁנֵי חַיִּים, “years of life,” occurs in the OT only in Prov 3:2; 4:10; 9:11 (cf., e.g., Gen 23:1; 25:7). It too is an indefinite time period that extends into the eschatological future, anticipating the resurrection to eternal life. (CC)

Frequently translated as “peace,” שָׁלוֹם denotes wholeness or completeness of a condition. Its nuance depends on the context. It can denote health and well-being (Gen 29:6) or political peace (Judg 4:17), as well as many other ideal conditions. Here it denotes a fullness of life that comes as God’s blessing on the one who takes the father’s instruction to heart. Without the blessing of God, life cannot be full or complete (cf. Jn 10:10b). (CC)

When Solomon prayed for wisdom, God promised him riches as well as long life if he obeyed God’s commands (1Ki 3:13–14). Normally the righteous are prosperous and happy (12:21), but sometimes it is the wicked who are strong and prosperous (Ps 73:3, 12), temporary though that may be (Ps 73:17–19). Job 1–2 also shows how disaster and death can strike a godly person. (CSB)

peace. Hbr *shalom*. Everything that provides wholesomeness, completeness, satisfaction. (TLSB)

This is the common Hebrew word *shalom*. It includes a wide range of concepts: peace, harmony, wholeness, prosperity – everything that makes existence complete and worthwhile. (PBC)

3:3 *steadfast love*. Hbr *chesed*. (TLSB)

love and faithfulness – These are two key OT concepts. Both find their source in God, the giver of all good gifts. God’s love, as expressed in Jesus, is to find reflection in our lives as well. Our word “amen” comes from the Hebrew word for faithfulness. Tied to it are the ideas of truthfulness and honesty. (PBC)

רַחֲמֵיךָ וְחַסְדְּךָ—The noun חַסְדְּךָ, “mercy, kindness,” is difficult to translate. It denotes a special attitude or act toward someone that exceeds the normal, expected attitude or action.

Scripture repeatedly affirms that Yahweh's רַחֵם endures forever. Thus רַחֵם often points to God's grace, his attitude and actions toward his people, who cannot by their own merits expect his mercy or kindness. (CC)

The phrase וְאֵלֹהֵימָן לֹא יִעָזְבוּ is the subject of the negated third person jussive אַל יִעָזְבוּ, literally, “may mercy and truth not leave you.” However, it is the son or reader who would cause “mercy and truth” to leave by disbelieving and rejecting them. Therefore the verb is translated as second person: “do not allow mercy and truth to leave you.” (CC)

bind ... neck. Like a beautiful necklace (cf. 1:9; 3:22). (CSB)

We are to wear such virtues as an ornament, that is, as a way to glorify God and serve others. (PBC)

קָשַׁרְם עַל-גְּרוֹתֵיהֶם—The identical Qal (G) imperative of קָשַׁר, “to fasten, bind, tie,” with third masculine plural suffix recurs in similar contexts in 6:21 and 7:3. This language recalls Deut 6:8. Contrast Prov 22:15, where stupidity is “fastened, bound tightly” (קָשַׁרְתָּהּ) to the heart of a youth. (CC)

write them on the tablet of your heart. See Jer 31:33. (CSB)

Can describe the tablets of the Ten Commandments (Ex 24:12). God's Spirit, working through the father's inspired words, tells the son to internalize God's commands (steadfast love and faithfulness). This internalization takes place as the Spirit works through the same Word of God, guiding people to identify with and act according to God's will. The commands and the Word of God are closely associated with the working of the Spirit: “No prophet, neither Elijah nor Elisha, received the Spirit without the Ten Commandments <or the spoken Word>” (SA III VIII 11). (TLSB)

כָּתַבְם עַל-לִוְיָהּ לְבָבָהּ—The identical clause recurs in 7:3b. For the form of the Qal (G) imperative with suffix, כָּתַבְם, see Joüion, § 64 a. The noun לִוְיָהּ, “tablet,” is the same word used in Ex 24:12 to denote the stone tablets upon which the Ten Commandments were written. The Qal of כָּתַב, “to write,” whose imperative is here (כָּתַבְם), is the same verb as in Ex 24:12, where Yahweh states that he “wrote” the Decalogue on the tablets. Moreover, in Ex 24:12 Yahweh said that he wrote “the teaching and the commandment” (וְהַתּוֹרָה וְהַמִּצְוָה), and the plural of the second noun refers to the father's “commands” in Prov 3:1. (CC)

Jews copied portions of the Scriptures, put them in little boxes called phylacteries, and then wore them on their foreheads and the back of their hands. Yet many of them missed the point. Jesus spoke against the attitude of the religious leaders of His day: “Everything they do is for men to see: They make their phylacteries wide...” (Matthew 23:5). This was showy hypocrisy. Wearing God's word means far more than wearing a phylactery (or cross on a necklace or lapel). It means living a life that is both pleasing to God and beneficial to others. Reflective of the words of Proverbs, we are told that as a twelve-year-old child, Jesus “grew in wisdom (Sophia – wisdom in general, knowledge) and stature and in favor with God and men” (Luke 2:52). (PBC)

Therefore Solomon, the father, is consciously comparing his commands (3:1) to God's commands to Israel at Sinai, because Solomon is writing under divine inspiration and his teaching is the revealed Word of God. Just like the Torah of Moses, the Proverbs of Solomon with their divine Wisdom are spoken by Yahweh himself (cf. 2:6). The book of Proverbs is authoritative and normative just like the other books of sacred Scripture. (CC)

To appropriate God’s Word rightly involves more than reading it. Its teaching also needs to be internalized, which can only be accomplished by the Spirit of God working through the Word itself. The Spirit, working through Solomon’s inspired words, grants the believer the power to do what the father invites the son to do. The commands of the father echo the commands of God himself, through which the Spirit works. The Lutheran Confessions emphasize that Christians should not attempt to find or be led by the Spirit apart from God’s Word and Sacraments, since it is through these external means of grace that the Spirit works and God speaks to us clearly:

God will not deal with us except through his external Word and sacrament. Whatever is attributed to the Spirit apart from such Word and sacrament is of the devil. For even to Moses God wished to appear first through the burning bush and the spoken word, and no prophet, whether Elijah or Elisha, received the Spirit without the Ten Commandments. John the Baptist was not conceived without the preceding word of Gabriel, nor did he leap in his mother’s womb until Mary spoke. St. Peter says that when the prophets spoke, they did not prophesy by the impulse of man but were moved by the Holy Spirit [2 Pet 1:21]. (SA III VIII 10–13) (CC)

The second invitation urges the son to retain “mercy and truth” (3:3, רַחֲמִים וְאֱמֻנָה) and internalize them by writing these attributes on his heart. However, this does not exclude their external manifestations in what the son will do and say. This is evident from the frequent use of the verbal idiom עָשָׂה רַחֲמִים, “to do/show mercy.” Both רַחֲמִים, “mercy,” and אֱמֻנָה, “truth,” can be used together as objects of the verb עָשָׂה, “to do, show,” with a believer as the subject (Gen 24:49; 47:29; Josh 2:14; cf. Zech 7:9). Moreover, the promise attached to this command—that both God and other people will recognize these attributes in the faithful believer (Prov 3:4)—assumes that these are not merely internal, but also are put to use. (CC)

3:4 Find favor – Hbr *chen*, “approval” or “affection.” (TLSB)

וְיָמְצָא־טוֹב—After the imperatives in 3:3, the imperative יָמְצָא, “and find,” here serves to introduce a result clause and promise: “then you will find” (see GKC, § 110 f; Joüon, § 116 f). For טוֹב, “good,” see the first textual note on 1:9. The emphasis here is on God’s gracious disposition toward the wise believer, but the next clause states that “good” here also includes the favor and goodwill of other people.

In this context “good sense” (טוֹב־לֵב) seems to imply that God and other humans will recognize the good sense possessed by a person who follows the instructions set forth here. (CC)

good success. A recognizable effect of the Word in the lives of those who follow God’s instruction. (TLSB)

in the sight – בְּעֵינֵי אֲנָשִׁים וְאֵלֹהִים—“In/with the eyes of” is used sixteen times in Proverbs and over three hundred times in the OT. Sometimes it has a literal meaning (1:17; 6:13). However, it usually refers to the attitude or opinion of the person(s) in the following genitive, here “God and humans.” Since here אֲנָשִׁים is contrasted with אֱלֹהִים, “God,” its sense is “humans” in general, not specifically “men” versus women (cf. *HALOT*, 1). (CC)

God and man. See Lk 2:52; Ro 12:17; 2Co 8:21. (CSB)

3:5 Trust in the LORD. Commit your way to the Lord (Ps 37:5), like Israel’s forefathers, who trusted in God and were rescued (Ps 22:4–5). (CSB)

Hbr *batach*, “feel safe,” “confident.” Demonstrates complete reliance on God’s grace and guidance. (TLSB)

אֶל־יְהוָה בְּכֹל־לִבְךָ—This is the first of ten occurrences in Proverbs of the verb *בָּטַח*, “to trust.” Usually it takes the preposition *בְּ*, “to trust *in*,” but sometimes it takes *לְ* or, as here, *אֶל* (BDB, s.v. 15, *בָּטַח*). Frequently it refers to faith in God and reliance on him (3:5; 16:20; 28:25; 29:25), but often it is used negatively in warnings not to put one’s trust in wealth (11:28), oneself (28:26), or other people or things. For both meanings in direct contrast, see Jer 17:5–7. The verb is cognate to the noun *בָּטָח* used adverbially, “safely, securely.” (CC)

Saving faith in God can be defined simply as trust in him and his mercy in Jesus Christ. The Lutheran Confessions affirm this often, for example:

Righteousness and godliness in God’s sight come from faith and trust when we believe that God receives us into his favor for the sake of Christ, his only Son. (AC XXVII 37)

If we must hold to the proposition, “Christ is the mediator,” then we must defend the proposition, “Faith justifies.” For how will Christ be the mediator if we do not use him as mediator in our justification and believe that for his sake we are accounted righteous? But to believe means to trust in Christ’s merits, that because of him God wants to be reconciled to us. (Ap IV 69; see also Ap IV 43–45) (CC)

Like Proverbs, the Lutheran Confessions also warn against trusting in anything besides God:

We must do all such good works as God has commanded, but we should do them for God’s sake and not place our trust in them as if thereby to merit favor before God. For we receive forgiveness of sin and righteousness through faith in Christ. (AC VI 1–2)

For without faith human nature cannot possibly do the works of the First or Second Commandments. Without faith it does not call upon God, expect anything of God, or bear the cross, but it seeks and trusts in man’s help. (AC XX 36–37) (CC)

True wisdom consists of listening to God, even when His Word goes against what we might think is best. By itself human wisdom simply is not capable of understanding life’s great tragedies and dealing with death. To trust in Him is to commit our lives entirely to Him. To lean on Him means just what it says. Of course to do this we have to be confident that God isn’t going to pull away and let us fall flat on our face. (PBC)

with all your heart. Like Caleb (Nu 14:24; Dt 1:36) or the godly King Hezekiah (Isa 38:3). David challenged Solomon to serve God with wholehearted devotion (1Ch 28:9). (CSB)

While the first two invitations might be considered the sage father’s wise advice, the third invitation (3:5) emphasizes that this is not mere human counsel, but divine guidance. The invitation to trust in Yahweh contrasts with relying on one’s own human reason or emotions. This trust in Yahweh is equated with acknowledging him, that is, openly admitting that God’s favor and love, conferred by his guidance in his Word, are better than human judgment. The promise of straight paths (3:6) is especially poignant because paths in ancient Israel were often winding, tortuous roads that took much effort on the part of travelers. A straight path, which would be relatively easy to traverse, was rare. “He will make your paths straight” does not necessarily mean that one’s course in life will be comfortable and trouble free. It does mean that through his Word God will reveal the right direction and destination, even if bearing the cross is required in order to get there (cf. Mt 10:38; 16:24). (CC)

3:6 *acknowledge him.* Be ever mindful of God and serve him with a willing and faithful heart (see 1Ch 28:9; Hos 4:1; 6:6). (CSB)

Apply what you have learned from the Lord in everything you do. (TLSB)

בְּכָל־דְּרָגְתֶיךָ יְדַעְהוּ—The imperative יְדַעְהוּ from יָדַע, “to know,” with third masculine singular suffix (“him”) referring back to יְהוָה in 3:5, in this context clearly means more than can be denoted by the English word “know.” יָדַע can mean “know personally” (see *HALOT*, 5 a) or “recognise, admit, acknowledge, confess” (BDB, 1 f). Nearly all English versions understand it to mean “acknowledge” here. (CC)

To acknowledge Him literally is to “know” Him. We need to become well acquainted with God through His self-revelation, the Bible. Everything else depends on this. (PBC)

make straight your paths. He will remove the obstacles from your pathway and bring you to your appointed goal (see 11:5; Isa 45:13). (CSB)

3:7 *be not wise in your own eyes* – This is another way of telling us not to lean on our own understanding. One commentator paraphrases, “Don’t take yourself too seriously.” We can be serious about life and relaxed at the same time. (PBC)

אַל־תִּהְיֶה חָכָם בְּעֵינֶיךָ—Literally, “do not be wise in your own eyes,” this is translated idiomatically: “do not consider yourself wise.” (CC)

fear the LORD and turn away from evil. Cf. Job, who was a “blameless and upright” man (see Job 1:1). (CSB)

יִרְאֵת יְהוָה—This imperatival clause, “fear Yahweh,” relates to the common nominal phrase. (CC)

וּמִן־מָרַע—The combination of the Qal (G) verb מָרַע with the preposition מִן, “to turn away from, avoid, depart from,” and the noun מָרַע (pausal: רָע), “evil,” recurs in 13:19; 14:16; 16:6, 17. See also the Hiphil (H) of מָרַע with מִן in 4:27. (CC)

The fourth invitation (Prov 3:7) builds on the third. Here the fear of Yahweh is linked with not considering oneself wise. This points out another component of the cluster of concepts that make up the fear of Yahweh. The believer possesses this attitude through faith and understands God’s kindness in revealing his wisdom to humans. This person, therefore, does not rely on human wisdom, which often leads to evil, but instead turns from evil. The promise connected with this invitation is health (3:8). While some believers may have good physical health and experience healing now, the fulfillment of this eschatological promise will come in “the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting” (Apostles’ Creed). See, for example, Job 19:25–27; Dan 12:2–3; 1 Corinthians 15. (CC)

3:8 *healing to your flesh* – Physical health is often related to our mental and spiritual condition. The Hebrew is this verse literally speaks of “healed navels” and “moist bones.” (PBC)

Complete wholeness and well-being. (TLSB)

וּסִוּר מֵרָע—The combination of the Qal (G) verb סִוּר with the preposition מִן, “to turn away from, avoid, depart from,” and the noun רָע (pausal: רָע), “evil,” recurs in 13:19; 14:16; 16:6, 17. See also the Hiphil (H) of סִוּר with מֵרָע in 4:27. (CC)

bones. The whole body. Elsewhere, good news and pleasant words bring health to the bones (15:30; 16:24; cf. 17:22). (CSB)

3:9–10 In agricultural societies, even young children understand the connection between producing and storing crops. The language of sacrifice and offerings reflects the agricultural heritage of Israel. (TLSB)

3:9 *firstfruits.* The Israelites were required to give to the priests the first part of the olive oil, wine and grain produced each year (see Lev 23:10; Nu 18:12–13). (CSB)

The Israelites were to sacrifice to the Lord the first fruit and grain of their harvests (Ex 23:16). (TLSB)

וּמִבְּרֵאשִׁית כָּל־תְּבוּאֵת הָאָרֶץ—The noun תְּבוּאָה is derived from the verb בָּוֵא, “to come,” and in the Hiphil (H), “to bring.” It refers to “what is brought in” from the field, the produce or yield harvested from the land (*HALOT*, 1). (CC)

Just as a godly life can be related to physical well-being, it can also bring material blessings. They were to offer to God the first and the best of what they had. (PBC)

The fifth invitation (Prov 3:9) is one of the few verses in Proverbs that mentions worship. Honoring God with the first part of the harvest is part of the Torah stipulations for worship (Lev 2:14; Deut 26:2–4). However, the focus here is not so much on formal worship in the annual calendar as it is on continual trust and ongoing worshipful faith in God (see Sirach 7:29–31). To give God the part of the crop that ripens first is to trust that God will not allow the rest of the crop to be ruined by disease, pests, or bad weather that leaves the believer with no sustenance; God will provide (cf. Deut 8:3). Such trust is rewarded with the promise of an overabundant harvest (Prov 3:10). This promise too is eschatological: the new creation and new earth will provide superabundance (e.g., Is 65:9–10, 17–25; Amos 9:13–14). (CC)

3:10 *filled with plenty.* For those who bring to the Lord his tithes and offerings, God promises to pour out more blessing than they have room for (see Mal 3:10; see also Dt 28:8, 12; 2Co 9:8). (CSB)

God promises abundance to those who honor Him with their wealth and possessions. Cf Mal 3:10; Lk 6:38. Generally, those who live wisely before the Lord will prosper. However, the Lord also tells us to expect struggle and suffering in this sinful world (Ac 14:22). (TLSB)

וַיִּמְלֵאוּ אֳמָרֹתַי שֶׁבַע—The noun אֳמָרָה means “storehouse” (see *HALOT*). In the context of a harvest, the plural refers to “barns” or “silos.” The noun שֶׁבַע, “plenty, satiety,” is a synonym of שָׂבַע. Here it is an adverbial accusative, translated as “filled to capacity.” (CC)

Hebrew society was largely agricultural, they thought of wealth in terms of overflowing barns and brimming vats of wine. While NT believers don’t have regulations as to how much to give, we still have God’s challenges and promises. For example, Jesus says, “Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you” (Luke 6:38). Sometimes that

“good measure” comes in material ways. Other times God pours out gifts such as friendships and happiness. (PBC)

With wine – תִּירֹשׁ יִקְבְּרוּ יִפְרֹצוּ—The noun תִּירֹשׁ is an adverbial accusative: “with fresh wine your winepresses will burst. (CC)

3:11–12 A warning that the righteous are not always prosperous. Through times of testing and affliction, God is teaching them (see 12:1; Job 5:17; 36:22; Ps 119:71). Heb 12:5–6 quotes both of these verses to encourage believers to endure hardship (Heb 12:7). “God disciplines us for our good” (Heb 12:10). (CSB)

The final invitation (Prov 3:11) is once again focused upon the fear of Yahweh, this time by mentioning its opposite, despising Yahweh’s actions. Here the father reminds his son that God often uses what humans perceive as misfortune in life as discipline to warn and correct those whom he loves (Heb 12:4–11). The promise that God is like a father who is favorably pleased with his son (Prov 3:12) is placed purposely at the end of these invitations. Solomon, the father who began this instruction by taking advantage of his good relationship with his son (3:1), now uses that relationship as an analogy for God’s relationship with his people. This points toward Christ, the Son of God, who kept these commands perfectly. Through baptismal incorporation and faith in the Son, we have received adoption as sons of God with whom he is favorably pleased (e.g., Rom 6:1–4; 8:15; Gal 3:26–29; 4:4–5). (CC)

Side by side with life’s pleasures, come trials. They, too, are blessings from God. (PBC)

3:11 *do not despise*. Solomon’s instructions tell what to do and what not to do in order to lead a God-pleasing life. (TLSB)

וְאֶל־תִּקַּח בְּתוֹכָהּ—The verb קִוֶּה, “loathe, abhor,” denotes a strong negative emotional response. Here “despise” fits well. (CC)

discipline. Hbr *musar*, “correction,” “instruction.” Through punishment and correction, parents chasten their children with the goal of teaching them. This is evidence of love and distinguishes discipline from simple punishment, which may only have the goal of curbing or preventing bad behavior. (TLSB)

3:12 *as a father*. God disciplined his son Israel by testing the nation in the desert 40 years (Dt 8:2–5). (CSB)

him whom He loves. Not all of God’s training is pleasant at the time. Sometimes, in retrospect, God’s love is most clearly evident in times of severe reproof and discipline. (Cf Heb 12:5–6.) Tertullian: “O blessed servant, on whose amendment the Lord is intent! with whom He deigns to be wroth!” (ANF 3:714). (TLSB)

כִּי אֶת אֲשֶׁר יֶאֱהֵב יְהוָה יִקְבֶּה—The relative phrase אֲשֶׁר יֶאֱהֵב means “whomever, the one whom” Yahweh loves, and it introduces the object of the final verb יִקְבֶּה. This is one of the few times in the OT אֶת does not have *maqeph* but instead another conjunctive accent (GKC, § 16 b). (CC)

Perfect forms of the verb אֶהֱבֶה, “to love,” usually refer to the past and present (“he has loved, now loves”). The Qal (G) imperfect אֶהֱבֶה has the nuance that Yahweh “loves, continues to love,” signifying “repeated, constant action” (Joüon, § 113 a). אֶהֱבֶה recurs in 15:9, 12; 16:13 (cf. 9:8). (CC)

The verb **יָכַח** always occurs in Proverbs in the Hiphil (H). Its range of meanings, depending on context, can include “decide, judge, argue, convince, convict, rebuke, warn,” and “correct.” It is cognate to the noun **תּוֹכַחַת**, “warning,” in 3:11. The context of the verb here shows that God performs this action out of love for each of his people. This can involve condemnation of sin and warning of eternal death and judgment, as in 2:18; 5:5, 23; 7:23; 8:36; 9:18. However, God’s purpose in warning through divine Wisdom is to turn the believer away from evil (3:7), to protect him (2:8, 11), and preserve him to everlasting life (3:2, 18, 22). (CC)

Although we don’t always see it at the time, our sufferings in this life are for our good. Rather than resenting such troubles, the believer learns to recognize them for what they are. Through life’s sicknesses, pains, and heartaches, our heavenly Father tempers us, teaches us patience, and summons us to rely more completely on His strength. One of the psalms puts it this way, “It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees, [O Lord]” (Psalm 119:71). What is probably the best-known passage on the subject has this to say, “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love, who have been called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28). Believers, then love God and His Word not simply out of hope for earthly rewards, but they love Him because they know that in all circumstances He is loving them! (PBC)

יְרַחֵם אֶת־בְּנוֹ יִרְצֵהוּ—This is somewhat difficult syntactically. If **בָּח** were the subject of **יְרַחֵם**, this would simply mean “like a father is pleased with a son.” But it is more likely that **בָּח** is the subject of an implied verb. The verb **יִכַּח**, “warns,” at the end of the preceding clause does double duty and is implied as the main verb in this clause too. The object clause is **יְרַחֵם אֶת־בְּנוֹ**, which involves a relative clause, “[like a father warns] a son *whom* he favors” or “a son *with whom* he is pleased,” as in most English translations. This understanding considers the object clause to be parallel to the object clause in the first half of the verse, which includes a relative clause: **אֶת־אֵהָבִי**, “the one whom he loves.” (Both verbal clauses of 3:13 also involve a relative clause.) (CC)

The verb **יְרַחֵם**, “show favor to, be pleased with,” occurs in Proverbs only in 3:12; 16:7; and as the Kethib in 23:26, but the cognate noun **רַחֲמֵי**, “favor, grace,” occurs more often; see the second textual note on 8:35. (CC)

This is the only place in Proverbs where God is likened to a father. Some other OT passages make this explicit comparison. More often God’s people are likened to his son or sons. The NT, of course, uses filial language for the relationship between God the Father and God the Son, including the verbal parallels at Christ’s Baptism and transfiguration, where the Father declares that he is “pleased” with his Son (Mt 3:17 and 17:5 and parallels; 2 Pet 1:17). God the Father is also pleased with—favorable and gracious toward—all in Christ (cf. Lk 2:14; 1 Cor 1:21). (CC)

Perhaps the rarity of OT depictions of Yahweh as a father is what led the LXX to read **יְכַחֵם** as **יְכַחֵם**, “and he causes pain.” It translated the clause as **μαστιγοῖ δὲ πάντα υἱὸν ὃν παραδέχεται**, “but he whips every son whom he receives.” (CC)

3:1–12 God punishes those who stubbornly resist His mercy and refuse to follow His commands. But He promises abundant blessings to all who, in faith, receive His gracious love and salvation through the merits of Jesus Christ. • Heavenly Father, lead me to dedicate myself to You and to trust in You with my whole heart, to know and live according to Your will. Send me Your Spirit to bless the use of my time, abilities, and possessions so that I may serve You faithfully and effectually. Amen. (TLSB)

Blessed Is the One Who Finds Wisdom

13 Blessed is the one who finds wisdom, and the one who gets understanding, 14 for the gain from her is better than gain from silver and her profit better than gold. 15 She is more precious than jewels, and nothing you desire can compare with her. 16 Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor. 17 Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. 18 She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her; those who hold her fast are called blessed. 19 The LORD by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding he established the heavens; 20 by his knowledge the deeps broke open, and the clouds drop down the dew. 21 My son, do not lose sight of these—keep sound wisdom and discretion, 22 and they will be life for your soul and adornment for your neck. 23 Then you will walk on your way securely, and your foot will not stumble. 24 If you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet. 25 Do not be afraid of sudden terror or of the ruin of the wicked, when it comes, 26 for the LORD will be your confidence and will keep your foot from being caught. 27 Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it. 28 Do not say to your neighbor, “Go, and come again, tomorrow I will give it”—when you have it with you. 29 Do not plan evil against your neighbor, who dwells trustingly beside you. 30 Do not contend with a man for no reason, when he has done you no harm. 31 Do not envy a man of violence and do not choose any of his ways, 32 for the devious person is an abomination to the LORD, but the upright are in his confidence. 33 The LORD's curse is on the house of the wicked, but he blesses the dwelling of the righteous. 34 Toward the scorners he is scornful, but to the humble he gives favor. 35 The wise will inherit honor, but fools get disgrace.

The promises attached to these six invitations paint a picture of God's faithful people who are constantly experiencing life's best: long life, health, success, and wealth. However, other passages in Proverbs as well as many other biblical books plus our personal observations tell us that even the most faithful believers do not always encounter such things. Some of the most pious of God's people have hardships that seem to fly in the face of these promises. Christ himself possessed no material wealth and was crucified in the prime of his earthly life. His ministry appeared to be a failure on Good Friday, and to some even on Easter Sunday (cf. Lk 24:10–11, 19–24). Most of his apostles were martyred, and few could be considered a success by worldly standards. (CC)

Waltke has addressed this problem and offered some solutions to this dilemma:

- These promises are only partially realized in this life.
- The epigrammatic nature of proverbs only allows them to express truth in a terse way. Their compact nature prevents them from expressing the whole truth at length. These proverbs are generally true, but they must be read in light of other proverbs that state that piety does not invariably lead to benefits in this life (15:16–17; 16:8, 19; 17:1; 19:22; 22:1; 28:6).
- These promises are realized eschatologically in God's eternal kingdom (11:4; 12:7, 28; see Wisdom 2:23). (CC)

Waltke's observations are correct. The NT revelation of God's Wisdom in Christ shows more fully the cruciform life of believers; the eschatological nature of God's promises in light of the first and second advents of Christ; and that the world's perceptions about wisdom and blessing are the opposite of God's (e.g., Mt 5:3–12; 11:19; 1 Cor 1:18–31). (CC)

We must add another important observation: None of us follows the advice of these six invitations perfectly. We as sinners often fall short of having the trust in God that we ought to have. Thus we cannot claim these promises by our merits, but only by the grace of God given to us in the merits of Christ, who kept God's Law perfectly and grew in wisdom (Lk 2:40; Heb 5:8).

As people who remain sinners as long as we remain in this life, we cannot expect or demand that we receive the benefits of these promises fully in this life. We also fail to recognize the extent of the blessings we already have, especially when we compare ourselves with those who have more. Yet we also know that all God's promises are yes in Christ (2 Cor 1:20), and we who are heirs of those promises shall receive their benefits in full on the Last Day. (CC)

The Benefits of Wisdom, Who Is Hypostasized in Jesus Christ (3:13–20)

Solomon moves on to the second part of his address, the blessings of Wisdom. This address is divided into two parts. Prov 3:13–18 tells of the blessings of Wisdom and is set off by an inclusio that begins with בֵּרַכְתִּי, “blessed” (3:13), and ends with the Hebrew cognate בֵּרַכְתֶּךָ, “blessed” (3:18). Then 3:19–20 speaks of Wisdom's role in creation. (CC)

In 3:13–18 Solomon connects Wisdom with promises attached to his invitations in 3:1–12. Wisdom brings a better profit than the harvest of the crops (compare 3:14 with 3:9–10). Wisdom offers long life (compare 3:16a with 3:2) and honor (compare 3:16b with 3:4). Wisdom bestows pleasant and peaceful paths (compare 3:17 with 3:6). (CC)

These benefits of Wisdom are gifts freely bestowed by God. They are compared to riches (3:14) and jewels (3:15). These treasures far outweigh earthly valuables. That is why in the NT Jesus uses the parables of the treasure in a field and the valuable pearl to teach the same lesson (Mt 13:44–46). He urges us to store up treasure in heaven rather than on earth (Mt 6:19–21). These treasures, of course, are not accumulated by our own efforts, but are stored up for us in Christ, in whom we have the riches of his grace along with wisdom and insight (Eph 1:7–8). (CC)

To emphasize that Wisdom and blessing come through God the Son, Solomon reminds his son that Wisdom is divine. He connects Wisdom with creation both in 3:18 and in 3:19–20. The first connection is “the tree of life” (3:18). Part of God's creation in Eden, “the tree of life” was able to bestow eternal life on those who ate its fruit (Gen 2:9). Therefore, after Adam and Eve fell into sin, God banned them (and all fallen humans) from the garden so they could not partake of this tree's fruit and thereby forever remain in their sin in a state of condemnation. He placed cherubim as guards to prevent sinful people from gaining access to it (Gen 3:22, 24). (CC)

The promise here is that Wisdom is even more beneficial than that tree was after the expulsion of the first people from the garden of Eden. As “the tree of life,” Wisdom first conveys salvation from sin through forgiveness by grace, and then she bestows everlasting life in the state of redemption. Those who enter God's eternal kingdom will eat the fruit of this tree eternally (Rev 2:7; 22:2, 14, 19). For this reason a number church fathers identified “the tree of life” with Christ. The cross of Christ is called “the tree” (τὸ ξύλον) in 1 Pet 2:24; see ξύλον also in, for example, Acts 5:30; 13:29; Gal 3:13. However, it is probably best to understand the tree of life here as a metaphor for Christ and not as a literal identification of Jesus as “the tree of life” in Eden or in John's vision in Revelation since Solomon also compares “the fruit of a righteous person,” “desire fulfilled,” and “a tongue that brings healing” to “a tree of life” (Prov 11:30; 13:12; 15:4). (CC)

The connection between Wisdom and creation is clearly extended in 3:19–20, which portrays Yahweh creating the world through the agency of Wisdom. Creation as an act of building is a common motif connected with Wisdom in Proverbs (the verb בָּנָה in 9:1; 14:1; 24:3) and the verbs “found” and “establish” in 3:19 are synonyms of “build.” This passage also resembles 24:3–4, since both passages refer to “wisdom,” “understanding,” and “knowledge” in that order.

Moreover, both use the verb “establish” (forms of כָּיָן in 3:19; 24:3) in connection with “understanding” (24:3 ;3:19 ,הִנְנֵהָ). (CC)

What God creates he also fills and provides—a theme connected again with Wisdom in Proverbs (9:1–6). This filling and provisioning is evident already in Genesis 1, where on the first three days God creates the heavens, the sea, and the dry ground and then on the fifth and sixth days he fills them with birds, fish, and animals. Moreover, God blesses humans so that they can be fruitful and fill the earth (Gen 1:22, 28). The same pattern is found in building both the tabernacle and the temple: God provides wisdom for the building of both structures, and then at their consecrations, he fills them with his glory (Ex 40:34–35; 1 Ki 8:10–11; 2 Chr 5:13–14; 7:2). Thus the tabernacle—and later the temple—is a microcosm of creation, which itself is built by God and filled with his glory (Is 6:3). Finally, we should note that the wise woman of Proverbs 31 also fills her house with products of her work and investments (31:10–31) in performing her godly and God-imitating vocation as wife and mother. (CC)

Wisdom in 3:19–20 is clearly divine: through Wisdom Yahweh himself forms the creation (“founded,” “established”) and fills it with what is needed to provide for and sustain all life (“the clouds drip dew”). Prov 3:19–20 goes beyond comparing Wisdom to the created “tree of life” (3:18) to presenting Wisdom as the means through which God created earth and heaven. The parallelism “earth ... heavens” (3:19) recalls Gen 1:1 and makes Wisdom an active participant in creation. This identifies Wisdom as Christ, by whom all things were made (Jn 1:3; Col 1:16). Prov 3:20 reminds us that Christ was not a mere observer of the Father’s creative acts but was himself the agent of creation, through whom the Father divided the waters. “The deep waters [תְּהוֹמוֹת] were divided” (Prov 3:20) alludes to the “deep” (תְּהוֹם) in Gen 1:2 and the separation of the sea from the dry land (Gen 1:9–10), providing habitations for the fish (Gen 1:20–23) as well as the terrestrial plants (Gen 1:11–13), the animals (Gen 1:24–25), and man (Gen 1:26–28). Likewise, the “deep (waters)” (the singular and plural of תְּהוֹם) in Prov 8:24, 27–28 alludes to the original creation as it affirms the preexistence of divine Wisdom. (CC)

This identification of Wisdom as preexistent and as at one with the Creator serves to draw the son who listens to his father’s instructions closer to Yahweh. Wisdom is valuable because Wisdom is God, who offers his gracious blessings to the son listening to the father’s word. Therefore, Wisdom in this passage is not merely personified, but is a hypostasis. That is, we are shown the unique essence of God the Son, who, together with the Father and Spirit, was Creator of all things and is the bestower of all good gifts through his Gospel. (CC)

Although most modern commentators have not understood Wisdom in Prov 3:13–20 to be Christ, the church fathers often made this identification. Moreover, this passage, especially 3:19, figured prominently in the Arian controversy. The Arians denied the preexistence and divinity of Christ and instead supposed that Christ was a created being. The orthodox church fathers disproved that heresy. Among the fathers who cite verses in Proverbs 3 as speaking of Christ—the preexistent second person of the Godhead, through whom all things were made—are Athanasius and Ambrose.¹⁹ Irenaeus cites 3:19–20 but identifies Wisdom as God the Holy Spirit. Yet in the larger context he argues that the Word (the Son) and Wisdom (the Holy Spirit) have always been with the Father and were present and active when the one triune God created the world. Irenaeus and Athanasius rightly argue that Wisdom in 3:19–20 is a divine hypostasis and cannot be a created being since the passage states that God founded the earth and heavens by Wisdom and Understanding. Since Wisdom is an eternal person of the Trinity who existed before the creation, Wisdom is uncreated, these fathers demonstrate. (CC)

However, this passage did not prove decisive in the debate. The Arians countered that Wisdom/Christ was created first and was not part of either heaven or earth, but then became the agent through whom heaven and earth were created. While 3:13–20 does teach that God the Father created all things through preexistent Wisdom, which supports the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity, the Arian controversy was not decided on the basis of the statements about Wisdom in Proverbs 3 since it does not specifically or directly discuss the eternal generation of the Son from the Father nor the eternal procession of the Spirit from the Father and the Son. Of course, other biblical passages do clearly teach these truths and the doctrine of the Trinity. Based on these biblical passages, the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds affirm the full divinity of Christ, his preexistence, his eternal generation from the Father, and his unity with the Father. (CC)

3:13–18 A poem praising wisdom that begins and ends with the word “blessed” (cf. Job 5:17). (CSB)

3:13 *blessed* – אֶת־בֶּן יִרְצֶה—This is somewhat difficult syntactically. If בֶּן were the subject of יִרְצֶה, this would simply mean “like a father is pleased with a son.” But it is more likely that בֶּן is the subject of an implied verb. The verb יוֹכִיחַ, “warns,” at the end of the preceding clause does double duty and is implied as the main verb in this clause too. The object clause is אֶת־בֶּן יִרְצֶה, which involves a relative clause, “[like a father warns] a son *whom* he favors” or “a son *with whom* he is pleased,” as in most English translations. This understanding considers the object clause to be parallel to the object clause in the first half of the verse, which includes a relative clause: אֶת אֲשֶׁר יֶאֱהָב, “the one whom he loves.” (Both verbal clauses of 3:13 also involve a relative clause.) (CC)

The verb יִרְצֶה, “show favor to, be pleased with,” occurs in Proverbs only in 3:12; 16:7; and as the Kethib in 23:26, but the cognate noun רִצוֹן, “favor, grace,” occurs more often. (CC)

This is the only place in Proverbs where God is likened to a father. Some other OT passages make this explicit comparison. More often God’s people are likened to his son or sons. The NT, of course, uses filial language for the relationship between God the Father and God the Son, including the verbal parallels at Christ’s Baptism and transfiguration, where the Father declares that he is “pleased” with his Son (Mt 3:17 and 17:5 and parallels; 2 Pet 1:17). God the Father is also pleased with—favorable and gracious toward—all in Christ (cf. Lk 2:14; 1 Cor 1:21). (CC)

Perhaps the rarity of OT depictions of Yahweh as a father is what led the LXX to read בֶּן יִכְאֵב as בֶּן יִכְאֵב, “and he causes pain.” It translated the clause as μαστιγοῖ δὲ πάντα υἱὸν ὃν παραδέχεται, “but he whips every son whom he receives.” (CC)

Finds – Both verbs in Prov 3:13 serve as relative clauses: מֵצֵא, “the person *who* finds,” and מְצִיָּא, “the person *who* acquires.”

In this chapter, the nouns חֵכְמָה and תְּבוּנָה are parallel again in 3:19. (CC)

מְצִיָּא—The verb מְצִיָּא II occurs only in the Hiphil (H) and means “acquire, obtain, gain.” It recurs in 8:35; 12:2; 18:22. It is parallel to מֵצֵא, “find,” in 3:13; 8:35; 18:22. (CC)

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

Cf the “finding” in v 4. True wisdom and understanding come only from God. (TLSB)

3:14 *better than gain from silver...gold.* The psalmist makes the same claim for the commands and precepts of the Lord (Ps 19:10; 119:72, 127). (CSB)

According to 1Ki, during Solomon’s reign, Israel enjoyed peaceful trade relations with the seafaring city of Tyre (9:10–14), caravan traders of Arabian Sheba (Yemen; 10:1–10), Ophir, in Arabia or on the Horn of Africa (Somalia; 10:11–12), and the Hittite kingdom in Asia Minor (Turkey; 10:29). Solomon’s wealth through trade became legendary (10:14–29). Yet treasures of true wisdom are far better than earthly valuables. Jesus encourages believers to store up treasure in heaven rather than on earth (Mt 6:19–21). (TLSB)

פְּרוֹתֶיךָ מִטוֹב מִן...—For the comparative construction מִן ... טוֹב, “better ... than,” see “Direct Comparisons” in the introduction. The second half of the verse has the same comparison but טוב is implied there. The segholate noun פְּרוֹתֶיךָ, “profit, gain from commerce,” recurs in 31:18. The cognate participle סוֹחֵר in 31:14 refers to a “merchant, commercial trader.” (CC)

The feminine pronoun on פְּרוֹתֶיךָ, “her profit,” that is, “profit gained from having her,” and the referent of the feminine forms (“she” and “her”) in 3:14b–18, probably is חָכְמָה, “Wisdom,” in 3:13a but could be תְּבוּנָה, “Understanding,” in 3:13b. (CC)

Except for “riches,” the blessings spoken of here are beyond what money can buy: long life, honor, pleasant ways, and peace. A person might be poor in material wealth, but rich with contentment. A believer might suffer unpleasant trials or persecutions, yet find great pleasure in knowing he walks with God. Another child of God might suffer an early death, only to enter more quickly into heaven’s eternity. We need not look for earthly fulfillment of these promises. Nor do we need to rule out the possibility. In His wisdom, God deals with us as He see fit. At any time during life, we can be confident that through difficult and easy circumstances the Lord is taking care of us in the best possible way. (PBC)

3:15 *jewels.* Considered of less value than wisdom also in Job 28:18. The “wife of noble character” is worth more than rubies (31:10). (CSB)

מְפִינִים—The adjective יְקָרָה, “valuable, costly,” recurs in 6:26 and is the feminine form of (24:4 ;12:27 ;1:13) יָקָר. The Qere, מְפִינִים, “than jewels,” is preferable to the Kethib, מְפִינִים, whose meaning is uncertain. Proposed translations for מְפִינִים, which always occurs in the plural, are “corals” (BDB; cf. HALOT) and “rubies,” since Lam 4:7 says that מְפִינִים are red. Whatever its exact meaning, in all its occurrences in Scripture, it denotes a valuable commodity. (Job 28:18; Prov 3:15; 8:11; 20:15; 31:10; Lam 4:7) (CC)

Desire – וְכָל-הַתְּפִיזִיךָ לֹא יִשְׁוֶה-בָּהּ—The identical clause recurs in 8:11b except that there the noun תְּפִיזִים lacks a suffix. The noun תְּפִיזִים denotes a desire (31:13) or, as here and in 8:11, something that is desired. The verb שָׁוָה, “to be like, equal, comparable,” recurs in the Qal (G) in 8:11 and 26:4, and in the Niphal (N) in 27:15. (CC)

3:16 *Long life.* Blessings of fulfilling and satisfying existence are connected here and elsewhere in Scripture with obedience to God’s commands. Cf Ex 20:12. (TLSB)

right hand ... left. Some see this as a reference to a wisdom goddess figurine, such as the Egyptian goddess Maat. However, similar language is used for invisible Yahweh (Ps 16:11; Hbr “at Your right hand”). (TLSB)

3:17 pleasantness. דְּרָכֶיהָ דְּרָכֵי־נֹעַם—The construct phrase “ways of pleasantness” has an adjectival genitive: “pleasant ways.” The noun נֹעַם, “pleasantness, pleasure,” is cognate to the verb נָעַם, “to be pleasant, delightful.” (CC)

Paths – וְכָל־נְתִיבוֹתֶיהָ שְׁלוֹם—This construction with a predicate noun (שְׁלוֹם) expressing a quality is rare in Hebrew, literally, “and all her pathways [are] peace.” (CC)

peace. Hebrew *shalom*, translated “prosperity” in v. 2 (see 16:7; Ps 119:165). (CSB)

3:18 tree of life. Source of life. This figure of speech may allude to the tree in the Garden of Eden (see Pr 11:30; 13:12; 15:4). (CSB)

First of four such references in Pr (11:30; 13:12; 15:4). The tree of life found in Eden was able to impart eternal life to those who ate its fruit (Gn 2:9). Cherubim guarded the tree so fallen people would not eat of it and live forever in their sin (Gn 3:22, 24). For believers, the tree of life signifies the eternal salvation Jesus freely offers. Augustine: “The tree of life would seem to have been in the [earthly] Paradise what the wisdom of God is in the spiritual [Paradise]” (*NPNF* 1 2:256). (TLSB)

עֵץ־חַיִּים—The construct phrase עֵץ־חַיִּים, “a tree of life,” here refers to divine Wisdom itself. It recurs in 11:30 and 15:4, where it refers to the righteous person’s life and words, which benefit others. In 13:12 it refers to a fulfilled desire of a godly person. The identical construct phrase with the article refers to “the tree of life” in Eden (Gen 2:9; 3:22, 24). Eschatologically, see the fruit-bearing “tree” in Ezek 47:7, 12 and “the tree of life” in the future paradise promised to all believers in Christ ([τὸ] ξύλον [τῆς] ζωῆς, Rev 2:7; 22:2, 14, 19). (CC)

This verse contains the first of four references in Proverbs to “a tree of life.” (The others are 11:30; 13:12; 15:4.) It directs our thoughts back to the Garden of Eden with its tree of life (Genesis 2:9). Through true wisdom we have access into the second Eden, heaven itself. Jesus Christ is the wisdom of God, and the cross of Christ is “a tree of life to those who embrace her.” (PBC)

hold her fast – וְתִמְכְּרֶיהָ מְאֹד—The Qal (G) of תִּמְךָ, “grasp, attain, take hold of, retain,” occurs eight times in Proverbs (3:18; 4:4; 5:5; 11:16 (twice); 28:17; 29:23; 31:19) and the passive Niphal (N) once (5:22). The unusual construction here has as its subject the plural Qal participle of תִּמְךָ with a feminine singular object suffix (-הָ) referring back to חֵכְמָה, “wisdom,” in 3:13. The predicate is the singular Pual (Dp) participle of אָשַׁר, “be blessed.” The plural participle has a distributive meaning: “all who hold on to her are blessed” (cf. Waltke-O’Connor, § 15.6c, including example 10). The verb אָשַׁר is used mainly in the Writings and especially in Wisdom literature, and it always refers to a person who is blessed, never to God as blessed. The Pual here is best understood as having an objective and factual meaning, with God as the implied agent: “are [actually, in fact] blessed [by God].” In other contexts the verb can refer to verbal human pronouncements about blessing. The Piel (D) in 31:28 has the active meaning “to declare/consider a person to be blessed” and refers to sons speaking about their mother. אָשַׁר in 3:18; 31:28 is a synonym of the more common verb בָּרַךְ, “to bless,” (CC)

3:19–20 The role of wisdom in creation is described more fully in 8:22–31. Divine wisdom guided the Creator and now permeates the whole creation. To live by wisdom is to imitate the Lord and conform to the divinely appointed creation order. (CSB)

3:19 *wisdom* – *hokmah* – The most frequently used word for wisdom and refers to practical wisdom. Practical wisdom is the chief concept in Proverbs. (PBC)

founded the earth. God’s work in creation is compared to the construction of a building (see 1Ki 5:17; 6:37; see also 8:29; Job 38:4–6; Ps 104:5; Zec 12:1). (CSB)

Wisdom was an instrument of God, the Creator. Cf 8:22–31. Irenaeus of Lyons: “The Word, namely the Son, was always with the Father; and that Wisdom also, which is the Spirit, was present with Him, [before all] creation” (ANF 1:488). In early trinitarian theology, the Word and Wisdom are often closely associated. (TLSB)

יָסַד יְהוָה בְּחָכְמָה יִסַּד אֲרֶזָה—The verb יָסַד, “to found, establish,” occurs in Proverbs only here. Other texts use it to refer to Yahweh creating the universe (e.g., Pss 24:2; 89:12 [ET 89:11]; Job 38:4) or to founding (laying the foundation of) the temple (Qal [G] in Ezra 3:12; Piel [D] in 1 Ki 5:31 [ET 5:17]; Ezra 3:10; cf. Ezra 3:6, 11). (CC)

established the heavens. See Isa 42:5; 51:16. (CSB)

כִּינֹן שָׁמַיִם בְּחָכְמָה—The verb כִּינֹן occurs twenty times in Proverbs. The Polel (D), “to establish,” is used only here in Proverbs, but in other texts it refers to God establishing the world (e.g., Pss 24:2; 119:90), the heavenly bodies (Ps 8:4 [ET 8:3]), or his sanctuary (Ex 15:17). The synonymous Hiphil (H) occurs six times in Proverbs. In the book the passive Niphal (N), “be established, prepared, preserved, enduring,” is used eleven times, and the synonymous Hophal (Hp; 21:31) and Hithpolal (HtD; 24:3) each occur once. (CC)

Not only does wisdom direct our thoughts back to the Garden of Eden, it goes beyond that – to creation itself. But the earth is tiny compared to the sun and to our Milky Way galaxy, which is 100,000 light years wide. (One light year is 6 trillion miles!) This galaxy, in turn, is but one of billions of other galaxies. All of this God watches over, controls, and keeps running with precision. (PBC)

3:20 *broke open.* God opened up springs and streams (see Ge 7:11; 49:25; Ps 74:15). Alternatively, though perhaps less likely, reference is to the dividing of the waters above from the waters below. (CSB)

The water is essential. During the long dry seasons in the Middle East, the soil depends on the dew for moisture. Without water, there can be no life. (PBC)

Water is essential for life, a most basic element of creation. God gives all life. Today, through the waters of Baptism, God gives us new life through faith in Him (Mk 16:16). (TLSB)

dew. Probably also includes rain (see Dt 33:13; 2Sa 1:21). (CSB)

The massive foundations of the earth, the expanses of the heavens, a tiny drop of dew – God’s entire creation reflects his awesome wisdom. (PBC)

3:21–35 The fourth address to a son. Keeping wisdom and discretion is explained in human relationships, introduced by “do not” in vv 21, 25–31. (TLSB)

This is the fourth address in Proverbs 1–9 from a father to a son. It has three sections:

- 3:21–24: The benefits of wisdom
- 3:25–32: Five warnings
- 3:33–35: Three sayings contrasting evil and righteous people (CC)

3:21-24 The benefits of wisdom (3:21–24) are described in ways already used in previous addresses: “life” (3:22 ,חַיִּים, as in 3:2, 18; cf. 2:19) and “grace” (3:22 ,חֵן, as in 1:9; 3:4; see also 3:34). Moreover, to the promise of safety on a path—a metaphor used heretofore—is added security when sleeping (3:24), a time of great vulnerability (cf. Pss 3:6 [ET 3:5]; 4:9 [ET 4:8]; 121:4). (CC)

3:21 *do not lose sight* – אַל־לָזוּן מֵעֵינַיִךְ נִצֹר רְשָׁיָה וּמִזְמָה—The Qal (G) of לָזוּן, “turn aside, depart,” occurs only here in the OT; for the Niphal (N), see the second textual note on 2:15. The form of לָזוּן is jussive, so with the negative, the literal meaning of the first clause is “do not let [them] depart from your eyes.” The subject of the masculine plural verb לָזוּן appears to be the two feminine nouns that are delayed to the second clause of this verse: רְשָׁיָה וּמִזְמָה. See “רְשָׁיָה,” ‘Sound Judgment’ ” and “מִזְמָה,” ‘Insight, Foresight’ ” in “Wisdom in Proverbs” in the introduction. The dash in the translation above (“them—”) indicates that the compound subject is delayed until the second clause. Some translations (e.g., NIV) simplify the syntax by placing 3:21b before 3:21a. (CC)

wisdom and discernment – To possess spiritual wisdom is to hold the source of other blessings as well. (PBC)

3:22 *life for your soul* – Literally, “for your soul.”

Wisdom and discretion are inwardly received and outwardly evidenced. (TLSB)

adornment. Hbr *chen.* (TLSB)

That is, it brings favor from others. They admire this quality in the people who possess it, just as they might see and admire a piece of jewelry. (PBC)

3:23 *walk on your way securely...not stumble.* God’s Word makes us secure and steady as we walk in His path (Ps 119:105). (TLSB)

אֶת־רַגְלְךָ לֹא תִגָּח—This is, literally, “and you will not strike your foot.” To an English reader this form-equivalent translation reads as if the son would be striking his own foot, which is clearly not what the Hebrew means. The English equivalent is “and you will not stub your toe.” (CC)

Wisdom brings safety. An awareness of God’s love gives us the assurance spoken of in the Psalm: “[The angels will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone” (Psalm 91:12). (PBC)

3:24 *when you lie down, you will not be afraid.* Also listed among the covenant blessings. (CSB)

אִם־הִשְׁכַּב לֹא־תִפְתָּד—The particle אִם can be used to set up a conditional sentence. It can signal a condition that will be realized or one that cannot be realized (HALOT, 1, 2). In this case it sets up a condition that will be realized. The son will lie down to sleep. However, an English sentence that began “if you lie down” would raise some doubt about whether the son would lie down to sleep. Therefore, it is better in this case to signal to an English reader that the father expects the son to lie down to sleep. In this sentence “when” is more appropriate than “if” would be and is

used in most English versions. Note that the second sentence in 3:24 is also a conditional sentence that mirrors the first sentence, but both the protasis and apodosis are coordinated with *waw* instead of ׀א. (CC)

The verb פָּחַד, “to be afraid,” occurs in Proverbs only here and in 28:14. It is cognate to the noun פָּחַד, “fear, terror,” in 1:26–27, 33; 3:25. This noun and verb usually have a negative connotation of dread and aversion, whereas the synonyms אָרַךְ, “to fear” (as in 3:25), and the noun הִאָּרַךְ, “fear,” more often refer to fear engendered by faith in God. (CC)

your sleep will be sweet. See Ps 4:8. (CSB)

Godly wisdom brings the blessing of sweet, undisturbed sleep. (PBC)

3:25-32 Once the son is assured of the benefits of wisdom, the father offers five pieces of advice in the form of warnings (3:25–32). First is the advice to not be concerned about sudden terrors or the destruction of wicked people (3:25). Instead the son is counseled to place his confidence in Yahweh, who is absolutely trustworthy and will prevent the son from being caught as he walks in wisdom’s ways (3:26). This first warning with its promissory counsel is foundational for the other warnings that follow. Faith in Yahweh grants to the son the confidence of salvation, which enables him to live sacrificially in gratitude and deal with others honestly and without malice (3:27–32). (CC)

Without that confidence, however, he would be afraid of what may happen to him, knowing that God would punish him along with the rest of the wicked, and he could not follow God’s Law. What fulfills the Law is love—love from God, which instills love for God and one’s neighbor (Mt 22:36–40; Rom 13:10). Jesus promises his people that they will not be punished with the wicked; rather, they will be separated from them in the final judgment as his sheep, who inherit “eternal life” in paradise (Mt 25:32–46). This is represented by the “tree of life” in Prov 3:18 and “life” in 3:2, 22. Believers are freed by Christ to follow God’s commands in this life and to inherit the life of the world to come. (CC)

The other warnings remind the son to have integrity in his dealings with his neighbor: not to misuse power and fail to do what is right, and not to withhold possessions borrowed from a neighbor or refrain from giving generously to him (3:27–28), not to take advantage of a neighbor who trusts him (3:29), not to engage in useless quarrels (3:30), and not to envy those who use violence (3:31), perhaps as an easy way to riches or a forceful way to gain power. Prov 3:32, which speaks of God’s attitude toward crooked and upright people, reinforces all the warnings in 3:27–31. It highlights Yahweh’s utter disgust with perverse people and promises that God provides his counsel to the son and to all who are upright. (CC)

3:25 *do not be afraid* – אַל־תִּירָא מִפֶּחַד פֶּתְאִים—The negative אַל with an imperfect (here תִּירָא) can express that something should not happen (GKC, § 109 e; Joüon, § 114 k), hence, “you *do not need* to be afraid,” as the same clause means in Job 5:22. (CC)

sudden terror ... ruin. The Lord shields the godly from deadly arrows and plagues (see Ps 91:3–8; Job 5:21). (CSB)

It keeps us from fear of sudden disaster, because we know our lives are in the hands of our loving Savior-God. (PBC)

3:26 confidence. The righteous have confidence rooted and originating in the Lord. Cf 2Co 3:4–5. They do not miss a step, though they see others suffer consequences of sin. (TLSB)

בְּיָהוָה יִהְיֶה בְּכַסְלְךָ—The noun כָּסֶל occurs in Proverbs only here. It can mean “confidence,” as here and also in Ps 78:7; Job 8:14; 31:24. Yet it can also mean “foolishness,” and it is cognate to כָּסִיל, “fool,” and כְּסִילוֹת, “foolishness,” which occur elsewhere in Proverbs. The preposition בְּ here is the *beth essentiae* (GKC, § 119 i), meaning “Yahweh will *be* your confidence.” (CC)

will keep your foot from being caught. Contrast the fate of the fool in 1:18; 7:22–23. (CSB)

Without the Lord, people don’t have this priceless wisdom, no matter how knowledgeable they might be in every other area of life. That’s why it’s vital for Christians to share the gospel of Christ, the wisdom of God. (PBC)

וְשָׁמַר רַגְלְךָ מִלֶּכְדָּה—This is, literally, “he will keep your foot from capture.” The noun לָכַד (pausal: לְכָד), which occurs only here in the OT, is translated verbally as “being caught.” Using the cognate verb, Ps 9:16 (ET 9:15) states this about the wicked: “their foot is captured” (וְרַגְלָם נִלְכְּדָה). (CC)

3:27 do not withhold – The infinitive לַעֲשׂוֹת, “to do,” is ambiguous. It could refer to the action of withholding what is good, in which case the verse means “do not withhold good ... even when you have the power to (withhold good).” Or it could mean “do not withhold good ... when you have the ability to do (good)—to give what is good to those who deserve it.” In either case, the verse warns against committing a sin of omission: not doing something that a believer should do. (CC)

אַל־תִּמְנַע־טוֹב מִבְּעָלָיו—This is, literally, “do not withhold good from its owners.” Here the noun בְּעַל signifies “one to whom good is due” (BDB, s.v. 1, בְּעַל), those who have the right to possess the good item in question. In this context, “those who deserve it” is the intended sense, as recognized by English versions such as NIV and ESV. (CC)

With all the people in need of help today, we don’t have to look far to see where we Christians can do good. (PBC)

to whom it is due. Especially the poor and needy. (CSB)

Those in need. We sin not only when we do wrong (sin of commission) but also when we fail to do what is right when the opportunity presents itself (sin of omission). (TLSB)

כִּי־יִהְיֶה לְיָדְךָ לַעֲשׂוֹת—The infinitive of הָיָה with כִּי forms a temporal clause: literally, “when it is/belongs to the power of your hand to do.” However, translating most Hebrew idioms into English with a form-equivalent translation yields awkward or misleading English. The translation above, “when it is within your power to do,” reflects and idiom-for-idiom translation rather than a word-by-word translation. (CC)

3:28 no reason. There are times when contention is necessary, when one has just cause. (TLSB)

3:29 not plan evil against your neighbor – God warns against the mindset that would take advantage of a trusting neighbor (or anyone, for that matter). (PBC)

– רָעָה—The Qal (G) of רָעָה can mean “to engrave” or “to plow,” as in 20:4. But elsewhere in Proverbs it means “to devise, plan.” Only once is its object טוֹב, a “good” plan or goal (14:22b). Usually, as here, its object is an “evil” (רָעָה or 14:22 ;12:20 ;6:14 ,רָעָה) plot or scheme, or “wicked” (6:18 ,רָעָה) plans. (CC)

לְרֵעִי—The singular Qere, לְרֵעִי, “to your neighbor” (as in 3:29), is preferable to the plural Kethib לְרֵעִי because of the two following singular Qal (G) imperatives, לֵךְ וְשׂוּב, which are addressed to the neighbor. (CC)

dwells trustingly beside you – לֵךְ וְשׂוּב וּמָחָר אֶתֵּן וְנָתַתִּי אֵיךְ—The quoted words, are literally, “go and return, and tomorrow I will give.” The implied subject of וְנָתַתִּי, “and it is with you,” is the “good thing” (טוֹב) that you have and should not withhold (3:27a) and that you have the ability to give (3:27b). (CC)

וְהוּא יֹשֵׁב לְבִטָּח אִתְּךָ—For a similar idiom, see the first textual note on 1:33. Here the neighbor is “dwelling securely with you,” meaning that he is living peacefully with good will and in trust. (CC)

3:30 *Do not contend ... for no reason.* See Job 2:3. (CSB)

The adverb בְּחֵן can mean “without cause.” However, “do not quarrel with a person without cause” sounds to the English reader that it is acceptable to quarrel if one thinks there is a reason to do so, no matter how flimsy the reason might be. The Hebrew, however, is implying that one must have a good, upright reason to engage in strife. Thus it is better to translate “for no good reason.” While the Christian should avoid strife and quarrels (Rom 14:1; 2 Tim 2:14; James 4:2), there are times when one cannot avoid conflict, and it is the Christian’s duty to engage in spiritual warfare, especially when the faithful proclamation of the Gospel offends unbelievers (Mt 10:34–36; Lk 12:51–53). (CC)

Instead of tearing others down, we can build them up. (PBC)

Done you no harm – לֹא גָמַלְךָ רָעָה—This circumstantial clause means “if/when he has not done to you any evil.” The Qal (G) of גָּמַל, “to do to, deal out to,” has a suffix that serves as the indirect object (“to you”). The verb recurs in 11:17 and 31:12, where it refers to doing good. (CC)

3:31 *Do not envy.* See Ps 37:1, 7. (CSB)

man of violence. Like the sinners of 1:10–16 (cf. 16:29). (CSB)

אִישׁ חַמְסִים—In Proverbs the verb חָמַד, “envy, be jealous of,” always occurs in the Piel (D) imperfect negated by אַל with the preposition בְּ prefixed to an expression for the wicked, expressing the command not to envy sinners (3:31; 23:17; 24:1, 19). The construct phrase אִישׁ חַמְסִים (“a man of violence”) recurs in 16:29 and has an adjectival genitive: “a violent man.” The noun חַמְסִים, “violence,” occurs five other times in Proverbs (4:17; 10:6, 11; 13:2; 26:6). (CC)

Violent men often seem to get what they want in life: power, riches, position, women, respect from others. They simply and boldly seize whatever they can get. Don’t envy them says Solomon, and don’t try to be like them. (PBC)

3:32 *abomination*. A word that elsewhere expresses abhorrence of pagan practices (see Dt 18:9, 12) and moral abuses. It is common in Proverbs (e.g., 6:16; 8:7; 11:20). (CSB)

devious person. A malicious, unrepentant sinner is an abomination to the Holy God. The end of such a person is everlasting torment because he or she has rejected God’s gift of salvation. (TLSB)

the upright are in his confidence. See Ge 18:17–19; Job 29:4; Ps 25:14; Jn 15:15. (CSB)

Translated as “friendship” in Ps 25:14 (“secret counsel” in ESV note). God reveals certain knowledge and understandings only to the faithful, while withholding them from unbelievers (Mt 13:11–17). (TLSB)

וְיָדוּ אִתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁרָאֵל—Here אִתּוֹ must be the preposition “with.” The noun יָדוּ can denote a confidential discussion or “counsel”; a secret; or a circle of confidants, a “council” (see BDB and HALOT). Yahweh’s faithful prophets were privy to the divine counsel revealed in the divine council (e.g., Jer 23:18; Amos 3:7; cf. 1 Ki 22:14–23). In this context יָדוּ appears to be the confidential advice in the divine wisdom that God gives to his believing people (as in Ps 25:14), but God withholds it from unbelievers (Mt 13:11–17). יָדוּ recurs in Prov 11:13; 15:22; 20:19; 25:9. (CC)

That is, those who trust in Him are His friends and are privileged to the intimate advice of His Word. (PBC)

3:33-35 The three sayings that contrast evil and righteous people (3:33–35) are examples of God’s own actions flowing out of his two attitudes depicted in 3:32. The “crooked person” who is the object of Yahweh’s disgust in 3:32 is further characterized as a “wicked person” (3:33) and one of the “mockers” (3:34) and “fools” (3:35). In contrast, the “upright people” in 3:32 are further characterized as “righteous people” (3:33), “the humble” (3:34), and “wise people” (3:35). Therefore, the people who are upright have been made so by God, who has justified them. This means that God has declared them righteous through faith on account of Jesus’ merit. Moreover, they are humble. That is, they do not stand before God relying on their own righteousness; instead, they humbly repent of their sins and rely on God’s grace and mercy to provide forgiveness and new life. Finally, they are wise because God has given them wisdom. This means that Yahweh’s “confidential advice,” or counsel (3:32), is what is summarized elsewhere as “the fear of Yahweh,” that is, the fear and love for God that result from saving faith and that grow with divine wisdom. (CC)

This theme of “grace to the humble” and “honor” for the “wise” (3:34–35) is explored in the NT by both James and Peter, who quote Prov 3:34 from the LXX. James uses this passage to exhort his Christian readers to “humble yourselves before the Lord,” adding the promise that “he will exalt you” (James 4:6–10). Similarly, Peter urges us to display humility toward all people (1 Pet 5:5). He echoes the words of both Solomon and James when he writes: “Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that he may exalt you at the proper time” (1 Pet 5:6). Of course, neither Solomon nor the apostles are teaching that through humility we can earn glory from God. Rather, they are reminding us that in humility we depend on Christ and his redemptive work, since only he fulfilled the demand for perfect humility and obedience. He is the one who has obtained everlasting glory for us (Rom 8:30). (CC)

3:33 This contrast is seen also in Dt 11:26–28. (CSB)

These final three verses of this chapter consist of three comparisons between the righteous and the wicked. (PBC)

The LORD's curse is on the house of the wicked. See Jos 7:24–25; Zec 5:3–4. (CSB)

Punishment and torment, ultimately eternal damnation for disobedience to God's Law (Dt 27:26). (TLSB)

The noun מְאָרָה, “a curse” (also in 28:27), is derived from the verb אָרַר, “to curse” (absent from Proverbs, but see, e.g., Gen 3:14, 17; 4:11). They are the strongest antonyms to the noun בְּרָכָה, “blessing” (see the first textual note on Prov 10:6), and the verb בָּרַךְ, “to bless.” Here מְאָרָה is in construct with its agent: מְאָרַת יְהוָה, “Yahweh's curse,” means that the wicked man's house, and by metonymy the wicked man himself, is cursed by Yahweh. Yahweh pronounced curses upon the serpent and the creation after the fall into sin (אָרַר in Gen 3:14, 17) and upon Cain, the first murderer (אָרַר in Gen 4:11). Unless the wicked repent, Yahweh will carry out his curse on the Last Day by publicly pronouncing all unbelievers as cursed and by damning them for eternity (Mt 25:41, 46). (CC)

house. Household; family. (TLSB)

מְאָרַת יְהוָה בְּבֵית רָשָׁע וְגוֹהַ צְדִיקִים בְּרָחֹף—The nouns בֵּית, “house,” and גוֹהַ, “home,” are synonyms. However, the verse has two pairs of antonyms. The first is רָשָׁע, “a wicked person” (see the first textual note on 2:22), versus צְדִיקִים, “righteous people.” (CC)

The house where ungodliness prevails is filled with strife and sorrow. (PBC)

blesses the dwelling of the righteous. See Job 42:12–14. (CSB)

Yahweh (Prov 3:33a) is the implied subject of יְבָרַךְ, the Piel (D) of בָּרַךְ, “to bless.” Here it has the eschatological meaning that God already now pronounces his blessing upon the habitation of the righteous (cf. נָוָה also in 21:20; 24:15), and on the Last Day he shall publicly declare their blessedness when he grants them their inheritance of everlasting life in the new creation (Mt 25:34, 46). The Piel (D) of בָּרַךְ can also refer to human benedictions, as in Prov 27:14 and 30:11. The Pual (Dp) of בָּרַךְ in 20:21 and 22:9 means “to be blessed” by God in an eschatological sense. The only other occurrence of בָּרַךְ in Proverbs is the Qal passive (Gp) participle בְּרוּךְ, “blessed,” in 5:18, where it refers to one's wife. (CC)

Although the righteous still struggle with sin, they also know God's love and promises of help. (PBC)

3:34 This verse is quoted twice in the NT (James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5). In the Magnificat, Mary, the mother of Jesus, expresses a similar thought, “He has brought down rulers from their thrones but lifted up the humble” (Luke 1:52). (PBC)

Quoted in Jas 4:6 and 1Pt 5:5 as “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” Mary, the mother of our Lord, expresses a similar thought in the Magnificat (Lk 1:52). Humility in this context describes contrite sinners, who are declared holy and righteous by the Lord's mercy. (TLSB)

אִם-לְלֹצִים הוּא יִלְיֵץ וְלְעֹנִיִּים יִתֵּן חַן—The construction אִם ... יִלְיֵץ marks the first clause as concessive: “although ...” This verse is translated by the LXX as κύριος ὑπερηφάνοις ἀντιτάσσεται ταπεινοῖς

δὲ δίδωσιν χάριν, “the Lord opposes the proud, but he gives grace to the humble.” The LXX rendition is quoted in James 4:6 and 1 Pet 5:5, but with ὁ θεός substituted for κύριος. (CC)

mockers he is scornful. God laughs at feeble human attempts at self-glorification: “The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them” (Psalm 2:4. (PBC)

gives favor. The Qere, מְלִיץ, is the plural of the adjective and substantive מְלִיץ, “humble, meek, afflicted.” It occurs in Proverbs only as the Qere in 3:34; 14:21; 16:19. The Kethib, מְלִיץ, is the plural of the synonym מְלִיץ, “humble, afflicted,” which is the Kethib in 3:34; 14:21; 16:19 and occurs five other times in Proverbs (15:15; 22:22; 30:14; 31:9, 20; cf. מְלִיץ, “affliction,” in 31:5). (CC)

3:35 *wise will inherit honor* – Sometimes already in this life, the wise are recognized by their fellowmen, while the ungodly fools are held in contempt. Even if it must wait until the life to come, this word of God holds true. (PBC)

Ultimately, the wise, rejected and scoffed by those who are evil, will be exalted through their inheritance as God’s children. In contrast, those without spiritual wisdom will receive eternal punishment and disgrace. (TLSB)

Fools get disgrace – מְלִיץ—The Hebrew text may mean “but disgrace lifts up fools,” as in KJV: “but shame shall be the promotion of fools.” Since מְלִיץ, “lift up,” is a masculine singular Hiphil (H) participle, the masculine singular noun מְלִיץ, “disgrace,” probably is its subject, and then מְלִיץ (“fools”) would be its object.

Some translations construe the plural מְלִיץ, “and fools,” as the subject and מְלִיץ as the object: “but fools get disgrace” (RSV, ESV; cf. NASB). However, this is grammatically inconsistent with the singular participle.

Another construal is to consider Yahweh to be the implied subject of the participle: “but he lifts up fools [to] disgrace,” as in NIV: “but fools he holds up to shame.” However, that would require supplying an implied preposition before מְלִיץ or taking it as an adverbial accusative. (CC)

The solution proposed by Emerton and adopted here understands מְלִיץ as the subject and מְלִיץ as the object. It assumes that the implied verb in 3:35b is מְלִיץ, “inherit,” which ends 3:35a and does double duty as the verb for both clauses of the verse. Finally, it emends מְלִיץ to מְלִיץ, assuming that a scribe confused the ם for ן. The noun מְלִיץ means “arrogance, pride” in Is 2:11, 17, and it occurs in an idiom for pride in Prov 21:4. (In Prov 25:3 מְלִיץ has the physical meaning “height.”) The preposition מִן attached to it would have a causal meaning: “but fools [מְלִיץ], because of pride [מְלִיץ], [inherit, מְלִיץ] disgrace [מְלִיץ].” (CC)

“Grace” (חַן, Prov 3:22, 34) is something that is not earned. Augustine notes that God freely gives his grace to the humble through the work of Christ: “Therefore is it grace because [it is] given gratuitously. And therefore is it given gratuitously, because it is not rendered as a reward.” (CC)

The apostle Paul urges us to adopt the humility shown by Christ himself:

Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any communion from the Spirit, any compassion and mercy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being spiritually united and thinking the same thing. Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility consider others as better than yourselves. Let each of you watch out not only for his own interests, but also for the

interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which was also in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count being equal with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in form as a man, he humbled himself, being obedient until death, even death on a cross. Therefore God highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil 2:1–11) (CC)

3:13–35 Solomon, parent and teacher, emphasizes the blessings God gives through the wisdom He imparts. These blessings include the treasures of peace, security, and confidence, apportioned to those who trust in the Lord for forgiveness, new life, and eternal salvation. The blessings of those possessing true wisdom contrast with the condemnation accorded those who resist and scorn God's favor. • Triune God, make us humble before You so that we may receive and ever hold fast the treasures of Your grace. Enable us to live according to the wisdom that comes only from You. Amen. (TLSB)