

# Wisdom of the Careful vs. Folly of the Careless

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 28 June 2020

Preacher: Shawn Woo

- [ 0 : 00 ] Heavenly Father, we know from our experience that people flourish under good leaders, but languish under bad ones.
- And today, we ask that you will teach us to be a people who are in glad submission to your leadership, to your good management.
- That we might live with the fear of the Lord, with carefulness in all the spheres of our lives. Speak to us as you always do.
- We incline our hearts, our ears, toward you now. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Proverbs chapter 14, starting in verse 15, going to Proverbs 15 verse 4.
- The simple believes everything, but the prudent gives thought to his steps. One who is wise is cautious and turns away from evil, but a fool is reckless and careless.
- [ 1 : 13 ] A man of quick temper acts foolishly, and a man of evil devices is hated. The simple inherit folly, but the prudent are crowned with knowledge.
- The evil bow down before the good, the wicked at the gates of the righteous. The poor is disliked even by his neighbor, but the rich has many friends.
- Whoever despises his neighbor is a sinner, but blessed is he who is generous to the poor. Do they not go astray who devise evil? Those who devise good meet steadfast love and faithfulness.
- In all toil there is profit, but mere talk tends only to poverty. The crown of the wise is their wealth, but the folly of fools brings folly.
- A truthful witness saves lives, but one who breathes out lies is deceitful. In the fear of the Lord one has strong confidence, and his children will have a refuge.
- [ 2 : 16 ] The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life that one may turn away from the snares of death. In a multitude of people is the glory of a king, but without people a prince is ruined.
- Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who has a hasty temper exalts folly. A tranquil heart gives life to the flesh, but envy makes the bones rot.
- Whoever oppresses a poor man insults his maker, but he who is generous to the needy honors him. The wicked is overthrown through his evil doing, but the righteous finds refuge in his death.
- Wisdom rests in the heart of a man of understanding, but it makes itself known even in the midst of fools. Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.
- A servant who deals wisely has the king's favor, but his wrath falls on one who acts shamefully. A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.
- [ 3 : 24 ] The tongue of the wise commands knowledge, but the mouths of fools pour out folly. The eyes of the Lord are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good.
- A gentle tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit. This is God's holy and authoritative word.

There are some things that people only do because they know no one is watching. And after a dozen or so cases of mail package theft at our condo, our condo association is now talking about installing a security camera in the lobby.

Because we know that if there is a security camera, people know that they will be seen. People know that they will be caught if they steal, and so they don't. Similarly, parents who are perhaps berating their kids in public in a harsh way will moderate their tone as soon as they recognize that there are people watching them.

Dog walkers, right, who are not going to bother picking up that poo on the neighbor's lawn. As soon as they see the eyes peering through the window, will quickly pick up that poo, right?

[ 4 : 44 ] That's what we call accountability. When we know that we will be held accountable, we modify our behavior and speech accordingly. And Proverbs, this passage that we read, 14, 15, 15, 4, teaches that this is a key to wise living, to live under the watchful eyes of God.

And knowing that we are accountable to God for all our actions and speech constrains our behavior and speech, helps us to live wisely. And the main point is that by living carefully under the watchful eyes of God, the wise find life for themselves and give life to others.

That's what happens when you live under the watchful eyes of God. In verses 15 to 18 of chapter 14, we see the teachings about personal carefulness, what this looks like in your own life, in your own decisions.

And chapter 14, verses 19 to 24, speak of kind of socioeconomic carefulness, what this looks like, what being living under the watchful eyes of God as you relate to others in a socioeconomical sense.

And then finally, chapter 14, verse 25 to chapter 15, verse 4, speak of kind of a political legal carefulness, what that looks like in politics, in the court, when you live under the watchful eyes of God.

[ 6 : 05 ] So let's first look at personal carefulness in verses 15 to 18 together. This subunit is bracketed by the contrast of the simple and the prudent. Verse 15 says, The simple believes everything, but the prudent gives thought to his steps.

Similarly, verse 18 says, So the simple is, the term simple, as we have seen throughout Proverbs, is not a positive designation in the book of Proverbs, although there is something to be commended for godly simplicity.

This is referring to people who are gullible or naive, people who are thoughtless and careless in their life. And because of this, the simple are especially vulnerable to being duped by evildoers.

And throughout Proverbs, these simple people are exhorted to heed instruction and learn prudence or shrewdness. Because if and only when they learn that prudence will they stop being simple.

And this reminds us again that the world is full of competing ideologies and worldviews and even moral principles. And people are driven by various competing interests and influences.

[ 7 : 20 ] And for these reasons, it is foolish to believe everything. Instead, we must give thought to our steps. When we walk through a bridge that has gaps in it, we give thought to our steps, lest we step into the void and fall.

And likewise, the world is beset with many false steps that can be taken. And so we must give thought to our steps. Verse 18 continues that same contrast between the simple and the full.

It says, This is an ironic statement because usually when we think of inheritance, it's something that is desirable. Something you look forward to getting.

You inherit something that benefits you. However, in this verse, it says, The simple inherit folly. Before they were only simple, naive, or gullible.

But now they are full-blown fools. Their careless simplicity is rewarded with folly. And in contrast, the prudent are crowned with knowledge. They were already shrewd.

[ 8 : 21 ] They were already knowledgeable. Yet they're crowned with further knowledge because of their discernment. Because they have been knowledgeable and careful. And these two verses, a bracket, verses 16 to 17 in the middle, which together expound on the folly of the simple.

Verse 16 says, One who is wise is cautious and turns away from evil. But a fool is reckless and careless. So the phrase, One who is wise is cautious.

So if you're looking at the English Standard Version, there's probably a footnote right next to that phrase. If you follow that phrase down, it tells you that it could be translated, One who is wise fears.

That's what it literally says. One who is wise fears. And some of the translators took that to mean, meaning you're fearful or cautious of other things. But I think that actually means something a little more literal.

I think that's an example of ellipsis, where one or two words, one or more words are omitted from a sentence and assumed. So you're supposed to supply that to get a complete meaning.

[ 9 : 25 ] I think that means this verse is saying, One who is wise fears the Lord. I think that's the assumption. One who is wise fears the Lord. That's exactly how the NIV, for example, translates it.

And this is all the more likely, because there are other verses in Proverbs that say exactly that. Proverbs chapter 3 verse 7 says, Fear the Lord and turn away from evil.

Proverbs 16 verse 6 says, By the fear of the Lord one turns away from evil. So the wise then, if that's the right interpretation, the wise are not cautious, merely in that they fear the things that might go wrong and therefore act carefully.

That's not what being wise looks like in a biblical sense. They are cautious primarily because they fear the Lord. That's the fear that constrains them, the fear of the Lord, because they know that they are accountable to God.

And that's why they turn away from evil. Not because they fear the circumstances or are anxious for what might happen, but because they fear the Lord. In contrast, the fool is reckless and careless.

[ 10 : 32 ] The word reckless literally means to overstep or transgress something. And the word careless literally means to trip and fall. So this is a very vivid image here.

The fool has no fear of God. He's complacent. He's secure in himself. And so he confidently oversteps God-given boundaries. And as they do that, in ignoring the no trespassing sign, he transgresses things.

He falls. He trips and falls headlong into trouble. And then verse 17 continues to fill out that picture of the simple person. A man of quick temper acts foolishly, and a man of evil devices is hated.

Now this verse combines two various kind of aspects of fools, yet denounces them all the same in the same category of foolishness.

So first, it talks about a man of quick temper. A man of quick temper acts foolishly. This person has a short temper, a short fuse. He is unrestrained and explodes onto others.

[ 11 : 39 ] And in doing so, they do incalculable damage to others and themselves. Jewish rabbis often use the image of a kettle, a boiling kettle, to explain the way anger inflicts damage to oneself.

They said, when the kettle boils over, it overflows its own size. So likewise, a man of quick temper acts not only maliciously toward others, but also foolishly because he hurts himself in the end.

And the short tempered person is one type of fool. The second type of foolishness is seen here is a man of evil devices. It's a contrast really from the short tempered person because a man of evil devices is self-restrained.

He keeps a tight rein on his temper. But for the purpose of doing evil, for the purpose of manipulating others, for the purpose of getting his way, he is the cold-blooded killer.

And he is a schemer. He is cunning. And that's to be contrasted with the wise who is shrewd and prudent. Being shrewd and being a schemer are not the same.

[ 12 : 51 ] Both the short tempered person and the schemer, though they behave very differently, Bible says they're both foolish because neither of them lives carefully under the watchful eyes of God.

So that's what personal carefulness looks like. Let's look at then verses 19 to 24, which focus specifically on what the life under God's watchful eyes look like socially and economically, socioeconomic carefulness.

It might seem for a little while like the man of evil devices who take advantage of others and will rise through the ranks in society. And that does happen as Proverbs itself admits.

But verse 19 says, So this is speaking of ultimate divine justice.

The evil men who seek to make others bow down to them will end up bowing down before the good. The wicked who sought to rule over others and judge others will themselves be instead ruled and judged at the gates of the righteous.

[ 13 : 58 ] So even though this might not be immediately true in your experience, it will ultimately true in God's perfect timing is what this proverb reminds us.

A morally upside down universe that we live in at times will be made right, right side up again. But in the meanwhile, sometimes the wicked do prosper. They do gain prominence by their prosperity.

And so verse 20 says this, This is a very realistic observation about human nature and relationships.

The poor in view here are not those who are impoverished due to God's judgment for their wickedness. And as I've said several times throughout our series in Proverbs, the word poverty is used consistently in a negative way as God's judgment on the wicked.

However, the word poor is used consistently in a positive way to refer to those who are poor because of circumstances outside of their control, because of injustice.

[ 15 : 05 ] And on those people, God shows special care and compassion. And so that's the poor that is in view here. So even though they are not morally reprehensible, it says the poor is disliked even by his neighbor.

This neighbor, this person who lives nearby, who should, of all people, like the poor man, should be able to relate to this poor man, should be able to care for this poor man because he is his neighbor.

Even he despises the poor man. And the implication is that the poor person is disliked by his neighbor because he is poor. Lack of money leads to lack of friends.

In contrast, the rich has many friends. We use the term gold digger, right, to describe friends like this.

When a woman marries a rich man for no other reason than his wealth, when a man befriends another in order to benefit from his wealth and privilege, we call them gold diggers.

[ 16 : 09 ] Their so-called relationships are not relational, but transactional. It's about the money in the end. And because of people like this, the rich, even when they are morally reprehensible, has many friends.

This is a descriptive, not a prescriptive proverb. It's describing what's the reality, what happens. It's not telling us to snub the poor and cozy up to the rich.

Lest we misunderstand it that way, Solomon adds a qualifying proverb in verse 21. Whoever despises his neighbor is a sinner, but blessed is he who is generous to the poor.

This proverb is structured as an incomplete parallel. So the first half speaks of despising one's neighbor, but the second half speaks of being generous to the poor.

So it's not exactly the parallel. It's what they call incomplete parallelism. And when you come across that kind of parallel structure, we have to use the content of each half to kind of balance and fill out the picture of the other.

[ 17 : 18 ] And because scripture often uses that method to say a lot more poetically than what's actually written on the page. So if we use each half to fill in the details of the other half, verse 21 says, Whoever despises his neighbor because he is poor is a sinner.

But blessed is he who is generous to the poor because he is his neighbor. That's how you fill out that parallel structure.

So if we despise a neighbor because he is poor, we sin because we are not loving our neighbor as ourselves, as scripture commands. Our poor neighbor might not be able to return any of our favors.

He may not benefit us in any tangible way. He may have no clout in society and therefore may be the object of people's scorn. And because they are powerless, they may have no recourse and they may not be able to retaliate when we take advantage of him.

And yet we must not take advantage of him. We must not despise our neighbor. Further theological rationale for this is given later in verse 31.

[ 18 : 27 ] But for now, scripture calls us to be generous to the poor by the simple reason that he is our neighbor. God has placed us near them to see their plight and suffering.

God has placed us near them and provided for us so that we might supply their need. And that poor person doesn't need to be especially deserving of our generosity.

He doesn't have to have a squeaky clean background. He doesn't have to be well-dressed and well-spoken. That he is our neighbor is enough according to this proverb.

Verses 22 to 24 add further motivation to be generous toward our poor neighbor. Verse 22 says, Do they not go astray who devise evil? Those who devise good meet steadfast love and faithfulness.

The word devise is repeated twice in this verse to emphasize the importance of intentionality, of deliberation, planning.

[ 19 : 32 ] The word devise is sometimes translated in grave or forge and it refers to kind of the work of artisans and craftsmen. And so it's very much a word that implies care and careful planning.

There are of course some evil and some good that people do without deliberate planning. But there are some evil deeds and some good deeds that only happen after premeditation that require careful planning.

So it's telling us we have to make concrete plans for doing good. Those who despise the poor are devising evil. They have already made up their mind that the poor neighbor is not worth their time and money and effort.

They are devising evil. On the other hand, those who are generous with the poor neighbor devise good. They have made plans to befriend the poor neighbor. They have made plans and they have resolved to supply their need.

They have made plans to do so. They have brainstormed ways to most constructively and lovingly provide for their needs. Being generous to the poor neighbor requires planning and work.

[ 20 : 42 ] But it's still worthwhile because those who devise evil will stray from the blessed path of God. But those who devise good will stay on God's path and therefore meet steadfast love and faithfulness.

Those are two attributes that throughout scripture are most often attributed to God. In Exodus 34 verses 5 to 7 when God reveals himself to Moses and God's Moses in Israel he says that he is abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.

Steadfast love, loving kindness. It's referring to God, the unmarried, its favor and the unchanging commitment that God shows toward his chosen people.

The word faithfulness refers to God's reliability, the firmness of his character that he never changes. He's always true to himself. And so then both words, steadfast love and faithfulness highlight God's unchanging loyalty toward his people.

And so then those who kindly meet the needs of the poor on his path of life will be met by the steadfast love and faithfulness of God on that same path.

[ 21 : 55 ] And in verses 23-24 Solomon elaborates on this on the importance of making concrete plans and following through. It says in verses 23-24 So toiling is hard but there is in the end profit, right?

The wise who do honest hard work will be crowned with wealth in the end in the normal working of things. In contrast, those who engage in mere talk and spew out folly will end up in poverty.

So he's using an economic Solomon is using an economic proverb here to tell us to put our money where our mouth is. It's a rebuke to people who are all talk and no action.

Merely saying that you intend to do good to your poor neighbor isn't enough. You must devise good, make concrete plans and take action in being generous to the poor. In the same way that hard work is met with profit so likewise being generous to the poor will be met with steadfast love and faithfulness of the Lord.

And verse 24 matches verse 18 and together bracket this subunit. Verse 18 said, The simple inherit folly but the prudent are crowned with knowledge. Verse 24 is that the crown of the wise is their wealth but the folly of fools brings folly.

[ 23 : 23 ] That's what it looks like to have socioeconomic carefulness living under the watchful eyes of God. And then starting in verse 25 and going through chapter 15 verse 4 Solomon expounds on what godly carefulness looks like in the political and legal realms.

And he says in verse 25 A truthful witness saves lives but one who breathes out lies is deceitful. In the court of law truth telling is a matter of life and death.

A witness who tells the truth can ensure that the innocent person is not condemned and that the guilty person is condemned only and that the guilty person is condemned.

But if one lies it is deceitful and it is treacherous because instead of saving lives you can in fact destroy lives. It's not a trivial matter to lie in court because it's not an abstract decision rather it's a decision that has consequences in the real lives and livelihoods of people.

And so then even when it is to their disadvantage to tell the truth even when it makes that person look bad the witness a good witness a true witness is to speak truthfully.

[ 24 : 39 ] Even when the witness knows that he is more credible than the person on trial by the virtue of their social standing or people's biases the truthful witness will courageously and conscientiously tell the truth because they live carefully under the watchful eyes of God and in doing so they save lives.

And so then the way we act and speak in life is not a drill is what Proverbs is telling us it's a matter of life and death which this passage keeps on emphasizing. So verses 26 to 27 continue that thought in the fear of the Lord one has strong confidence and his children will have a refuge.

The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life that one may turn away from the snares of death. So the fear of the Lord that's another way to put living carefully under the watchful eyes of God one personally gains a strong confidence he finds life for himself secures a safety for himself but not only that he says he will provide refuge for his children living carefully under watchful eyes of God has generational consequences and then on top of that in general he says the fear of the Lord is a fountain of life it provides life not only to oneself to others like a fountain that bubbles forth with water life-giving water it nourishes others with life-giving wisdom and then in an interesting turn verse 28 Solomon addresses rulers specifically and in doing so leaders generally of the particular responsibility that rests on them to be this life-giving fountain for others and verse 28 says in a multitude of people is the glory of a king but without people a prince is ruined so by definition a king is someone who rules over others since without people he would have no kingdom and he would be ruined he would not be a king and in order to ensure that he has a multitude of people he must become a fountain of life by living carefully under the watchful eyes of God now this truth is confirmed by verse 29 it says whoever is slow to anger has great understanding but he who has a hasty temper exalts folly the word great in great understanding and the word multitude in multitude of people they are the translations of the same Hebrew word and so it connects those two verses 28 and 29 so if you were to play on that more obviously it says in the numerousness or in the greatness of people is the glory of a king and whoever is slow to anger has great understanding so the implication is this do you want to gather people around you instead of scattering them do you want to be a great leader do you want to rule over a great people will then gain great understanding which is found in living carefully under the watchful eyes of God

Greek philosopher Aristotle once said he who has never learned to obey cannot be a good commander there are people who want to lead want to teach want to exercise authority and rule over others but who have not learned humility who are incapable of submitting to and following others because they think too highly of themselves they are always dissatisfied under other people's authority because they always believe they could do better they squirm impatiently when others are teaching but beam excitedly when they themselves are teaching such people cannot lead because they will lead selfishly and for vain glory rather than the good of the people that are under their charge such people can't lead because they are incapable of listening and therefore will not heed wise counsel from others they will not benefit from perspectives that differ from their own because they think too highly of their own opinions and this principle is especially important when it comes to following and submitting to God only those who display great understanding of the fear of the Lord only those who live under the watchful eyes of God are fit to rule over a multitude of people a great people a good ruler understands that he is first and foremost under authority accountable to God and under his authority and this great understanding is what makes a person more patient it says in verse 29 whoever is slow to anger has great understanding but he who has a hasty temper exalts folly when we live carefully under the watchful eyes of God we recognize that there is someone in charge above us and because of that we don't need to panic and act hastily we have self-control because we know that God really is in control so the expression slow to anger outside of Proverbs exclusively is used to describe

God God is slow to anger so being slow to anger is not a natural characteristic of simple humans rather it is a divine attribute and we are to imitate this so then when someone displeases us or offends us we don't need to make that displeasure known immediately and impulsively because as it describes there a hasty temper exalts folly hasty temper is literally shortened breath it's a vivid description of how people behave when they are agitated and angry just short breaths it's a hasty temper that's what that refers to and it says in contrast to that in verse 30 it says a tranquil heart gives life to the flesh but envy makes the bones rot once again this is not just this is a matter of life and death living carefully under the watchful eyes of God and a tranquil heart is a heart that is satisfied in God a heart that is entrusted to God and because of that it's a heart that is at rest and that kind of heart gives life to one's own flesh but in contrast envy makes the bones rot a heart that is dissatisfied with God and the lot that God has given because of that discontentment complains and envies and distrusts God and because of that is beset with anxiety and this makes one's own body weak to disintegrate and this living carefully under watchful eyes of God affects the way a person deals with the poor as well we saw this early in verse 21 that we were commanded to be generous to the poor but verse 31 now gives us further theological rationale for that command it says whoever oppresses a poor man insults his maker but he who is generous to the needy honors him so when you oppress a poor man this is saying you insult the God who created him it's a powerful teaching in 2016 there was a you guys know

[ 32 : 17 ] Dutch master Rembrandt one of his paintings entitled now The Unconscious Patient was discovered in a basement in New Jersey when adult children were clearing out their family home after their parents death they discovered a Rembrandt painting in a basement the oil painting however was discolored it was flaking and it looked totally unremarkable after years of disintegration in a damp basement and in spite of all of that an art collector purchased it for 1.1 million dollars at an auction and went through the painstaking process of restoring it to its original beauty and now it's in its rightful place touring the world's most famous art museums and why is that when professionals lay their eyes on that painting it didn't matter to them that it was rotting that it didn't matter to them that it was discolored it didn't matter to them that it was flaking it didn't matter to them that it looked worthless because they knew whose work it was no matter what condition you find it and if you find a Rembrandt it's worth millions likewise if you meet a human being created in the image of God doesn't matter how old or frail that person is it doesn't matter how poor or pitiable that person is it doesn't matter how disenfranchised and powerless that person is it doesn't matter what that person's racial or cultural background is it doesn't matter whether this person is male or female it doesn't matter how battered this person is how oppressed this person is how sick or disfigured this person is this person is priceless because they are created in the image of God they are the signature masterpiece of the greatest master craftsman that's the reason for this reason he was generous to the poor generous to the needy honors

God himself and those who honor God will ultimately be rewarded verse 32 says the wicked is overthrown through his evil doing but the righteous finds refuge in his death verse 26 and 32 both speak of the refuge to describe the heritage of the wise living under the watchful eyes of God is not an onerous burden rather it is like a refuge something that secures us protects us helps us in the end it will lead to eternal refuge even beyond death that's what verse 32 suggests the wicked is overthrown through his evil doing through his own evil doing but the righteous finds refuge in his death even in his death the righteous will find a refuge in verses 26 to 32 if you scan it again



Solomon spoke of how the ruler should live righteously carefully under the watchful eyes of God and then starting in verse 33 he focuses on how the subjects of that ruler should live with care of their own and he begins by enjoining wisdom to all of us in verse 33 it says wisdom rests in the heart of a man of understanding but it makes itself known even in the midst of fools this is an invitation to learn wisdom first and foremost wisdom resides in the heart of a man of understanding so a man like King Solomon that's the implication wisdom stays there it makes a permanent dwelling there and so the implication is that we should listen to such people listen to the Proverbs and that's not all wisdom makes itself known even in the midst of fools so wisdom is not only for kings like Solomon it's for us all and we saw in the personification of wisdom in chapter 1 chapter 8 and chapter 9 that wisdom is not this high brow elitist that only caters to the brightest and most prominent among people she invites all comers she calls out to the simple all who are willing to humble themselves and learn can come and gain wisdom and so it is it says even in the midst of fools wisdom's call can be heard and so then the invitation is for us to heed her call leave our folly behind and let wisdom rest in our hearts also verse 34 continues that exhortation righteousness exalts a nation but sin is a reproach to any people now just as the king should be concerned with righteousness so also the whole nation should be concerned with righteousness in God's estimation and in his ultimate justice it's not deft political maneuvering forging international alliances or even military prowess or even economic prosperity that ensures a nation's security or exalts a nation it's not those things ultimately speaking it is righteousness that exalts a nation conversely sin is a reproach to any people if you read the bible and if you study history you know that every empire eventually falls

Daniel chapter 2 verse 21 says that God changes changes times and seasons he removes kings and sets up kings he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding the United States of America too will fall and when it does whatever the immediate causes might be the ultimate cause will be moral degeneration the ultimate cause will be injustice and unrighteousness the ultimate cause will be the lack of humility before God so not only the king but all the subjects must preoccupy themselves with doing justice loving kindness and walking humbly with their God as it says in Micah chapter 6 verse 8 verse 35 says a servant who deals wisely has the king's favor but his wrath falls on one who acts shamefully the person who serves the king should live also carefully under the watchful eyes of God his service should be characterized by competence wisdom and integrity just as sin is reproached to the whole nation the servant's shameful acts will incur the wrath of his master his king but even the best of servants will incur the wrath of the sovereign sometimes and so chapter 15 verses 1 to 4 teaches the art of speaking carefully in such situations it says in verse 1 a soft answer turns away wrath but a harsh word stirs up anger whether the king's wrath is justified or not the servant should not retaliate in kind with a harsh word because doing so will only stir up the anger of the king alternatively a soft answer turns away wrath this is the art of de-escalation if you live or work with someone who has a short temper getting into a shouting match with them is not going to improve your life a soft answer turns away wrath a ticking bomb needs to be diffused not smashed it will lead to more destruction a soft answer turns away wrath verse 2 continues the tongue of the wise commends knowledge but the mouths of fools pour out folly the person who answers softly commends knowledge or adorns knowledge beautifies knowledge he makes the truth he makes a wise decision attractive to the hearer the wise person does not use his tongue as a sledgehammer to bludgeon others into submission rather with it he adorns knowledge with it he beautifies commends knowledge and that's contrasted from the mouths of fools that pour out folly there is no restraint whatsoever like a breached dam fool opens his mouth and pours out folly but the kind of restraint that's displayed by the wise person is only possible as we've been seeing over and over again for those who live carefully under the watchful eyes of

God so it says in verse 3 the eyes of the Lord are in every place keeping watch on the evil and the good in his small book on anger biblical counselor Ed Welch writes that sinful anger is essentially atheistic we don't often realize this but when we get angry sinfully angry and lash out at other people we're angry at God we're saying God you have no idea what kind of injustice this person or this ruler or this nation is putting me through we're saying God because you're not doing anything about it I have to take things into my own hands and get angry and make this right and this is why in Exodus chapter 16 verse 8 when the people of Israel complain against Moses and Aaron for not giving them bread and meat in the wilderness Moses responds this way the Lord has heard your grumbling that you grumble against him what are we your grumbling is not against us but against the Lord this is why in 1st

[ 42 : 29 ] Samuel chapter 8 verse 7 when the nation of Israel asks Samuel their leader for a king an alternate ruler to rule over them like the other ancient near eastern nations God says to Samuel in all that they say to you they have not rejected you but they have rejected me from being king over them this is why sinful anger is always directed in the ultimate sense against God that's why it's necessary for us to remember this truth that the eyes of the Lord are in every place keeping watch on the evil and the good the evil and the good represents a complete range it means that God's eyes are everywhere and he sees everything there is no sin or injustice that comes that's committed against you that has escaped God's notice his justice might not satisfy your desire instantly but his justice is real it is inescapable and it is exacting and it's for this reason that we can respond to a wrathful person with a soft answer knowing that God is at the scene knowing that God sees knowing that God is working out his plan patiently and that he is slow to anger and so verse 4 concludes a gentle tongue is a tree of life but perverseness in it breaks the spirit in this fallen and broken world outside of the garden of Eden a gentle tongue is like the tree of life in that original paradise that humanity has been cut off from it brings healing rather than destruction it leads to eternal life this passage has been speaking repeatedly of the fact that wisdom is a matter of life and death right chapter 14 verse 27 said the fear of the Lord is a fountain of life verse 30 of chapter 14 said a tranquil heart gives life to the flesh now chapter 15 verse 4 says a gentle tongue is a tree of life now these are all glimpses that foreshadow the ultimate deliverance from death itself that comes through

God's son Jesus Christ because the reality is we have all been careless personally socioeconomically politically legally we have all been careless we have all at times spurned the fear of God and lived for ourselves we have all at times been hasty and short tempered we have all at times taken advantage of others for our selfish gain and yet even though we have been fools there is a wise man who offers us wisdom who can still give us this eternal life because 1st John chapter 5 verse 6 says this is he who came by water and blood Jesus Christ not by the water only but by the water and the blood water likely represents the life-giving water of the spirit that flows from Jesus and blood represents the sin-cleansing blood poured out by Jesus on the cross and that's why throughout his ministry he says in John 4 to the Samaritan woman at the well whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again the water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water walling up to eternal life

Jesus is the ultimate sage the wise person who by living carefully under the watchful eyes of God gives eternal life to others and Jesus imparts this life-giving water first by living a life of perfect obedience he never said a false word he always lived under the watchful eyes of God he never said or did anything that he did not see his father himself doing but in spite of this he died the death of sinners on the cross not because of his sins because he had no sin but for our sins for the sins of his people out of the steadfast love and faithfulness of God his covenant loyalty to his people and through Jesus that cross that hideous tree of death becomes the beautiful tree of life that gives eternal life and Jesus' blood becomes the cleansing fountain in which we may wash away all of our sins that's what we were singing earlier this morning there is a fountain filled with blood drawn from

Emmanuel's veins and sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains so let's remember Jesus this morning remember Christ the one greater than Solomon the ultimate sage who revives us by the water of his spirit who restores us and cleanses us by his blood and as we look to him and as we are revived by him we now too may live carefully under the watchful eyes of God and point the watching world to the eternal life found in Christ alone are new poor are too