

This doctrine, though taught more or less clearly throughout the entire Bible, belongs distinctively and in all its fullness to the New Testament (Deut. 8. 5; Psalm 118. 18; Lam. 3. 33, etc.). The Book of Job was written in corroboration of this truth, for in early times the Hebrews had great difficulty in regarding adversity, trouble, or misfortune of any kind as a blessing from God. Suffering, to them, was an evidence of a corresponding sin in the sufferer, rather than one of God's ways to purify men and bring them closer to him. A kind father will correct his son whom he loves rather than allow him to go on in sin and suffer the inevitable consequences. So also our heavenly Father reproveth whom he loveth.

13. Happy is the man. A common expression in the Bible, which, if literally rendered, would read: "O, the blessednesses of the man," or, "How superlatively happy is the man!" **Wisdom.** This is a comprehensive term in Hebrew. It includes both divine and human knowledge; that which teaches man his obligations to God, to himself, and to his fellow-being; that which makes one wise unto salvation. The nearest synonym to wisdom in our language is practical religion.

14. The gain thereof. Or, better, "the profit arising from the pursuit of wisdom and understanding." **Fine gold.** The expression translated "fine gold" has puzzled the critics. It is not sure whether it comes from a verb meaning "to dig out" or "to shine." It is generally agreed, however, that *charutz* is used poetically for the more usual *zahab* (gold). (See Job 28. 12, ff.)

15. Rubies. It is impossible to say with any certainty what the word here rendered "rubies" does really mean. Corals, gems, pearls, etc., have been suggested as the possible equivalents. It is probably a general term for precious stones of all kinds.

16. Length of days, etc. (See verse 2.)

Here wisdom is personified as one dispensing the richest blessings to those who will accept them.

Riches and honor. Those who love God and keep his commandments have a better chance to acquire wealth than those who violate his laws and despise his rule. Those who honor God will be honored, not only by him in return, but by men as well. Even bad men honor and respect the good. This is especially true in business transactions.

17. Her ways are ways of pleasantness. The life of a good man is the happiest. He alone who lives to God can hope to live a happy life. Whoever is conscious of constant communion with God has peace like a river. **All her paths are peace.** All the ways of wisdom or religion, not some of them, are peace. This peace which passeth all understanding may come through great tribulation; nevertheless, the anticipation of the joy resulting from doing one's duty will invariably produce happiness.

Thoughts for Young People.

We are in this lesson directed to four blessed rewards:

1. The reward of obedience. Obedience to God promotes length of days. Sobriety makes for longevity. Honesty is the best policy. Truthfulness secures a good reputation. Virtue is its own reward. Sin promotes disease and dishonor. Who are the esteemed, respected, beloved men and women of any community? Not the wicked, but the good.

2. The reward of faith. Divine guidance is what we most greatly need in this life (verses 5, 6). He who looks to God, leans upon God, acknowledges God, can confidently expect God's care and direction.

3. Of chastening. The light afflictions which endure but for a moment work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

4. The reward of wisdom. Wisdom brings the deepest happiness. Riches may prove a curse and not a blessing. Long life is not always to be desired, but everyone who possesses the true wisdom of an intelligent faith will enjoy happiness in God's service, and his happiness the world can never take from him.

"Wisdom divine! who tells the price
Of wisdom's costly merchandise?
Wisdom to silver we prefer,
And gold is dross compared to her."

By Way of Illustration.

God's law must be lived. I have here a music book. The object of this book is to teach and promote vocal and instrumental music. Now, how does this music book teach music? Simply by being studied? Not at all. Suppose a person previously unacquainted with the science and art of music, who has never sung a strain and has no ear for melody, takes this book and commits it to memory, will that make him a musician? He might almost as well swallow the book, and would derive about as much benefit from it. He must reduce the book to practice. He must make the sounds indicated, or the book is a dead letter to him. Precisely so is it with the Bible, God's law.—*Bishop E. O. Haven.*

Trust God, and not human understanding. During more than fifty years men had fixed their gaze on the starry sky, seeking to trace the laws of the planets. The universe was a confused maze. One day a man of genius said to himself, "The worlds must be considered with reference to the sun, and not with reference to the earth." He placed the sun as the center, and directly the harmony appeared; everything was explained, and the plan of the universe was discovered. God is the center of the universe, and we must begin all our calculations with him as the head of all things.—*Berlin.*