

EXPLANATORY AND PRACTICAL NOTES.

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General Statement.

The matchless teacher of practical wisdom from whose words our last lesson was quoted proceeds in this passage to describe some of the results of the life of wisdom. The chapter from which it is taken is one of the most beautiful in the word of God. The first two verses repeat in brief the lessons of reverent submission which we have already learned from Job, and are quoted by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews (12. 5, 6). By carefully watching the various dispensations of divine Providence we are to learn how to set out on our search for truth. The description which follows is one of rare literary beauty. Worldly wealth—gold, silver, and rubies; length of days; all the innocent pleasures of life; and a peaceful career, enriched by the honorable regard of one's peers—all these are the perquisites of "the man that getteth understanding." The deep reason for the happiness of "every one that retaineth her" is that the chief characteristic of Jehovah himself is wisdom. By it he "founded the earth" and "established the heavens." Therefore "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." He whose entire inner and outer life is in harmony with the will of the Maker of all physical and moral law possesses the secrets of prosperity and peace. Our lesson closes with a tender fatherly injunction to the scholar to make "discretion" the very life of his soul; to make the attainment of sound wisdom the chief object of his life.

Verses 11, 12. My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord. A most solemn injunction, presented in fatherly tones. The man who recognizes God's severe dealings with him as chastenings has gone far past the danger of despising them. The first instinct of the unregenerate heart is to count all sorrow undeserved, and when a man has come so far in his approach to wisdom as to see that he deserves more afflictions than he gets, he is sometimes apt to swing to the other extreme and regard them as acts of vengeance. A proper conception of God's attributes will get rid of both these errors. It is true that we cannot well think of God except by the help of our thoughts of each other, and most of us think of him almost as an infinite man—infinite in goodness and in power. But let us beware lest we degrade him in our thoughts by conceiving him as an infinite Czar or Sultan, with knouts and bastinadoes and dungeons in waiting for those who offend him. The gradual scriptural revelation of God culminates in the announcement, "God is love." Instead of "the chastening of the Lord," Delitzsch beautifully translates "the school of the Lord." **Neither be weary might be translated "do not loath."** They who regard God's chastenings as accidental or cruel "despise" them. They who recognize them as disciplinary, but turn from the lessons they are intended to teach, "loath them." **Whom the Lord loveth he correcteth.** Therefore suffering is no proof of the anger of God. (1) *Not a stroke of sorrow can fall upon us without God's permission.* (2) *"If God did despise them he would not chasten them; if God were weary of them he would not correct them."*—Jermin.

13-16. Happy is the man. Blessed is the man, or "O, the blessedness of the man!" **That findeth wisdom.** Who secures it after

long search. Read Matt. 13. 44-46. **The man that getteth understanding.** A repetition, to intensify the force of the utterance. **Merchandise.** Trading. The interchange of wisdom between teacher and student is of infinitely more value than all the profit which might come from interchange of goods. About the time Solomon was writing these wise sentences his ships were bringing over remote seas gold from Ophir and rubies and pearls from other lands. Solomon highly prized these treasures, but, after all, counted them as mere sand and pebbles when compared with "understanding." (3) *The treasures of the heart are the only treasures worth having.* (4) *Financial wealth is very desirable, but cannot satisfy the deeper nature of man.* **All the things thou canst desire.** To print a catalogue of these would exhaust all the paper and type on the continent, and we could only read the list to be told at the end that we cannot get all we desire. But here is a prize incomparably more precious than "all the things thou canst desire," which is yet within the reach of all. The very search for wisdom is invaluable, for by the means of it come most of the intellectual and moral developments which are the truest source of **length of days.** (5) *"A wise way of living conforms to the laws of health."* (6) *The truest "length of days" bridges death and endures to immortality.* **Riches.** All the treasures wealth can bring. **Honor.** Public esteem and office need not be sought by the wise man, for they seek him.

17, 18. Ways are highways; paths are byways. The public life of the wise man is pleasant, his private life is peaceful. (7) *Godliness is profitable to all things.* **Tree of life.** The tree was an ancient symbol of life-giving power. (8) *We should grow in grace; when growth ceases decay begins.*