

## PRINCIPLE OR PROMISE?

The book of Proverbs consists of many statements which predict that a certain blessing will follow a certain attitude or behavior. Or, contrariwise, that a certain calamity will result from a certain attitude or behavior. The following two questions naturally arise upon reading certain Proverbs: (1) "Are these statements predictions of what will *inevitably* happen, on *every occasion, without exception*? In other words, are they absolute PROMISES?" Or, (2) "Are these statements predictions of what will *usually* happen, on *most occasions*, under *ordinary* circumstances, all other things being equal? That is, are they ABSOLUTE PROMISES or GENERAL PRINCIPLES?"

This study affirms that HUMAN EXPERIENCE and the OBSERVATIONS OF LIFE, taken objectively and without bias, assert that certain predictions of the book of Proverbs are GENERAL PRINCIPLES, and not ABSOLUTE PROMISES. Note the following:

1. **Proverbs 3:13-17** - Does the exercise of wisdom ALWAYS produce long life, riches and honor? If a person dies prematurely, is poor, or receives little honor in life, does that mean he lacked in wisdom?
2. **Proverbs 4:10** - Does listening to and accepting what the writer says ALWAYS produce long life? What about a listening, obedient person who dies at a youthful age? Must he have been inattentive?
3. **Proverbs 10:22** - Does the Lord NEVER add trouble to His blessings? Did not the apostle Paul and others experience some trouble along with their blessings? What does Job 14:1 mean?
4. **Proverbs 10:24** - Does the righteous receive his EVERY desire? The apostle Paul seemed to be a righteous person, yet did not receive release from his "thorn in the flesh" (II Cor. 12:8-9).
5. **Proverbs 10:27** - Is a person's life span ALWAYS regulated by how godly or wicked he is? What about godly people who die young and wicked people who live lengthy lives?
6. **Proverbs 10:30** - Are righteous people NEVER evicted from house, land or position? If one ever IS "uprooted," does that necessarily mean he was unrighteousness?
7. **Proverbs 11:8** - Are righteous people ALWAYS rescued from EVERY trouble? What about the apostles, Christian martyrs and some righteous person you know? What about Psa. 119:67, 71?
8. **Proverbs 12:8** - Is a wise person praised EVERY time? Wasn't Jesus wiser than all others, yet he was cursed by some?

9. **Proverbs 12:11** - Does a person who works hard on his farm NEVER lose a crop or have a lean year? What about hard working people who have to give up farming because of repeated crop failure?
10. **Proverbs 12:21** - Does this mean that a righteous person will NEVER suffer harm? What about faithful Christians who have accidents, car wrecks, house fires? And what about the Apostles? Or weren't they REALLY righteous?
11. **Proverbs 12:25** - Is an anxious person cheered up by kind words EVERY time? What if he remained depressed a little while after the person with kind words leaves? What does that prove?
12. **Proverbs 13:4** - Does a hard worker get ALL he desires in a material way? Or does he SOMETIMES have to wait a lifetime, or not even get it at all? (Shades of "health/wealth gospel").
13. **Proverbs 15:1** - Does a "soft" or "gentle" reply ALWAYS cause people to stop being angry with us? People became angry with Jesus and who would accuse his answers of being faulty?
14. **Proverbs 16:13** - Is EVERYONE who speaks right loved? What about Stephen, the martyr? Or Paul, the apostle? Or Jesus Himself? What did Jesus mean in Luke 6:26?
15. **Proverbs 16:30** - Does "winking" an eye and holding your mouth a certain way ALWAYS mean the person up to something wrong? Couldn't these things be done innocently?
16. **Proverbs 17:6** - Are ALL grandchildren a "crown" (an honor) to their grandparents? Are ALL parents the pride of their children? What about those who are drunkards, thieves, fornicators, etc.?
17. **Proverbs 19:23** - Does fearing (respecting) the Lord ALWAYS prevent ALL trouble? Is it evidence that a person DOESN'T fear the Lord if he experiences even a small amount of trouble?
18. **Proverbs 22:4** - Does fearing (respecting) the Lord ALWAYS bring wealth, honor and (long) life? What about faithful Christians who die early, in obscurity, or with little material goods?
19. **Proverbs 22:6** - Does EVERY child brought up properly CONTINUE to follow godly upbringing, without some lapse? Even God's children (the Israelites) didn't do that (See Isa. 1:2).
20. **Proverbs 22:11** - Does EVERY person with a pure heart and proper speech have a KING for a friend? If you and I do not have kings (or presidents, or some prominent public officials) for friends, does that mean our HEARTS and SPEECH are not good?
21. **Proverbs 22:15** - Does a beating NECESSARILY change a child's behavior? Does it do it EVERY time, and to EVERY child? If not, was the beating too lenient, or too severe?

22. **Proverbs 23:13-14** - Hasn't SOME child died from being beaten with a "rod?" If so, then this proverb must have SOME qualifications to it. If it has qualifications, then it has to be a principle and not an absolute promise.
23. **Proverbs 24:25** - If "convicting" a guilty person of his wrongdoing ALWAYS results in things "going well," how do we account for judges, policemen, attorneys, witnesses, etc. being hurt and even killed in the course of bringing criminals to justice?