

Useful

Proverbs 13:13-14

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A. It Rewards (vs. 13):

1. Despise – To despise the word is to treat it with contempt. It is to act as if the Word is beneath our intelligence and ability when the Lord addresses an issue differently than the way we do. “To trample with the feet, which is applied to contempt, comp.” (Pro. 27:7).^[1]

a) Pharaoh despised the word, and fell beneath the avenging hand of the Lord. Saul despised the word, and was put to grief before the Philistines. The last three kings of Judah despised the Word, and learned to the fullest, yet too late, the terrible mistake made. It would be great if the solemn example of these, and many more whose lives are recorded in both sacred and secular history, would speak loudly to those bent on taking their own way and ignoring the commandment of the Lord, who has said, “To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My word” (Isa. 66:2).^[2]

2. The Word – To despise the Word is to treat the divine prophetic revelation of God as being beneath us or as nonsense or unnecessary.

a) The book of Proverbs provides detailed instructions for Godly living in an ungodly world. Proverbs provided practical principles for successful living in relation to God, parents, children, neighbors, and government.

b) Our wisdom is foolish to God (1 Corinthians 2) and we are told not to lean to our own understanding (Proverbs 3:5-6).

3. Debt – The word ‘debt’ is like a cord or rope that is attached to someone so that once connected it can lead them to death, sorrow or even become a snare. This cord or rope is also an analogy of someone being connected to the repayment of a loan. So, the person who is in debt to the Word is attached to it until what is said is accounted for.

a) Being in debt to it is not a possibility; it is a certainty.

b) According to the Jewish law the debtor deposited with the creditor some article as a pledge (Ex. 22:26(25), Am. 2:8; Job 22:6; Pr. 20:16 *al.*) or mortgaged his house or land (Neh. 5:3), and the creditor, if the debt were not paid, might take possession of the debtor’s property (Mic. 2:9), and even, if this did not suffice he himself, along with his wife and children (2 K. 4:1; Isa. 50:1; Neh. 5:8). So, our text declares, he who

offends against the word (that is, the law) is regarded as a debtor to it, and, if he does not meet his obligation, will be punished, while he who *fears* and obeys the Word will be *rewarded* (cf. 11:31). The sinner, it is said, exists on sufferance for a time; at the end of that time, he must discharge his obligation by obedience, or submit to his fate.^[3]

4. The one who fears – In contrast to the person who despises the Lord’s divine message is the person who reverences God because they stand in awe of his power and authority. This person is a “God-fearer.”

a) *Fearing God* is critical to productive results when it comes to God’s Word (the lack of fear was because people hated knowledge – 1:29; 3:7 – do not be wise in your own eyes): “*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.*” (1:7, 33; 9:10).

- Then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God. (Pr 1:33; NIV)
- To fear the Lord is to hate evil; I hate pride and arrogance, evil behavior and perverse speech (Pr 8:13; NIV)
- The fear of the Lord adds length to life, but the years of the wicked are cut short. (Pr 10:27; NIV)
- The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, turning a man from the snares of death. (Pr 14:27; NIV)
- Better a little with the fear of the Lord than great wealth with turmoil. (Pr 15:16; NIV)
- The fear of the Lord teaches a man wisdom, and humility comes before honor. (Pr 15:33; NIV)
- Through love and faithfulness sin is atoned for; through the fear of the Lord a man avoids evil. Pr 16:6; NIV)
- The fear of the Lord leads to life: Then one will rest content, untouched by trouble. (Pr 19:23; NIV)
- Humility and the fear of the Lord bring wealth, honor, and life. (Pr 22:4; NIV)
- Do not let your heart envy sinners, but always be zealous for the fear of the Lord. (Pr 23:17; NIV)
- Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is kept safe. (Pr 29:25; NIV)

5. Commandments – This person reverences the power and authority of the Lord, so view God’s divine revelation as a directive from the Lord to whom they are subservient (He is their teacher and they are His students; John 4:26; 1 John 2:26-27)

6. Reward - The “God-fearer” lives in harmony with the Lord (John 15:1-11), develops a friendship with God (John 15:13-14) and is therefore fulfilled in what they do.

- a) Despising parental or other instruction results in a person having to make a “payment” of guilt and punishment. But respecting such instruction to the point of following it results in the “reward” of blessings. ^[4]
- b) “Whoever despises the word becomes pledged to it.” The reference must be to the word of God. The point is that one is not exempt from obeying the commandments of God just because he willfully ignores them. In the ancient world a debtor deposited a pledge which was forfeited in the event of loan default. So every person’s life is, as it were, on pledge to obey God’s law. If one does not submit to the demands of that law, he forfeits his life. On the other hand, “he that fears the commandment shall be rewarded.” He shows respect for the law by immediate compliance with its demands. Such a person receives his life back with a reward. ^[5]

B. It Protects (vs. 14):

1. Teaching – Teaching is not just providing information; its’ purpose is to assimilate the Words being communicated into the life of the hearer. The person being taught the Word of God is a person who receives God’s instruction as a means of directing their lives to do what is being taught.
 - a) Commandment translates a word used the first time in 2:1, which may refer in this context to God’s command or law, or more generally to the instruction of the teacher of wisdom. If you have used an expression meaning divine law in line 1, it will be appropriate to do the same in this line. Will be rewarded is the opposite of what the scorners of the first line can expect. The verb rendered rewarded may also express the thought of being complete, whole, or secure. Note TEV “you are safe.” ^[6]
2. Wise – A wise person is one who has become skillful in applying God’s Word to real life situations so that each day they live reverencing the Lord.
 - a) Wisdom may help keep a person from a premature death (cf. 1:32–33; 2:11; 4:20–22; 8:35–36), pictured here as an animal trap that ensnares suddenly. With the second line of 13:14 being a dependent clause, this verse has synthetic parallelism (see “Literary Style” in the *Introduction*) rather than the antithetic parallelism of most of the verses in chapters 10–15. ^[7]
3. Fountain of life – The person who does not hold God’s Word with contempt (the scoffer; Psalm 1:1) but rather fears the Lord and is therefore rewarded for their faithful wise living, is a person who experiences the intrinsic good that life empowers by God provides (Prov. 24:3-5). It is as if Adam decided to pick from the ‘tree of life’ rather than the tree of death because He revered the Lord and therefore accepted His instruction.

- a) In an arid land such as ancient Judah, a fountain provided water for oneself and for one's flocks. It was a necessity—a source of life. That is a very strong endorsement for the law of the wise. A fountain was also a picture of salvation (Is. 12:1–3).^[8]
- b) The law is to the wise man a fountain of life.” It is the same to him as the “vein of lives,” מקור חיים *mekor chaiyim*, the great *aorta* which transmits the blood from the heart to every part of the body. There seems to be an allusion here to the *garden of paradise*, to the *tree of lives*, to the *tempter*, to the baleful *issue* of that temptation, and to the *death* entailed on man by his *unwisely* breaking the *law* of his God.^[9]
4. Turn aside; Depart – The person who walks wise because they open their hearts to God's instruction changes the course of their life, because they cut themselves off from anything that is destructive, and only focus on what the Lord is saying.
5. Snares – To walk wise is to change the direction of life away from the traps of life. To not change direction would be the same as an animal strolling along only to find itself caught in a trap or to allow the enticements of life to lure us so that we become entangled in sin (Ex. 10:7).
- a) *Snares of death* are snares set by death (as fowler or hunter), or, more probable, snares of which the result is death, as in first cl. the result of the fountain is life. The *sage* (see 22:17; 24:23; 1:2–6; 2:1) is the man of experience and wisdom, the teacher (public or private) whose instruction is designed to be a practical guide in everyday affairs. The sages appear to have formed a recognized class at this time, and to have performed the function of Heads of schools or Professors of the philosophy of life. Their teaching related to matters of common-sense prudence, and to the more nearly ideal conception of right and wrong; it included the observations of practical sagacity, and the prescriptions of a strictly ethical-religious view of life; see notes on 1:2–6; 10:11; 13:11; 14:27 *al.*^[10]
6. Death – To be caught in a snare; when we choose not to listen to the Lord's instruction and apply His Word skillfully, it leads to sickness (1 Cor. 11:29-32), and possibly an early death (1 John 5:16), something God takes no pleasure in (Ezek. 18:32).
- a) Heeding to the Word of God breaths life and keeps us from death.

^[1] Gesenius, W., & Tregelles, S. P. (2003). [Gesenius' Hebrew and Chaldee lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures](#) (p. 107). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

^[2] Ironside, H. A. (1908). [Notes on the Book of Proverbs](#) (p. 149). Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Bros.

- ^[3] Toy, C. H. (1899). [*A critical and exegetical commentary on the book of Proverbs*](#) (p. 269). New York: C. Scribner's Sons.
- ^[4] Buzzell, S. S. (1985). [Proverbs](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 933). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.
- ^[5] Smith, J. E. (1996). [The wisdom literature and Psalms](#) (p. 560). Joplin, MO: College Press Pub. Co.
- ^[6] Reyburn, W. D., & Fry, E. M. (2000). [A handbook on Proverbs](#) (p. 294). New York: United Bible Societies.
- ^[7] Buzzell, S. S. (1985). [Proverbs](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 933). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.
- ^[8] Radmacher, E. D., Allen, R. B., & House, H. W. (1999). [Nelson's new illustrated Bible commentary](#) (p. 757). Nashville: T. Nelson Publishers.
- ^[9] Clarke, A. (2014). [The Holy Bible with a Commentary and Critical Notes](#) (New Edition, Vol. 3, p. 739). Bellingham, WA: Faithlife Corporation.
- ^[10] Toy, C. H. (1899). [A critical and exegetical commentary on the book of Proverbs](#) (p. 270). New York: C. Scribner's Sons.