

PROVERBS:
STARTING STRIFE

Tuesday, April 14

Reading: Proverbs 18:1-12

Proverbs 18:10 The name of the LORD is a fortified tower; the righteous run to it and are safe.

Business leader and founder of the Jepson School of Leadership Robert S. Jepson once said, “Not just personal unhappiness but all strife in life, including war, is the result of an over-emphasis on temporary things; money, power and material possession.”¹ Proverbs 18 continues the theme of strife by describing some characteristics that start strife.

SELF-CENTERED – When we are only interested in being #1 we are bound to stir up strife (18:1). Along with this attitude comes the need to always express our own opinion and ignore the thoughts and feelings of others (18:2).

CONTEMPT – Those who follow wickedness tend to have contempt for other people which stirs up trouble (18:3). They do not care about right and wrong. Instead, they favor those who agree with them and despise those who don’t (18:5).

FOOLISH WORDS – Once again, Proverbs focuses on the damage our words can cause. The words of the wicked are like “deep waters.” This idea is often used to describe something that is inaccessible or foreboding. The words of fools cannot be reached and benefit no one. In contrast, wisdom flows out to others and gives life (18:4). Likewise, bits of ‘juicy gossip’ also cause trouble (18:8). Our sin-warped nature loves to hear negative things about others. These slanderous words cut to the heart and stick in the memory. Gossip has a life of its own! Once spread it is impossible to stop all its negative effects. “One who is slack in his work” (18:9) is a reminder that we must do the work of reconciliation to prevent any more damage. Solomon doesn’t pull any punches. He warns us that our words will bring consequences and punishment (18:6). While using words to hurt others, we inevitably hurt ourselves (18:7).

PRIDE – Some take pride in their accomplishments and wealth (12:11). They think they are protected (“fortified wall”) and no one can touch them. They can ‘buy’ public opinion or ‘buy off’ any trouble that comes their way. The word “haughty” (18:12) means high and exalted. When applied to human attitudes it often means arrogant – full of pride. Those who think they are superior and look down on others are destined for a fall. But with humility comes honor and strength.

Billy Graham once said, “Self-centered indulgence, pride and a lack of shame over sin are now emblems of the American lifestyle.”² What resource do believers have in the midst of strife? “The name of the Lord is a fortified tower; the righteous run to it and are safe” (18:10). A tower was a place of safety as well as a place to look out for coming danger. From its heights, one has a good vantage point to see all around. Faith in the Lord is our defense against the attacks of the world. Trust in Him will give us the proper perspective to face the challenges and problems of life.

¹ <https://www.inspiringquotes.us/topic/9596-strife>

² <https://www.brainyquote.com/authors/billy-graham-quotes>