

**PROVERBS:**  
**BUSINESS AFFAIRS**

Thursday, April 23

Reading: Proverbs 20:13-23

*Proverbs 20:17 Food gained by fraud tastes sweet, but one ends up with a mouth full of gravel.*

Patti LaBelle is a famous singer and businesswoman. She once said, “There is nothing more personal than your values. What you will and won't do to get ahead, the lines you will and won't cross to win, whom you will and won't step on for personal gain, are at the very core of your code of honor. And your code of honor determines your character. And your character is who you are. Behind closed doors. When nobody is watching.”<sup>1</sup> In this middle section of Proverbs 20 we find principles for all believers, especially the working man and woman who want to live by God's standards.

**DON'T BE LAZY (20:13)** – Opportunities are missed if we are not paying attention. In this verse, the opposite of being poor is not riches but having “food to spare.” The Hebrew literally reads being ‘satisfied with bread.’ Satisfaction with what God has given is our goal. We “must work, doing something useful with [our] hands, that [we] may have something to share with those in need” (Ephesians 4:28).

**DON'T BE SHADY (20:14-15)** – “This kind of buyer is not interested in offering a fair price. He claims the product is poor quality in order to drive its price down below market value, and then boasts about his shrewdness once he has closed the deal...”<sup>1</sup> Better to have “lips that speak knowledge” than deceitful words. A truly honest and forthright person is a rare treasure in business...and in life.

**DON'T BE RISKY (20:16)** – When putting up security for a stranger, it is necessary to take a person's cloak as collateral to make sure it gets paid back. If you don't, you will probably lose your shirt! Proverbs is full of warnings against risky business practices that could backfire and damage your reputation and your well-being.

**DON'T BE MOUTHY (20:17-19)** – Several negative traits are listed in these verses. Fraud is deceit or misleading someone to believe something that is not true. It is true that there is something alluring about forbidden fruit and ill-gotten gains. They may even give momentary pleasure. But in the end, it will be like gravel in your mouth. It leaves a bad taste and breaks your teeth. Solomon next tells us to avoid gossips. One “who talks too much” in Hebrew reads ‘one that flatters with his lips.’ “Gossip is to abuse confidentiality and to traffic in the private; flattering is to abuse truth and to traffic in the untrue.”<sup>2</sup> These people are to be avoided. A wise person will seek godly advice and guidance instead.

**DON'T BE UNTRUSTWORTHY (20:20-23)** – Those who treat their family badly are bound to do the same in business dealings. Those who always want “to get even” and those who use dishonest means to get what they want are not trustworthy. The ends do not justify the means! These are not the way a Christian should act.

<sup>1</sup> David Finkbeiner. “Proverbs” Moody Bible Commentary, p 937

<sup>2</sup> A. J. Higgins. What the Bible Teaches: Proverbs (Ritchie Old Testament Commentary), p. 226