

Proverbs Week #145 (13:23)

"Abundant food is in the fallow ground of the poor, but it is swept away by injustice. He who withholds his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him diligently. The righteous has enough to satisfy his appetite, but the stomach of the wicked is in need." (Proverbs 13:23–25 NAS95)

This week presents us with three statements separated by the conjunction "but." The first speaks of injustice that causes the poor to be without food. The second talks about the discipline provided by loving parents. The last tells of the difference between the righteous and the wicked when it comes to being satisfied with what they eat; the righteous appetite is satisfied but the wicked continue to crave. As we consider these three verses, try to think about who God is and what kind of people we are as His treasured possessions.

When God first created the Earth He placed Adam and Eve in a garden. There He told them, *"Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth."* (Genesis 1.28 NAS95) He declared that His creation was good. When Adam and Eve sinned many things changed in creation. God said, *"Cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; and you will eat the plants of the field; by the sweat of your face you will eat bread, till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; for you are dust, And to dust you shall return."* (Genesis 3.17–19 NAS95) Our first proverb reminds us that even though the ground may be cursed, by God's design the soil of the Earth can still produce a great harvest of food. By God's grace, the earth is full of great resources. How we view God and treat one another (with justice or injustice) can affect the amounts of produce the ground provides.

Adults, did your parents love you? What does today's verse teach us about love? How do parents show their love to their children? Before we answer that question, first let us think about our relationship to God. As parents what do we think about God's loving discipline? The depth of our understanding and experiencing of God's love will be seen in how we reflect it to others, especially our children. As members of God's family, do we really believe that He works all things for good? Do we live our lives each day knowing Him and trusting Him? The following verses come just after the proverbial command to trust in the Lord with all our hearts.

"My son, do not reject the discipline of the LORD or loathe His reproof, for whom the LORD loves He reproves, even as a father corrects the son in whom he delights." (Proverbs 3.11–12 NAS95)

In this phrase, "the discipline of the LORD" or מוּסַר יְהוָה (*musar Hashem*), the Hebrew word for discipline comes from the root יָסַר (*yasar*) and has the basic meaning to instruct, inspect or correct. "In the general semantic field of learning and instructing, the verb יָסַר specifically relates not to formal education but to the instilling of values and norms of conduct by verbal (hortatory) means or, after the fact, by rebuke or even physical chastisement."¹

Paul taught four things the scripture does in equipping us for God's work. If you add the last proverb in today's lesson to these truths, we learn that when scripture is doing its job in our life then our appetites (including all the things we need) will be satisfied. When the word of God does not do its job in our lives then we will hunger for more and never be satisfied. Do you remember the "job" of scripture that Paul taught Timothy? Scripture teaches, reproves, corrects and trains us in right living. What God has given us in His written word is sufficient to lead us to Him, point out those things in our lives that need to change, show us how to change them, and keep us on track with Him; to live as He desires and to bring glory to His name.

¹ VanGemeren, Willem A., ed. *The New International Dictionary Of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*. Accordance electronic edition, version 2.2. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997.