



Jim Rickard Bible Ministries
Sunday, September 14, 2025

Proverbs Chapter 27.

1. Various instructions in relation to life, Vs. 1-22.

In the next six verses, **vs. 17-22**, we have instructions for men to live a godly life, with a concluding warning for the foolish man. These principles build upon each other to exhort men to walk in the integrity of God's righteousness and justice. Though directed towards men, woman can apply the same principles.

Vs. 21

Prov 27:21, "The crucible is for silver and the furnace for gold, and each *is tested* by the praise accorded him."

Praise as the Refiner's Fire. This proverb speaks to how praise can affect a person. The ancient Israelites knew how to refine precious metals by heating them so that the impurities (dross) either burned off or floated to the top where they could be skimmed off. Having been purified, the metal could then be cast in a mold, cf. **Prov 25:4**. The heat thus refines and tests the metal, since it reveals and burns off impurities. So here, we see how praise can have the same effect on the heart of a man. Just as adversity tests us, so also prosperity and praise test us, sometimes even more severely.

Prov 25:4, "Take away the dross from the silver, and there comes out a vessel for the smith."

Prov 17:3, "The refining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold, but the LORD tests hearts."

The second half reads, "**And each is tested by the praise accorded (*given to*) him.**" When a believer is praised by other believers (and sometimes unbelievers) for his righteous and just acts and lifestyle, it shows you the heart of that man as one being occupied with Christ and filled with His Word. Yet, if a believer is not praised by other believers, it shows he is not occupied with Christ and His Word.

Our passage is a bookend of the topic in the first section of the chapter, as **Prov 27:2** is the other, "**Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips.**" In addition, as noted above, the first half is identical to **vs. 3a**

Praise from others is in fact another category of the "refiner's fire." Others things like adversity and suffering are typically thought as the refiner's fire, cf. **Isa 48:10; Jer 11:4**, yet, praise as a category of prosperity blessing is also one, cf. **Rom 8:17; James 1:2-4; 1 Peter 1:3-9; Rev 2:10**.

Isa 48:10, "Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction."

Jer 11:4, "Which I commanded your forefathers in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, from the iron furnace, saying, 'Listen to My voice, and do according to all which I command you; so you shall be My people, and I will be your God'." Cf. Deut 4:20; 1 Kings 8:51; Ezek 22:18-22.

Rom 8:17, "And if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him* so that we may also be glorified with *Him*."

Rev 2:10, “Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.”

James 1:2-4, “Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, ³knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. ⁴And let endurance have *its* perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”

1 Peter 1:3-9, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴to *obtain* an inheritance *which is* imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, ⁵who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, ⁷so that the proof of your faith, *being* more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; ⁸and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, ⁹obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.”

The message is: How one responds to honor, recognition, or compliments becomes a “testing fire” of the heart. Here, we see the character of a man when others righteously praise him for walking inside the will and plan of God, rather than bragging about himself and his own accomplishments.

The testing of “praise” is directed towards man’s pride and arrogance, as praise can be more dangerous than criticism, for it tempts the heart toward pride. Jesus warned against those who **“loved the praise of men more than the praise of God,” John 12:43**. In fact, king Saul was ruined because he cared more for man’s approval than for God’s. Unfortunately, many fall not in seasons of difficulty, but in seasons of applause.

So, this verse reminds us: how we handle success and recognition is a test of our true character. Will the man remain humble in his thoughts and actions, or will the praise “go to his head,” where he becomes prideful and arrogant about himself and his deeds. In other words, can he handle praise from others when rightly due without him becoming arrogant within the heart of his soul, cf. **Prov 17:3**.

Prov 17:3, “The refining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold, but the LORD tests hearts.” Through the praise of others, the Lord can test a man’s mental attitude to see if he will stay humble or become arrogant. Whether or not a person becomes prideful in response to praise reveals the state of his heart. Therefore, beware of measuring your worth by human applause. It is fleeting, fragile, and fickle.

Just as fire does not change the essence of metal, it reveals it, so praise does not make a proud man proud; it shows his pride. On the other hand, the humble man remains grounded when honored because his worth is in God, not human approval. Therefore, when others compliment you, what does it reveal? Do you crave more, or do you quietly give thanks to God?

Thirdly, this passage *“can also mean a person’s mettle is tested by whom or what he praises. Musicians praise their composers; literate people praise their authors; sports fans praise their heroes; and the godly praise the Lord. Likewise, the immoral praise the adulterer and adulteress and the covetous praise the rich (Ps. 49:18). To honor a fool dishonors oneself.”* (New International Commentary.)

As such, this admonishes a man to test himself by what he lauds or extols about, or openly admires, and to investigate who you praise, as well as, those who praise you. However, do not be surprised to find yourself a lonely minority in a corrupt society, like Jeremiah and our Lord, as the scornful reproach or contempt of sinners is actually the honor of saints. Therefore, the believer’s safeguard is to treat praise as a stewardship: whatever honor

comes, return it to God. Like Paul said, **“By the grace of God I am what I am,” 1 Cor 15:10.** Therefore, our goal is to hear not man’s applause but God’s “Well done.” When honored, do not deflect with false humility, but sincerely acknowledge God as the source.

Principles:

- 1) This passage adds to the truths about being and having wise and true friends who are loyal to their Biblical heritage and avoid fools who are out to make an easy buck or to enjoy easy sex.
- 2) Just as fire refines gold, praise refines the heart.
- 3) True wisdom learns to handle both criticism and praise with humility, keeping God as the only audience that matters.
- 4) How you respond to praise reveals your humility or your pride.
- 5) We are to deflect glory to God, not absorb it for ourselves.
- 6) Evaluate your true self by what you do, what you praise, and by whom and for what you are praised.
- 7) Ask yourself: When praise comes, does it expose dross, or does it reveal refined faith in God? Live in such a way that every compliment only shines back the glory of Christ.