Bible Gateway Proverbs 19 NASB.

Verse 1 states,

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“Better is the poor who walks in his integrity than one who is perverse in his lips and is a fool.”
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How well off or how poor a person may be has nothing to do with the principle described in this verse. From a worldly standpoint, being financially poor is a condition that must be avoided at all costs. But there are many, many qualities that are more valuable than a person’s standing in society.

One of those qualities is integrity. Integrity is defined in the Merriam-Webster dictionary as, “Firm adherence to a code of especially moral or artistic values: incorruptibility. An unimpaired condition: soundness. The quality or state of being complete or undivided: completeness.” This definition is also reflected in Thayer’s definition of integrity.

This writer has known men and women who had little formal education and lived modest lives. But those individuals had a reputation within their communities, and within their congregations, that was above reproach. They were listened to, they were respected, and they

were deeply loved. That describes a man of integrity.

Verse 2 continues the writer's thought,

> *"Also it is not good for a soul to be without knowledge, and he sins who hastens with his feet."*

Both the Old and New Testaments emphasize that a person must live his/her life based on a knowledge of God's Word. How can a person live a righteous life unless there is knowledge of what God expects?

The two kingdoms of Israel and Judah repeatedly forgot or dismissed this fact. The Northern Kingdom never attempted to follow God's instructions. In fact, the first king of Israel, Jeroboam, set up two golden calves for the people to worship so they would not travel to Jerusalem for the God mandated festivals. 1 Kings 12:26-28 states,

> *"And Jeroboam said in his heart, 'Now the kingdom may return to the house of David: If these people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will turn*

back to their lord, Rehoboam king of Judah, and they will kill me and go back to Rehoboam king of Judah.’ Therefore the king asked advice, made two calves of gold, and said to the people, ‘It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt!’”

It was so bad that the Book of the Law had been lost! In the Kingdom of Judah, the Temple in Jerusalem had fallen into disrepair, and Josiah the King ordered that the temple be restored. During the restoration, it is recorded in 2 Kings 22 “Then Hilkiah the high priest said to Shaphan the scribe, ‘I have found the Book of the Law in the house of the Lord.’ And Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it.” Notice that the high priest had not known the location of the Law!”

Today, there is always the danger that Christians will drift away from the Word of God. Rarely is this done deliberately. But a small change here, based on personal opinion, or an introduction of something new to accommodate the expectations of people, will take people far form what God expects. Just look at the various groups that insist that they are Christians yet there is little real knowledge of the Word of God.

The second part of verse 2 also contains a warning. Enthusiasm without knowledge is dangerous and ineffective. In fact, verse 2 states

that it is sin! The qualities of zeal, sincerity, and enthusiasm do not make what a person says or believe right.

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Yet, people are drawn to leaders or speakers that are eloquent and appear to be sincere. But belief that is not based on a knowledge of God's Word and Will is sin! Remember Paul's words in Ephesians 6:15 concerning the armor of God,

> *"…and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace."*

A person who does not know how to use his weapons will fail.

Verse 6 states,

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> *“Many entreat the favor of the nobility, and every man is a friend to one who gives gifts.”*

While the New King James Version uses the word “nobility”, other translations use the word “prince”, “liberal” or “generous”. In any of these situations, people are looking to others who have the ability to grant favors or give gifts. It makes no difference if the person asking deserves the gift or favor.

When Jesus fed the 5000 from five loaves and two fish, the crowd followed after him. In John 6:26,

> *“Jesus answered them and said, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled…’”*

Fame and popularity are very fickle. One day the crowd was rejoicing over Jesus and then a day or two later were crying for his crucifixion.

Christians are told to help the brethren and help others, and unethical people will try to capitalize on this to get money or other things

for their own selfish ends. God ultimately knows the mind of each person, and there will probably be times when someone is helped that did not need it. But it is better to help a person and be fooled than to become callous to people's needs.

Of course, simply giving away everything is not the answer either. Christians have hearts and Christians have minds. Knowledge and prayer will make a person more discerning. There is a difference in caring and being foolish.

Verse 17 looks at the idea of giving from a different perspective, "He who has pity on the poor lends to the Lord, and He will pay back what he has given." The word "pity" can mean different things. In one sense, it can carry the idea of looking down on someone that is poor. Jesus told of the Pharisee and Publican that were praying near each other. The pride and arrogance of the Pharisee was condemned.

At one time, there was a popular belief called "Social Evolution". This idea came from the Theory of Evolution. According to this idea, if a person is poor, then he/she deserves to be poor. Whereas, a person who is rich deserves to be rich because of the social survival of the fittest. This concept was embraced by many wealthy people, because there was no responsibility to help the poor. Of course, if a wealthy man lost his fortune, then he deserved to fail.

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This is in direct contradiction to the teaching in the Word of God. Jesus made it very clear in ***Matthew 25:31-46***,

> “***But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him***, then He will sit on His glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left.
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> “Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.’ Then the righteous will answer Him, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You something to drink? And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ The King will answer and say to

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them, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.’”
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Now, those gathered to His left were condemned into eternal punishment because they did not help those in need. So, pity must be joined with compassion, and both must include action. Every day, a person will face numerous times where a smile, a sign of respect, a helping hand, some food can make the difference. As Christians go about applying this principle of loving care, light and love can touch so many people’s lives. Plus, the Lord will bless such people with the hope of eternal life.

Verse 19 is one that many people have probably experienced.

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“A man of great wrath will suffer punishment; for if you rescue him, you will have to do it again.”
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It may be a family member, an acquaintance, a neighbor, or an associate at work; but most everyone has known a person that always seems to be angry.

That person may direct his anger and rage at an object, at a situation, or, sadly, at a person. A husband and father may physically or verbally abuse his family. When confronted by someone who can stand up to him, he may excuse it by saying, “I can’t help it. That is just the way I am.” Loved ones, even the ones that have been hurt, may say, “Well, his job is so stressful”.

A “man of great wrath” is never really happy. Yes, there may have been some traumatic event in his/her past that may lead to the anger, but that is no excuse for a person’s actions. Men and women are living beings. Each person is “god breathed”. Every person has the power to make decisions. If a person exhibits great wrath, it is because he DECIDED to be angry.

After the “outburst” is over, that same person may be apologetic and promise never to do that again. But the fact remains, that a person WILL NOT change until he/she makes the genuine decision to seek the help needed to deal with the anger and make a real change. Otherwise, any offers of help, however well intentioned, will fail. As the writer stated, *“for if you rescue him, you will have to do it again.”*