

WORSHIP SERVICE - 7.24.2022

HOW WISDOM REWARDS YOU - PART 2

I. INTRODUCTION

PROVERBS 3:21-35

- 21 My son, do not lose sight of these—
keep sound wisdom and discretion,
22 and they will be life for your soul
and adornment for your neck.
23 Then you will walk on your way securely,
and your foot will not stumble.
24 If you lie down, you will not be afraid;
when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet.
25 Do not be afraid of sudden terror
or of the ruin of the wicked, when it comes,
26 for the Lord will be your confidence
and will keep your foot from being caught.
27 Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due,
when it is in your power to do it.
28 Do not say to your neighbor, “Go, and come again,
tomorrow I will give it”—when you have it with you.
29 Do not plan evil against your neighbor,
who dwells trustingly beside you.
30 Do not contend with a man for no reason,
when he has done you no harm.
31 Do not envy a man of violence
and do not choose any of his ways,
32 for the devious person is an abomination to the Lord,
but the upright are in his confidence
33 The Lord's curse is on the house of the wicked,
but he blesses the dwelling of the righteous.
34 Toward the scorners he is scornful,
but to the humble he gives favor.
35 The wise will inherit honor,
but fools get disgrace.

II. WISDOM REWARDS YOU WITH SECURITY

- Similar to what we looked at last week in v13-18, with the inclusio of the word “blessed,” we have another inclusio in this next poem.
- Inclusio—literary device in which everything between those two outside words or phrases is defined by those two words or phrases and supports or expands on those two words or phrases.
- V21 and v26, the inclusio is around the phrase that contains the word “keep”.
- “If the son keeps the Lord’s wisdom, the Lord will keep him.” That’s the point Solomon is trying to drive home to his son.

- All of these exhortations to keep the father’s teachings are motivated by these future promises of security:
 - Will be life for your soul
 - You will walk on your way securely
 - Your feet will not stumble

- You will not be afraid
 - Your sleep will be sweet
 - The Lord will be your confidence
 - The Lord will keep your foot from being caught
- The father strongly exhorts the son “*don’t lose sight of my teachings and commands*”.
 - His teaching, which includes all of the proverbs, must not be neglected.
 - V22 “and they will be life for your soul and adornment for your neck.”
 - When we think of the soul, we might think of the mind or intellect, the psyche.
 - But in the OT, soul refers to the passionate drives and desires, the appetites of living creatures.
 - The word literally means “throat”.
 - Which is why the father tells the son that keeping sound wisdom and discretion is life for his soul/throat, like an adornment around it.
 - It will keep sinful desires in check, it will keep him from being mastered by carnal appetites, such as, greed or gluttony or sexual temptations.
- V23-24 “Then...” Here is the conditional promise and reward of wisdom, his walk will be secure and his foot will not stumble.
 - Not only that, he will also have security when he lies down at night; a refreshing, restful, and peaceful night’s sleep with no fear or dread.
 - Security at all times as he walks on the way of life and when he lies down at night.
- V25-26 No need to fear sudden terror or the judgment that comes upon the wicked “for the Lord will be your confidence and will keep your foot from being caught.”
 - The Lord is the hidden source providing the security and the sure-footedness of the one who keeps sound wisdom, who fears the Lord, who trusts in the Lord with all their heart, and holds to the teachings of His word.
- Keep wisdom and she will keep you safe and secure.
 - Who doesn’t want this for themselves?
 - This world is cruel, harsh, and difficult. What an incredible promise that when we hold fast to wisdom—which is Christ—if we keep to the wise path, we won’t stumble.
 - We will be sure-footed because the Lord is the hidden source of our sure-footedness. He keeps our feet from stumbling.
 - Keep God’s word and God will keep you.
- How does this work out?
 - Wisdom keeps you from doing the foolish things that keep you up at night worrying.
 - Wisdom preserves you on your way as you avoid the things that can trip you up and cause you to stumble.
 - When you live according to God’s word and God’s way you don’t live in a way that makes you worry about being found out or getting caught.
 - When you avoid the foolishness of sin, your conscience is clear, your mind is free from anxiety and worry.
 - Wisdom gives you peace of mind.
- Again, I will continually remind you, wisdom is a person—Jesus Christ.
 - We can’t do this perfectly. We can only keep sound wisdom and discretion in so far as we keep it through Jesus.
 - He is the perfect and obedient Son.
 - In him we are safe and secure.
 - And we know because of that, even though these things are generally true now, they will be ultimately true later.
 - Wisdom will reward us with eternal security in Christ Jesus.

III. WISDOM REWARDS YOU WITH RIGHT INCLINATIONS

- There is a transition which contains some practical applications to the father’s teaching.
- Our vertical relationship with the Lord impacts our horizontal relationship with others.
- Specifically, Solomon is exhorting his son to be a good neighbor.

WHO IS OUR NEIGHBOR

- Today, when we hear the term neighbor, we think of the people that live next door to us, in our immediate vicinity, on our block or subdivision.
- More broadly, we think of our neighbors as the people we come into contact with in our day-to-day life.

- To an Israelite, the original audience of Proverbs, the term neighbor meant something specific.
 - The word was used in reference to close friends, a companion, a beloved person, acquaintances. They were the people of their community.
 - Neighbors were people that were known to someone.
 - Neighbor as used here in Proverbs and in our OT is not a generic, catch-all term for all people.
 - Jesus further defined our neighbor in Luke 10 as someone we encounter and is in need of our help.
- Solomon is going to give four quick practical applications to his son and these are the outworking of how wisdom rewards by helping us relate rightly to our neighbors and giving us the proper inclination to treat them as we should.
 - The wise person is a righteous person. That righteousness works itself outwards and benefits others.
- V27-28 are classified as sins of omission. That is when you do not do the good that you should do.
 - 27 Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it.
 - “Do not withhold good...” that could mean we are not to withhold from helping with money, or providing a practical benefit in a given situation, an action such as the administration of justice, or any general help to the needy.
 - “From those to whom it is due...” this implies that they are deserving of good. They have a moral claim on our good graces and our assistance.
 - This also implies that not everyone has such a claim on us. Not everyone is deserving of our good graces and assistance. Proverbs tells us that evil people, the sluggard, the fool, and some others are not people that we help in the same way.
 - There were specific laws that defined this. Deut. 23:19, you could not charge your brother interest on a loan or anything that was lent, but a foreigner could be charged interest.
 - Lev. 25, if your brother becomes poor, and sells himself to you, he is not to be treated as a slave but as a hired worker.
 - Lev 19, at harvest time, the edges of the fields were not to be reaped and that would be left so that the poor could have something.
 - “...when it is in your power to do it.” That means that you are not obligated to give what you do not have.
 - **Galatians 6:10** So, **as we have opportunity**, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.”
- What does this look like for us?
 - When someone has a need, we supply what they need. Help with moving, pay a utility bill because someone’s hours were cut at work, cooking meals for someone who has been sick, loaning out tools to someone who needs them for a project.
 - If you are an employer, it means paying fair wages to your employees.
 - When you hire a service pro or a vendor make sure you pay them on time.
 - Sometimes it can be something as simple as providing a listening ear, a shoulder to cry on, or giving a word of encouragement to someone you know needs to hear it
 - Maybe it’s just serving someone in a practical way.
- If you are in the position of needing help, be sure you are deserving of it—that it is due you.
 - If you are in need of financial help, are you generally a good steward of your finances and have just fallen on hard times? Or are you just wasteful and spend more than you make?
 - If you are in need of generosity, have you been a generous person?
 - Do you repay your debts on time?
 - Do you return things that you borrow quickly? (Tools, money, books, etc.)
- Do good when it is in your power to do it to those to whom good should be done!
 - 1 John 3:17-18 But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? 18 Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.
 - But we all fall short here. We are all guilty of this sin of omission.
 - How many times have we looked away from someone in need and withheld good from them?
 - We do that because of selfishness, we hold on to our stuff too tightly, we don’t want to be put out or inconvenienced, our hearts are indifferent to others, or we just don’t care about them.
 - **James 4:17** So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.
 - The wise are attentive to the needs of others, especially among their church family.
- V28 Do not say to your neighbor, “Go, and come again, tomorrow I will give it”—when you have it with you.
 - This goes hand in hand with the previous one, don’t delay in doing good when you have the means to do it.
 - “Go, and come again, tomorrow...” Tomorrow is the favorite word of the idle person and procrastinator.
 - How often have we done this to others, delayed in doing good to them, when we could have done it immediately?

- This goes right to the matter of integrity. Can people take you at your word?
- When you say something or commit to something, do you back it up with action or is it just talk?
- V29 Do not plan evil against your neighbor, who dwells trustingly beside you.
- This moves from the sin of omission to the sin of commission. We are actively not doing good.
- This means don't accuse your neighbor without reason if they haven't wronged you.
- It's a violation of God's law, 9th commandment, "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor." (Ex. 20:16)
- "...who dwells trustingly beside you." Trust is indispensable to relationships and community.
- The neighbor has no reason to fear or suspect that their neighbor is plotting evil against them because they haven't done anything wrong.
- Now we probably can't picture ourselves plotting evil against someone. But we have done that in our heart. We have desired harm to others, we have fantasized about them getting what we think they deserve.
- Oftentimes we do that because of jealousy, or because we want something they have, or for other sinful reasons.
- We should never desire harm to another for no reason. We shouldn't accuse someone for no reason.
- We should never take a neighbor to court out of spite or to get even with them.
- 1 Cor. 6 explicitly forbids this kind of behavior among believers.
- V30 Do not contend with a man for no reason, when he has done you no harm.
- Contend means to quarrel, to dispute over a disagreement over something
- We should not quarreling with someone who has not harmed us.
- If you are a contentious person, you have some serious heart issues.
- James 4:1-2 What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? 2 You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel.
- There are valid reasons to contend with people but not when no evil has been done to you.
- And Scripture tells us how to go about doing that.
- 2 Tim. 2:23-26 Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels. 24 And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, 25 correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, 26 and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.
- The golden rule, "Whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets." (Matthew 7:12)

IV. WISDOM REWARDS YOU WITH BLESSING, FAVOR, AND HONOR

- That last section includes the admonition to "not envy a man of violence and do not choose any of his ways."
- Violence seems to be ingrained in the human heart. We don't need to teach it, it's just there.
- Don't envy, don't associate with, don't desire, those who love violence and conflict and hate peace. Don't walk in their ways.
- The son might be tempted to envy the violent man because they seem to prosper and get away with their schemes.
- You might be tempted to be jealous and adopt their ways when we see their apparent success and ease in life.
- But we know that is not the end of the matter.
- Now here is how wisdom rewards those who have her, she bestows upon them the Lord's blessing, favor, and honor.
- Solomon shows us this by drawing contrasts between the devious and the upright, the wicked and the righteous, the scorners and the humble, and the fools and wise.
- The devious person is an abomination to the Lord, they are detestable to him. Devious means crooked, twisted. They are bent towards perversion and wickedness.
- But the upright stands in contrast to them. Upright means straight.
- The upright are taken into the Lord's confidence, they are part of his inner circle.
- We get that through the knowledge of God's Word, we are given insight and drawn into the divine counsel of God revealed to us in His word.
- A contrast is drawn between the house of the wicked and the dwelling of the righteous.

- House and dwelling are not the same thing. A house is the structure where people live, but a dwelling is the word for a grazing place, like a pasture, where flocks feed and lie down and rest. (Psalm 23)
- There is a curse on the house of the wicked, even if in this life it looks like they are prospering, it may not look like they are cursed, but they are.
- But the righteous are in a place of safety and abundant provision. They dwell with God. We may not have much by way of material possessions, but we are in a house of blessing because we have Christ.
- The scorners and the humble are contrasted.
- The scorner is the mocker. And the scorner will be scorned by God.
- But to the humble, those who are not proud or boastful, those who are lowly, they receive the favor of the Lord.
- The humble are those who know that they are wretched and fling themselves on the mercy of the Lord. They are the ones who receive his grace and favor.
- James 4:10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.
- Lastly, the wise and fool are contrasted.
- The fool gets disgrace as an inheritance. That will be their assigned possession.
- But the wise will inherit honor.
- Honor is a word that means weighty or heavy.
- Honor is of great value, that is what the wise get.
- Dishonor is of no value, that is what the fool gets.

CONCLUSION

- Sometimes the evil and wicked get what they deserve now. They are punished. And that is a foretaste of the judgment that will come at the end of the age. All will be held accountable.
- Sometimes the righteous prosper and have a blessed life now. And that is a foretaste of the glories to come in the new heavens and new earth.
- The wicked will be punished and the righteous will enter into their eternal reward.
- Wisdom has its rewards. That's what Solomon wants his son to know and that's why they are presented to motivate him to get wisdom.
- All of these rewards are ours in Christ. Only he can make good on those rewards and only by the power of His Spirit can we walk in these ways.