

WISDOM FROM HEAVEN FOR LIFE ON EARTH - Practical Studies From Proverbs

Part thirteen - Teaching #1855 - Sunday, January 10th, 2016 - 6:00 p.m.

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HOW SIN RUINS LIFE, NOT JUST RELIGION

We need the constant reminder that the writers of Proverbs never dispensed their wisdom with the idea of making people more religious. They would have been surprised to learn their writings would, in later years, come to be seen as *religious* documents. They were trying to tell people how to *live* - how to discover *life to the full*. These were *practical* writers. They weren't composing sayings for the classroom.

The reason we need to emphasize this is people *don't* think of *religious* instruction as being *practical* instruction. Religion is for churches and seminaries, not for lovers and artists and stock-brokers and homemakers and sheet-metal workers and lawyers.

Today's study centers in on a term that has lost its deepest meaning in our world. *Sin* only has *religious* currency in our day. Even if people relate sin to some distant final punishment, they *don't* relate it too deeply to life on Tuesday morning in Ontario. And that's where these proverbs come in, because, while the Apostle Paul wrote extensively about the *theology* of sin, the proverbs deal with the *relationship between sin and life*.

You see, most people *commit* sin without *thinking* about sin. They're not pondering the nature of sinful bondage from Romans chapter seven. They probably are not even *trying* to sin. They sin as they try to live life in this world. And they sin because, somewhere along the way, they've decided sin *works*. And they *want* life to work - desperately. This is the issue the writers of Proverbs are addressing.

Here are some of the life-lessons about sin from some of the richest authorities of truth that ever lived:

1) AS THE PASSING OF TIME WILL REVEAL, SIN NEVER INCREASES LIFE, BUT DIMINISHES IT

Proverbs 12:3 - "No one is established by wickedness, but the root of the righteous will never be moved."

Look closely. This profound little verse is telling us something we can easily miss if we look only at the *surface* of life. It is dealing with the *roots* of life, or, in the first phrase, with the *establishing* of life. This should interest anyone seeking the good life because, if we can make our lives good at all, we will want that condition to be as *lasting* as possible. Who wants only *short-term* success?

And here's the point to all of this. Sin (wickedness) can only generate the *appearance* and temporary *feel* of pleasure. But it can never *establish* it. In other words, nothing sin brings into the life can build quality over the long haul. It can only fill up a life the way *cotton candy* can fill it.

Roots only come to a life by *righteousness*. Could there be a more satisfying picture of the process of *life-building* than the formation of strong roots? The writer of this proverb chose the perfect picture. The rest of the plant or tree - branches, flowers, leaves, etc. - aren't the *source* of the plant's life. They are the *result* of the plant's life. But roots are *where life comes from*. They *sustain* everything else about the plant.

What *roots* are to botanical life, *righteousness* is to human life. Sin is the ultimate deception. Like a plastic plant without real roots, sin can only give the *appearance* of life. It's all artificial. It only brings staleness, emptiness and death, never life. This is why, in the ultimate comparison of righteousness with sinfulness in the Bible, Psalm one, the unrighteous are likened to *chaff* which the wind blows away.

So the wise person - the person interested in *life* - will lift his eyes beyond the inviting but deceptive first impressions sin can stimulate. The wise person will think *long-term*. The wise person will strive to live above the instincts of the herd. He will seek to follow after righteousness.

2) THE BIBLE EXPOSES THE UNDERHANDED NATURE OF SINFUL PURSUITS AND WARNS OF A TIME OF OPEN, SUDDEN DESTRUCTION OF THE WICKED

Proverbs 6:12-15 - "A worthless person, a wicked man, goes about with crooked speech, [13] winks with his eyes, signals with his feet, points with his finger, [14] with perverted heart devises evil, continually sowing discord; [15] therefore calamity will come upon him suddenly; in a moment he will be broken beyond healing."

We should note the harsh tone of these words. Sin *sucks the worth* out of a life - "*a worthless person...*" (12). Those words sound stern because, in the truest form of love, they are a warning against falling into an empty life. A life bound in sin is *worth less* in terms of joy and eternal impact.

Notice also the *deceptive nature wickedness produces* - **6:13-14** - "...winks with his eyes, signals with his feet, points with his finger, [14] with perverted heart devises evil, continually sowing discord...."

Openness and honesty go out the window. Sin turns us into shifty cowards. It puts people into hiding from God and the truth. And it takes great effort and energy to live life on the run like this:

Proverbs 28:1 - "The wicked flee when no one pursues, but the righteous are bold as a lion."

Sin takes an *incredible* amount of energy. And it's all *wasted* energy. It robs the life of confidence and peace because it makes one's own conscience a foe rather than a friend. Sin creates stress.

But notice something else. While sin *grows* and *generates* deception, its end will be sudden and dramatic - **Proverbs 6:15** - "...therefore calamity will come upon him suddenly; in a moment he will be broken beyond healing."

While sin usually *grows* gradually, it will be *punished* suddenly. While sinners won't see this coming, whatever form the judgement takes will be drastic:

- a) God can remove His convicting presence from the life - **Romans 1:28** - "And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done."
- b) God can turn a deaf ear to their prayer for His help and grace - **Proverbs 15:29** - "The LORD is far from the wicked, but he hears the prayer of the righteous."
- c) Sinners will be finally and completely judged when Jesus comes again - **Revelation 20:12-15** - "And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. [13] And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. [14] Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. [15] And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire."

3) **NOT ONLY DOES SIN CUT OFF TRUE LIFE, IT BLINDS THE SINNER TO THE SOURCE OF HIS OWN TROUBLE, WHILE IT BINDS HIM MORE TIGHTLY IN IT**

Proverbs 4:19 - "The way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know over what they stumble."

Perhaps we could make the last line more in keeping with the times. In our day we are almost constantly surrounded with sources of physical light, unlike the writers of Proverbs who lived by the sun and lamplight. But the writer isn't talking about *physical* lights or *physical* stumbling. Perhaps we could capture the same idea in a contemporary way with the desperate cry I frequently hear from people who have found themselves caught in the deceptive power of sin - "*I don't understand what's wrong with me!*"

That's what sin does. Until you are prepared to face it with an absolutely honest and costly repentance you will never be able to figure out why your life is in such a mess. Sin *blinds* as it *binds*.

Another thought: Usually we will look at almost any other source of our problems than the one God wants us to face. This is why sin is so often equated with *foolishness* in the Scriptures. Only the truth of God's Word, humbly received, has the power to free the life from such a downward spiral of blind bondage:

Psalm 119:11 - "I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you."

4) **THE STAIN AND POWER OF SIN CANNOT BE REMOVED BY INCREASED ZEAL IN WORSHIP**

Proverbs 21:27 - "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination; how much more when he brings it with evil intent."

You can tell this verse is intended for the worshiping crowd. This verse has to do with the practice of bad religion. It's directed to people who obviously are interested in God, but want to be *forgiven* their sin without *forsaking* their sin.

Who else could God be addressing but church goers? Atheists don't come to worship. No. These words are for those who want to cling to *God* and *sin* at the same time. What they don't realize is that even though they may *think* they are worshiping God in their sinful condition, they aren't. They are only *angering* God.

Worship doesn't automatically cleanse anyone. Only repentance and the blood of Jesus can transform the sinful heart. Worship must always be in Spirit and in truth.

5) **WE ARE NEVER TO ENVY THOSE WHO PERSIST IN THEIR SIN, EVEN IF THEY SEEM TO BE ENJOYING THE GOOD LIFE IN THIS WORLD**

Proverbs 24:1-2 - "Be not envious of evil men, nor desire to be with them, [2] for their hearts devise violence, and their lips talk of trouble."

To envy sinners would be the supreme manifestation that we don't value God over sin. This greatly smudges God's glory in this world. This instruction is so needed because, without meaning to, we are so inclined in our hearts toward the values and treasures of this fallen world. And the *proof* of the presence of this distortion in our own heart is when we actually *desire* the things of this world - the things the wicked may possess - *more* than we are content with the greater glory and joy of our God.

The source of this distorted envy is our tendency to look at life *short-term* rather than *long-term*. **Psalm 37:1-11** is the classic treatment of this subject in the Scriptures - especially **verses 1-4**:

Psalm 37:1-4 - "Fret not yourself because of evildoers; be not envious of wrongdoers! [2] For they will soon fade like the grass and wither like the green herb. [3] Trust in the LORD, and do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness. [4] Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart."

6) **SIN CAN NEVER BE CLEANSSED OUT OF OUR SYSTEM WHILE WE COVER IT UP**

Proverbs 28:13 - "Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy."

When we read these wonderful words, we should go back immediately to **point number 2**. Remember the words we read there?

Proverbs 6:12-15 - "A worthless person, a wicked man, goes about with crooked speech, [13] winks with his eyes, signals with his feet, points with his finger, [14] with perverted heart devises evil, continually sowing discord; [15] therefore calamity will come upon him suddenly; in a moment he will be broken beyond healing."

You can almost see this wicked person shifting his feet and pointing his finger of blame toward someone else - anyone else! There is no healing or help for sinners in this way. The same writer warns us yet again - "***Don't conceal! Confess. Forsake. Find compassion.***"

Many centuries later, with the full, glorious light of the final revelation of God's justice and mercy in Jesus Christ, God the Son, we read the very same ideas with even greater meaning and grandeur:

1 John 1:8-10 - "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. [9] If we confess our sins, he

is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. [10] If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.”