

Proverbs Week #102 (11:7,8)

When a wicked man dies, his expectation will perish, and the hope of strong men perishes. The righteous is delivered from trouble, but the wicked takes his place. Proverbs 11:7,8

This week's verses speak of what will happen to the expectations and hopes of those who are wicked. The wicked are further described as those who hope in the strength of men. In contrast, the righteous are delivered from trouble. In delivering the righteous from death, God displays His mercy and compassion. In bringing judgment upon the wicked He displays His righteousness.

Paul compares God's dealing with mankind to a potter making clay pots. Have you ever made anything from clay? How did it feel to squish the clay around, make balls, press them together, and shape and mold the clay however you pleased. Did you use great care in molding the clay? Did you have an idea of what you were making before you started? What did you do with the clay projects after you were done with them?

Right after teaching these things Paul said, *"What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory, even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles."* (Rom 9:22-24). God's plans started before creation. He gives us the ability to hope and dream. He has fashioned us to be unique. His desire is for us to be wise and to remember that His plans will always succeed.

To Learn: How do we learn what God's plans are all about? In Deuteronomy 29:29 we learn that God reveals certain things for us to keep His covenants. Some things He hides from us. He doesn't tell us everything. As His people we need to continue to connect what we learn to Him. It is not enough for us to just do "what is right in our own eyes." (Judges 21:25)

"In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes."

But we know that there is a King in Israel. He is enthroned at the right hand of God. He is alive and His rule is active in this world. So we as His people are to pray that His kingdom would come. Here is what Paul taught those in Ephesus:

*"Therefore **be imitators of God**, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as the Messiah also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma. But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. **For this you know with certainty**, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of the Messiah and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them; for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), **trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.**"* (Ephesians 5:1-10)

To Discern: We are to be imitators of God as part of His family. We are to learn how to love from Him and live our lives according to His standards. We are to know His ways with certainty and not just guess at what is right and wrong. As we grow in wisdom we are to "learn what is pleasing to the Lord" and not live our lives focused on what is right in our own eyes. We can agree with God that what He says is right.

To Impart: Some people may try to persuade us with "empty words" that they have a better plan for us. We are taught not to be deceived by them. We are not to join with them in their foolish ways. In Paul's letter he gives some areas to focus on. He tells us to watch the words we speak and not to speak with "filthiness," "silly talk," or "coarse jesting." As our young children grow up, do we watch how they play? Are they playing the kind of games that will help them mature and grow in wisdom? What healthy boundaries, even in play, have we set for our children to promote the Messiah's kingdom in our families and community life? Do we set the example as parents and adults?