

Proverbs Week #114 (11:31)

“If the righteous will be rewarded in the earth, how much more the wicked and the sinner!” Proverbs 11:31

There are few things that are certain in life. We often say that death and taxes are certain. In business knowing with certainty is important. If you are confident that creating a product or service is a good idea, it is important that what you create is truly needed. If it is, you can reasonably expect a return for your work. But what if you decide to make a product that no one wants? I would suggest that you don't plan on making huge profits manufacturing 8-track tapes, typewriter ribbons, or lead lined hats. Each of these products rewarded people for their efforts in the past, but no one would consider them a sure thing for making money today.

Our proverb invites us to use our ethical mind to evaluate choices based upon cause and affect. Most people would agree that if we do the right things we can expect a good result and if we do wrong things we can expect a bad result. Now that just makes sense doesn't it? Just by the simple definitions of good and bad we can expect, in a world ruled by a good God, that eventually things that start good will end that way. Not everyone will agree on what is right and wrong and this is where God's wisdom seeks to teach us His definitions. God intends for His standards to reach all parts of our lives (even the ones we think no one knows or cares about). He desires to teach us for our good and His glory. He is a loving Father as well as a King.

To Learn Wisdom and Instruction: Knowing that God rules the world is an important fact we must keep in view as we learn the skills of wisdom. He is not far off and unaware of things that are happening in His kingdom. The Messiah taught us to pray to our Father that His kingdom would come and His will would be done.

“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.” Galatians 6:7-9

To Receive Moral Instruction: There is a reward to be received and without God's grace we all deserve punishment. But if we receive His grace we can be changed. The grace of God brings salvation. We read this on Shabbat during our liturgy. When we receive His grace it is like planting seeds and the process of growth is part of the receiving. Are you resisting God's planting or growth process in your life? Are you tired? Paul teaches us not to lose heart. God will bring about a completion to the good work He started in every believer in the Messiah. The One who made us made us according to a plan. He doesn't do random.

To Impart Shrewdness or Moral Skills: If you are going to be shrewd, the best time to learn these lessons is before you need them. As parents and children we can grow the moral skills God expects. We can build habits even when times are hard. In reality, the hard times are the times when we need wisdom most and are often the times when wise people working together can more greatly glorify God. We hope to see the next generation be wise and for them to know what it means to live in “whole families.” Whole families could be defined as families that are experiencing mature faith, humble service, and genuine love for one another.

To Discern Wise Counsel: The importance of wholeness and holiness are intimately connected (linguistically and in reality). God's pity on the people of Ninevah was in part that they “did not know their right hand from their left.” That is to say, they were infants when it came to knowing the righteous, moral standards of God. As God's people we are directed to be mature (1 Cor 14:20). To be mature we need to do the hard work of studying and applying the Word of God. The writer of the book of Hebrews compares this to eating meat instead of milk.

“But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.” Hebrews 5:14