

***"The one who puts up security for a stranger will surely have trouble, but whoever avoids (hates) shaking hands will be secure." (Proverbs 11:15 NET)***

This proverb calls to mind the community that surrounds the wise son. Do you remember last week's lessons? How we use our mouths and whether or not we receive wise counsel determines the success or failure of more than just ourselves (previous verses mentioned cities or the people). This verse keeps the community in view as well. It speaks of normal business practices and how one manages their own property. The shaking of hands established agreements to do or pay for services or products. This verse might be standard advice from a leader who was concerned with the welfare of members of the community. The ability for a community to grow and find security requires applying what we learn in view of the larger community. It requires commitment to things that are virtuous. A stranger may not hold the same standards.

This verse is not a command. It does not say that we should never become surety for another. It says that if we do we can expect to have trouble. It advises us to avoid such things and receive the security this advice provides. This advice presumes one must keep their word even when others do not. Those who offer themselves as security would be expected to pay or do whatever two others agreed upon, even when another fails to keep their word. Listen to the words of this Psalm.

*"O LORD, who may abide in Your tent? Who may dwell on Your holy hill? He who walks with integrity, and works righteousness, and speaks truth in his heart. He does not slander with his tongue, nor does evil to his neighbor, nor takes up a reproach against his friend; in whose eyes a reprobate is despised, but who honors those who fear the LORD; he swears to his own hurt and does not change; he does not put out his money at interest, nor does he take a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things will never be shaken." (Psalms 15:1-5 NAS95)*

This song also promises security. "He who does these things will never be shaken." (v5) Doing what God directs and prescribes brings with it good fruit. In our day of political correctness and tolerance the idea of despising a reprobate needs to be understood. Those who are foolish or reprobate should not be given honor. When people who are reprobate or fools are given honor (or office) we all feel the results.

For the remainder of this lesson I want focus on two questions:

***"Are you the kind of person who builds your family up or tears it down? What kind of family/community are we seeking to build?"***

1) We must look to the LORD for His strength, wisdom, grace, and guidance to ensure our families grow and mature according to His design. Proverbs teaches to get wisdom and understanding (leaning on God). *"Unless the LORD builds the house, they labor in vain who build it; unless the LORD guards the city, the watchman keeps awake in vain." (Psalms 127:1 NAS95)*

2) While this next verse commends a wife (or women) who builds her house, I believe it can also be applied to each member of a family. How we express God's love to the members of our families proves us to be either wise or foolish. Every family relationship gives an opportunity to show God's love and care. *"The wise woman builds her house, but the foolish tears it down with her own hands." (Proverbs 14:1 NAS95)*

4) We should not allow ourselves to be deceived into thinking what we do and say doesn't matter. We each have a place in God's plan. By His grace we can be secure in this world and while we might be completely free from trouble or distress we can at least eliminate those things that are self-inflicted. *"Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap." (Galatians 6:7 NAS95)*

4) Being "in Messiah" is not optional. If we are to become His disciples and display the virtues of His Kingdom we must remain connected to Him. A broken branch can be kept alive but it will not bear new fruit.

*"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me." (John 15:4 NAS95)*