

Proverbs Week #34 (3:27-30)

“Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it. Do not say to your neighbor, “Go, and come back, and tomorrow I will give it,” when you have it with you. Do not devise harm against your neighbor, while he lives securely beside you. Do not contend with a man without cause, if he has done you no harm.” Proverbs 3:27-30

Our lessons from Proverbs are meant to help train us in wisdom. Part of the process of training is reviewing what we have learned and remembering why we are learning. The Bible teaches us that we should discipline ourselves for Godliness. (1 Tim 4:7) I have suggested that you remember three things and do them on a regular basis as part of this training process.

- 1) Sing for Joy in the Lord – learn to sing to Him and worship Him (Psa 33)
- 2) Give thanks to the Lord – learn what it means to be thankful (Psa 118)
- 3) If you lack wisdom ask God and trust Him to provide what you need (James 1)

Today’s verses focus our attention on our responsibilities to our neighbors. These verses speak of sins of omission and sins of commission. When we wrong our neighbor by ‘sins of omission’ we fail to do something good for them that we have the ability to do. When we wrong our neighbor in a ‘sin of commission’ we do something to them that is wrong and harmful to them. The wisdom of these verses directs us to stop and think before we act. A fool ignores the words from these verses and holds onto his own plans. This fool will “devise harm against” his neighbor “while he lives securely beside” him.

Our lesson from last week encouraged us to trust in God. It spoke of the security and confidence we have when we embrace wisdom, and reminded us that God Himself would be our confidence and our hope. Today’s verses focus our attention on ourselves and our own treatment of others.

I wondered as I considered the theme of this lesson if the writer of the book of Proverbs was meditating on chapter 19 of Leviticus as he wrote these verses. We read there:

“You shall not oppress your neighbor, nor rob him. The wages of a hired man are not to remain with you all night until morning. You shall not curse a deaf man, nor place a stumbling block before the blind, but you shall revere your God; I am the LORD. You shall do no injustice in judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor nor defer to the great, but you are to judge your neighbor fairly. You shall not go about as a slanderer among your people, and you are not to act against the life of your neighbor; I am the LORD. You shall not hate your fellow countryman in your heart; you may surely reprove your neighbor, but shall not incur sin because of him. You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD.” Leviticus 19:13-18

Our obligations to obey these commands and to take to heart the wisdom from Proverbs are based upon the relationship we have with the One who is commanding us. Our relationship with God directs our relationship to others. Repeated throughout these verses is the declaration of the One who is instructing us “I am the LORD.” Are you trusting in the LORD and acknowledging Him in all your ways? Are you asking Him for wisdom? Are you thanking Him when He provides for you? Do you sing to Him? If you don’t know how to do these things – ask for help. Parents turn your hearts to those questions when they come, and teach your children from God’s wisdom.