

Proverbs Week #44 (4:18-19)

"The path of the righteous is like the morning sun, shining ever brighter till the full light of day. But the way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble." Prov 4:18, 19

It has been about 6 weeks since our last lesson in the book of Proverbs. I will attempt in the next few weeks to review some of the previous lessons as we continue to study this book. Today's verses tell of two paths. One path is a path that is well lit and the other is a dark path. As you might remember, these first few chapters in Proverbs record a father teaching his son. Here the father reminds his son that there is a right and wrong way to do things. While this may not be hard to understand it can be easily forgotten or ignored when faced with seemingly hard choices in life.

"Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path." Psa 119:105

Scripture repeats the theme of paths and light. As a part of Psalm 119 (a very long song if sung all at once) it would have been sung along with the commitment to value, guard, keep and do all that God commanded. I challenge you to think about this idea often, especially when faced with decisions between right or wrong. (Joshua 1:8, 9) How can we be sure that what we decide to do in life is right or wrong? To think like a boy scout out for a walk at night, we should be prepared with a "flashlight." We should take out the "flashlight" of God's word and let it shine. This answer may seem a little over simplistic and may not always be easy to do. Then again, that same "flashlight" teaches me that if I lack wisdom I should ask God and believe that He will provide His wisdom (James 1:5). God has told us in His word that He desires to teach those who trust in Him and have them learn from Him (Psa 32:8-10).

This theme is also seen in the message that the prophet Isaiah declared:

"..but in the future he will honor Galilee of the Gentiles, by the way of the sea, along the Jordan—The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned." (Isaiah 9:1,2)

We know that this light is Yeshua; the Word of God that became flesh and lived among us. The gospel of Matthew tells us that when Yeshua heard that John was put in prison He began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near." (Matt 4:17) This, we are told, was done to fulfill the words that Isaiah spoke. The light that would be seen in a dark place would be the life that Yeshua would live and the words He would proclaim.

Now how do we fit all these ideas together? First, remember that two paths are ahead of you; one path is a righteous one and the other is wicked (actually this path starts inside of you). You need to know that if you choose to take the righteous path you will find yourself walking on a lighted path and that if you choose the path of the wicked you are going to be in dark places. The Bible teaches us that we may stumble along the way (that is not always doing things that are right) and that when we do, if we are students of our Master and we remember His words, we will recognize and repent when we have done wrong. If we are strangers to God and His covenants (Eph 2:12) and walk in wicked paths, we will stumble and fall and not even know why.

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul exhorts those believers to remember who they are based upon what God has done for them. In the light of the knowledge that God called them (those who were formerly Gentiles living in darkness) to be part of His people, they were to remember who they were and understand the plans of God for them. He said, *"For we are God's handiwork, created in the Messiah Yeshua to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."* (Eph 2:10) In a world of self-definitions, group identities, and divisions we are told that if we have connected ourselves to the Messiah that who we are and why we live is based upon His unfailing truths.

"In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven." (Matt 5:16)

Yeshua taught these words to His disciples. Crowds of people witnessed the words that He spoke. These words were spoken right before He taught that He had not come to abolish the Law and Prophets but to fulfill them. He proclaimed that those who do and teach all the words that are written in them would be great in God's kingdom. Parents, help your children to learn and remember the themes of this lesson, so that they would shine the light of God's truth on themselves (their thought, plans, and actions) and continue to learn what it means to shine His light for others to see. All this is with a view toward bringing glory to our Father who is in Heaven.