

Proverbs Week #53 (5:11-14)

“And you groan at your final end, when your flesh and your body are consumed; and you say, “How I have hated instruction! And my heart spurned reproof! I have not listened to the voice of my teachers, nor inclined my ear to my instructors! I was almost in utter ruin in the midst of the assembly and congregation.” Prov 5:11-14

In our last lesson from Proverbs I finished the teaching with the picture of two possible doors. Behind door number one was a life that is wasted; where one’s vigor and strength were given over to “the cruel one.” (Prov 5:9) Behind door number two was God’s way of escape when we are tempted in our lives to do wrong things.

“No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.” 1 Cor 10:13

Today’s verses continue to warn the son of the result of choosing the wrong ‘doors’ in the decisions he makes in his life. Just after telling him to listen to the words of his wisdom, the father further explains to his son what the son might say if he refuses to take his father’s advice. In the midst of a bad situation none of us like to hear “I tried to tell you” or “I told you this would happen,” but in this example the father is warning his son before the “ruin” happens. The best time to listen and heed the advice of wisdom is before we find ourselves in trouble. Sometimes, the difficulties we face are out of our control and other times our troubles are self-inflicted.

As I pondered these verses I wondered about how much time we think about our lives in relation to our own problems. If we could map out the time and effort we place on meeting our own needs and desires vs. seeking concerns outside of ourselves, what would be our rating? Do we think of ourselves 100%, 80%, 50% of the time? How often do we stop and consider others? More importantly, how often do we stop and consider our God and what He considers as important? I don’t mean to ask this question as if we could get by if we just increased our percentages with God. I believe when we trust in Him with all our heart and lean not on our own understanding (Prov 3:5,6) that we still live our lives with a variety of concerns. The proof of wisdom in our lives is that we are able to discern the right concerns from the wrong ones and understand the importance of God’s ways.

God uses many means to get people’s attention. Not all of life’s circumstances should be considered in this way, but in the verses above at least two things are highlighted. The father tells his son that he can expect to groan or to be miserable for not listening to those who would teach him to be wise (his instructors and teachers 5:13). He also speaks of ‘humiliations galore’ that the son can expect; in the very midst of the congregation his downfall would be evident. The testimony of God’s dealing with His people is filled with specific examples of how this downfall or “utter ruin” has worked out in history. A few examples include: the generational accounts of the book of Judges, the history of the divided kingdom, the prophets warnings of nations being used to punish Israel, the destruction of the Temples, and the scattering of His people throughout the nations. In all these God intends for His plans to be seen as the most important. His plans include His people, His nation, and also include us. He does not delight in suffering and pain but He will not allow arrogant disregard for His ways to go unpunished. Punishment that serves noble purposes is never cruel or wrong. God’s dealings with His people are never wrong.

It is in the light of these ideas that the value of God’s wisdom needs to be focused on and given high priority in our lives. It is best to learn these lessons before trouble comes and to always reinforce them in our own lives and the lives of our children. Often times God places others in our lives to help us. A wise person seeks out wise counsel and accepts genuine reproof. Fools reject wise counsel and often turn on the very ones who would seek to help them.

May God grant us the strength daily to do the things that are pleasing to Him. Not from a heart of improper obligation as if we could earn His favor or love, but with hearts of loving submission to a Father who cares for us more than we care for ourselves. May He renew our hearts so we can hear and remember His wise instructions. Lord willing, next week we will focus on the joys that can be found between a husband and a wife in a godly marriage.