

Proverbs Week #55 (5:21-6:5)

“For the ways of a man are before the eyes of the LORD, and He watches all his paths. His own iniquities will capture the wicked, and he will be held with the cords of his sin. He will die for lack of instruction, and in the greatness of his folly he will go astray.

“My son, if you have become surety for your neighbor, have given a pledge for a stranger, if you have been snared with the words of your mouth, have been caught with the words of your mouth, do this then, my son, and deliver yourself; since you have come into the hand of your neighbor, go, humble yourself, and importune your neighbor. Give no sleep to your eyes, nor slumber to your eyelids; deliver yourself like a gazelle from the hunter’s hand and like a bird from the hand of the fowler.” Proverbs 5:21-6:5

There are two main ideas in the lesson I want to present today. One is a review about God’s eyes and the other is a lesson about our mouths. Our review from last week will focus on what it means that God is watching us and then we will consider how our mouths can get us into and out of trouble.

First, the eyes of the Lord are watching you. This was the main theme of our lesson from Proverbs last week. This can seem like a bad thing or a good thing depending on your point of view. If your relationship with God is based upon a trusting faithfulness in Him and what He provides, then the thought of God watching you is a good thing. You may know Him as your Shepherd and the One who cares for you, guides, and protects you. If you do not know what I am talking about and do not know God as your Shepherd than the thought of God watching you is likely to be unpleasant and something you do not want to even think about.

Every one of us have this one thing in common, we all must live our lives in relationship to God. We will either have a relationship with Him or not. We cannot relate to God based upon our friends’, our neighbors’, or even our parents’ relationships with God. We all live before the eyes of God. Does that sound like a good thing to you or a bad thing? If it sounds like a bad thing, I encourage you to ask for wisdom from others who see it differently.

Next, how much trouble do we get into with our mouths? What we say can be good or bad. For those who have been the target of mean words the saying “sticks and stones can break my bones but words can never hurt me” is often used to make the hurt go away but does not mean the pain was not felt. Most of us know from experience that mean words can and often do hurt. We need wisdom to know how to use our mouths as God intends.

The verses from today’s lesson again teach the son to be aware of the importance of the words he speaks. In this case, he has “become surety” for a neighbor and given a pledge to a stranger. The main idea of this proverb is best seen by observing the parallels of thought. It is not so much a prohibition on the making of pledges as it is a warning against hasty speech and involvement with someone not well known to you. It is obvious that the father here is teaching the son that he has trapped himself. His advice is to make every effort to be released from the words of his mouth. In the context of this general advice, I want to finish this lesson today.

Have you ever said or thought “I should not have said that...what kind of mess have I gotten myself into now?” As God’s children we do not always treat each other the way we should. Sometimes we say things or promise things that we should not. Our mouths can sometimes be used to genuinely encourage others and at other times we may say things for selfish reasons. Sometimes we just are not thinking of others before we speak. Knowing that one harsh word may take many kind words to overcome, we should be careful when we speak. We may not always realize how much our words can affect others in good and bad ways.

Here is my main idea. We can trap ourselves by the words we speak and when we realize it we can use our mouths to escape that trap. We may need to tell someone that we wronged them and seek forgiveness. We may need to tell others we spoke a lie to or about them, say we are sorry, and tell them we won’t do it again. Sometimes we may need to go to someone and say what we promised we cannot fulfill and ask them to agree to release us from our pledge. When our mouths get us into trouble we may need to use our mouths to get us out of that trouble. Finally, as always, our mouths can serve us by asking God and others for wisdom.