

Proverbs Week #64 (6:16-19cont)

“There are six things which the LORD hates, yes, seven which are an abomination to Him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that run rapidly to evil, a false witness who utters lies, and one who spreads strife among brothers. Prov 6:16-19

I have mentioned that this passage of scripture was written with a chiasmic format. A chiasm is a structure in scripture that helps emphasize a message based upon how themes in a passage are arranged. This chiasm is centered on our emphasis from last week “the heart.” Today’s family lesson will focus on the first parallel structure of the matching pair “hands that shed innocent blood” and “feet that run rapidly to evil.” These represent the taking of the “wicked plan” of a person’s heart into the world. Metaphorically our hands and our feet symbolize how we conduct our lives with each other and before God. A person’s feet and hands can be seen as dirty before God and in need of cleansing before one can have a right relationship with Him (John 13:10). The phrase “your hands are full of blood” (Isa 1:15) speaks of guiltiness before God, which causes God to hide His eyes from that person’s prayers. This vivid chiasmic arrangement further drives home the message of why God hates these things.

Next, I want to clarify what the Bible speaks about says that the destination of the running is “to evil.” The Hebrew word רָעָה (raah) that is translated evil has a variety of meaning and is not always used in an ethical or strictly moral sense. In other passages it is translated harm, hurt, affliction, mischief, ugly, poor, and vicious. Several times it is seen in close connection to טוֹב (good) as in the passage in Prov 31 that is said as a blessing over one’s wife; “She does him good and not evil all the days of her life.” As I see it, what makes these “feet” so hateful to God is that they are destroyers of people and relationships. They are set on a “war path” and they wreak havoc wherever they go. Their appetite for destruction is not passive either for they “run rapidly” to it. In contrast the “good” that should be done to others is left undone.

Two forms of evil that could be included here are revenge and bitterness. A heart that devises wicked plans often seeks to do harm to others based upon past hurts or offenses. Sometimes hurt is real and other times it comes from our own misplaced priorities. How we deal with real pain caused by real wrong actions of others takes wisdom. A person whose priorities before God are right may find it difficult to live with people who are constantly cruel or unfair. In contrast, a selfish person is hurt by anyone who doesn’t bow to his or her self-centered whims. A person who is obsessed with their self is also likely to be very bitter and angry with others for all the “terrible things” that they have done or not done for them. None of us are immune to becoming bitter. The unguarded heart is ripe soil for bitterness to grow.

Now I want to caution you at this point. I want to warn you about the potential for bitterness that exists in misapplying this message I am teaching. If you are learning to see how others might be self-centered (maybe you are even thinking of a person or specific people now) and you are beginning to shape your understanding of life from this perspective, be warned! As most lessons in life, you are in danger of seeing this problem only as it appears in others and not yourself. Do you know what I mean by this? Too often we allow bitterness to grow by dwelling on the mistakes and faults of others. In this case, we may think we are wise but are really fools. We apply the lessons of wisdom to diagnose others but never allow them to diagnose ourselves.

Revenge is often the “war path” that a bitter heart plans for those who have hurt them. Here too, I must warn you that those who focus on bringing harm to others need a course correction. To illustrate this point I would like to end this teaching time with Psalm 35:1-10.