

May 18

Proverbs

Hi everybody, this is Reid Brown with the May 18, Project 4:4 edition, where we find ourselves about a third of the way through our reading in the book of Proverbs. A benefit of reading through the Chronological version of the Bible places the Proverb verses according to themes and concepts. Hopefully the compiling of verses according to its theme will solidify the nuggets of wisdom contained in these precious sayings.

The first thing I want for you to notice from today's reading is the warning that is contained at the very beginning of chapter 29;1; in fact, there are specific warnings there I want to focus upon. In verse 1, we are warned that, "a man who remains stiff-necked after many rebukes will suddenly be destroyed," and then come these extremely sobering words, "without remedy." There is no going back at that point. The more rebellious we become toward God, the more we ignore His commands, the more rebukes we refuse to pay attention to, the more stiff-necked we get. That figure of speech, which was very common in Israel, comes from the poor farmer trying to get the yoke around the neck of oxen who doesn't want it there. It is a very picturesque expression of rebellion, but when we ignore the rebukes of God, when we don't listen to His warnings, when we don't do what we know we ought to do, finally we become so stubborn and stiff-necked that we invite sudden, final, irrevocable judgment. That is what it means when it says -- "without remedy."

In much the same vein, Solomon says again in Chapter 10:8 that "*the chattering fool comes to ruin.*" Empty words - foolish words - angry words - sinful words - can easily bring us to ruin. Many a man or woman has been completely undone, ending in total failure simply because of the words they have spoken. We must know, we must learn that words are enormously powerful things. Use them carefully.

From today's reading in the last verse of chapter 20:30 Solomon's view of how to handle public offenders is stated, "Blows and wounds cleanse away evil and beatings purge the inmost being." This king at least believed in corporal punishment.

Since we are talking about corporal punishment, we may as well note now that within the confines of the family, there is also a place for physical punishment albeit administered with love. "Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction will drive it far from him." Chapter 13:24 We have had quite a few exposures to Solomon's advice with regard to the raising of children. Here is more advice for parents, especially with regard to the subject of discipline and correction of children. In verse 15, and then again in verse 17 of chapter 29 we are told that, "The rod of correction imparts wisdom, but a child left to himself disgraces his mother." "Discipline your son, and he will give you peace; he will bring delight to your soul." I do not want to go on record as advising you to physically beat your children, that certainly is not what scripture is saying, but an occasional spanking administered carefully and in love when a child steps out of line will do more to build character in that boy or girl than to break it down.

He has told us we need to correct our children because foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child. That is alluding, in part to at least the simple fact that children are sinners by

nature and if left to themselves they will not generally choose to do the right thing, but they will often choose to do the wrong thing because sin works in children just as it does in adults.

This brings to light the doctrine of original sin, and sometimes I have thought the people who have questioned it must not ever have been parents, because I am sure that you have observed, as I have down through the years, that you don't have to teach a child to sin. You don't have to teach a child to be rebellious; you don't have to teach a child to lie; you don't have to teach a child to be selfish. All of those things come very naturally because foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child. The rod of correction will drive it far from him. I don't believe you need to spank your children once a day whether they need it or not. But I do believe that the Scripture teaches us quite clearly that a spanking, if it is necessary, firm correction lovingly administered, is one of the most important components toward shaping the value systems and the life of a young person. If we don't control our children and if we don't discipline our children, make no mistake -- we will not control them. Unfortunately, we and they will be the losers.

Let me close with this last thought from Chapter 12 verse 6 that says, "The speech of the upright rescues them." I think what Solomon is trying to help us see with this thought is that, unlike the wicked that are often tripped up or ensnared by their own lies; the integrity of the righteous is reflected by their words, which often have the effect of rescuing them from difficult situations. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refused to bow down to the great graven image in the plain of Shinar. They stood true to their words and convictions and God honored them. They were rescued by their words. Take inventory of the words you have been using lately. Be intentional about using those that bring life and weed out those that cause trouble. This is Reid Brown with the May 18 Project 4:4 edition encouraging you to walk in the way of wisdom.