

May 22

Proverbs

Hi everybody, this is Reid Brown with the May 22nd edition of Project 4:4. We find ourselves about 2/3 of the way through our journey of the book of Proverbs. In 2 Chronicles 8:11 we learn that Solomon married one of the daughters of Pharaoh. There is a collection of proverbs in Egypt called the teaching of **a-mano-mopay** that closely parallels Proverbs chapters 22 and 23 in which a couple of verses from our reading today come from. Solomon was almost certainly aware of that and most likely he even drew from the wisdom of other nations. He worked under the inspiration of God so that we are guaranteed that what he wrote is true and it is what God wants written. But he, like Luke and so many others, had other sources before him when he did his work. Everything that is here, however, focuses on the importance of gaining wisdom, and living by wisdom, so that we can have and experience the blessing of God.

If you are digging deeper today, I want you to memorize the seven things that God says are detestable to Him. Every mom and dad and every boy and girl and every young person ought to memorize this list and learn to remember the seven things that God hates:

haughty eyes

lying tongues

hands that shed innocent blood

hearts that devise wicked schemes

feet that are quick to rush into evil

false witnesses who pour out lies

and anyone who stirs up dissension among brothers.

There is a great deal of wisdom in the portions that we have read today regarding the way in which we should interact with each other. Chapter 17 begins with one of those more picturesque Proverbs "better a dry crust with peace and quiet than a house full of feasting with strife." Righteous spouses, children and grandchildren are to be seen as a precious gift from God more valuable than anything else that we can imagine. Quarreling spouses and rebellious children are on the other hand the greatest sources of grief and trouble that we can imagine. (I believe that Solomon in his polygamous household could speak with just as much authority as his father David on this subject). You may recall verse 18 of chapter 19, from our reading a couple of days ago, seems especially significant to me on this point. It says "discipline your son for in that there is hope. Do not be a willing party to his death." remember Aaron's sons- Nadir and Abhor, and Eli's sons, and the sons of Samuel and the sons of David: Amnon, Absalom and Adonijah. They all had one thing in common. They had over indulgent (and probably overly busy) fathers and all of them died before the Lord because of their rebelliousness. I want you to know today that really gets my attention as a father.

There is an interesting Proverb at the very end of chapter 22 instructing us to not move any ancient boundary stone set up by our forefathers. There is an almost identical warning in chapter 23, and back in chapter 15. We were told not to move a widow's boundary stone.

The stones, of course, were the ancient equivalent of surveyor's stakes. If you moved one, you were in effect stealing property from your neighbor.

Seriously, there is one more thing I want you to notice with me before we close for today. It is the section in chapter 24:11 and 12 that citizens in Nazi Germany in the 1930's should have paid attention to -- it might have made a huge difference. We need to learn the lesson so that it never recurs. It says, "rescue those being led away to death, hold back those staggering toward slaughter. If you say, 'but we knew nothing about this', does not he who guards your life know it? Will he not repay each person according to what he has done?" What a chilling passage when you set it against the response, or more precisely the lack of response, that people in Nazi Germany had when the Jews started to be led away to slaughter. We didn't know at all; we didn't see a thing. You can't hold us to blame; what could we do? That was the response of far too many Germans.

Those of you who are would have interest in reading about one person who stood up to the Nazi's in World War Two, I am going to ask you to read about the life of Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer. He preached from this text; he lived it; he went to a concentration camp because of that and he died as a martyr, because he believed that one should pay attention when others are being led away to death. This book has been recommended on our "You Are Here" brochure for adult discipleship and is titled, "Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy" by Eric Metaxas.

It's been a joy for me to bring the May 22nd Project 4:4 edition to you. I'm Reid Brown wishing you the peace that comes from the wisdom of Proverbs.