

Rivalries in the Human Heart, part 2

(Proverbs 11:14-31)

10/18/17; Wed PM Pine Grove

Introduction

Last week, we began a look at Proverbs 11, which is a chapter that speaks of rivalries within the human heart...

Now, let's talk about the heart for a minute before we finish chapter 11...

I talked about this a little bit last week, but I want to continue to explain this a little bit more so that I am not misunderstood in terms of what goes inside us every day..

At childbirth, the human heart is filled with a sinful nature that we inherit from Adam who plunged the world into sin in the garden...

You see in a very real sense, Adam's sin infected our DNA and we are born to sin and sin well...

And if the human heart is left in its sinful state, it will continue to sin for a lifetime...

Now that being said, not everyone expresses that sinful nature in the same way...

Some unbelievers are good at masking their sin and covering it for the rest of the world to see..

This would include people all throughout human history like the Pharisees and even the modern day unsaved church goer..

Though these people are generally seen as good men by society, their hearts are still ravaged by sin all the time..

Now on the other hadn't, some unbelievers have no desire to cover their sin..

They express their sins out in the open and even flaunt them before the world...

And then you have unbelievers in between those two extremes...

That is the truth about everyone who isn't saved, who hasn't the gospel and trusted in Christ to save them..

Now, let's talk about the heart of the believer..

When I speak of heart, remember that I am not talking about the organ in your chest that pumps blood...

The heart is not a muscle that beats but rather a reference to the decision making side of who you are..

Its not even the place of emotion, but rather the place of intellect...

When the Bible speaks of the heart, it is a reference to the control center of who you are...

Now at salvation, the promise of the gospel is to give you a new heart with new desires..

And like I said last week, though we get a new heart, it is housed within a old flesh...

The Bible calls it an old nature..

The old self..

So in the believer's life, there is constant struggle of the new heart and the old flesh...

Our beloved Paul, the one whom God chose to write much of the NT, was not immune to this struggle....

Look at what he wrote in Romans 7:21-25...

21 I find then the [n]principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good. 22 For I joyfully concur with the law of God [o]in the inner man, 23 but I see a different law in [p]the mem-

bers of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner [q]of the law of sin which is in my members. 24 Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from [r]the body of this death? 25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.

You see this is the struggle in the life of a believer..

It is not an angel on one shoulder and a demon on the other shoulder...

It is the new heart that comes when someone is truly saved versus the old flesh...

And Paul would go on to say that he often found himself doing the thing he didn't want to do and not doing the thing he wanted to do...

While his mind, which is the idea of the heart, while his mind and heart wanted to serve the law of God, he often found his body following not his mind but his fallen unredeemed flesh...

Paul eventually just saw how sad of a person he was and simply praised God for sending Christ to die to secure his eventual freedom from what he called a body of death..

So in a real sense, the battle is real within the human heart..

And last week, we looked at some of the rivalries that often exist in the human heart in the book of Proverbs...

And these rivalries exist because God's way of doing things stand in contrast to man's way of doing things..

In other words, the law of God opposes the flesh of man...

And so the benefit to us is that we can see these rivalries in our hearts to prepare us for the battles that rage between our new heart and our old flesh...

It has been said that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure..

So what we are doing in Proverbs 11 and really throughout the entire book of Proverbs is trying to prevent being caught up in these battles by seeing God's way versus man's way in a number of areas of life..

Last week, we looked at these rivalries in the human heart up through verse 13...

And we took note of 5 rivalries within the human heart...

Honesty versus deceit

Pride versus humility

Righteousness versus wickedness

Clean conscience versus guilty conscience

Wise Use of Words versus foolish use of words...

And tonight we are going to add 3 more rivalries to that list which is probably going to grow over the the rest of the book of Proverbs..

So let us pick up in Proverbs 11:14 with a rivalry that I call..

Seeking Counsel versus Acting Alone...

Let's read verse 14...

14

***Where there is no guidance the people fall,
But in abundance of counselors there is [d]victory.***

The proverb here is directed at the nations..

And the wisdom of God is to seek counsel in the business of a nation..

Our own country has a group of people that surround the president along with a House of Repre-

sentatives and a Senate that help guide this country...

And the reason for that is because of the wisdom of God seen here..

Where there is better guidance if there are more offering direction...

In other words, the right path is not always clear to a single person, but it can be found through the counsel of many people..

Much of this can also be applied to the individual as well...

There is wisdom in seeking counsel...

Sometimes, that may simply be asking another Christian or it also may come through the counsel of many people...

The Christian life is not to be lived in solitary confinement...

It is meant to be lived out surrounded by other believers and often times, those believers are not just there to give us fellowship but also to lend their biblical counsel to a situation...

But the hindrance to seeking that counsel of others is often our own pride...

We don't want to appear weak or helpless or ignorant, so we shy away from asking for advice and simply go it alone..

Yet that can be dangerous..

There is much wisdom in seeking counsel and advice..

It blesses and protects a nation and it bless and protect you as well..

Verse 15 shifts gears and reminds us of something we learned in Proverbs 6, and this is the idea of being a loan co-signer for someone..

Verse 15..

15

He who is guarantor for a stranger will surely suffer for it,

But he who hates [e]being a guarantor is secure.

Now the note to make here is that it is not wise to be a guarantor for a stranger...

In other words, don't pledge help to someone that you don't know well...

If you do, you will most likely end up suffering for it..

Now is it a sin to co-sign for someone you know well?

No, but even then, you may find trouble...

The simple principle is this...

You willingness to pledge your name for someone else should get less and less, the less and less you know them...

And look there is no shame here in saying no..

There is also no selfishness here either..

It is fine to help strangers but limit your financial responsibilities to them...

If you feel a need to help, give them some money but don't put up your house as collateral for them..

I think a lot of people would feel guilty for not co-signing for someone to get a loan..

God would say feel no guilt...

Help if you can but you don't have to buy them a car...

Now on to verse 16...

16

***A gracious woman attains honor,
And ruthless men attain riches.***

The contrast of two people are seen here...

One the one hand is the gracious woman and on the other end is the ungracious...

One gets honor and the other gets riches...

The world applauds the riches but God applauds the honor...

I think we all know what the ungracious and unkind and ruthless man looks like...

He schemes and plans and uses evil to get ahead...

But what does the gracious woman look like?

I think 1 Peter 3 gives us a great look at a gracious woman ...

Listen to verses 1-4...

1 In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, 2 as they observe your chaste and [a]respectful behavior. 3 Your adornment must not be merely external—braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; 4 but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God.

The gracious woman is the woman of dignity...

She is kind and merciful and her life is characterized by a quiet and gentle spirit...

The ruthless man is just the opposite..

He is loud and a man of many words and the center of attention...

The gracious lady is filled with mercy and understanding and wisdom and gentleness...

She cares for the internal spirit as much as she does her external look...

And the result of her graciousness is the honor that she gets from people and ultimately from the Lord..

I assure you....

Many, many, many gracious ladies will places of prominence in eternity...

There will be much honor extended to them in the day of judgment..

And whether you are a man or a woman, it is much better to be gracious than ruthless...

And we are reminded of that in verse 17...

17

***The merciful man does [f]himself good,
But the cruel man [g]does himself harm.***

Mercy and cruelty are opposites in terms of God's way of doing things...

Mercy extends kindness..

Cruelty removes kindness..

And the simple truth of verse 17 is that merciful people receive mercy and unmerciful people will receive cruelty..

Some people are just bent on others getting justice....

Now, I am not saying that we shouldn't want justice, but sometimes I see Christians who just want others to suffer..

That is such a sad attitude for a Christian to have for this simple reason...

As believers, we have been shown and received great mercy, but now we have trouble extending that mercy to others...

Merciful people are not always weak and push overs, they are people who realize that they should show as much mercy as they have received from God.

In verses 18-21, we turn our attention to the contrast between the righteous and wicked man...

18

***The wicked earns deceptive wages,
But he who sows righteousness gets a true reward.***

19

***He who is steadfast in righteousness will attain to life,
And he who pursues evil will bring about his own death.***

20

***The perverse in heart are an abomination to the Lord,
But the blameless in their [h]walk are His delight.***

21

***[i]Assuredly, the evil man will not go unpunished,
But the [j]descendants of the righteous will be de-
livered.***

Let us make two columns in our mind now from these verses on the left side, we have the wicked man...

And notice some things that come to the evil man...

Verse 18...

Deceptive wages...

Verse 19...

Death...

Verse 20..

An abomination to the Lord..

Verse 21...

Punishment....

On the right side of the column in your mind, place all the benefits of righteous man..

Verse 18..

He is rewarded..

Verse 19...

He attains life...

Verse 20...

He delights the Lord...

Verse 21..

He is delivered...

Needless to say, the battle for right living and wrong living go on all the time in the human heart...

And one reason to chose the way of righteousness are the great blessings that go along with it..

Lets switch gears again in verse 22 for one of these picture proverbs, which we are going to seem more of in the chapters ahead...

But for now, we just get this one in chapter 11...

Verse 22...

22

*As a ring of gold in a swine's snout
So is a beautiful woman who lacks [k]discretion.*

For the record, I am a big fan of pigs...

Pigs fed our family for 5 years while I worked in the BBQ restaurant, and pigs still feed our family nearly every day as we eat a ton of bacon...

But in this case, the pig represents filth and dirt and a nasty way of life...

But in his snout is a gold ring...

Now, I am no pig farmer but from what I read, a nose ring in a pig keeps his from rooting and destroying property and land...

So farmers put these rings in the pig's snout and when he roots, it is painful so he learns to stop doing it....

Now, it would make no sense to put a gold ring in the snout of the pig...

The gold is going to get tarnished or broken or lost over time...

So it is best to put just an old iron or steel ring in the nose of the pig...

Besides, the pig is a filthy animal and even a gold ring won't make a pig look better...

Now, you have the picture of the gold ring in the pig's nose and here comes a beautiful woman..

And she would be like the gold ring....

She is rare and desirable...

But verse 22 says that she lacks discretion...

In other words, she lacks judgment...

She isn't modest or gentle or kind but rather flirtatious and loud and immoral...

And the picture of verse 22 is that a gold ring on the ugliness of a pig makes no sense...

In the same way...

That a beautiful woman who lacks judgment and falls into sin makes no sense either...

Charles Bridges puts it this way, "All the charms of beauty are lost upon a foolish woman. Instead of attending the honor of the woman of verse 16, she attains the filth of a pig."

Clearly, it is better to be beautiful and gracious than beautiful and immoral...

Makeup can cover a lot of things but it won't cover the ugliness of sin...

In the same way that you can put a pig in a beautiful mansion, but he is still a pig...

Verse 23..

23

***The desire of the righteous is only good,
But the expectation of the wicked is wrath.***

Long story short...

Do the right thing and you will find that your desire to do more right things will grow...

Do the wrong thing and you will find that you begin to expect punishment for it...

Now we get the final 8 verses of Proverbs 11, and in it, we will find two additional rivalries that exist in the human heart and both have to do with money...

We have talked about and seen the rivalry over honest and dishonest gaining of wealth..

The Bible is clear...

Those who gain wealth through sinful actions will not be blessed by the Lord...

If you get rich through high interest rates or theft or bribery or other sinful activities, you are not gaining wealth wisely...

Instead, you should work to gain wealth or inherit it and gain it through wise investments..

But now we have the question of what do you do with the money that you gain

And that brings us to another rivalry in the human heart and that is the battle between generosity and selfishness...

So, let's look at this rivalry by reading verses 24-26..

24 There is one who scatters, and yet increases all the more,

And there is one who withholds what is justly due, and yet it results only in want.

25

***The [l]generous man will be [m]prosperous,
And he who waters will himself be watered.***

26

He who withholds grain, the people will curse him,

But blessing will be on the head of him who sells it.

There is a great rivalry in the human heart over the sharing or keeping of money and possessions...

On the one hand, there is a call to be responsible and a good steward of the financial resources we have..

On the other hand, there is a call to be generous with those around us...

So where do we find the right balance in what to keep and what to give...

Well, verses 24-26 teach an often misunderstood truth about giving....

Giving results in getting.

There is such a misconception that when you give it away, it is gone forever..

But the Bible never teaches that...

Verse 24 even says that the one who scatters increases all the more...

In other words, generosity comes back even more than what you gave...

And then on top of that is this at the end of verse 24...

The more you keep your wealth, the more you end up in need...

Verse 25 furthers this idea...

Generous people prosper...

People who give and water others will they themselves be watered...

Then in verse 26 we see that the one who withholds is cursed, but the one who sells is blessed...

And the underlying principle of generosity and selfishness is trust in the Lord...

Selfishness comes from lack of trust in God to provide for your needs....

Generosity is the overflow of the heart that knows God can meet all your needs...

Now, there is always balance here as there is in any part of the Christian life...

You aren't called to give everything away and be completely generous in every situation all the time..

There are times that you need to say no and not give in order to provide for your family...

But on the other extreme as I spoke about Sunday night, you can save but you cannot hoard things as a Christians...

Hoarding says I don't trust God to provide for me, so I must trust whatever I can stockpile for myself...

Generosity says I trust God to provide for me.

Yes, I will save modestly and care for my family, but ultimately our security is not in a bank account but in the Lord..

And this battle will rage in your hearts all throughout life, but ultimately we are called to be generous and it is better to be too generous than to remain selfish...

Now, let's finish out the chapter quickly...

Verse 27-31...

27

***He who diligently seeks good seeks favor,
But he who seeks evil, evil will come to him.***

28

He who trusts in his riches will fall,

But the righteous will flourish like the green leaf.

29

***He who troubles his own house will inherit wind,
And the foolish will be servant to the wisehearted.***

30

***The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life,
And he who is wise [n]wins souls.***

31

***If the righteous will be rewarded in the earth,
How much more the wicked and the sinner!***

Verse 27 is a another reminder of the law of divine retribution...

Which say that those who do good usually get good and those who do evil usually experience evil things...

Verse 28 is visual reminder that those who trust in riches fall like the old dead leaf in winter...

While those who trust in God flourish like a green leaf...

Verse 29 is also a great reminder to be good managers of our homes...

The one who troubles his house gets nothing but wind....

Family drama is out of control these days and it often starts with a dad or mom who is out of control...

God takes seriously the leadership in a house...

In fact, you can serve the church unless you have proven to be a good manager of your home...

So many people overlook how a person manages their home today but not God..

And the truth of verse 29 is that fathers and mothers who bring drama into the home should have no expectation of reward from God...

And furthermore, they may lose the leadership of their home and become a servant in another home, according to the end of verse 29...

Verse 30 speaks of the blessings that flow out of the lives of believer...

They are a blessing to the people around them...

To their families, to their churches, at their workplace....

Their lives enrich the people around them..

But not only that, their acts of righteous living wins souls to the Lord...

That is the story of my own salvation...

It was watching the life of a man I worked for and seeing his faithfulness to his church, his clean living, his pleasant way that really was an attraction to the gospel for me...

And then a great reminder in verse 31 of the ultimate outcome of the righteous and the wicked...

IF the righteous will be rewarded greatly, then the wicked will be punished greatly...

And that really is the point of chapter 11...

Conclusion

These battles in the heart...

These rivalries that exist inside of us...

They are not unimportant battles or trivial matters
...

First of all, winning these wars results in greater
rewards for the believer...

But second, the pattern of the outcome of these battles ultimately reveals our heart...

If you are consistently losing these battles...

If the pattern of your life is to be deceitful and
wicked...

If the pattern of your life is seeing a guilty conscience and an abundance of foolish words and gossip..

If the pattern of your life is not to seek godly counsel but to pursue dishonest wealth and then be selfish with what you have...

Then the alarm should go off in you mind that your
may not be saved...

And that a reward is not coming your way...

Instead, you only have expectation of judgment...

Then Proverbs 11 reveals that you are not in the first category of the righteous person, but rather in the second category of wicked person in verse 31...

And if that is the case, it is not time to try and live better...

It is time to repent and trust Christ...

And to receive a new heart that now makes possible for you to ever experience victory in these rivalries...

And then have the hope of eternal reward in verse 31..

Let us pray.