

Road Signs for Life, part 2

(Proverbs 20:16-30)

4/4/18; Wed PM Pine Grove

Introduction

Life is quite ironic at times..

I will never forget walking to class under the cover on my umbrella and staying pretty dry only to close the umbrella and have the water on it spill on my shoes...

You may not know this but the most shoplifted book in the world is the Bible..

It is also ironic that the tool most people use to clean their ears, the Q-tip, says on the box, "Do not insert in the ear canal..."

These are the ironies of life..

Just last week in Nebraska, a woman had to be taken to the hospital after she crashed her car...

Now accidents are not unusual, but what was unusual is that the woman was injured when she hit a road sign that ended up going through her windshield...

Though her injuries were not severe, it could have been much worse...

The ironic part of the story is that the road sign she hit is the “Keep Right” sign that she you see on the screen there...

Unfortunately, the lady didn’t keep right and she ran straight into the sign that was trying to keep her safe..

God has given us road signs for life all throughout the Bible..

Psalms 1 calls us to not walk in the path of sinners...

Jesus calls us to take the narrow road..

The Bible is called a lamp for our feet and a light for our path..

There is sense that our lives are lived on a road, and God gives us road signs for life..

Well, 2 weeks ago we began a look at Proverbs 20..

And since it is a difficult book to outline, I simply grouped some of the verses in sets that serve as road signs for our lives in this world..

We looked the first sign in verses 1-4 that told us to swerve around and away from some things in life, like drunkenness, government rebellion, strife, and laziness..

Then we looked at verse 5-10, which call us to pay close attention to some things on the highway of life, like the inner motivations of a man...

We were also called to pay close attention to people who have true integrity in the world and actually practice what they preach..

In those cases, we are to pay close attention to those folks and follow and listen to their example...

Then, we were called to pay close attention to government leaders since they too are sinful and not without their own issues...

And then the 3rd and final road sign we looked at 2 weeks ago was the follow closely sign, which told us to do good deeds, to go to work, to deal fairly with people in business, and to seek wisdom and knowledge about diamonds and gold...

So, we have two more roads signs for life to consider tonight in the final 15 verses of Proverbs 30...

So, let's now look at the sign that tells us there is trouble and a detour ahead for certain folks..

IV. Detour Ahead (16-19)

Beginning in verse 16 down to verse 19, we find trouble in highway of life in the form of some folks making bad decisions...

The Lord through Solomon simply tells us that these four people can cause a wreck by their actions, so we need to steer clear of what they do..

The first person who can cause a detour is found in verse 16..

16

Take his garment when he becomes surety for a stranger;

And for foreigners, hold him in pledge.

The trouble in the road in verse 16 is the person who lends money to a stranger...

To become surety is to co-sign for someone else's loan...

And there may be times when that is necessary in life, but even then it should lonely be done for those closest to us...

To co-sign for a stranger is pure foolishness.

In fact, co-signing is the same as taking out your money and giving it to them yourself...

Because they are going to default and you are going to responsible for their debt...

Some folks never learn about lending money...

Y'all know I watch a lot of Judge Judy, and she often deals with people loaning.

In cases where a person has made multiple loans to another person, she almost never gives them all their money back...

Her reasoning is simple.

If you give loan more money to someone who already owes you so money, you are now equally guilty as the one not paying it back..

If you want to wreck your loan, co-sign for others and lend money without giving it much thought and you'll end up broken down on the side of the highway as well...

Look, we are called to be generous and compassionate, but not foolish..

A wise person knows the difference or else they get another Christian's counsel.

A second person that can detour us is the dishonest person...

Verse 17...

17

***Bread obtained by falsehood is sweet to a man,
But afterward his mouth will be filled with gravel.***

The sweetness of stolen bread is in the thrill of getting away with it for the thief..

The bitterness of stolen bread is that it assaults our conscience...

Remember Judas?

Those 30 pieces of silver for betraying Jesus were sweet for a while, but he eventually took those 30 pieces and try to give them back because of the guilt of his dishonesty...

To gain through deceit may give you a good view of your cleverness for a while, but it will eventually rot your soul..

Don't take the road of dishonesty.

You may get ahead for a while, but eventually the road will run out..

A 3rd detour of life is the person who acts rashly...

Let's read verse 18...

18

***Prepare plans by consultation,
And make war by wise guidance.***

There are people who live by the seat of their pants..

To ask them to plan is like asking them to have their teeth pulled...

They don't plan.

They don't do schedules.

They just go with the flow.

Now, these people can be very successful.

I worked under a guy like that for many years, and he was super successful in business..

But often suffered due to a lack of looking ahead.

Let me be clear, not everything requires a grand plan or lots of counsel...

But on the other hand, there is wisdom is planning and seeking guidance...

The Lord speaks of the value of value of planning and getting counsel in life...

If not, your own lack of planning and guidance may guide you off the highway of life...

Verse 19 gives us our 4th and final person that causes wrecks and detours in life....

19

***He who goes about as a slanderer reveals secrets,
Therefore do not associate with [k]a gossip.***

Solomon would tell you to take a detour around a person who can't control their tongue..

Gossips and slanderers will wreck your life...

The wisdom here is very clear.

DO NOT ASSOCIATE WITH A GOSSIP.

The Hebrew word for associate is Tetarab...

It literally means to avoid fellowship with these people...

I cannot stress it enough but people who gossip to you will gossip about you...

And not only that, they will ruin your friendships with others by their loose tongue...

Detour around them...

The final road sign we see is what I have called...

V. Stay in Your Lane (20-30)

In verses 20-30, we see that people are called to live a certain way in the world..

And we we leave that lane of life, we run the risk of a head on collision with God...

So what Solomon does in verses 20-30 is tell us to live in the world in the lane that best pleases the Lord..

So, let's look at some of these guardrails of life that keep on the proper road and headed in the proper direction..

The first lane is the lane of parental authority...

Verse 20-21....

20

***He who curses his father or his mother,
His lamp will go out in [l]time of darkness.***

21

***An inheritance gained hurriedly at the beginning
Will not be blessed in the end.***

The simple explanation and connection of these two verses begins with an affirmation of God's command to honor our father and mother...

In fact, that commandment was the only commandment with a promise attached to it...

12 “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the Lord your God gives you.

The principle of that command is easy to understand..

Generally speaking, those that honor their father and mother enjoy a longer life...

That is why it shouldn't be a surprise to read in Proverbs 20:20 that the child who curses his mother or father will have his lamp turned out..

And my translation really clean that up too much...

The King James says that this child will have his lamp put out in obscure darkness...

This literally means that the child who dishonors his father and mother will die and go to outer darkness.

Again, that isn't a guarantee of hell for that child, but the principle of life is simple...

Failing to honor your parents is usually an indication of a life that fails to honor the Lord..

I always say that kids must be taught to honor and obey their parents or they will never honor and obey God...

Parents who don't teach honor and obedience might as well be putting their kids on the broad road to destruction...

Now verse 21 is connected here because of the word inheritance..

An inheritance is a gift of a parent to a child in the proper time...

So how would a child gain an inheritance hurriedly?

Well, the child's rebellion could lead to an early death for the parent...

The child could even lack enough honor for their parent to steal part of the inheritance or even harm the parent to get the inheritance...

There is an example of this Proverbs in a very familiar parable in the book of Luke..

In the parable of the prodigal son, Jesus opens it with a really simple picture to see..

Luke 15:11-13...

11 And He said, “A man had two sons. 12 The younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me.’ So he divided his [d]wealth between them. 13 And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey into a distant country, and there he squandered his estate with loose living.

In this parable, a son lacks so much honor for his parent that he even asks his dad for his share of the inheritance..

In this culture where wealth remained in families for generations, the request of the son was essentially the son saying..

“Dad, I wish you were dead. Will you just give me my portion of the wealth so I can go out and live like you weren’t here?”

Surprisingly, the dad agrees to do that in the parable, and he gives the disrespectful son an inheritance gained hurriedly..

And look what happened to that inheritance by verse 13...

He lost all of his inheritance with loose living...

That is the consequence of not showing enough honor to the parents that God placed over you...

You end up getting your inheritance but instead of being blessed by it, you are cursed by it...

The simple wisdom here is living in the lane of honoring your father and mother..

Now, a note..

Your parents may not be believers...

In that case, you still owe them honor but you can't excuse their sin..

In that case, you preach the gospel to them..

You pray for them, and you honor them but never dishonor God in order to do it...

The next lane we are called to drive in and stay in is the lane of trusting the Lord..

Let's read verses 22-24....

22

*Do not say, "I will repay evil";
Wait for the Lord, and He will save you.*

23

*[m]Differing weights are an abomination to the
Lord,
And a [n]false scale is not good.*

24

*Man's steps are ordained by the Lord,
How then can man understand his way?*

This is probably one of the easiest lanes to swerve out of in life....

I love the convenience and scenery of Caulks Ferry Road over I-20, so I take it often..

But man, they put those little bumps on the right side of the road too close and even over the white lines at times..

I can literally be in my lane, and Tonya will tell me to get over....

Verses 22-24 are that way...

You can think that you are where you should be in trusting the Lord but you can actually be out of your lane at times..

The wisdom in these verses is clear...

Do not seek revenge on your own.

Do not repay evil for evil.

Trust the Lord to deal with evil in His time.

Now, verse 23 is here and I think it serves to offer a reason for someone to seek revenge...

We have seen the idea of differing weights and false scales before in the book of Proverbs...

And it carries the idea of someone who cheats you in the marketplace...

They have a scale that is weighted too heavy and you end up paying more and getting less...

Well, that is enough to get most people fired up and wanting revenge..

But God would tell us to leave it to Him...

Now, that doesn't mean you shouldn't report that injustice to the authorities...

It doesn't mean that you can't seek to be reimbursed.

The simple principle is don't return evil for evil..

Don't take matters into your own hands...

Trust the police and the courts to punish evil doers,
and even if they fail, God will not fail to punish
these kinds of evil doers in time..

So, trust the Lord when evil is done to you...

But verse 24 also calls the trust the Lord in another
way...

And this is trusting the Lord when we really don't
know where life is headed..

When a job is lost..

When an illness is diagnosed.

When a loved one dies..

When life takes a turn, we are simply called to put
our trust in the sovereignty of God..

Solomon simply reminds us that God directs our
way, and at times, we don't understand the road we
are on...

In those instances, read your Bible more, pray more, obey more, and trust the Lord to show you the next step to take...

Look, it is easy to get out of that lane, and try to make our own way...

It is easy to let life a turn and we take a turn away from the Lord..

But that can't be the case..

Stay in the lane even when the fog keeps your from seeing what in front of you, and just keep driving knowing the Lord knows exactly where you are headed..

Verse 25 gives us another lane to consider in our lives...

I call this the lane of commitment....

25

***It is a trap for a man to say rashly, "It is holy!"
And after the vows to make inquiry.***

It was common for the Jew to declare certain possessions in their life as being holy to the Lord..

For instance people would declare their money as Holy and dedicated to the Lord, so that they wouldn't have to give it to the poor or else they would violate their vow to the Lord...

Jesus spoke about children who would do that in Mark 7, so that they wouldn't even have to help their needy parents since that money had been dedicated to God..

Well, there are some people who would declare things holy to the Lord but then want to change their mind...

Solomon says that they would vow that something was holy and then make inquiry..

In other words, they ask the priests if there were a way of of their commitment to give whatever it was to God...

The simple piece of wisdom is this...

Be a person of your word.

Be committed to what you say you are going to do...

There are people in church every week who commit their lives to serve the Lord better and they can't

make it make it back to church on Wednesday night...

It is better to not commit than to commit and be a fraud...

A final lane to stay in on the road of life is found in the final verses of chapter 20..

I call this the Lane of Submission...

Let's read these final verses beginning in verse 26...

26

*A wise king winnows the wicked,
And [o]drives the threshing wheel over them.*

27

*The [p]spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord,
Searching all the [q]innermost parts of his being.*

28

*[r]Loyalty and truth preserve the king,
And he upholds his throne by [s]righteousness.*

29

*The glory of young men is their strength,
And the [t]honor of old men is their gray hair.*

30

*Stripes that wound scour away evil,
And strokes reach the [u]innermost parts.*

If there is anything under assault in our day and age, it is the assault against all authority in this world..

I don't want to get into all the political issues of this recent march into Washington by all these high school students...

But that right there is a symptom of a generation that resists authority...

The yelling, the screaming, the demanding that these kids do is an outright rebellion to authority...

I was talking to our girls about last week in our devotional time, but let me stress once again that Christians are called to be rebels who resist authority...

Jesus never carries a protest sign or led a sit in or demonstrated in his ministry...

He always lived in submission to the authorities over him in government...

When they demanded him to pay taxes, he didn't protest, he sent Peter fishing...

Where he directed a fish to Peter's hook, and in that fish's mouth he found a shekel to pay his taxes...

That's what I tell Tonya every time I go fishing...

Baby, I am looking for a fish with out tax money in his mouth...

But seriously, Jesus was not a rebel against authority in his ministry, and get this....

He lived under an incredibly evil government...

One that would make our own government look good...

So, we aren't people of protest and rebellion...

Yet, so many in our culture are..

I saw a group of people disrupt a government meeting in Sacramento last week demanding justice...

It is literally out of control, and we as believers do not need to contribute to the resistant to authority..

In face, the Christian is called to submit to all sorts of authority...

WE submit to one another in the Lord..

Wives submit to husbands...

Children submit to parents..

We all submit to the church leaders over us..

We submit to the word of God..

WE submit to our bosses in the workplace..

The Christian life is a life of submission to all sorts of authority that God has put over us...

And all of us need to stay in the lane of submission...

You see a few bits of wisdom related to this idea in verses 26-30...

Verse 26...

The Bible is clear. The book of Proverbs is clear.
Romans 13 is clear.

WE submit to government because kings have the God given authority to punish the wicked..

Verse 26 says that the king winnows the wicked and drives the threshing wheel over them..

Verse 27 is an interesting verse to translate, but the meaning is the same...

WE submit to God because God knows us to the depths of our hearts..

Verse 28 is a reminder that even the king must submit to the commands of God...

Loyalty and truth and righteousness preserve the king..

In other words, as the king lives by the commands of God and submits to them, God keeps him in power...

Verse 29 is also an interesting verse in relation to the idea of submission..

Young men rely on the strength and power, but older men rely on their gray hair of wisdom...

In a very real sense, we submit to the limitations of our bodies...

I can't do what I once could do physically, but the trade is that I can work smarter and wiser....

People who refuse to submit to the limitations of their body end up in the hospital or morgue...

And then finally in verse 30, we submit to discipline...

I see verse 30 as the stripes and strokes of a human parent or authority figure...

And the idea is that this discipline is meant to profit the one receiving it by helping them turn from evil...

It is possible to see this as reference to the Lord's discipline as well...

But the point is the same...

Submit to correction and you will take a U-turn away from evil...

To many people refuse discipline and find themselves back in the same ol' sin over and over..

Conclusion

Well, those are some road signs that contain God's wisdom in Proverbs 20..

I pray that we all follow the signs and guardrails that God has put in place in our lives...

I have to admit that Matthew 7:13 and 14 were verses that were so instrumental in my salvation..

I had read the Bible and listen to people talk about the Bible growing up as a kid, but it was always so hard to grasp and understand...

I now realize that I was lacking the Holy Spirit as I listened to people all those years..

But I will never forget the clarity of Matthew 7:13 and 14 when God was bringing me to salvation...

13 "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it.

14 For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.

I love the simplicity of the Bible.

I also love the pictures that the Scriptures paint as well..

I have found that narrow road, but I still live by the
road signs that are all along it...

And I pray that you will as well..

Let us pray...