

Peaceful Proverbs, part 2

(Proverbs 21:20-31)

4/18/18; Wed PM Pine Grove

Introduction

A lady is walking along the beach and stumbles upon a genie's lamp....

She picks it up and rubs it and a genie pops out and offers just one wish...

She quickly grabs her phone, pulls up a world map and asks the genie to bring a lasting peace to the area around Israel and the entire Middle East...

The genie stares at the phone and then looks at the woman in disbelief...

“Lady, I am a genie, not a miracle worker. Those countries will never be at peace in this world. I am good at granting wishes but wishing for peace is a little too much. So make another wish.”

The lady thinks a minute and says, “Ok, well I have been single for all my life. But I would like you to send me a man to marry who is funny and romantic, who likes to cook for me and keeps the house clean. He must also love my family and have no hobbies.”

The genie looked at her at here for a moment, and said, “Let me see that map on your phone again.”

Look, some things are difficult but other others are impossible...

Peace is something that is very difficult in the world...

Peace existed in the garden of Eden.

We have witnessed that in the opening chapters of the book of Genesis on Sunday nights...

Adam and Eve were at peace with God and with one another until that peace was broken by their fall into sin...

And since that day in the garden and that act of sin and disobedience, peace has been replaced by conflict, distress, and war.

We see that unrest in the world through crime and disputes and relationship struggles...

WE see it in courtrooms and arguments between friends and family.

Now, this doesn't mean that peace in the world can't be had...

It can be had, and believers should enjoy peace, and make peace, and maintain peace in the world..

We should be known as peacemakers...

Now, that doesn't mean that compromise truth in order to win peace...

But it does mean that we should seek peace if possible in all situations...

Now, the Bible is helpful in regards to finding peace in a chaotic world...

The Bible tells us that the forgiveness of sins brings peace to us that can't be taken away...

Even in the midst of a war, a saved soldier can stand up and fight yet be at total peace knowing that his sins are forgiven even if the world around him is at war...

The same can be said of a person battling for their life against the enemy of cancer or heart trouble or all sorts of health problems..

And the reason for the peace of the soldier or the patient is that they have made their peace with God throughout repentance and faith in Christ...

And while the peace of salvation is the greatest peace in this world, it is not the only peace that can be attained in this world...

In fact, as we took a look at the first part of Proverbs 21 last week, we saw that peace is possible in other areas of our life as well...

We can not only have peace with God through the forgiveness of sin...

We can also find peace with who God is..

WE can find peace with the world..

And we can have peace in our personal relationships and with our life in general...

But this peace only comes through living by God's wisdom..

The book of Proverbs is simply an instruction manual on how to live skillfully in this world...

And skillful living that comes through God's wisdom and instruction brings peace to our lives...

Now, this leads to another aspect of peace, and that is finding peace with God's wisdom...

In other words, we must be people that trust the wisdom of God...

There is a game that is popular for youth groups where each person picks a partner and one puts on a blindfold while their partners talks them through an obstacle course to locate a prize at the finish line..

It requires the blindfolded person to trust the instructions of his or her partner....

Often times, that is the challenge for us in the world...

We have to resist our own wisdom and way of living in the world and simply trust what God's wisdom tells us to do...

But when we do that, we find peace because God always proves to be trustworthy...

God's words and wisdom never fail if we live by them...

Now, that leads us to verses 20-31 of Proverbs 21 tonight, where we find some of God's wisdom for living rightly in the world...

And what we are going to see here is simply this...

We can get more peace if we simply come to terms with the fact that God's wisdom is the best for us..

So, let's dive into these verses which deal with a variety of subjects, and let us find peace by acknowledging that God's wisdom is good...

We will begin with verse 20...

IV. Peace with God's Wisdom (20-31)

20

***There is precious treasure and oil in the dwelling
of the wise,
But a foolish man swallows it up.***

This proverb is simply an acknowledgment that wise people generally have an excess of good things..

Treasure and oil are of great value in the economy of Solomon's day and wise people have a supply of it in their home...

Both are the result of work and planning and saving, which are all actions of wise people...

They work, they plan, and they save and their homes are filled with treasure and oil...

On the other hand, the fool swallows up all he has...

Fools don't work or plan or save...

So what they get, they consume immediately...

They cannot delay their pleasure, so they swallow up everything that comes into their possession...

This is the attitude in our culture of immediate gratification, which says that I have to have it now..

And I have to have it now so that I can enjoy it now..

In some areas of life, that is fine..

God gives us good things to be enjoyed now, but in other areas of life we need to practice delayed gratification that comes through planning and patience..

I wanted an Atari when I was growing up, but I had only \$5 of my birthday money left..

And so I worked for my grandad to earn about \$10 a week..

And the temptation was to spend all \$10 of it when I got it on Friday, but I planned and saved and eventually I had the \$125 that was required to buy the Atari..

The wise work and plan and save and their homes are filled with treasures and oils as a result of their discipline...

The fool's home is empty because he devours everything in sight...

Peace comes from discipline and contentment with what we have while we wait...

Chaos comes from devouring everything in sight like there is no tomorrow..

A second bit of wisdom is found in verses 21-22...

Let's read them...

21

***He who pursues righteousness and loyalty
Finds life, righteousness and honor.***

22

***A wise man scales the city of the mighty
And brings down the [e]stronghold in which they
trust.***

A common question of a high school student is what in the world will I ever need this subject for?

Whether it is history or economics or all types of math classes, most kids see little purpose in investing their time and effort into studying a certain subject...

A common question for the student of the book of Proverbs is simply, "what benefit is there in filling my life with the wisdom and knowledge of God?"

Well, verses 21 and 22 and others in the Bible give us answer..

First, the wise find life, righteousness, and honor...

In other words, the wisdom of God leads to a better earthly life...

Wisdom protects us from the difficult consequences of sin by helping us live righteously in the world..

And when a life filled with right living often finds honor among people...

Now, clearly we dont live by God's wisdom to receive man's applause, but honor is a by product of right living...

But not only that, verse 22 speaks of another benefit of right living....

And that is the ability to use wisdom to gain an advantage over people who are more powerful or intelligent...

The wise man in verse 22 scales the wall of the city and brings down the stronghold in which they trust...

The picture of a wise man going over the wall of a city can be seen when people use the wisdom of God to overcome the things that people trust in...

For example, there are plenty of highly intelligent people and often their stronghold is their intelligence, their knowledge, their abilities...

Yet, a man with far less intellectual ability can pick up the Bible, preach it to highly intelligent people and cause those people to let go of their confidence in their flesh and put their confidence in Christ...

A reward of the wise is ability to identify the barriers that people have built against the Lord, then overcome those barriers and lead people to no longer trust in those barriers but trust in Christ..

God's wisdom is clear...

Pursue righteousness, loyalty, wisdom and God rewards you with life, right living, honor, and the skill to overcome barriers in this world and in the lives of those around us to call them to the gospel...

Let me tell you the peace that I have as I step into the pulpit...

I taught a group of 4th-6th graders at Grace Community Church for nearly 3 years....

Kids that come from incredibly bright homes...

The kids of seminary professors, doctors, lawyers, judges, John MacArthur's own grandchildren were in those classes..

In human terms, who am I to teach these children?

In human terms, who am I to step in a pulpit each and every week and preach to people who clearly more intelligent and even more experienced than me?

But the reality is this..

The word of God levels the playing field for us all...

And as we study the Word and grow in the wisdom of God, we can scale the barriers that seem to prevent us from getting through to people...

A reward for gaining wisdom is the ability to take that wisdom and knowing how to use it for God's advantage in the world..

A third bit of God's wisdom that we can find peace with is found in verses 23-24...

23

*He who guards his mouth and his tongue,
Guards his soul from troubles.*

24

*“Proud,” “Haughty,” “Scoffer,” are his names,
Who acts with insolent pride.*

Simply put, we must come to peace with God’s wisdom concerning our speech..

So many people know what the word of God says about having control over our words, speech, language, and tongues...

Yet so few actually put those principles into practice..

And the excuses for our failures usually take the form of “well, that is just who I am...”

I speak my mind...

I’m going to say whatever I am thinking...

But I remind us all that that is no excuse...

The Bible says that true salvation bring a new creature, a new man, a new woman, a new way of life, a new heart, and certainly a new tongue....

You may have been that way in the past, but you presupposed to be that way now...

The new you has arrived and the Spirit works to help us transform every aspect of our lives, including our speech...

And the Spirit affirms the truth of the Bible to us, and the Word clearly calls us to guard our words...

When you guard your mouth, you guard your life from trouble...

And one of the great sins of the mouth is often the sin of pride that we see in verse 24...

So many sins of the mouth are the result of pride...

People gossip to display the fact that they are “in the know.”

People slander to cut people down and raise their own view of themselves...

People complain to declare that God hasn't met their standards of how should be in the world...

If you want peace in your life, pick your words wisely...

If you want peace from troubles, get your tongue under control...

Peace is also possible in our lives if we pay attention to the wisdom of verses 25-26...

And just like our speech, this is a constant theme of the book of Proverbs...

Verse 25..

25

***The desire of the sluggard puts him to death,
For his hands refuse to work;***

26

***All day long he [f]is craving,
While the righteous gives and does not hold back.***

Peace comes through diligence and labor.

The wise work and the fool sleeps...

His desire is for the bed, and eventually he will die on the bed of laziness...

Verse 26 says that the sluggard craves all day long, and that certainly doesn't lead to peace...

However, the man who works has so much peace that he can give with generosity...

The end of verse 26 says that the righteous gives and doesn't hold back...

How can a person be that generous?

When they know that a paycheck is on the way to replace what they just gave away..

And how do they know a paycheck is coming?

They go to work everyday...

And those who are diligent and disciplined can be at peace with life and even with their giving..

Because they know that God is always replacing what they give away through their own work and through His generosity..

The next bit of peaceful wisdom in verse 27 is a repeat of something that we saw last week...

Verse 27..

27

***The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination,
How much more when he brings it with evil intent!***

The sacrifice of the wicked is simply a act of someone who doesn't believe in God trying to please God in some other way...

In Israel, there were unbelieving Jews who offered sacrifices to God in hopes that God would find them acceptable...

In 2018, there are unbelievers who come to church in hopes that God will find their attendance acceptable...

Wicked people do all sorts of things to try and win the affections of the Lord..

There are unbelievers who help at churches and do all sorts of acts of service in hopes that God will accept their good works and forgive their sin..

There are even unbelievers who do all sorts of things for the Lord but not in hopes of Him accepting them but rather for selfish reasons...

That is what the second half of verse 27 refers to..

So unbelieving people sacrifice for the Lord with an evil intent...

In other words they sacrifice not for the sake of the Lord but for their own selfish reasons...

For instance, an unbelieving businessman may show up at church to advertise his business and gain some customers..

There are even businesses that publicly display their Christiana faith but not in order to bring glory to Christ but to simply bring in more customers...

There is no peace in this world for those who offer unacceptable worship to God...

God desires believers to worship him first and foremost...

God also desires obedience of believers over the sacrifice of believers...

But even when believers offer a sacrifice to the Lord, it must be done with the right motivations...

To sacrifice with evil intentions is to make your sacrifice an abomination to God..

Let's now move to verse 28-29 and the peace that comes to those who are honest...

Verses 28-29

28

***A false witness will perish,
But the man who listens to the truth will speak
forever.***

29

***A wicked man [g]displays a bold face,
But as for the upright, he makes his way sure.***

The first part of verse 28 is rather easy to understand...

People who lie perish...

To be a false witness in a courtroom was punishable by death...

In fact, there are some states in our country today that allow the death penalty for anyone who lies in court and causes an innocent man to receive the death penalty..

Therefore in very real sense, it is still possible for the false witness to die...

Now on the other hand, the man who listens to the truth will speak forever...

In other words, witnesses who hear or see what happened and testify truthfully about it, their testimonies last forever..

They prove themselves to be reliable witnesses so their testimony is accepted over and over...

Verse 29 is along these same lines...

The wicked man displays a bold face...

In other words, the wicked man lies right to your face...

He hardens his face and he tells you a lie...

Ever heard of a bold faced liar?

This is the picture of verse 29..

Some people lie and refuse to budge when confronted by their lie...

On the other hand, the upright man makes his way sure..

In other words, he speaks clearly and confidently and his words are sure..

Needless to say, honesty bring peace to our lives in so many ways...

Deceitfulness never lets us truly rest...

A final stop in this chapter of finding peace in the world is found in verses 30-31...

30

***There is no wisdom and no understanding
And no counsel against the Lord.***

31

***The horse is prepared for the day of battle,
But victory belongs to the Lord.***

This chapter essentially returns to where we started in verse 1....

And that is with the sovereignty of God...

Verse 30 tells us that no counsel or wisdom or understanding can overcome the counsel, wisdom, and understanding that comes to us from the Lord...

This is why it is hopeless to turn to the world's wisdom in attempting to solve our problems...

Now, that doesn't stop people from doing it..

In fact, so called spiritual book sales are at an all time high...

People are looking for the secret to life...

They are looking for the key to happiness...

They are looking for the road to success..

And they buy all sorts of books that can bring them the answers to all of life's problems while never picking up the word of God...

Ultimately, I need more of what God says and less of what man says...

Because in the end, only the word of God will last into eternity while man's ideas will be destroyed...

And in case you don't quite believe that or embrace that or understand that, Solomon paints us a picture of that in verse 31..

The horse is prepared for the day of battle, But victory belongs to the Lord.

In other words, you can go out and bunch of books on how to train your horse for war...

And you can spend time training that horse...

And you can get him ready and call him the best horse out there in terms of fighting a war...

But if God's plan is for the other side to win, that horse will make no difference in the outcome of the war...

Now that doesn't mean we shouldn't prepare and train the horse, it simply means that the best training in the world will not overcome the plans of God..

Therefore, we shouldn't put our trust in the horse but simply in the sovereignty of God to accomplish his purposes...

It is fine to train the horse, but it is best to trust only in the Lord...

Our peace must come from knowing that God knows best...

Conclusion

That is really a good thought to end a chapter of the Proverbs that has given us some help in terms of living a skillful and peaceful life in this world...

Ultimately, peace comes by knowing God in a saving way and living by His wisdom...

Nicolas Ridley is not a name you may know since he lived in the 1500s, but Ridley was a man who had peace in chaotic times...

Ridley lived during the days Queen Mary I of England...

Queen Mary is often called Bloody Mary because she slaughtered countless Protestants in attempting to return England to a Catholic nation...

And anyone who tried to resist or oppose her desire were often burned at the stake...

Nicolas Ridley was the bishop of London and he refused Mary's Catholic beliefs, specifically her view that Jesus was present in the bread and cup of Communion...

Ridley said that Jesus was in heaven and not in the bread and the wine..

And when he wouldn't back off those beliefs, Mary threatened to burn him at the stake..

So Mary sentenced him to die along with his friend Hugh Latimer on October 16 1555...

The night before his execution, Ridley was visited in jail by his brother, who offered to stay with him on his last night on earth...

Ridley refused and simply told his bother..

“I plan to sleep well tonight. I know God's peace, and I will rest in that peace while Mary makes war with God.”

I pray that we have that peace.

I also pray that we increase our peace by living by the wisdom of God that we see in Proverbs 21...

Let us pray...

acknowledgement (30-31)