Four Roadblocks to Reform, part 2

(Proverbs 26:13-28)
7/18/18; Wed PM Pine Grove

Introduction

This past Saturday afternoon, a man and a woman noticed an unattended vehicle in Northern California..

They quickly hopped in and took off in the vehicle saying that they wanted to take it for a joy ride.

However, the vehicle they chose to steal was a large million dollar fire truck.

The fire truck reached speeds of 80 miles an hour as it rolled along northern California highways…

Now the problem with chasing a fire truck is the sheer size of it…

You can't hit it in the back fender and hope to knock it off the road…

So the cops simply let them run for a while until they wee able to get far enough ahead to lay spike strips on the road and blow out the right front tire..

However, the truck still drove another 45 minutes on a flat tire until it was forced to stop going up a steep mountain road when the driver took a wrong turn..

Car chases have existed ever since cars were invented, but they have always been a challenge for law enforcement..

For years, the standard way to end a car chase was the use of a stationary roadblock.

Police cars were often used along with man made objects as well..

However, that practice ended when a man driving a stolen car was killed when he crashed into a stationary roadblock set up by police in Inyo County California in the 1980s.

The man's family sued the police and in 1989, the Supreme Court ruled it unconstitutional to set up stationary road blocks to end police chases…

With that in mind, there are also roadblocks in the life of a nation or church that is trying to get back on track…

In 715 BC, the southern half of the nation of Israel needed to get their lives back on track…

Their fellow Jews to the north had fallen to the Assyrians and if the southern part of Israel didn't get their act together, they were speeding down the road of destruction as well..

So, they needed to reform..

They needed revival to get their lives and their nation back on track…

But what stood in the way of revival and a return to living in obedience to the Lord were the roadblocks of sin…

Last week, we met someone that the Bible simply calls a fool…

The fool is a roadblock to revival…

First, his sinfulness blocks his own reform but his foolishness also holds back any group that he is a part of as well..

Whether that is his family, his place of employment…

His church, his community, even his nation is wounded by his foolish behavior…

And we look at his foolishness last week in verse 1-12 of Proverbs 26…

However, the fool is just 1 of 4 people who serve as roadblocks to reform…

The other 3 we will meet tonight…

And none of these people are new to us in the book of Proverbs…

They have all been introduced to us in the first 25 chapters of the this book..

But their foolishness is so dangerous and so destructive that we need to be warned about them over and over…

So let's jump into verses 13-16 as we are reminded that sluggards block blessings…

II. Sluggards Block Blessing (13-16)

13
The sluggard says, "There is a lion in the road!
A lion is [h]in the open square!"
14
As the door turns on its hinges,
So does the sluggard on his bed.
15
The sluggard buries his hand in the dish;
He is weary of bringing it to his mouth again.
16
The sluggard is wiser in his own eyes
Than seven men who can [i]give a discreet answer.

The book of Proverbs is full of warnings to avoid laziness…

Laziness stunts or roadblocks our spiritual growth..

Laziness leads to hunger…

Laziness leads to more time to sin..

Laziness leads us to burden others…

In short, lazy people are trouble for themselves, for their families, for the church, for the government …

The list goes on and on in terms of the consequences of laziness..

However, lazy people find it hard to break from their sluggish ways…

First of all, the excuses to be lazy never run out…

In verse 13, the sluggard wont go to work because he fears a lion is waiting for him in the road as he heads to work..

We have this same excuse for laziness back in Proverbs 22:13, and the point is not that the lazy man always uses the same excuses…

The point is that the lazy person always find an excuse not to work, even if that excuse is as ridiculous as a lion killing them on the way to work..

Now why the excuses?

Why do lazy people need to justify their laziness?

Well, you see God has given us a conscience and he has written his law on our hearts and we are made in his image..

Therefore, we know that we should be working and productive..

Our conscience tells us that…

The image of God in us tells us that…

The law of God tells us that..

So when people resist work, they try to justify it with an excuse, often a very silly one…

But why do they resist working?

Verse 14..

14
As the door turns on its hinges,
So does the sluggard on his bed.

The lazy man doesn't work because he loves his bed..

This is a great example of how someone can take the goodness of God and turn it into sin..

You see, God made our bodies in such a way that we need rest and sleep…

But when rest and sleep are abused, they quickly become the sin of laziness..

And sluggards love their rest and their bed…

Just like a door that opens and closes, but doesn't go anywhere..

The sluggard turns over and over in his bed but never goes anywhere or does anything productive..

And in the same that his reasons not to work are extreme, the lengths of his laziness are also extreme..

Verse 15..

15
The sluggard buries his hand in the dish;
He is weary of bringing it to his mouth again.

In other words, the lazy man is so lazy that he wont even feed himself..

He will put his hand in the dish to eat but he is too sluggish to even raise it up to his mouth…

But guess what?

The lazy man doesn't even see any problem with his laziness..

Verse 16..

16
The sluggard is wiser in his own eyes
Than seven men who can [i]give a discreet answer.

Lazy people even brag about their slothfulness..

They are proud of their ability to get out of work..

We live in a culture that rewards laziness and people even boast of their ability to sit and home and not only strive but thrive..

Yet, their cleverness is not pleasing to God, and their laziness will never be rewarded by God..

Man has been created to work..

His assignment is to rule and subdue the earth, and when he fails to obey that command, he exits the will of God…

Yes, there are people who can't work, but most can and should…

Sluggards block blessings in a family, in a church and in a nation because they become burdens to those around them..

A second roadblock to reform and revival is the person of verses 17-22…

I call this persons the busybody….

III. Busybodies Block Blessing (17-22)

But you could also call this person a gossip or a meddler or a drama queen or a pot stirrer…

This is someone who simply can't keep their nose in their own business..

Verse 17..

17
Like one who takes a dog by the ears
Is he who passes by and [j]meddles with strife not belonging to him.

In the setting of 1000 BC, dogs were not yet pets in the middle east..

Rather, dogs were scavengers that ran in packs and if you grabbed one by their ears, the dog would make sure that you quickly let go with a growl or more likely a bite…

The same is true of someone who passes by and puts their nose in someone else's problems..

They are likely to get bit, and rightfully so..

Let me remind us all of the Lord's instructions to us in 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12..

9 Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; 10 for indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more, 11 and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you, 12 so that you will [i]behave properly toward outsiders and [j]not be in any need.

There is wisdom in minding our business, but according to this verse, there is obedience in minding our own business…

To tend to someone's business without their permission is to disobey the word of God…

But the busybody lives to put their nose where it doesn't belong..

But that is not the only sin of the busybody..

Verses 18-19 speak of those who deceive their neighbors but hide try to behind the humor of it..

18
Like a madman who throws
Firebrands, arrows and death,
19
So is the man who deceives his neighbor,

And says, "Was I not joking?"

If you remember the sluggard of verses 13-16, you will remember that he always has an excuse for his sin of laziness…

Well, the same is true of the gossiping busybody…

What they will do is talk about their neighbor or pass on destructive information about their neighbor and then they will excuse their sin by saying it was all in good fun..

They will engage in deception of gossip and slander but they will say that they didn't think it was that big of a deal..

On a similar note, gossips in the church will often excuse their gossip and slander by saying they "were concerned" about the person…

Or worse yet, they will boast about their holiness by turning their gossip into a prayer request..

You see the gossiping busybody has as many excuses as the sluggard, and they often hide behind them as an excuse for their sinfulness..

But that is not all the meddler does…

Verses 20-21..

20
For lack of wood the fire goes out,
And where there is no whisperer, contention quiets down.
21
Like charcoal to hot embers and wood to fire,
So is a contentious man to kindle strife.

Why is a person who gossips and slanders and puts their nose where it doesn't belong often called a busybody?

Well, you see it right here…

They are busy in the sense that they are always staring up trouble…

Verse 20 says that the fire goes out when the wood runs out..

And the same is true in life…

The fire of drama often dies down but the busybody is often the fuel that keeps it burning…

He or she even dreams up ways to keep the pot stirred…

They think all the time about how to prevent peace..

As we see here in verse 21, busybodies are contentious people..

They like causing arguments …

They like starting fires between people and watching them burn..

They are opposite of what we as believers should be..

We aren't called to throw gas on the fire but water..

We are called to be peacemakers…

We don't stir the pot, we take the spoon out and watch the rotation inside the pot slow down…

We dont create drama, we destroy drama…

And then in verse 22, we get a summary verse on busybodies..

22
The words of a whisperer are like dainty morsels, And they go down into the [k]innermost parts of the body.

Why are gossips and slanderers and pot stirrers so effective in spreading their sin?

Simply because, there are plenty of ears willing to listen..

Verse 22 says that gossip is like a chocolate chip..

You look at it and it just looks so sweet and delicious, and your mind simply is overcome by the little size of it..

You often say, “it is just one chocolate chip, what will it hurt?”

And the same is true for those little bits of slander that come our way…

They seem so harmless, yet slander and gossip is so destructive..

Verse 22 says that the words of a gossip goes deep down in our soul..

In other words, a small bit of slander isn’t harmless…

In fact, it will go down and corrupt your soul if you stay and around and enjoy it…

Avoid the busybody but also avoid being the busybody as well…

Gossipy people are roadblock to reform in your life, in their own families, in their churches and certainly in their communities…

One more roadblock to see in Proverbs 26 tonight in terms of someone who blocks the Lord's blessings in a society and that is the liar of verses 23-28…

IV. Liars Block Blessing (23-28)

The book of Proverbs has said this before but nations that are filled with liars are very unstable..

When you can't trust your neighbor to tell you the truth, the foundation of that nation is breaking…

There is a certain level of trust of your fellow man that must exist if any group of people how to thrive and be reformed…

But trust is destroyed by dishonesty…

So let's look at the liar in verses 23-28…

In verse 23, we see the foundation of a liar is an evil heart…

23
Like an earthen vessel overlaid with silver dross
Are burning lips and a wicked heart.

When I was in school, gold chains were all the rage..

But since we couldn't afford real gold, we tried to fool everyone with gold overlaid on a cheap necklace…

There result is that a little the cheap exterior gold would often be exposed over time..

Sometimes it would be seen in a ring of green around someone's neck or on a girl's ear..

The point is that liars cover up their evil hearts with good sounding words just like clay pot makers put a little silver over their pots to make them appear valuable..

In other words, the liar is destructive because he often masks his evil with his smooth words..

Look at verse 24…

24
He who hates disguises it with his lips,
But he lays up deceit in his [l]heart.

This is an important truth about lies and liars..

Liars and lies are founded on hate..

To tell someone the truth is an example of loving them in the greatest way possible…

To tell someone a lie is an example of hating them in the worst way possible..

Sadly, liars hide that hatred in the sweetness of their lies…

But wisdom tells us to look beyond the charm of the liar…

Verse 25..

25
When [m]he speaks graciously, do not believe him,
For there are seven abominations in his heart.

In other words, liars are not be trusted since their hearts are full of hatred and deceit…

Seven abominations is simply a way of saying that a liar's heart is completely filled with deceit and hatred…

Verse 26 and 27..

26
Though his hatred covers itself with guile,
His wickedness will be revealed before the assembly.
27
He who digs a pit will fall into it,
And he who rolls a stone, it will come back on him.

Liars may thrive for a while in the world…

They may get rich and famous..

They may excel in their professions..

But time and truth go hand in hand…

And given enough time, the truth abut liars will be revealed..

Verse 27 is a great picture of the consequences of lies..

Every lie you tell is like taking a shovel full of dirt from the ground around you..

Eventually if you tell enough lies, you will have a pretty big hole in front of you…

And you may be clever enough to stay out of that hole for a while, but eventually the hole will grow so big that you fall into it eventually…

The picture is also clear in verse 27…

If one lie is a little snowball, and every lie adds to that snowball, you eventually be too weak to push it and it will roll back over you and kill you..

The point is simply summarized in verse 28..

28
A lying tongue hates [n]those it crushes,
And a flattering mouth works ruin.

No lies are innocent..

They all come from a heart of hate and they all produce a path of destruction wherever they are told…

No nation, no family, no church can throve where honesty isn't valued..

Dishonesty is the death of any group…

When lies are more common than truth-telling, everyone suffers and eventually everyone comes to ruin..

Conclusion

You see, liars are roadblocks to revival..

But so are fools, busybodies, and sluggards..

Now, what is the application for us tonight?

First and foremost, may God grant us repentance is we see any of these practices in our own life..

If we act like a fool and ignore the wisdom of God, may we see our error and turn to God's wisdom..

If we are prone to laziness, may God grant us the discipline to rise and find work and be faithful in that work..

And I would also add this note..

Laziness is not just seen in a lack of commitment to our daily labor in providing for our family..

Laziness can also be seen in our sluggishness in studying the Bible and in our prayer life and commitment to the church..

There a lot of people who are hard workers but never see the need to work on their spiritual growth in the Lord..

Don't be tempted to stay in bed each morning for 30 extra minutes when you need to be spending those minutes with the Lord in Bible reading and prayer..

If we are prone to being a gossiping pot-stirrers who sticks our nose where it doesn't belong, may God grant us the self-control to simply to simply tend to our business and stay out of everyone else's..

May we all resist the urge to listen to the morels of slander and gossip and make we be peace makers and not pot stirrers…

If we are prone to lies, may God give us a truthful tongue..

And may He help us se that our lies are simply evidence of hatred to whom we are speaking..

May we be honest people since our Lord is filled with nothing but the truth…

Hezekiah needed reform in Israel if they were ever going to make it as a nation, and we need revival in our churches today….

May that revival begin in our own hearts first as we turn from foolishness, laziness, gossip, and lies…

And seek God's wisdom, discipline, self- control and truthfulness..Let us pray.