

Faith, Fuel, and Friends

(Proverbs 27)

7/25/18; Wed PM Pine Grove

Introduction

When the Bill Clinton affair with Monica Lewinsky came to light, Gallup polled people with the following question...

“How important do you think it is for the president to provide moral leadership for the country -- very important, somewhat important, only slightly important or not at all important?”

The results to that question were as follows...

64% of Democrats said that it was very important for the president to provide moral leadership for the country while 86% of Republicans said that it was very important for the president to provide moral leadership for the country..

Let's fast forward to 2018, and Gallup asked the same poll question in May of this year regarding the moral leadership of Donald Trump..

The results to that question were as follows..

This time, 77% of Democrats now said that moral leadership was very important, but only 63% of Republicans agreed..

The simple conclusion is this...

Politically, people only care about moral issues if it gets their guy elected or their opponent defeated..

Otherwise, they could care less about a person's morality..

This is how fallen the human heart is...

For most politicians regardless of party, doing the right thing is only important if it means votes in the next election..

Now, that is not how the Lord views morality..

The Scriptures are clear..

We are to obey the Lord regardless of who is looking or what is at stake..

Obedience and morality are not a matter of pleasing the voters..

Obedience and morality is a matter of pleasing the Lord.

Therefore, morality is important regardless of who you are, but it very important for those who lead others..

In 715 BC, Israel had a new leader..

His name was Hezekiah, but he came to power in a time of great immorality in the culture around him..

Most notably, the people of Israel were engaged in idol worship..

The temple was infected with false worship, so Hezekiah made it a priority to get the temple in order and restore a proper worship of God...

But that is not all Hezekiah did..

Hezekiah also made it a priority to God's wisdom to God's people, and for the past few weeks, we have been looking at some of the wisdom that Hezekiah's men recovered from Solomon's reign 200 years earlier..

As we have gone through this section of Proverbs each week, we have talked about Hezekiah the king and his desire to see revival in Israel..

But we haven't talked too much about Hezekiah the man..

But let me read you a few verses about Hezekiah the man that we see in 2 Chronicles, which contains the history of his reign over Israel...

2 Chronicles 29:1-3...

1 Hezekiah became king when he was twenty-five years old; and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Abijah, the daughter of Zechariah. 2 He did right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father David had done.

2 Chronicles 31:20-21...

20 Thus Hezekiah did throughout all Judah; and he did what was good, right and true before the Lord his God. 21 Every work which he began in the service of the house of God in law and in commandment, seeking his God, he did with all his heart and prospered.

You see, Hezekiah understood that his morality mattered..

How he could lead Israel to reform as a nation if he hadn't reformed himself?

But the truth is that Hezekiah was a moral man..

In other words, he lived by the same wisdom that he was encouraging the people to live by...

And when the leader of nation lives and does right, the people of the nation generally follow suit..

So, let's get back into this section of the book of Proverbs 25 -29 that contain the wisdom that Hezekiah brought to Israel...

Which is also the wisdom that Hezekiah lived by in life...

In Proverbs 27, we are continuing to learn about personal morality..

There is a way to live rightly in the world, and that way brings blessing to us...

But it also brings blessing to those around us whether that is our family, our church, or our nation..

Hezekiah lived rightly and the people who were exposed to this wisdom also began to live rightly, and God put off Israel's conquering for another 100 years..

May we be just as committed to living rightly, and may our commitment to live rightly bless our families, our churches, and our nation..

So let's continue to learn how to live by the Lord's wisdom beginning in verse 1 of Proverbs 27..

I. Honor in Humility (1-2)

*1 Do not boast about tomorrow,
For you do not know what a day may bring forth.
2
Let another praise you, and not your own mouth;
A stranger, and not your own lips.*

In verse 1 of Proverbs 27, we almost James speaking to us from his book in the NT..

Listen to James 4:13-16...

13 Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit." 14 [g]Yet you do not know [h]what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. 15 [i]Instead, you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that." 16 But as it is, you boast in your [j]arrogance; all such boasting is evil.

Why is the problem with making plans for tomorrow?

The problem in planning and even boosting of tomorrow is that you have no idea if you will make it to tomorrow..

You presume that you will be here.

You presume that the world will be here..

And when you do that, you make no room for God's sovereignty.

The Bible teaches that is fully in control of all things at all times..

His sovereign control is sure, and if it is sure, there is also the chance that this could be your last day or the world's last day..

But it is also possible that God could have other plans than the ones you have made..

To plan without making any room for God's sovereignty and rule over the world is simply arrogance.

It is the sin of pride that puts us at the center of the world and everyone else (including God) revolving around us.

The sin of boosting about tomorrow is the sin of dethroning God's rule over all..

Wisdom tells us to plan but to plan in pencil and not pen.

Anything else is a result of arrogance..

Arrogance is also the root cause of verse 2 where the Lord tells us to avoid praising ourselves..

To live rightly in the world is to humbly in the world..

And humility never finds praise for yourself but always for others..

Arrogant people point out their own accomplishments while humble people are content with never being noticed or letting others praise them..

One time when Ronald Reagan was governor of California, he gave a speech in Mexico City..

He recalled boldly speaking for about 30 minutes and then sitting down to just a little bit of applause..

Once he sat down, a Mexican official stood up and began speaking in Spanish and the crowd went wild..

Applauding for extended periods at each pause in his speech..

Well, Reagan had no idea what he was saying but in order not to feel left out, he began to applaud loudly, often begging before the rest of the crowd and ending last..

Suddenly the US ambassador to Mexico leaned over and told Reagan that the man speaking was simply an interpreting what Reagan had just said..

Reagan would go on to say that no one in history had applauded as loudly and often for their own speech as he did that evening in Mexico City..

Fortunately for Regan, he wasn't intentionally trying to praise himself..

Yet there are plenty of people who are trying to praise themselves today...

In fact, you can really notice this when you start up a conversation with someone and they always find a way to make them look good before the conversation is over..

Wisdom calls us to humility...

Foolishness calls us to arrogance..

Arrogance worries that no one will notice them, but humility is only concerned with what God thinks of them..

May we exalt others and lower ourselves..

Only then will we truly be blessed by the Lord because God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble..

If you need grace tonight, seek to repent of your arrogance and put on more humility..

Humility will also be helpful when we find ourselves tempted to make the wrong choice in life, which is what we see in verses 3-4...

WE can call this..

II. Fuel for a Fall (3-4)

A huge part of living a moral life in this world is being prepared for trouble..

This world is fallen..

The people in it are fallen..

Jesus even said that in this world, we will have trouble..

But that doesn't mean that we shouldn't be prepared for trouble...

Instead, we should trouble approaching a mile away..

Well, verse 3 and verse 4 give us situations where he even the most righteous of people can be tempted to do the most unrighteous of things..

Verse 3..

3

***A stone is heavy and the sand weighty,
But the provocation of a fool is heavier than both
of them.***

Some things in life are particularly difficult to lift..

A stone is hard to grip and sand is extremely heavy..

But neither of them are as difficult as a fool who is provoking you to sin..

Look, we all deal with people in this world..

Some are believers and some are unbelievers but even so, we can find common ground with nearly anyone...

Yet, there are people who simply know how to push our buttons..

Verse 3 does not give a specific example of how foolish people provoke us, it simply states that they do..

And wisdom simply tells us to be spiritually prepared for them..

If you were lifting a stone or a bag of sand, you would have to prepare yourself to physically do it..

If you are dealing with a fool, you better be spiritually ready to deal with them as well..

Verse 4 is another example of fuel that can lead us to sin..

4

***Wrath is fierce and anger is a flood,
But who can stand before jealousy?***

Some people can stand under the assault of another's person wrath..

Some people can control their temper in difficult situations..

But not many people can stand under the assault of jealousy...

Envy of others can lead to all sorts of bad choices in life..

Think of Eve in the garden...

The original sin was her wanting to be like God..

She was jealous of God even in the paradise of Eden..

And even prior to her, it was Satan's own jealousy of God that led to his fall..

The cure for jealousy is contentment..

Contentment says that whatever I have and wherever I am at, I will find my joy in the Lord..

Listen to Paul speak of contentment in the book of Phillipians...

Phil 4:11-13

11 Not that I speak [g]from want, for I have learned to be [h]content in whatever circumstances I am. 12 I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. 13 I can do all things [i]through Him who strengthens me.

Contentment is the result of finding all your joy, all your needs, all your hope in Christ..

Jealously says that there is something that I cannot have..

Contentment says that there is nothing I need other than a saving relationship with Christ..

Jealously leads us to sin.

Contentment leads us to obedience..

Revival and reform and right living are the result of making right choices in bad situations..

If Israel wanted return to the Lord, they had to be committed to making the right decisions even when they were tempted to be provoked by fools and the be made jealous of others..

And the same is true for us as well...

The road to being more like Christ is filled with landmines that seek to throw us off track..

May we be prepared when we are provoked by a fool and may we be prepared when we are provoked to jealously...

This brings us to verses 5-10 which carry a common theme of friendship and relationships in this world...

And we clearly need wisdom in this area of our lives..

So let's look at verses 5-10 which we can call...

III. Rules for Relationships (5-10)

In verses 5-6, we see what can be called true friendship between people..

Verse 5..

5

***Better is open rebuke
Than love that is concealed.***

God's wisdom tells us that true friendship is based on accurate and open communication..

True friends are those that will rebuke you for your own good...

While not so true friends will hide the truth from you..

In other words, the best friend you can have are those who love you enough to tell you the truth, while the worst friends you can have are those who keep the truth from you...

Verse 6.

6

***Faithful are the wounds of a friend,
But [a]deceitful are the kisses of an enemy.***

Verse 6 furthers this idea by saying that enemies kiss you but friends wound you...

Not that sounds almost the opposite of what would expect, yet it still true about this world....

There are people who will run up and embrace you and love on you and claim their love of you, but in the end they will stab you in the back..

And there are also people who will hurt you with the truth, and though their words wound you, those people are the ones who truly love you...

Remember Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss, as be aware of those who stick close by you...

They may simply be hanging around to figure out the best way to hurt you...

Verse 7 is a little more difficult to understand but it seems that it is also in reference to friendships..

7

***A sated [b]man [c]loathes honey,
But to a famished [d]man any bitter thing is sweet.***

The person in the first part of this verse is full...

A sated man is someone who has just eaten, and when we are full, we do not desire to add to our misery...

I love the new caramel M&Ms..

But there is a point where I can fill myself with them so much that even looking at them makes me sick..

And the point here seems to be that we are so full of friends when things are going well that we don't see a need to continue making friends..

However, our fullness of friends changes..

We in a sense get hungry for people..

Maybe we have fallen into sin and all of our friends scatter..

In those cases, those who stick by us are sweet, even if they give us some bitter counsel in the process..

Think of the man who commits adultery and brings shame to his family.

Most of his friends will distance themselves from him, yet his true friends will stay by his side..

Now they may offer some hard truths about his sin, but by staying, they prove their friendship and their true love of him.

Let's now move to verses 8-10 which also speak of friendships in a couple of ways..

8

***Like a bird that wanders from her nest,
So is a man who wanders from his [e]home.***

9

***Oil and perfume make the heart glad,
So a [f]man's counsel is sweet to his friend.***

10

***Do not forsake your own friend or your father's friend,
And do not go to your brother's house in the day of your calamity;
Better is a neighbor who is near than a brother far away.***

Some of the best scholars on the book of Proverbs find difficulty in pulling meaning from these verses..

Most agree that these verses are connected to friendships, yet there is often disagreement in how they should be applied..

Let me offer a few thoughts...

In verse 8, there is the simple wisdom of staying close to home..

That doesn't mean that God never wants you to move.

That doesn't mean that moving is the wrong decision...

However in the context of the wisdom about friendships, traveling away from home means that you will be leaving the blessing of good friends..

Very rarely do we have close friends who lives long distances from us..

In our day, it is possible with phones and cars, but even then it isn't easy to maintain close friends who are far away..

So, it is fine to leave the security of your home, but it means that you will need to make friends wherever you land..

Then in verse 9 , we get a benefit of having good friends..

9

*Oil and perfume make the heart glad,
So a [f]man's counsel is sweet to his friend.*

Just like oil and perfume make the smell of your immediate area more pleasant..

The sweet counsel of a close friend makes your life more pleasant as well..

And then we see this in verse 10..

10

Do not forsake your own friend or your father's friend,

And do not go to your brother's house in the day of your calamity;

Better is a neighbor who is near than a brother far away.

There have many thoughts on what the wisdom of verse 10 is..

Let me give you what I think is the best option..

There are people in our life who aren't related to us, yet we are closer to them than we are to our own family..

And the simple wisdom of verse 10 is don't forsake your true friends by trying to keep your family happy.

In fact, the church is a reflection of this..

There are brothers and sisters in the Lord that we would turn for counsel way before we would turn to our own brothers and sisters for advice.

I was talking to someone about this the other day, but there seems to be this pressure to listen to our family and be close to them even though we may be saved and they are lost..

I want to remind you that truth divides people as much as it unites people..

Jesus even said that he would cause division in families..

So if your find yourself growing in Christ while also growing apart from your unbelieving family, that is normal..

In fact, you should be growing apart from people who don't love the Lord like you do, and if you aren't seeing that, you may not be growing at all..

Now, should we honor our father and mother?

Absolutely.

Should we be willing to help our family?

Absolutely.

But does this mean that we have to run to them and seek out their advice over the advice of our Christian friends?

Absolutely not.

Verse 10 would tell you and other verses in the Bible would encourage us to go to those closest to us spiritually rather than those closest to us in the family tree..

Now, the best of both worlds is to have a family around you that loves the Lord as much as you do..

That my friends is one of the greatest blessings that the Lord can provide.

And if that is the case in your life, thank the Lord for it over and over..

Conclusion

Let's stop at verse 10 for tonight..

Next week, we will finish up chapter 27 as we see a father offering wisdom to his son..

Let me give you a few notes to end our night..

#1 - Live in peace under the sovereignty of God.

I feel the pressure to plan, to save, to have the next 10 years mapped out for my life.

Yet, I also know that I have no idea what tomorrow may bring, much less 10 years of tomorrows.

So what I do is simply trust in whatever the Lord brings my way.

That doesn't mean that I am never disappointed or saddened or surprised by life, it just means that when life takes an unexpected turn, I know that God is behind the wheel...

But not only should we not boast about tomorrow, we also can't worry about tomorrow...

We simply live in the peace that God is there and in control...

#2 - Live under control in the world.

Proverbs 27 is clear..

Foolish people and jealousy can both provoke us to sin..

But those aren't the only hurdles in life..

Lack of patience, lack of compassion, lack of love for others can also lead us to make bad decisions in the world..

Self-control is a fruit of the Spirit, but we need to exercise it and train it in our lives...

You are looking and living in a world that has very little of zero self-control...

Most people live by the motto that if it feels right, do it.

Yet, the Bible never endorses that idea.

The Bible tells us to live controlled lives under the leadership of the Spirit of God..

And there need to be things in our life at all times where we are exercising self-control..

Maybe it is your tongue.

Maybe it is your diet.

Maybe it is your anger.

Maybe it is your lack of patience..

As believers, we must be under control in the world..

Panic and chaos are not fruits of the Spirit, but self-control and discipline surely are.

#3 - Live as a good friend and live with good friends.

Sadly as technology increases, real friendships seem to be decreasing..

My children have friends that they have never met because many friendships are simply social media friendships..

Yet, that is not the kind of friend described in the Scriptures..

Real friends have a physical presence in your life..

And real serve a spiritual need in your life..

And if I could stress one aspect of friendship that is sorely lacking in our culture..

It is the friend who will rebuke and correct you if necessary...

In a culture that does it all it can not to offend anyone, you need a friend who doesn't mind offending you if necessary..

That doesn't mean we need unkind friends but it does mean we need friends who are willing to identify our sins and point us to repentance..

If you have a friend who will tell you why you are wrong according to the Bible, you make sure to thank the Lord for him or her..

And if have a friend who keeps you around even though you point out their flaws, you cherish that friendship..

Let's pray.