

Hezekiah's Help

(Proverbs 28:1-11)

8/8/18; Wed PM Pine Grove

Introduction

For the past few weeks, we have been looking at a section of Proverbs that runs from Proverbs 25-29..

These 5 chapters have a title of sorts..

Proverbs 25:1...

These also are proverbs of Solomon which the men of Hezekiah, king of Judah, transcribed.

And we have talked at length about Hezekiah, who was the king of the southern part of Israel after the northern portion of Israel fell to the Assyrians..

We noted in the book of Chronicles that he came to power at the age of 25...

Now that alone is challenging..

Yes, there have been young kings who successfully led nations, but often they came to power in peaceful times and we are able to learn how to lead while things were prosperous..

Hezekiah did not have that luxury..

Instead, he came to power as half the nation of Israel was gone having been taken captive to Assyrian..

It would have clearly been a time of unrest for the remainder of Israel..

Surely, the people in the south feared a similar fate for themselves..

I am sure they feared a return of the Assyrians or even another nation would sense their weakness and attacks as well..

And now in their minds, they have some kid running the show as their king...

Though we don't know, I would assume that Hezekiah lacked the confidence of the people that he was leading..

So what was he to do?

Well, he turned to the only source of help.

He turned to the wisdom of God to lead the nation..

I was reading an article the other day that really made a lot of sense...

The author of the article was noting how Christians often pray for wisdom on matters that are already addressed in the Scriptures...

For instance, he noted that Charles Spurgeon was once talking to a young man who came to him wanting advice..

The young man was ready to get married, but had two young ladies that he was trying to decide between..

He told Spurgeon that he had begged God for wisdom on which one to ask..

As Spurgeon asked a few questions, it became clear that one of the girls was not a Christian...

Spurgeon got irritated with the young man..

“Why are you asking God for wisdom on which one to marry? God has already given you wisdom on that in the Bible. How dare you ask God for wisdom that is already available to you without prayer.”

I think that is a valid point today.

I have had people tell me that they are praying for wisdom on issues where God has already offered wisdom on these same issues in the Bible..

Well, Hezekiah may have needed a lot of wisdom in running a country on the brink of collapse, but he realized that God's wisdom was available to him..

So instead of despairing that he lacked wisdom, he simply sent his men to collect wisdom that God had already given to Solomon...

I think there's a good application for our own hearts there...

Instead of thinking that you don't know what to do, turn to the Bible and see if God has already given the wisdom that you need.

Well, Hezekiah's men found lots of valuable wisdom for him and the nation..

And we have been looking at this wisdom over the past few weeks..

In sum, a king and a nation can be blessed if they simply live by God's wisdom..

In other words, there's no secret formula for personal or national revival other than obedience to the Lord's commands...

And so chapters 25 to 29 have simply offered God's wisdom in a few areas...

One area has been wisdom for rulers and governments..

One area has been wisdom for personal relationships, whether those relationships of family or friends or even strangers..

And then a final area of wisdom is simply personal wisdom for each individual in a nation...

In other words, nations are blessed as people live by God's wisdom and kings rule by God's wisdom..

Well, the final two chapters of this collection of wisdom put together by Hezekiah's simply reinforce those themes by mixing them together..

So, let's start these final two chapters of this section by looking at verses 1-11 of chapter 28...

We will call these verses...

I. A Confidence in Wisdom (1-2)

*1 The wicked flee when no one is pursuing,
But the righteous are [a]bold as a lion.*

2

*By the transgression of a land many are its
princes,
But by a man of understanding and knowledge, so
it endures.*

In 1 Corinthians 14:33, we read that God is not a God of confusion but a God of peace..

You see, Satan is the master of confusion and chaos..

This is how he operates..

He likes disorder.

He thrives in war and violence..

Well, wicked people act in the same manner..

In verse 1, the wicked flee when no one is pursuing...

In other words, wicked people run away even when there is no threat..

No the question is this..

Why would you run when no one is chasing you?

Well, a lack of confidence would cause you to run..

You would either be so paranoid and unsure that you would run just in case..

Or you would be so confused that you would run until you had more information..

Well, wicked people lack wisdom...

They lack peace..

So they foolishly retreat when it isn't necessary...

On the other hand, those with wisdom who are described as the righteous here will stand and face nearly anyone.

The second half of verse 2 says that they are as bold as a lion..

Now, let me tell you something.

I am by nature a less than confident person.

I didn't take the drivers test until almost a year after I was eligible because I feared failing..

Though you may not believe, I lack the confidence in any situations in life..

But due to the grace of God saving me...

Through the Word of God teaching me, I am able to stand confidently each week and declare the full counsel of God to anyone who is willing to listen...

This is the confidence of gaining God's wisdom and understanding and knowledge..

It builds our confidence..

Not in ourselves but in the power of God..

And then in verse 2, we see more negative effects of confusion..

When a nation is filled with sin, there are many leaders..

In other words, wickedness leads to chaos as the people of the land don't know who to listen to or follow..

And when there are many leaders, confusion spreads...

On the other hand, a leader full of God's wisdom and knowledge provides stability to a nation so it endures..

This is the personal and national benefit of wisdom...

It leads to a confident life and a stable society..

While wickedness and lack of wisdom lead to paranoia and collapse..

If a nation wants revival, it must first have stability...

I think it is a safe assumption that there were a lot of people in Judah questioning the direction of the country after the fall of the northern part of the nation..

I am sure there were many people wanting to act as prince and king and lead the nation..

And though Hezekiah may have been young and inexperienced, he could be a stabilizing force in the country if he simply sought out the wisdom of God and taught it to the people of Israel as well..

In times of confusion, people don't need more voices to listen to..

They need one voice to listen to, and that voice is the Word of God...

And when that word is embraced and preached and obeyed, a chaotic nation can become a stable place, and a unsure life can become a confident life.

Let's move from a confidence in Wisdom to a contrast in wisdom in verses 3-11..

II. A Contrast in Wisdom (3-11)

As Hezekiah seeks to lead Israel back to the wisdom of God, he often uses the contrast in how the wise and foolish live, which is exactly what verses 3-11 highlight..

Now to see this contrast in the best light, we are going to group the verses in this section...

WE will begin by reading verses 3 and 8...

Verse 3..

3

***A poor man who oppresses the lowly
Is like a driving rain [b]which leaves no food.***

Skip down to verse 8...

8

***He who increases his wealth by interest and usury
Gathers it for him who is gracious to the poor.***

One of the great hopes of the world is to eliminate poverty, yet Jesus even said that the poor will always be around..

And the reason is two fold..

Number 1, poverty will always exist in a fallen world because fallen people will always take advantage of other fallen..

And number 2, poverty will always exist because it is often a judgment on sin..

So poor people will always be around in the world..

You can find them in the poorest countries and the wealthiest countries...

And God's wisdom is simply..

Do not take advantage of the poor..

In verse 3, it is possible for the poor to even take advantage of other poor people..

Now you may ask how does that happen?

It could be that the poor come into money and power..

It could be that the person is poor but not as poor as another..

Either way, it is possible for the poor to exploit the poor..

But when that happens, it is like a hard rain beating down the crops instead of watering them..

In other words, you expect the rain to help the crops but sometimes the rain can harm the crops..

In the same way, you would expect the poor to help the poor so when they take advantage of the poor, it is doubly worse..

Then in verse 8, there is a warning to anyone who oppress the poor...

You may exploit the poor, but God may exploit you and take what you have and give it to someone who is generous to the poor..

The contrast here is simple..

Wisdom for a nation and or us as people is to be gracious and generous to the poor and resist the urge to take advantage of them..

Verses 4, 7, and 9 offer us a second bit of wisdom in this section..

Let's read each of them together..

*Verse 4.**4**Those who forsake the law praise the wicked,
But those who keep the law strive with them.**7**He who keeps the law is a discerning son,
But he who is a companion of gluttons humiliates
his father.**9**He who turns away his ear from listening to the
law,
Even his prayer is an abomination.*

While verses 8 and 9 speak of man's relationship to the poor, these verses speak of man's relationship to the law of God...

In verse 4, those who disobey the law of God lack the wisdom to make right decisions..

In other words, if you are not a student of the law of God and the wisdom of God, you will end up calling right wrong and evil good..

In this case, you end up praising people who are clearly wicked in their behavior..

While those who keep the law of God and study the wisdom of God oppose those who act wickedly...

In verse 7, this principle is reinforced where a discerning son knows which friends to choose, while the son who lacks judgment hangs out with gluttonous friends...

We stress the need to pick your friends wisely in our home.

Clearly, there is a need to be kind to everyone, but close friends are such an influence in our lives for good or bad..

So how do we help our kids choose friends?

We talk about what a good friend looks like in terms of their spiritual walk..

Are they pursuing Christ?

Are they committed to the church?

Are they making good choices?

In other words, wisdom in choosing friends comes as you grow in your knowledge of the Bible..

The son in verse 7 lacked godly wisdom so his close friends were all people living in sin...

Verse 9 offers another consequence of not living by the law and the wisdom of God...

9

***He who turns away his ear from listening to the law,
Even his prayer is an abomination.***

Lack of obedience to the law and lack of wisdom leads to bad friendships, but it also ruins your relationship with the Lord..

In this case, lack of living by the law of God hinders your prayers..

There is a myth that God hears all prayers in the same way, yet the Bible speaks in multiple places of how a person's prayers are hindered..

In 1 Peter, a man who fails to live in an understanding way with his wife will have his prayers to God hindered..

Psalms 66 says that people who refuse to repent of their sins are in danger of the Lord refusing to listen to them...

And that is certainly the case here where a person who refuses to listening to word of God will find that God refuses to listen to him...

In sum, verses 4, 7, and 9 speak of the wisdom of those who listen to the law of God and have a respect for the word of God..

Verses 5 and 10 offer us another bit of wisdom here..

Verse 5..

5

***Evil men do not understand justice,
But those who seek the Lord understand all things.***

10

***He who leads the upright astray in an evil way
Will himself fall into his own pit,
But the blameless will inherit good.***

In verses 1 and 2, we learned that evil and foolish people lack good judgment...

Remember that the evil man runs when no one is chasing..

Well, evil people also lack good judgment about other things in the world as well..

In this case, evil people don't understand justice..

In other words, people who spurn God and his word have no idea how to know right from wrong..

While the righteous are able to understand all things..

This is not to say that all Christians know all things, but it does teach that those who seek the Lord are much more equipped to understand the world than the lost..

In fact, the evil man lacks so much judgment that he can even lead the righteous man astray...

That is what verse 10 teaches...

Yet when he does that, he often falls into his own trap, while the righteous man escapes danger and finds good..

One final contrast in wisdom is seen in verse 6 and 11..

Verse 6..

6

***Better is the poor who walks in his integrity
Than he who is [c]crooked though he be rich.***

Verse 11..

11

***The rich man is wise in his own eyes,
But the poor who has understanding [d]sees
through him.***

We have seen the “better is” statements before in the Proverbs..

The idea is that there is a better way of life in the world...

Yet, it is not often a better way of life as the world sees, but as God deems it..

In this case, the better life is to be poor and honest than rich and crooked..

And though verse 11 doesn't say it the same way as verse 6..

The wisdom of it is this..

It is better to be poor and have understanding than to be rich and lack judgment..

Think of Judas..

He wanted riches and that blinded him to what he was doing...

So he thought it was good idea to get riches and betray Christ...

And what a tragic lack of judgment that was..

Yet, that is how riches often blind our hearts...

They promise happiness but they end up making us stupid in the process...

Now the world assumes that rich people are wise people, yet that is not always the case..

Though there are plenty of people who love the Lord and have wisdom and money, there are also plenty of people who have money but no wisdom..

Think of the majority of Hollywood...

All the money in the world but couldn't define right and wrong if their life depended upon it..

All the money in the world but not an ounce of integrity and honesty..

There is no question that riches can make life easier, but if that means I lose my integrity and understanding to gain them, it isn't worth it..

Conclusion

So what can we take home with us tonight?

#1- Wisdom brings security.

As you listen to the world today, people want security.

The main reason is that the world is less and less stable..

Not only are there threats from other nations on our own nation, there is also growing unrest among people in our own nation..

People are scared to go out into the world..

People are scared to send their kids out into the world..

And worse yet, people are afraid to speak out in the world..

Yet that lack of security and fear of speaking up further cripples us...

As I said before, the cure for uncertainty is trusting in the certainty of God's word and wisdom...

God's word makes us secure in Him..

God's word makes us secure to live in the world...

And God's word also makes us secure to speak in the world as well..

I want to be honest...

I have no confidence in myself or in anything that I say despite what you may think..

But I have great confidence when I know the Word of God and speak with certainty about it..

Look, the world needs a clear voice in times of confusion..

We as believers must speak clearly and boldly, but we can't do that if we aren't full of the wisdom of God that is found in the Scriptures..

I can't tell you how many times I have heard Christians say that they didn't know how to respond to someone because they weren't sure what the Bible says..

Well, it is time to figure out what the Bible says and stand boldly on it...

#2 - *Wisdom brings clarity.*

As we have seen tonight, people who lack wisdom don't know how to choose friends...

They don't what justice looks like..

They don't really know how anything works...

Yet, the promise of wisdom is clarity...

The person who has wisdom gets discernment..

The person who has wisdom understands justice.

The person who has has wisdom sees clearly how the world works..

If there is anything that the world needs worse than a sense of security, it is a sense of clarity..

We live in the age of the judges where everyone odes right in their own eyes...

Yet, we as believers must call people to do what is right in God's eyes..

And that requires us to know what is right in God's eyes..

So may we all gain wisdom and help ourselves first
of all get clarity..

And then may we share that clarity with the rest of
the world..

Let us pray.