

Go This Way!

(Proverbs 29:3-14)

8/22/18; Wed PM Pine Grove

Introduction

With fall comes football season.

Every fan thinks their team will win every game this year.

And while we realize that isn't possible, there is one team over the past decade that has won nearly every game..

That team is a team that we rarely hear about because they play up north, but the North Dakota State Bison are an incredible team...

Since 2010, they have only lost 8 games while winning 77..

Over their history as a team, they have won 14 national championships in their division..

They have won 34 conference championships..

And they are the only college football program to win 5 consecutive national championships from 2011 to 2015..

Simply put, this football team is the best of the best.

As a result, many people have tried to determine why they are so successful...

The current coach simply says that the school is successful because they “do things the right way.”

And what he means in terms of football is this.

They run a program that is honest.

They recruit by the rules.

They make sure that players graduate.

They are free of player and coach scandals..

They play by the rules on the field.

Though I agree that teams who have those characteristics are doing it the right way, that phrase alone interesting...

If there is a right way to do things in terms of a football team, that must mean that there is also a wrong way to do it as well..

And we all know even if we aren't a football fan, that there are teams that cheat and lie and get involved in scandals...

In fact there are plenty of teams that do things the wrong way..

But the same is true in life.

There is a right way to live and a wrong way to live.

In fact, the book of Proverbs makes this claim over and over..

There is a right way to do things.

There is a right attitude to have.

There is a right view of the world around us..

And for 28 chapters, we have looking at how the Lord would have us live in the world that he created..

Tonight brings us to Proverbs 29.

There are only two chapters remaining in the book, but this is the last chapter of a small section that runs from Proverbs 25 - 29.

And for the past few weeks, we have been looking at this section in the book of Proverbs that is simply titled “the proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah, king of Judah, transcribed.”

And we have noted that this section of the book of Proverbs was essentially a collection of wisdom that can help turn a nation back to the Lord..

Hezekeiah was a young king when he came to power..

He lacked wisdom that comes through life experience, but he also knew that God had provided his wisdom through a previous king of Israel named Solomon..

And even if you are young, you don’t have to wait on wisdom, you simply need to read it and live by it..

Therefore, Hezekiah sent his men to collect God’s wisdom given through Solomon in hopes that he could turn the nation under him back to the Lord..

And though he had no idea how his efforts would turn out, we do..

Because history tells us that the portion of Israel that Hezekiah ruled would repent and turn to the Lord for a while..

In fact, their response and obedience to the wisdom of Proverbs 25-29 prevented their overthrow as a nation for at a 100 years...

Needless to say, the wisdom of these chapters is effective if people will only listen and live by it..

Therefore, let's finish up this final chapter of wisdom that Hezekiah's men collected in hopes that we can respond and obey like the people of Judah did many centuries ago..

The structure of this last chapter is fairly simple to follow..

Most every verse or set of verses is a contrast of right living with wrong living...

In other words, Proverbs 29 will teach us how to do things the right way while avoiding the wrong way...

We will begin in verses 3 and 4 with what I call...

I. Don't Lose It All (3-4)

3

*A man who loves wisdom makes his father glad,
But he who keeps company with harlots wastes his
wealth.*

4

*The king gives stability to the land by justice,
But a man who takes bribes overthrows it.*

In verses 3 and 4, we see two people who waste incredible opportunities...

The man in verse 3 is a wealthy son, and the man in verse 4 is a king..

Both of these positions give these men an advantage in the world..

The wealthy son has the advantage of money to help him make his way in life.

The king has the advantage of power to help him make his way in the world.

Yet, both of them waste their incredible opportunities..

The wealthy blows his money on harlots.

And the king wastes his power by taking bribes from others..

On the other hand, there are two others in these verses who don't squander their blessings..

The wise son loves wisdom and makes his parents glad.

And the wise king loves justice and makes his nation glad.

Needless to say, there are plenty of foolish people who waste their talents and advantages in life..

Whether God makes rich or powerful is not the point, the point is that you use whatever God has given you to bless others..

And when you do that, the people around you will also be blessed by it..

Let's look at verses 5 and 6, which we will call..

II. Don't Get Trapped (5-6)

5

*A man who flatters his neighbor
Is spreading a net for his steps.*

6

*By transgression an evil man is ensnared,
But the righteous sings and rejoices.*

There are two people in verses 6-7..

The person who sets traps for others, and the person who avoids the trap set by others..

In verse 5, we meet the trap-setter..

This is the overly flattering person..

WE have seen and been warned about the person who gushes with compliments of others..

They are so full of flattery that it looks fake..

And the truth is that it is fake..

There is no sincerity in some people's compliments..

They are only flattering you to gain an advantage over you..

Verse 4 says that their flattery is setting a trap for you..

In other words, they are baiting you with their compliments...

They are trying to win your friendship to get something from you.

When I was a kid, my dad would put out fishing baskets in a pond.

These were baskets made out of chicken wire and sunk in the lake.

Inside the basket was some sort of bait...

It was often baited with cat food or dog food, and the wire was bent in a certain way to let the fish slide in to get the bait, but they couldn't easily exit..

This is the aim of the flattering tongue..

It lures you in to trap you and use you to its advantage..

And the simple wisdom of these two verses is don't get caught in that trap..

In fact, the righteous man is able to sing with traps all around him..

And the reason he can sing is that his wisdom and his knowledge makes him secure even in a fallen world surrounded by fallen people trying to trap him..

In light of this verse, we may think of Paul and Silas being thrown into prison, yet the Bible tells us that they were singing..

Even in prison, those who are safe and secure in Christ have the freedom to sing..

And even in a fallen world with trouble all around, those who love God and have his wisdom feel safe and sound..

Let's now move to verse 7, which stands alone but gives us a good contrast of right from wrong...

I call this..

III. Don't Mistreat the Poor (7)

A common theme in the book of Proverbs is a person's view of the poor.

The clear instruction of verse 7 is that wisdom calls us to defend the poor..

And the reason that believers defend the poor is because God defends the poor..

Listen to *Psalm 140:12*...

12

*I know that the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted
And justice for the poor.*

Pslam 41:1..

*How blessed is he who considers the [a]poor;
The Lord will deliver him in a day of [b]trouble.*

Pslam 9:18

18

*For the needy will not always be forgotten,
Nor the hope of the afflicted perish forever.*

In sum, God's people fight for the rights of the poor because God Himself fights for the poor..

On the other hand, wicked and evil people don't help the poor, and even struggle to understand why others do..

The prevailing of poor people throughout much of history and even today is that the poor deserve their poorness..

Most people assume that they are poor because they don't work or because God is judging them due to some great sin..

Now to be fair, financial trouble can be a result of laziness..

WE have seen that in the book of Proverbs..

And financial trouble can also be a judgment of God due to their sin...

But most of the time when we see a poor person, we have no idea why they are poor..

However it is easier to assume they deserve it than to help them in their trouble..

As a result, many needs of the poor go unmet...

And this is not only the result of unbelievers not caring, it can also be the result of believers who don't care as well..

Wise people, God-honoring people should never take advantage of the poor, and we must certainly defend them and help them in a world that largely ignores them..

Speaking of the world, let's look at the next contrast in how to live right and wrong in terms of the society around us..

IV. Don't Lose Your Cool (8-11)

In verses 8-12, we read this..

8
*Scorners set a city aflame,
 But wise men turn away anger.*

9
*When a wise man has a controversy with a foolish
 man,
 [e]The foolish man either rages or laughs, and
 there is no rest.*

10
*Men of bloodshed hate the blameless,
 But the upright [f]are concerned for his life.*

11
*A fool [g]always loses his temper,
 But a wise man holds it back.*

There may be no more appropriate piece of wisdom for the climate of our current culture than this set of wisdom verses here..

In verse 8, the wicked riot while the righteous show restraint...

Scorners set a city aflame means exactly what it says..

There are people who lack self-control and whose anger burns so hot that they will set fire to the world as a way of trying to get back at it..

While the righteous man keeps his wits about himself by turning away when he is angry..

You see, foolish people panic in their anger..

They can't think rationally so they think irrationally...

In the LA riots of 1992, people were angry at the police brutality of Rodney King.

However their anger turned to rage and they actually burnt down their own neighborhoods..

They burnt down churches and stores and place that they shopped..

That is the insanity of anger out of control.

Anger out of control doesn't think rationally..

The people of fire shouldn't have set anything on fire, but if they wanted to burn something, they should have at least picked a neighborhood that wasn't their own...

However, the actions of a man or woman out of control are not the only problem..

Not only are they violent, you also can't reason with them..

Look at verse 9...

9

***When a wise man has a controversy with a foolish man,
[e]The foolish man either rages or laughs, and there is no rest.***

In other words, you can try and talk to a fool..

You can even make a sound argument of why he should change his way..

But fools will laugh at you or worse, they will rage at you even though you are right in your argument..

And the reason that the wicked rage at the righteous is found in the first part of verse 10..

Men of blood shed hate the blameless..

In other words, if you are trying to live right, you are only enraging the people around you who refuse to live right..

And the summary of these verses is simply verse 11..

11

***A fool [g]always loses his temper,
But a wise man holds it back.***

Let's now turn our attention to verses 12-14...

V. Don't Forget the Image of God (12-14)

In verses 12-14, we return to the subject of the poor in society..

In verse 7, we were one the individual level in our view of the poor, but now in verses 12-14, we look at a nation's view and treatment of the poor..

In verse 12, we see that some governments are based on lies..

12

***If a ruler pays attention to falsehood,
All his ministers become wicked.***

In this case it seems that the lies are about the poor..

IT could be a case of governments and leaders who refuse to help the poor because they are being told that all people deserve what they get..

IT could be the case of a king thinking that all poor people are being punished by God..

Whatever the reason, it seems that some governments act wickedly toward the poor..

But here is the reason for not being unfair with the poor..

Verse 13..

13

The poor man and the oppressor [h]ave this in common:

The Lord gives light to the eyes of both.

In our language, the reason that you shouldn't treat the poor unfairly is that we all put our pants on one leg at a time..

In other words, even the poor are made in God's image and therefore deserve the respect of everyone, especially those in positions of leadership over them...

There is no biblical reason to treat the poor unfairly, but there is plenty of reason to treat them with respect and dignity since they reflect the image of God in the world...

On top of that reason, there is one final reason for kings to show respect to the poor in verse 14..

14

***If a king judges the poor with truth,
His throne will be established forever.***

In other words, God honors rulers who govern with fairness to both the poor and the rich...

And he honors them with long reigns of power and privilege...

The ultimate picture of a righteous king is Christ...

He judged the poor with perfect truth during his ministry on earth..

He dealt kindly and fairly with poor people and even showed compassion to the poor all throughout his ministry..

We as His people are called to no less..

And let's end there for tonight, but let's make a few notes before we sing and pray..

Conclusion

#1 - It is easy to waste the Lord's blessings.

I was talking with a former football coach this week.

He is now out of coaching but he is still around kids.

I was asking him what has changed in his years of being around kids...

His reply?

It used to be that kids took advantage of every opportunity, but now kids waste opportunity more than ever..

Then he told me about the best football he ever saw in high school who is now working a 40 hour a week job at Wal-Mart...

The Lord blesses his people abundantly..

Therefore, our responsibility is not to make the blessings but rather to recognize them and then use them to bless the Lord...

The prodigal son asked for his inheritance and then quickly blew it all away..

The wealthy son on Proverbs 29 did just the same..

May God help us to see the blessings of today and use them for our good and God's glory..

#2 - It is easy to be deceived with sweet words.

The book of Proverbs has really taught me to be cautious with flattery.

There is nothing wrong with encouraging people but I never want to encourage anyone in order to gain their favor...

Encouragement and flattery should be used to build up those in church rather than to win them to my side..

The danger is that fools and false teachers both use flattery to gain a following...

May God help us to be discerning when we hear sweet words...

#3- It is easy to be unkind to the poor.

Somewhere along the way, the church has lost its love of the poor..

To be fair, there are now plenty of poor people who know how to take advantage of Christians...

The parking lot of the Christian bookstore in Spartanburg used to be a place where the poor learned to hang out..

They knew that believers used that store so they would wait until they left and then approach them asking for money...

Yet, even with poor people like that, we can't become unkind to all poor people..

WE can't assume that everyone is looking for a handout at church..

We must assess every situation with a sound biblical approach and then act in good faith..

Will we be taken advantage of by poor people?

Sure, we will.

But we can't let that harden our heart to all of them..

May God give us grace to extend kindness to the poor..

One final thought..

#4 - *It is easy to lose our temper.*

There is much that tempts me to anger in the world,
yet I am never to sin in my anger..

You see, fools can't control their temper and worse
yet, they can't can't control their actions once they
lose their temper..

Yet, this cannot be the way of the Christian in the
world..

A wise man holds back his temper...

Do you know what the opposite of rage is?

It is self control...

People with self control are able to keep their tem-
pers in check and they can turn away and walk
away even when the tempers rise..

Do you know the greatest example of cool under
fire?

Christ.

Even when they hurled insults and whips at Him, he
never once lose his composure...

He was faithful and sinless until the very end...

When we are tempted to anger, may we all find our strength in the One who never sinned in His anger..

Let us pray.