

July 4

Scriptures: Read Proverbs 19 & 20

Key Verse: “He who keeps the commandment keeps his soul, but he who is careless of his ways will die.” (Proverbs 19:16)

Overview

We read in these chapters many brief descriptions about several types of people, including that of the ideal King, who is wise, just, and righteous (19:12; 20:2, 8, 26, 28). The righteous and kind poor man is also described as being better off than the lying fool, implied to be rich (19:1, 22; compare 28:6). Yet another liar who is condemned is the false witness who will not escape the judgment of God, for God hates injustice and corruption of any kind (19:5, 9, 28). The deception of merchants who use false weights is an abomination to the Lord (20:10, 23). It is equally deceptive for the buyer to lie while bargaining over merchandise and later boast of how he got a good deal (20:14). When people get what they desire by sinning and eat of the sweet “bread of deceit”, they may be pleased with themselves and satisfied for the moment, but later they will come to regret it and suffer for it (20:17).

Another individual that receives attention is the foolish son. The punishment of death was prescribed in the Law of Moses for an extreme case of rebellion and disrespectfulness when the son would curse his parents (Ex. 21:17; Lev. 20:9). The Lord Himself will bring judgment upon such a foolish and wicked son (20:20; 19:26). Notice that in the same sentence about the foolish son who is the ruin of his father, mention is made of the contentious wife who brings discord into the home rather than peace. She is described as being a continual source of irritation (19:13). When the wife does not honour and respect her husband, it can have a terrible influence upon the children who may grow to be disobedient and disrespectful to their father and other authority figures. God has preordained an order of authority (the husband is to be head of the house), and when this order is not kept, the result is chaos and the break up of the home. The home is blessed, however, by a prudent wife, who is to be considered as a gift from God (19:14).

The father, as well as the mother, plays an important role in the raising of a child. The father’s loving discipline and chastisement of his child from the time of early childhood, “while there is hope”, will teach him to obey instructions and respect authority, including the authority of God and His Holy Word; this will help him in attaining wisdom so he might not die the death of a fool (19:18, 27; 20:11). The one who, as a child, received correction and listened to counsel will be better able to receive counsel as an adult from both wise men and God (20:18). Man’s counsel can sometimes fall, but those who follow the Lord’s counsel can be sure it will stand (19:20-21)

The most important thing to teach a child is the fear of the Lord, which these proverbs repeatedly stress as leading to life, and it is promised that “he who has it will abide in satisfaction; he will not be visited with evil” (19:23). The one who fears the Lord lives his or her life in a way pleasing to the Lord which will help him to avoid many troubles, as well as keeping his soul from destruction. The one who follows God’s way and not the twisted paths of his own careless choosing (19:1, 16) will not do such an unwise thing as to drink intoxicating beverages (20:1).

This can cause one to lose his self-control. The wise person always maintains control of his temper (19:11; 20:3).

These proverbs make it very clear that slothfulness does not please God (19:15; 20:4,13). The epitome of laziness is humourously pictured by the slothful man who, while eating with his hands (the custom of the ancient near east), is too lazy to bring his food to his mouth (19:24)! This proverb may be condemning those lazy people who start something without seeing it to completion.

In previous proverbs, much has been said about showing mercy and kindness to the poor. We are all created in the image of God, and every person must be given human dignity and respect. To reproach the poor is to reproach their Maker, the Lord (11:24-26; 14:31; 17:5). Here we learn that giving to the needy is like lending to God. He will repay those who are charitable (19:17; cf. 2 Cor. 9:6-9; Matt. 25:34ff).

Prayer

Dear Lord, You are the one we look to for wisdom. Help us to heed the counsel from Your Word and be faithful to pass it on to our children, as well as to other loved ones. For Your Word is Life!