

July 6

Scriptures: Read Proverbs 23 & 24

Key Verse: “Do not let your heart envy sinners, but in the fear of the Lord continue all day long; for surely there is a hereafter, and your hope will not be cut off.” (Proverbs 23:17-18)

Overview

Once again we read of the importance of giving discipline to children. The Bible advises the use of a “rod” to punish and correct the child who has erred. The rod was a flexible twig which would sting but not cause any serious harm. Children must learn that disobedience to their parents and to God will lead to punishment. By correcting a child when he first starts to wilfully and knowingly disobey, the parents can “deliver his soul from hell” (23:13-14).

These continuing “words of the wise” (22:17-24:22) are so that the student of wisdom might be delivered from destruction and hell by learning to trust in God and by knowing and speaking the truth, thus being wise (22:19, 21). In order to be wise, the person who gains the favour of sitting down to eat with a ruler must be cautious at all times to do and say the right things, as well as have the right attitude toward the king and his delicacies or luxuries (22:29 — 23:1-3). It is most likely that the warning is not concerning eating too much of the king’s food, but rather participating in his evil schemes or desiring his riches, which the following two verses explain as being the “deceptive food” (23:4-5; Ps. 141:4). One day it is here and next day it is gone (23:5). The desire to be rich, which usually springs from greed, can cause a person to overwork. The wise man, like the Apostle Paul, warns against such a desire, since it not only causes stress but can cause one to fall into sin and be destroyed (1 Tim. 6:9-10).

The repeated warning for the student is to not be envious or jealous of an evildoer, nor of his riches, for they have no hope, and death awaits them. The student is also warned to not become friends with sinners, fools, sluggards, and riotous party-mongers, such as drunkards and gluttons who live excessively, lest he be influenced to be like them. Such a person’s life will end in poverty and death (23:6, 9, 17, 20-21; 24:1, 19, 30-34). He must also not join company with the greedy revolutionists (“those given to change”) who do not fear the Lord nor the king, lest he share in the calamity that these two powers (the Lord and the king) can bring upon such sowers of discord (24:21-22). The wise person will rather help to deliver those on the path of destruction (24:11-12) and lead them along with him in the way of hope and life, which is the way of the knowledge of wisdom and the fear of the Lord. This way alone promises a happy future, even unto eternity (23:17-18; 24:14).

Once again the student is warned against being greedy. He is to respect the property rights of the defenceless, and he is not to oppress the fatherless by moving the boundary stones of their inherited land so that he might have more land. Such a practice was strongly condemned (23:10; 22:28; Deut. 19:14). The Lord is the Defender and the mighty Redeemer of the needy (23:11; Ps. 68:5). He is like the kinsman redeemer or blood avenger in the Old Testament — a close relative who protected the property, rights, and honour of the family, as well as avenged the murder of his relative (Lev. 25:25; Num. 35:19; Ruth 4:4). Truly, our Lord Jesus is our Mighty Redeemer.

More importantly than protecting our earthly possessions, He redeemed our never-dying souls from the hands of the evil one and gave us a heavenly inheritance of which no one can rob us.

The way of wisdom and life that is portrayed in the Book of Proverbs, as well as in the entire Bible, does not include the drinking of intoxicating beverages (20:1; 21:17; 23:20-21; Isa. 5:11-12; Eph. 5:18). With descriptive language, the student of wisdom is strongly warned of the evils of drinking (23:29-35). It enslaves a person and makes him become insensitive, foolish, contentious, sorrowful, lustful, and irrational, as well as destroying his health (the body which was created by God to be the temple of the Holy Spirit). Thus it causes detrimental effects physically, psychologically, economically, and socially. The sparkling wine, or any other alcoholic drink, is described as being like the poison of a most venomous snake. Who in his right mind would voluntarily drink poison?

Prayer

Thank You, Lord, for the heavenly inheritance You've promised us as we follow Your ways. May we keep an eternal perspective which results in a compassion rather than an envy toward sinners.