

July 7

Scriptures: Read Proverbs 25 & 26

Key Verse: “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver.” (Proverbs 25:11)

Overview

We are told that this section of the Book of Proverbs (25:1-29:27) was compiled by the scribes of good King Hezekiah, who was anxious to preserve these sacred manuscripts and bring spiritual reformation to Judah. He was naturally interested in what Solomon, the wisest king who ever lived, had to say regarding kings, one's relationship to the king, and the establishment of the king's throne; so the first seven verses of chapter 25 deal with just that. A noble and wise king, or any leader, is to “search out a matter” that the truth may be revealed. It is especially important for the Word of God to be thoroughly searched, for within it is found the greatest of truths, enabling one to discover the will and mind of God.

When the wicked are present, problems and contention are sure to arise. In order for the king's throne to be established in righteousness, the wise king must cleanse his court, employing only those who are trustworthy, honest, pure, and righteous; then, like purified silver, it can be made into something beautiful (25:4-5).

Jesus taught in parable form the principle of humility (Luke 14:7-11) that closely resembles Proverbs 25:6-7, in which one is wisely advised to not exalt himself before a king so that he might not be put to shame. If one is proud and desires selfish approbation or a position which he does not deserve, he will surely be humiliated and rebuked by the one he seeks to impress. Before the King of kings, only the humble will be honoured.

Another way one may be put to shame is by publicly exposing a quarrel between individuals by going to court (25:8-10). It is better to settle differences privately, if possible, and if one is patient and uses gentle words, a dispute is quickly resolved (25:15). Like beautiful ornaments on a wall (“apples of gold in settings of silver”) is a word fitly spoken which brings peace (25:11).

The Proverbs give much practical wisdom for one's personal life, as well as one's relationship with others. We are advised against doing anything in excess, such as having too much of a good thing, like honey, or even in visiting one's neighbour too often, which can breed contempt (25:16-17). The emphasis here, as in many proverbs, is upon self-control. One is not to over-indulge, but to rather do all things in moderation; this is pleasing to the Lord. The wise person is also to have self-control over his spirit (the inner man with his desires and temperament). If he does not have self-control, he will be held up to ridicule, reproach, and contempt, and he will become vulnerable, just like a city whose walls have broken down (cf. Neh. 1:3).

Showing kindness to an enemy is a principle that Jesus taught and something for which the Lord will reward. More often than not, to “heap coals of fire on his head” by showing kindness will have a great effect in melting away the problems that exist (25:21-22; Matt. 5:44; Rom. 12:20).

Chapter 26 deals with the folly of fools (vv. 1-12), sluggards (vv. 13-16), and gossipers (vv. 17-28) and one's relationship to them. There seems to be a contradiction in 26:4-5, but upon closer

examination Solomon's intention is clear. There is a time when one should not enter into discussion with a fool, for such is vain, and he might lower himself to the fool's level (v. 4). Yet there is a time when the wise person must answer the fool with a strong rebuke to show him his folly, so that he might not also be guilty of pride in thinking that he is wise in his own eyes, as the sluggard thinks (26:5, 12, 16).

Considerable attention is given to the effects of contention, slander, gossip, and deceitful words (26:17-28). Those who speak in these perverse ways have wicked hearts and cause strife and ruin. The Lord will reveal their wickedness and bring back upon them, all the ruin they planned for others (26:26-27). Similarly, the Apostle Paul warned the Galatian Christians, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap" (Gal. 6:7). We serve a God of perfect justice!

Prayer

Oh God, give us wisdom in the words we speak. May our words always serve to build up rather than tear down. We ask, Lord, that You shed your love abroad in our hearts, for "out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks" (Matt.12:34).