

June 29

Scriptures: Read Proverbs 11

Key Verse: “The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he who wins souls is wise.”
(Proverbs 11:30)

Overview

Solomon’s proverbs continue with stressing the importance of honesty in business dealings, for that pleases the Lord. “A false balance” is a way to cheat others, springing out of greed and a disregard for one’s neighbours — this is an abomination to the Lord (11:1; Lev. 19:35-36). The root cause is pride and a selfish desire to be great and rich, which the fool will try to attain by any means, even though it harms his neighbour. He is ruthless and unprincipled. He will withhold grain to cause the prices to rise, but this will cause the poor to curse him (11:26). Such perversity and pride will bring him shame and cause his fall (11:2; 16:18), as well as the destruction of all his hopes and expectations. The riches he lusted after and attained through corrupt means will profit him nothing on judgment day, when God’s wrath will be poured out upon him.

The presence of too many wicked men, such as the one described above, will bring the downfall of their city and break apart the society. The opposite is true if there are enough righteous men within the city (e.g. Sodom and Gomorrah, Gen. 18:32); their wise counsel to the leader will bring safety (11:14; 24:6; compare 1 Kings 12:1-14, where foolish counsel brought about the division of the kingdom). Wise men deal honestly and prudently and cause the city to rejoice and be exalted (11:10-11). The people will bless the man who sells his grain at an honest price (11:26). He will be successful, since wisdom and integrity will guide him, and his righteousness will deliver him from death (11:4).

Unlike the foolish, the wise work to maintain peace; they do not gossip or reveal secrets which can stir up trouble and bring hurt to a person, but instead they use discretion. They can be trusted as faithful confidantes to “conceal a matter” (11:12-13; 19:11). Such a person is merciful and full of grace and therefore retains his honour, as does the “gracious woman”. The one, however, who is cruel and ruthless may retain riches but will never retain honour, and he is destined to fall (11:16, 28). The righteous please God and “flourish like foliage” (11:28). They receive honour and divine favour because of their blameless ways, which are far more important than riches (11:16, 27). Even so, the righteous will be judged and suffer the recompense because of their sinful nature, but how much more will the wicked sinner be recompensed with divine wrath (11:31; 1 Pet. 4:17-19).

The wisdom and understanding of the righteous yields fruit, for they are like a tree of life (Ps. 1:3). By their witness for God and their example to others, who see them flourish and have true life, they bring other souls to share in this tree of life that only God can give. The truly wise are those who purpose in their heart to win souls, for that is what the Lord desires His people to do (be “fishers of men”, Matt. 4:19; Eph. 5:15-17). Their divinely given wisdom teaches them their responsibility to win souls. Also, wisdom, coupled with love, instructs them in the best way to bring others to the Lord, that they too may know and experience the Lord and the wisdom He gives (James 5:20; Ezek. 3:17-21; Dan. 12:3).

Prayer

You, oh God, are the Author of Wisdom, and You write it in our hearts by Your Holy Spirit. Make us fruitful trees of life You can use to attract and win souls for Your eternal Kingdom.