

Proverbs

Proverbs Final Study

November 26, 2023

I. Introduction

A. The book of Proverbs is a rich resource of wisdom for all of us – both young and old. We began our study of selected portions of Proverbs twelve weeks ago, and today is our final Sunday in Proverbs. I have selected two portions of Proverbs that I think will be good for us to consider.

1. We will begin with **Proverbs 5:1-13**, a portion that clearly warns us of looking back with regret once we get caught and have to face the consequences of our foolish, selfish, and sinful choices.
2. Therefore, I invite the young people to listen attentively to this one. Sadly, I didn't when I was a teenager – and I have paid the price.
3. However, I have discovered that you don't have to be a teenager to make foolish choices, get caught, have to face the consequences, and then – when it is too late – feel a deep sense of regret over being so foolishly selfish and sinful. And so I am inviting all of us to listen attentively to the message in **Proverbs 5:1-13**.

B. Pray

II. Selected Portions from Proverbs

A. Proverbs 5:1-13

1. For the sake of clarity, I am going to replace the words “an adulteress” in **vs 3** with the words “sin's allure.” The word “allure” speaks of that which tempts us, or seduces and entices us by appealing to the desires, fears, hopes, and longings that reside within us, and which in turn draw us into foolish, selfish and sinful choices and behavior.
2. [1] My son (*young people*), give attention to my wisdom, incline your ear to my understanding; [2] that you may observe (*give attention to*) **discretion** (*cautious discernment leading to wise choices / behavior*) and your lips may **reserve** knowledge (*hold on to knowledge for future use*).
3. [3] For the lips of **sin's allure** (*sin's seductive enticements*) drip honey (*When sin's allure stirs your passions and desires, it often leads to you feeling like you just have to do what you are being enticed to do.*) and smoother than oil is her speech (*sin's allure is intended to deceive you into believing that what is being offered is too good, too beneficial, too satisfying, or too important to your well-being to turn down*);

4. [4] but **in the end** she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword.
 - a. “**in the end**” infers that even though you may get away with some foolishly selfish and sinful choices and behavior for a time, and maybe even a long time, the day will come when you get caught and have to pay the price for your foolishness.
 - b. And that price always includes some form of significant loss, self-destruction, and damage to your most valued and important relationships – including your relationship with God.
 - c. The reality is, you cannot avoid that day, for it will come – if not in this life, then for certain in the next.
5. [5] Her feet go down to death, her steps take hold of Sheol. [6] She does not ponder the path of life; her ways are unstable, she does not know it.
 - a. Sin’s allure/seduction/enticement has one goal in mind – our destruction. As Jesus said, “The thief comes **ONLY** to steal, kill, and destroy!”
 - b. Selfishness and sin know only one path, the path of death and eternal damnation. They know no other way. They have no other options. In spite of all they promise you, and in spite of all the fun and pleasure they shower on you, the only place they can take you is to the place of death and destruction.
6. [7] Now then, my sons, listen to me and do not depart from the words of my mouth. [8] Keep your way far from sin’s allure and do not go near the door of her house, [9] or you will give your vigor to others and your years to the cruel one; [10] and strangers will be filled with your strength and your hard-earned goods will go to the house of an alien;
 - a. The cost, to yourself and those around you of your selfish and sinful choices and behavior is **always far greater** than whatever gain they bring you – which is why, once you get caught and have to pay the consequences, you regret having taken the path of selfishness and sin.
 - b. So yes, in the moment, your selfish and sinful choices and behavior may give you the thrill of a lifetime, or comfort from whatever pain you are experiencing, or a settled sense of security, or hope for the future. But the time will come when the destructive and painful consequences will roll in, and you won’t be able to stop them.
7. [11] and you groan at your final end, when your flesh and your body are consumed; (*Usually you have to get caught before realizing that*

the cost and the loss resulting from your selfishness and sin is so great that doing what you did wasn't worth it. But once you get caught, all that is left for you to do is to moan with sorrow over having been so stupid.) [12] and you say, "How (*stupid I have been, for*) I have hated instruction! And my heart spurned reproof! [13] I have not listened to the voice of my teachers, nor inclined my ear to my instructors (*when I could have and should have*)!"

8. Additional truths from this portion of scripture
 - a. To the self-focused mind, selfishness and sin are far more appealing than righteousness. Sadly, many young people raised in the church – and some older folks too – see Christianity and righteousness as limiting their ability or freedom to experience such things as (1) having fun, (2) certain worldly and physical pleasures, (3) getting what you want when you want, (4) feeling safe and secure – especially financially, (5) becoming famous, and (6) being self-ruled as opposed to submitting to God's rule.
 - b. Sin's hook – that is, the thing that gets you addicted or makes you cheerfully blind to what you are doing – is its ability to repeatedly deliver the goods without revealing how much damage it is doing to you, your relationships, and your future.
 - c. When you are young (1) and thinking yourself invincible, (2) or thinking you can continue sinning without any self-destructive consequences (*because none have shown up yet*), (3) or you choose to live in denial (*not thinking about the cost of what you are doing*), sin becomes that much more attractive, and you become that much more willing and eager to do what you know is wrong.
 - d. Without question, selfishness and sin always include some form of destruction and loss. You cannot escape this truth.
 - e. Beware, because not all of sin's consequences can be removed in this life – even though you are a Christian or become a Christian. The reality is, you will have to live with some of sin's consequences until you die and pass into God's eternal kingdom.
 - f. However, God will diminish or even remove some of sin's consequences if you will repent, put an end to your selfishness and sin, and pursue a life of godliness and love.
9. Therefore, young people, and the rest of us, I urge you to give careful consideration to the wisdom given us by God in these 13 verses.

B. **Proverbs 27:20**, Sheol and Abaddon are never satisfied, nor are the eyes of man ever satisfied.

1. Sheol is the most common word in the OT used for life after death – appearing 65 times. In most of those places, Sheol refers to a place that holds both the righteous and the unrighteous.
2. However, here in **vs 20**, **Sheol** appears to refer to the place in the afterlife where the righteous go, and **Abaddon** (*which means person or place of destruction*) appears to refer to the place where the unrighteous go.
3. I want to reference two other proverbs that affirm the truth expressed in **Proverbs 27:20**.
 - a. **Proverbs 30:15-16**, The leech (*blood sucker*) has two daughters, “Give,” “Give.” There are three things that will not be satisfied, four that will not say, “Enough”: [16] (1) Sheol, and (2) the barren womb, (3) earth that is never satisfied with water, and (4) fire that never says, “Enough.”
 - b. **Ecclesiastes 1:7-8**, All the rivers flow into the sea, yet the sea is not full. To the place where the rivers flow, there they flow again. [8] All things are wearisome; man is not able to tell it. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor is the ear filled with hearing.
 - c. The essence of the message in these proverbs is that we are rarely, if ever satisfied with what have. It seems we always want more.
4. However, before looking at the problem of discontent more fully, I want to clarify that there is a difference between the things we **need** to sustain life, and the things we **want**. The three proverbs we’ve just read are speaking of endless discontent in relation to the things we **want**, not to the things we **need**. For example:
 - a. We **need** food, water, and oxygen to sustain life.
 - b. We **want** things like power, possessions, pleasure, approval and acceptance, entertainment, financial security, recognition and respect, success in our endeavors, justice, and the freedom to do as we please.
 - c. We **want** to win – instead of lose. We want to be seen as important rather than unimportant. And we want to experience far less frustrations, disappointments and troubles in life than we do.
 - d. However, when it comes to the things we **want**, none of them are essential to sustain life. Though we often treat them as if we **need** them, and go after them as if the only way we can be satisfied or content is if we have them, they are not essential to sustaining our lives. We can live without them.

5. I am going to ask a few questions in an effort to help you apply the truth in **Proverbs 27:20**. However, these questions are not just for you, there are for me, too, because I know from personal experience the power of treating **wants** as **needs**. I know about discontentment. I know about never be satisfied.
 - a. Have you treated, or are you still treating a particular want – or maybe even several wants – as if they are needs?
 - (1) If your answer is no, then you are either a saint or living in denial?
 - (2) If your answer is yes, can you name them?
 - b. In relation to non-life sustaining needs, how often do you feel or express negative feelings of discontent toward or about certain people and recurring situations?
 - (1) Are you aware that these negative feelings affect your overall attitude toward the ups and downs of life?
 - c. When you express these negative feelings, are they proportional to the situation, or are they greater because they are combined with the disappointment, frustration, or anger carried with you from previous situations?
 - d. In relation to your strongest felt desire or desires, how often do you feel the need to return to the well of gratification in order to be happy, or to maintain a sense of contentment, or to feel that life is good and you are okay?
 - e. In thinking about your strongest felt desire or desires, when are you satisfied? When you experience being satisfied, for how long are you content?
 - f. In relation to wants, passions, cravings, desires, and felt-needs, have you given serious thought to when enough is enough?
6. The reality is, discontentment is the enemy of trust in God's goodness, and it discourages confident faith that God will work all things out for good.
 - a. Discontentment feeds a poor-me mindset and a victim mentality.
 - b. It promotes unloving and ungodly responses to the challenging people and situations of life.
 - c. Discontentment places the emphasis on self over others, and on your happiness and well-being over other's happiness and well-being.
7. In contrast, contentment is an inward state of being that God uses in building a settled peace and ongoing joy within us – regardless of the circumstances.

- a. The reality is, without contentment, you cannot know true inward peace and a joy that transcends your circumstances.
 - b. Contentment helps protect you from the temptations of ungodly desires, unhealthy jealousy, greed, covetousness, envy, the allure of immorality, the anger of frustration, and the need to be in control.
 - c. Contentment aids self-control, encourages patience, and supports love – especially love in the home.
 - d. Contentment helps you live within your means, increase your giving, and express heart-felt thanks to God for what you have – even when it is not enough.
8. Paul wrote these words in **Philippians 4:11-13**, “Not that I speak from want, for **I have learned to be content** in whatever circumstances I am. [12] I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. [13] I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.”
9. How do we learn to be content in any and every circumstance?
- a. First and foremost, you need God, faith in God, and reliance on God to be your primary source of love, security, provision, protection, and overall well-being.
 - b. You must get honest about your wants, and about treating them as if they are needs.
 - c. You must progressively starve and/or put to death your evil desires, sinful passions, worldly lusts, sensual pleasures, and felt-needs that you treat as if they are true needs.
 - d. You must work at replacing the things just mentioned with godly desires, godly thinking, godly speaking, and godly behavior.
 - e. You must persevere in this process in order to see the truth that God’s ways truly satisfy – far and above whatever the devil and the world offers – without the cost of destruction and eternal death.
 - f. If you will persevere, you will find that in choosing to find your satisfaction in God, He will take away your discontentment and replace it with contentment.

III. Conclusion

- A. It is God and only God who leads us down the path of life. It is in God’s presence that we can have fulness of joy. And it is at God’s right hand that we find pleasures that last forever. Herein is true contentment.