

NEIGHBORLY ADVICE Sunday School- September 25, 2011

Unifying Topic: WISDOM AND DISCERNMENT

Lesson Text

I. The Second Wise Sayings Of Solomon (Proverbs 25:1)

III. The Hierarchy: God-King-Subjects (Proverbs 25:2-7)

III. Treating One's Neighbor Justly (Proverbs 25:8-10)

The Main Thought: Debate thy cause with thy neighbour himself; and discover not a secret to another. (Proverbs 25:9, KJV).

Unifying Principle: People need principles by which to conduct their relationships in society. Where do we find such principles? The Proverbs of Solomon suggest principles for developing good and equitable relationships.

Lesson Aim: To learn and appreciate the value of humility in relationship with God and with our neighbors.

Life aim: To examine the wisdom of following godly advice in our dealings with other people; otherwise, we will fail to show humility and love to our neighbor.

25:1 These are also proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied out.

25:2 It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter.

25:3 The heaven for height, and the earth for depth, and the heart of kings is unsearchable.

25:4 Take away the dross from the silver, and there shall come forth a vessel for the finer.

25:5 Take away the wicked from before the king, and his throne shall be established in righteousness.

25:6 Put not forth thyself in the presence of the king, and stand not in the place of great men:

25:7 For better it is that it be said unto thee, Come up hither; than that thou shouldest be put lower in the presence of the prince whom thine eyes have seen.

25:8 Go not forth hastily to strive, lest thou know not what to do in the end thereof, when thy neighbour hath put thee to shame.

25:9 Debate thy cause with thy neighbour himself; and discover not a secret to another.

25:10 Lest he that heareth it put thee to shame, and thine infamy turn not away.

HISTORY:

We are told that the men of Hezekiah, apparently scribes, were responsible for copying the section from 25:1-29:27. Proverbs written by Solomon, date to his reign (971-31 B.C.). The role of Hezekiah's men (25:1) indicates that important sections were compiled from that king's period (715-686 B.C.). This part, deals with, rulers/kings; pride and humility; and having discernment when arguing with your neighbor.

LESSON:

Proverbs 25:1 The Second Wise Sayings Of Solomon

25:1 These are also proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied out— This section, is composed of the proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah...copied. "Copied" (from the *Heb root 'ateq*) seems to indicate that the scribes were dealing not only with written proverbs, but also with proverbs that were a part of Israel's oral tradition. Hezekiah, in his anxiety to preserve these sacred words from the past, had them brought together in one sacred collection. This collection of 137 proverbs was spoken by Solomon and most likely copied into a collection during the reign of Judah's king Hezekiah over 200 years later. Hezekiah was one of the few kings of Judah who honored the Lord. By contrast, his father Ahaz actually nailed the Temple door shut. Hezekiah restored the Temple, destroyed idol worship centers, and earned the respect of surrounding nations, many of whom brought gifts to God because of Hezekiah. He worked very hard to encourage respect for the Temple, the law, and godly living, and was very successful (2Chron.31:21).

Proverbs 25:2-7 The Hierarchy: God-King-Subjects

25:2 It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter— The hierarchy or chain of command is God, then king. God's glory is to conceal/hide a thing and the king's honor is to search out the secrets of God. God whose knowledge and whose ways are unsearchable, keep things to Himself because He needs no counsel. ¹We know there is a secret of God that will not be revealed till the end of the world. We know that the Lord

¹ <http://www.lovetheLord.com/books/proverbs/40.html>

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

revealed Himself in part to the disciples and to all believers in Christ. He reveals to each of us what He desires us to understand. God is a mystery. Jesus revealed the mystery somewhat in coming to the earth and telling us about God. But a king is great if he understands mysteries. The king needs to realize, if his people are unhappy, he has to decide what he should do. The solution to the problem might be a mystery. The decision may be difficult but it is to the king's honor to give the correct and wise decision of the matter in order to rule righteously; then he is a great king and is therefore, honored.

25:3 The heaven for height, and the earth for depth, and the heart of kings is unsearchable—²Nothing is higher than the heavens, nor anything deeper than the earth; the height of the heavens cannot be reached, and the center of the earth cannot easily be gotten into; the heavens above cannot be measured, and the foundation of the earth cannot be searched beneath; at least not by common persons. And so it is that we cannot know a king's emotions or secret thoughts. In public, the king might seem bold. But in private, he might be afraid. Some schemes are laid deep, concealing their designs, and keeping their reasons secret, so that it is not an easy thing to penetrate into their councils and views.

25:4 Take away the dross from the silver, and there shall come forth a vessel for the finer—³When extreme heat is applied to silver and it is melted down, the trash will come to the top and can be skimmed off and leave pure silver. This is very similar to a Christian. Sometimes God applies the heat (problems) to purify us. We are purged in the fire and made pure; pure silver shall come out of it for the refiner; of which a vessel may be made, very honourable, beautiful, and fit for use. The impurities have to be skimmed off to see the better quality.

25:5 Take away the wicked from before the king, and his throne shall be established in righteousness— This verse is associated with verse 4 above. The king cannot rule well if his government is evil and wicked. The king needs trustworthy servants and advisors. Just as heat is applied to the silver and the silver is made pure, the kingdom is made pure, and the kingdom made righteous when the wicked are removed. The king has it in his power to remove whomever he will. The removal of dross from the silver produces silver suitable for use for the silversmith, just as the removal of the lawless/wicked men will establish the king's throne in righteousness.

25:6 Put not forth thyself in the presence of the king, and stand not in the place of great men— The matter of proper conduct before dignitaries is the subject of verses 6 and 7. A man who attempts to gain recognition in selfish advancement is certain to meet with the king's rebuke. One is not to intrude himself into the presence of a king; or rush not into his presence in a rude and irreverent way, for he will be put to open shame where he stands when men of greater reputation arrive on the scene (Lk.14:8-11). Don't think too much of yourself; be humble.

25:7 For better it is that it be said unto thee, Come up hither; than that thou shouldest be put lower in the presence of the prince whom thine eyes have seen— It is better that one is recognized to be brought forth into the king's presence rather than moving oneself there beforehand. As in verse 6 when approaching too near the king's person, and taking the place of some great man, you would find yourself being forced down to a lower place. In other words, it's saying, it is better that we are asked to come up than to be asked down. This will definitely show humility. For the elevating of the humble is honorable, but the humbling of the proud is disgraceful (Lk.14:8-11; Jam.4:7-10).

Proverbs 25:8-10 Treating One's Neighbor Justly

25:8 Go not forth hastily to strive, lest thou know not what to do in the end thereof, when thy neighbour hath put thee to shame— The subject matter is going to court with a neighbor. When conflict arises, the man with a contentious spirit is quick to go to court. Quick anger causes embarrassment. The end to quick anger is repentance for what is said. "*Don't start something you can't finish and go down before your neighbor in shameful defeat*" (TLB). Take the time to think things through before going to court or before making judgment you would be ashamed of.

² <http://www.searchgodsword.org/com/geb/view.cgi?book=pr&chapter=025&verse=003>

³ <http://www.lovethelord.com/books/proverbs/40.html>

<http://www.pitwm.net//pitwm-sundayschool.html>

25:9 Debate thy cause with thy neighbour himself; and discover not a secret to another— If you are unhappy with a matter dealing with your neighbor, you should discuss the matter with that person first; talk it over by discussing it privately and hear what he has to say. By debating privately, hopefully a lawsuit will not be involved. Don't disclose or gossip the matter with another if the thing in controversy is a secret (something scandalous and reproachful of your neighbor and his family).

25:10 Lest he that heareth it put thee to shame, and thine infamy turn not away— If the person you have the conflict with hears that you have discussed it with someone else, he can accuse you of slander and you can't withdraw what you have said. And your indiscretion will be put to shame and it shall stick so close to you that you shall never get clear of it as long as you live, leaving you with a bad reputation.

SUMMARY:

These proverbs were gathered by Hezekiah when he became king, and they were added to the books of proverbs by Hezekiah's scribes. During the period of Hezekiah's reign, it was a period of national revival (v. 1). These men of Hezekiah feared the Lord and the king in due order and proportion. God's grandeur and sovereignty is to conceal the matter of His own wisdom and understanding and power and might. The secrets of the universe are concealed by God. Yet the honor of kings is to search out a matter (v. 2). Here is wisdom from God to teach you to respect civil rulers. The heaven for height, the earth for depth, and the heart of kings is mentioned and only God can know about these things but He can also conceal the height of the heaven, the depth of the earth and the thoughts of a king. All their ways cannot be understood and are unsearchable by us (v. 3).

Before a beautiful vessel can be brought forth, the impurities have to be removed and taken away. In the same way, before righteousness is to be established, wickedness has to be removed and taken away (vv. 4-5). Before King Jesus can completely and fully rule upon this earth, the wicked are removed into judgment, while God's righteous people will be left to rule and reign with Him. ⁴It is wrong for a person to try to promote himself (vv. 6-7). It is likely that he will rate himself far higher than others would. The man who is content with the lowly seat may be called to a higher one if found to be deserving of such recognition

A man must practice care in relationships in order to avoid conflict with others. We should never jump to hasty conclusions about others for what are first impressions may not be true at all (v. 8). Much trouble could be avoided if people were careful to keep their discussions to themselves in place of spreading abroad their differences. In providing evidence against a neighbor in a court case a plaintiff may be forced to betray a friend's confidence (vv. 9-10). As a result the friend may shame him and the plaintiff may have an irretrievable loss of reputation. It is risky business to accuse others publicly in court. What God wants us to do is to follow the simple scriptural rule of, "*Tell him his fault between thee and him alone.*" In following this principle many misunderstandings can be made right and many people spared from hearing about the problem when they should have never heard about it anyway.

APPLICATION:

Always use discernment before giving advice. It may have been with good intentions but somehow resulted badly. They have to be ready to receive, and sometimes they never are. Well the first and last thing to do is to give it to God!

⁴ <http://www.family-times.net/commentary/tell-a-person-his-fault-alone/>
<http://www.pitwm.net//pitwm-sundayschool.html>