

The Stabilizing Effect of God's Word

When I left home in the middle of my college career to attend another school in Indiana, I was subjected to a bit of a culture shock. For the first time in my life I was on my own. My life was now surrendered totally to the Lord and it was a fantastic thought that I now owned every decision. My parents, (especially my dad) were still my coaches, but he had pretty well turned loosed of the reigns of my life and I sensed without him saying it, "I trust you, Son." Along with this gracious trust came the sober acceptance of accountability to God. I also understood that I had been given a good name (Proverbs 22:1) and the integrity behind it should be protected. I did not want to disappoint God and I did not want to disappoint my parents. I was set on doing and accomplishing the will of God for my life. Within the first couple of months while meditating on Proverbs 16, it seemed like God opened the door of understanding of this passage of Scripture and it became a lighthouse of guidance in my new sea of surroundings. Even now as I reflect over this great chapter I find great solace. May the following points bring you the same consolation.

1. Do the right things and God will govern your plans.

We see this in Proverbs 16:1 and 3, "*The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the LORD. Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established.*" In verse one, "preparations" (Hebrew: maarak) means an arranged mental disposition. Then in verse three the word "thoughts" (Hebrew: machashabah) means a plan, plot or purpose coming from your imagination.

Let me break this down. Often times we get so many thoughts running in all different directions that a state of mild chaos settles in our emotions. What do I do when this happens? In reflecting upon the passage of Scripture, it comes down to this: do what you should do - right now! Going back to my college days, I had thoughts of this wonderful girl I had just met shortly after I began to meditate over Proverbs 16. It had been so long since I had dated a girl, I wondered how to pursue her, how serious should I be? I was two years from graduating and here I was in consternation about what to do. The phrase "*Commit thy works unto the LORD...*" was my answer. Picture this: I have a test Friday; it is now Wednesday, therefore, I need to study today. I have a bus route in a gang area of Chicago that needs visiting on Saturday and I have to preach in Junior Church on Sunday. What do I do? I study for the test, I go calling on my bus route on Saturday and when I get home, I dig in on my sermon. I don't have time to worry about whether or not this wonderful girl is falling for me. I trust the insights God gave me into His Word through the week before and I will trust Him to help me organize those thoughts into my sermon when I return from doing what I am supposed to be doing.

2. Accept that you could be wrong.

"*All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the LORD weigheth the spirits*" (Proverbs 16:2). For the natural man who is a stranger to grace or the carnal man operating through the power of his own flesh, he is right in his own

eyes. His decisions may be ruining his or life, but he just knows he is doing what's best for himself. This is a philosophy that is rampant today, i.e. "this is right for me, or this is my truth." This is the essence of relativism, which is defined as the doctrine that knowledge, truth and morality exist in relation to culture, society or historical context and are not absolute. Christ said He is the Truth (John 14:6) and in John 17:17 He said, "...*Thy Word is truth.*" The Bible says, "*Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever*" (Hebrews 13:8). "*For I am the LORD, I change not...*" (Malachi 3:6). As a Biblicist, we cannot accept the fact that I am always right. I may be wrong, you may be wrong! So where do we find the constant, that which is always right? Christ is always right; the Bible is always right. Therefore, when we filter our belief system and behavior through our Lord and His Word, we will not miss it. To reemphasize how dangerous it is to live otherwise, the Bible went on to say in the 16th chapter of Proverbs in verse 25, "*There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.*"

Returning to Proverbs 16:2, the later part of the verse reads, "...*but the LORD weigheth the spirits.*" The word "weigheth" (Hebrew: *takan*) means to balance, i.e. measure out (by weight or dimension); figuratively, arrange, equalize, through the idea of leveling. Here we see the Lord will give us balance in life as we allow Him to weigh our thoughts and intents of our hearts, "*For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword...and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart*" (Hebrews 4:12). Last week we meditated on Matthew 11:30 when Jesus says, "*For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*" The definition of the "yoke" our Lord refers to is not only the yoke that goes over the animal, but the root of the word (Greek: "ζυγός" / *zugos*) means the *beam* of the balance (as connecting the scales); a pair of balances. In accepting that we may be wrong, we submit to the higher authority in God and find truth and balance in a very rocky, wobbly world gone mad.

3. It will all come out in the wash.

We have heard this saying all our lives, have we not? Literally, we see a stain in our clothing, but as a rule we need not worry, because once we put it in the washer with some detergent, it will come out. To use this phrase philosophically, it means that our mistakes or problems will not have a permanent effect because in the end, it will all work together for our good and God's glory. Now if we rely on the philosophy of the world in the realm of relativism, we will have stains that just don't wash out. If on the other hand, we trust in the Lord and His Word, even those stains that don't seem to wash out become part of the greater overall purpose. Our comfort as Christians is found in Proverbs 16: 9 and 33, "*A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps. The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD.*"

What a contrast! The Bible says, "*Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ*" (Colossians 2:8). When we are trusting in the accrued wisdom of the world, we become spoiled and soiled beyond any

quantitative good. However, when our trust is in God who works through my blunders to His ultimate Divine purpose and glory, we are blessed into ecstatic praise for all things, as the Word says, *“In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you”* (I Thessalonians 5:18).

This is well illustrated in a famous Highland lodge in Scotland. In the first few days of its grand opening someone on the mezzanine floor was carrying a pot of strong tea, when much to their chagrin, they accidentally dropped it onto the lovely tapestry that hung from the second to first floor as the centerpiece seen by all when entering the lodge. It appeared they were going to have to trash this very expensive piece of art due to the stain. Providentially, lodging with them was a very well known and highly acclaimed artist that kept staring at the tea stains on the tapestry and finally asked if the establishment would give him an opportunity to do something that would possibly fix it. They agreed most readily. Using the discoloration of the tea stain, he painted a majestic Highland stag deer as the new focal point in the foreground of the tapestry. The tapestry became one of the most beautiful works of art in all of Scotland. And that which was a stain became a masterpiece. Yes! When we give our all to God, it will all come out in the end, in a beautiful way and best of all, it's God's way!

-Pastor Pope-