

Eternal PERSPECTIVE Proverbs

BIBLE TEXT | PROVERBS 29:1-14

1 He who is often reproofed, yet stiffens his neck, will suddenly be broken beyond healing.

2 When the righteous increase, the people rejoice, but when the wicked rule, the people groan.

3 He who loves wisdom makes his father glad, but a companion of prostitutes squanders his wealth.

4 By justice a king builds up the land, but he who exacts gift tears it down.

5 A man who flatters his neighbor spreads a net for his feet.

6 An evil man is ensnared in his transgression, but a righteous man sings and rejoices.

7 A righteous man knows the rights of the poor; a wicked man does not understand such knowledge.

8 Scoffers set a city aflame, but the wise turn away wrath.

9 If a wise man has an argument with a fool, the fool only rages and laughs, and there is no quiet.

10 Bloodthirsty men hate one who is blameless and seek the life of the upright.

11 A fool gives full vent to his spirit, but a wise man quietly holds it back.

12 If a ruler listens to falsehood, all his officials will be wicked.


13 The poor man and the oppressor meet together; the LORD gives light to the eyes of both.

14 If a king faithfully judges the poor, his throne will be established forever.

DEVOTIONAL FOR PROVERBS 29:1-14

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"I just need to vent for a minute," "I need to process my feelings with you," "I just have to say...". Be honest; how often do you say something like this to a friend or family member and then vomit your feelings on them, and usually negative feelings? I will confess, I can remember a couple occasions of me doing something to this extent just in the past week (oof!)



Eternal PERSPECTIVE

Proverbs

Proverbs 29:11 says "A fool gives full vent to his spirit, but a wise man quietly holds it back." It can be so tempting to unload all of our feelings on others, and sometimes we can even justify it as "living authentically" or allowing others to "share the burden" but is that really what God calls us to do?


Solomon says a fool gives "full vent" to his spirit. This means he speaks whatever comes to his mind whenever it comes to his mind, no filter. This can often lead to more pain and drama, not the outcome that we hope for when we "vent" our feelings. Usually we are hoping for some kind of relief from the feelings, relief that we should be searching for in Christ.

We see all through scripture examples of the perils of the tongue. James 3:1-12 is a passage that many of us think of immediately when we talk about the tongue. It tells us that the tongue, though small, can control the whole body and lead to its peril if not careful. Another great passage Ephesians 4:29 tells us to let no "unwholesome talk" come out of our mouths, only what is useful for building others up. And Colossians 4:6 tells us our conversations should be full of grace and seasoned with salt. It seems pretty clear that God does not want us to air out all our feelings and all the dirty laundry.

So then what are we supposed to do with all of those feelings? They can be pretty overwhelming sometimes, especially if we dwell on them. The second half of Proverbs 29:11 helps us find that answer. At first read, I will be honest I didn't fully understand this. "A wise man quietly holds it back." That doesn't seem healthy to hold in all our feelings and I know it's not what the Bible teaches. We see multiple places in scripture where we are told to bring our grievances to each other and to seek restoration (Matthew 18:15-17, Colossians 3:13, Romans 12:18, Matthew 5:23-24.)

As I was studying this passage though, I realized that a wise man holding back his feelings is not counter to the process of restoration, but the first step of it. Have you ever tried to confront a conflict and mend a relationship when you were still angry? It often doesn't go well. The verb used in Proverbs 29:11 is the same one used in Psalm 89:9 when talking about God stilling a storm. Solomon isn't telling us to shove our feelings down and ignore them. He's telling us to overcome them, to calm them.

So, how do we do that? John 14:27 tells us that Jesus gives us His peace. To calm our feelings, we need only to look to Him. Once we have allowed His peace to calm us, then we can look at the situation with a clear head and with God's heart. We then discern the difference between a petty offense that we can overlook (Proverbs 19:11, 1 Peter 4:8, Ephesians 4:32) or a sin that grieves God that we need to address. Knowing the difference and trusting God in the middle of all of "the feelings" can be hard, but it is what God calls us to do, how we become wise, and how we live at peace with one another.



Eternal PERSPECTIVE --- *Proverbs*

Questions:

1. Do you tend to vent your feelings or are you wise in holding them back?
2. Who do you run to first when you are upset or your feelings are hurt? Is it God or is it someone else?
3. Are you dealing with hurt feelings or conflict in your life right now? Take some time and pray for God's peace and then ask Him to show you how to proceed. Read Matthew 5:23-24 and 18:15-17.