PROVERBS:

ROGUE GALLERY

Tuesday, April 21

Reading: Proverbs 19

Proverbs 19:3 A person's own folly leads to their ruin, yet their heart rages against the LORD.

If you read comic books, you know that every hero has a rogue gallery, that group of villains that they battle over and over. Batman has the Joker, Penguin, and the Riddler (to name a few). Spider-Man has the Green Goblin, Doctor Octopus, and a host of others. Throughout chapter 19 we meet a rogue gallery that has popped up over and over in Proverbs.

THE FOOL – The fool is mentioned often in Proverbs. In this chapter, fools are seen as people with crooked ("perverse") lips. They rush into things without planning or understanding. When their "folly leads to ruin" they blame God instead of their own foolish choices (19:1-3). "Haste makes waste!" Too often Christians can fall into this trap. Instead of prayerfully making plans, we rush ahead with our own ideas and then ask God to bless them. When they fail, we then question God's faithfulness when it was really a lack of faithfulness and trust on our part. When fools are given authority things will always go bad (19:10). It only encourages their foolish behavior. "Men out of place, unfitted by God for the roles into which they have been cast, will have no appreciation of their responsibilities and abuse the place into which they have come." [1]

FALSE WITNESS – A false witness mocks the justice of God because they feed on evil (19:28). It sustains them much as food sustains the body. However, they will not go unpunished. Proverbs 19:5 & 9 are almost identical except for the last words. These liars will "not go free" and ultimately "will perish." Even if they do not receive their 'just desserts' in this life, God will judge them in the next.

THE SLUGGARD – These rogues have reared their heads many times. They are preoccupied with sleep (6:9; 19:15). Their desires are not satisfied because they refuse to work (13:4; 21:25). Their plans are blocked by their laziness (15:19). They do not prosper because they do not do what is necessary (20:4). In this chapter, they are so lazy they won't even lift their hand from the dish to their mouth (19:24)! Sluggards never accomplish anything and often drag others down with them.

THE MOCKER – This Hebrew word means to boast or scorn. In Proverbs, they are always portrayed as those who refuse to listen to wisdom and spurn discipline (9:7). They are arrogant and proud (21:24) and stir up strife around them (22:10). They do not learn even from punishment, but others can learn the path of wisdom through seeing the consequences of their actions (19:25; 21:11).

We could all name people who fit into this rogue gallery. Chapter 19 ends with a promise of punishment (19:29). So how do we avoid becoming like them?
(1) Remember that godly character is more important than what others think (19:1, 22).
(2) Remember to obey the Lord (19:16) and strive to follow God's purpose in your life (19:21).
(3) Fear God and be content (19:23). "The secret of contentment is not having all our wants fulfilled, but having our wants framed by the will of God. The man who fears God has one ultimate goal in life: to please God." [2]

[1] A. J. Higgins. What the Bible Teaches: Proverbs (Ritchie Old Testament Commentary), p. 212
[2] Higgins, p. 216