

PROVERBS:
THE KING & HIS PEOPLE

Wednesday, April 22

Reading: Proverbs 20:1-12

***Proverbs 20:8** When a king sits on his throne to judge, he winnows out all evil with his eyes.*

It was God who established earthly government to promote the peace and deliver justice. In Proverbs 16, we discovered how a good king was to reflect God's righteousness and God's ways (16:1-15). In this passage we once again see the importance of this relationship between the Lord and earthly leaders. While many of the individual proverbs apply to all people, taken together they give us a good picture of a good leader. In this first section, we will see a leader's relationship with those he leads.

LEADERS SHOULD BE SOBER (20:1) – While this verse is a good general principle for all people, it particularly applies to those in authority (see Proverbs 31:4-7). To let any outside force control us (whether it be alcohol, drugs, sex, etc.) is not godly. The only One who should be in control of our lives is the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Paul wrote, "Do not get drunk on wine...Instead, be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18).

LEADERS SHOULD BE HONORED (20:2) – Proverbs 19:12 speaks of the king's rage "like the roar of a lion." It also describes his favor like the life-giving "dew on the grass." Here the positive side is replaced by a warning for those who anger the king. It is our duty to respect the power and authority of our leaders even if we don't always agree with them. Believers are to pray for and obey our leaders (1 Timothy 2:1-3; Romans 13:1-7; Titus 3:1-2). Only when they command us to disobey God and His Word are we to disobey. In these cases, "we must obey God rather than human beings!" (Acts 5:29).

LEADERS SHOULD BE EVEN TEMPERED (20:3) – Only the fool is always looking for a fight. Leaders should avoid strife whenever possible. The words of Proverbs 19:11 fit well here. Leaders must be patient and be willing to forgive and get past an offense against them. Honor does not come by picking and winning a fight, but by avoiding conflict or bringing it to a godly conclusion.

LEADERS SHOULD NOT JUDGE BY APPEARANCES (20:5-11) – As Proverbs has reminded us before, things are not always as they appear. Good leader can draw out a person's true intentions which may be hidden under "deep waters" (20:5). They realize that not everyone who claims loyalty ("unfailing love" = hesed) is truly faithful (20:6). No one can claim to have a perfectly pure and clean heart because we are all sinners (20:9). Even children are "known by their actions" so we must look at how people live instead of just hearing the words they say (20:7, 11). Good leaders "winnow out" the wheat from the chaff. By careful examination, they determine the true from the false – the good from the evil (20:8).

These verses conclude by bringing God into the picture (20:12). He created our ears to listen and our eyes to see right from wrong. This also reminds us that God's ears hear all and His eyes see all. There is nothing that escapes His notice or is beyond His control. For leaders (whether in government, church, or the home), our lives should be centered on the Lord. This truth will be stressed further at the end of this chapter.