PROVERBS:

THE VALUE OF CHARACTER

Thursday, April 30

Reading: Proverbs 22:1-9

Proverbs 22:1 *A good name is more desirable than great riches; to be esteemed is better than silver or gold.*

There's an old German proverb that says, "When wealth is lost, nothing is lost. When health is lost, something is lost. When character is lost, all is lost."[1] As Proverbs 22:1 tells us, character is more important than anything. "A man's reputation has no price tag! A good name is better than riches, because once riches become the goal of life, everything else, including every character virtue, is sacrificed to this austere god."[2] Proverbs gives us some examples of what a person of godly character should value.

VALUE PEOPLE (22:2, 4) – Since all people are created in the image of God, those of good character do not think of themselves as 'better' than anyone else. The rich often look down on the poor in disgust while the poor despise the rich for their wealth. But those who fear the Lord are humble. They realize that God makes no distinctions in how He treats people and His children should follow His example. Those who follow the Lord, whether rich or poor, will receive "riches and honor and life" from the Lord. The order of these blessings goes from the least to the greatest. God may bless us with material blessings. But it is more important to have honor with God because we are pleasing to Him. At the pinnacle of this triad is to receive eternal life with the Lord.

VALUE CAUTION (22:3, 5) – As we walk through this life, there are many "snares and pitfalls" that try to block our path. The wise person will look for dangers and avoid them. The simple walk through life with their eyes closed and fall into these traps, suffering the consequences. When it comes to temptation and sin, we often think in terms of how close I can get to the edge of the cliff without falling off! We want to "toy with temptation.' But Proverbs tells us to "stay far from them." It is not 'how close can I get without sinning'; it should be 'how far away can I stay!'

VALUE FAMILY (22:6) – This proverb has caused much confusion and heartache for godly parents who raised their children right and yet they still went astray. We must remember that proverbs are not promises. They show the way things normally happen and rarely mention the exceptions to the principle. Generally, a child who is raised to fear the Lord will continue in the right path. But each of us makes our own decisions and sometimes we make the wrong ones. This proverb does hold out hope that the prodigal child can return when they remember what they had been taught about God's way.

VALUE GENEROSITY (22:7-9) – Verse 7 is a warning about getting into debt. The Bible does not forbid making or taking out loans, but it does warn about the dangers it can incur. We must be careful not to get ourselves in 'over our heads.' Often the rich and powerful use debt as a weapon. But those who abuse their wealth and power will not succeed. However, those who are generous will be blessed. Instead of using their money and power for their own gain, they see the needs of others and realize that God prospered them so they could help others. What do you value?

[1] "https://www.inspirationalstories.com/proverbs/t/german-on-money-wealth/

[2] A. J. Higgins. What the Bible Teaches: Proverbs (Ritchie Old Testament commentary), p. 243