

MISPLACED ACTIONS

Wednesday, January 14
Reading: Proverbs 11:1-19

Proverbs 11:10 *When the righteous prosper, the city rejoices; when the wicked perish, there are shouts of joy.*

Proverbs 11 can be divided into two parts. The first part deals with a person's actions (11:1-19), while the second part focuses more on their motives (11:20-31). These two sections both began with what God "detests" and in what He "delights."

MISPLACED HOPE (11:1-8) – The word "detest" is a very strong word. It literally means 'abomination.' The phrase "find favor" literally means delight. The same Hebrew word is translated this way in 11:20 by the NIV. It too is a strong word pertaining to pleasure and acceptance (11:1). So why is God so passionate about a dishonest or accurate scale? For the Israelite reader, the words of Leviticus 19:35-37 would be ringing in their ears:

"Do not use dishonest standards when measuring length, weight or quantity. Use honest scales and honest weights...I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt. Keep all My decrees and all My laws and follow them. I am the LORD."

Being dishonest in business dealings shows a lack of gratitude and obedience to God. It is an act of pride and deceit (11:2-3). These proverbs warn that gaining wealth in this way has no benefit when the day of judgment comes (11:4-8). Placing your hope in wealth or in other people (11:7) is futile. Our hope must be in God Himself. It is interesting that the Hebrew word translated "humility" in verse 2 is only used one other time in the Old Testament.

Micah 6:8 He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

MISPLACED WORDS (11:9-14) – As we've already seen in Proverbs, words can either build up or destroy. These verses describe how what we say can affect the community around us. Foolish people accuse falsely but the righteous can answer these charges (11:9). The foolish belittles and gossips about others but the righteous know when to speak and when not to speak (11:12-13). The foolish won't listen to others but the righteous know there is strength in "many advisors" (11:14). No wonder society rejoices when the righteous succeed and the wicked fall (11:10-11).

MISPLACED COMPASSION (11:15-19) – The focus of these verses is how and how not to show compassion to others. The danger of giving bad loans was discussed in Proverbs 6:1-5. In a desire to help others, we may make bad decisions and not be good stewards of what God has entrusted to us (11:15). True kindness is seen in grace (11:16 – kindhearted – Hebrew *hen* = favor, grace, acceptance) and love (11:17 – kind – Hebrew *hesed* = lovingkindness, mercy, faithfulness). This results in the respect of others and the honor of the Lord and benefits themselves as well; for hatred and anger lead to physical, emotional, and spiritual hurt. The idea of sowing righteousness implies that the 'harvest' of reward may not be immediate, but it is certain (11:18).

What does God see when He looks at the way you live your life?
Do you have misplaced priorities?
Do your words always honor God?
Do you show real compassion for others?