

BLESSED ATTITUDES

Thursday, January 15

Reading: Proverbs 11:20-31

Proverbs 11:20 *The LORD detests those whose hearts are perverse, but He delights in those whose ways are blameless.*

From actions, these proverbs move on to attitudes and motives. A person of perverse heart is one that seeks only his own way while the righteous seeks God's way. A person's eternal destiny is determined by which way they choose (11:20-21).

"Behavioral modification without heart change may satisfy society, but it does not bring pleasure to God. As a result of redemption, God works from the inside out. All legalism begins on the outside and demands only outward change to conform to rules and laws. The goal of spirituality is to make us like Christ. The goal of legalism is to make us look like those who make the rules."¹

GOOD JUDGMENT (11:22) – This is one of the more colorful proverbs. The "woman" in this verse is compared to "a gold ring in a pig's snout." No matter how beautiful the ring may be, all people will see is the pig! So a woman (or a man) without good judgment - one who is tasteless - is ugly and of little value. No amount of beauty can replace the need for character!

GENEROSITY (11:23-27) – The word "generous" in verse 25 literally means 'blessing.' A person who desires to do good and is willing to share will be blessed by God. The Hebrew translated "refresh" has the idea of fully watered. It means to drink all that one wants, to satisfy. Those who 'water' others will be 'soaked' themselves. Again we see that God takes pleasure ("finds favor" – 11:27; see 11:1 & 20) in those who follow His ways.

GROWTH (11:28-31) – These verses compare the righteous to "a green leaf" and "a tree of life." We think back to the tree in the Garden of Eden that gave life forever to those who ate from it (Genesis 2:9; 3:22). We also look forward to the tree of life in eternity that grows by the river of the water of life, bearing fruit each month (Revelation 22:1-2). This is an image of never-ending fruitfulness. "The rich life associated with the righteous is the rich life of wisdom, lived in relationship with the Lord. And it's a life that grows."² This is the life we share with others and thus save their lives.

This passage reminds me of the "blessed" person of Psalm 1. One "who does not walk in step with the wicked" (1:1) but who "delights" in God's Word (1:2). This person is described as "a tree, planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither – whatever they do prospers" (1:3). Does this describe you? Are you watering or withering?

¹ A. J. Higgins. What the Bible Teaches: Proverbs (Ritchie Old Testament Commentaries), p. 129

² Kathleen Nielson. Proverbs for You, p. 107