

## **BLESSED IS THE NATION**

Thursday, January 22

Reading: Proverbs 14:16-35

**Proverbs 14:34** *Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin condemns any people.*

The last half of Proverbs 14 has a lot to say to America today. We are a nation divided. Deep political and social differences separate us into sometimes warring factions. Racial and economic issues separate us. Hatred is tearing the fabric of our nation apart. Proverbs 14 addresses many of these issues.

**WORDS ON ANGER (14:16-19)** – The wise person who fears the Lord will see hatred and anger for what it is – evil. To be “hotheaded” means to cross the line; to be arrogant and furious. This person is overconfident and believes they have a right to rail out at God and others. Verse 17 speaks of two kinds of anger – impulsive anger that leads to foolish words or actions and premeditated anger that plans to do evil things. Both are wrong and should not be a part of the believer’s life. With all the political and social anger today, do you ever lash out with angry words? Do your spoken words and posts on social media reflect the fear of God?

**WORDS ON THE POOR (14:20-27)** – The Bible stresses the fact that God has a special concern for the needy who cannot help themselves. James says that pure and undefiled religion is “to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world” (James 1:27). Proverbs 14:20 reminds us that far too often we ignore the cries of the poor because we don’t want to get involved or are afraid of what we may have to do to help. It is also true that the rich have many friends, but how many are true friends. How many are ‘friends’ simply for the prestige or for what they can get. The next verse reminds us that this is a sin. We need to show mercy and compassion to those in need (14:21). We need to make plans for how we can help them (14:22). And then we need to do more than talk about it. We need to do it! (14:23). What plans has God laid on your heart to reach out to the needy with the love of Christ? What are you doing about it?

**WORDS ON LEADERSHIP (14:28-35)** – A ruler needs to value their citizens (14:28). Leaders are there to serve the people, not the other way around. Leaders must be patient and seek peace, as trouble and conflicts will arise (14:29-30). Leaders are to care for the poor. How we treat others shows what we think of God, for all people are made in His image (14:31). Calamities are bound to come and the only way to work through them is to trust in God. No matter how bad it may get, even to the point of death, the righteous have eternal refuge in God (14:32). A leader must remember that a nation is not exalted by its political, military, or economic might, but by a right relationship with God (14:34). Finally, a leader needs to be open to wise counsel and opposed to bad counsel that does not benefit the nation or leads it away from God. While addressed to kings, this advice is practical for any leader from captains of industry to leaders in the church and to parents in the home.

The fear of the Lord is again prominent in these verses (14:16, 26-27). The “secure fortress” and “refuge” for our children is found in training them to love and honor the Lord. The future of our nation, our church, and our families is not dependent on politics but a right relationship with God through Jesus Christ our Lord.