

Friday, February 15, 2019

Who?

Proverbs 19-20

Who can say, "I have kept my heart pure; I am clean and without sin"?

Proverbs 20:9

Well, this is certainly a good question. Of course, it is rhetorical. It is asked to make a statement rather than to seek information. It is not as if anyone can answer this question in the affirmative. Rather, it is designed to help people realize *"there is none righteous, not even one"* (Romans 3:10). So often, I need this reminder. If I am not careful, I can begin to think of myself more highly than I should. I can quickly glance over my faults and, with indignation, look at the faults of others under a microscope. It is the default mode of my wicked heart. It is also the way that I have been impacted by the deceiver's lies. My self-righteousness allows for an imagined piety. Soon enough, it becomes a perceived piety and eventually leads me to be oblivious to certain sins in my life. Then I enter into my time of confession to the Lord and have a tough time finding specific things of which to repent. It is really rather silly. I must learn to allow God to reveal my deepest sins—the hidden faults that I overlook regularly. These are the things in my life that I know are wrong but have not yet called "sin." I call them personality traits. I call them things that I struggle with. I rationalize them by saying "it is just the way God made me." Thinking of my sin in those terms allows me to gloss over it and, in so doing, miss the intimacy of the presence of the Lord because my unconfessed and improperly titled sins cause me to struggle to be close to God. Because deep in my heart I know that I am *not* clean and without sin. Praise God that He is patient, showing me the areas of sin, so that I can confess them and be pure before Him.

Dear God, in the depth of my heart I long for the intimacy with You that only comes as I stand clean before You. Reveal to me those sins that I so easily explain away or overlook. Amen.

Saturday, February 16, 2019

Refuge

Proverbs 21-22

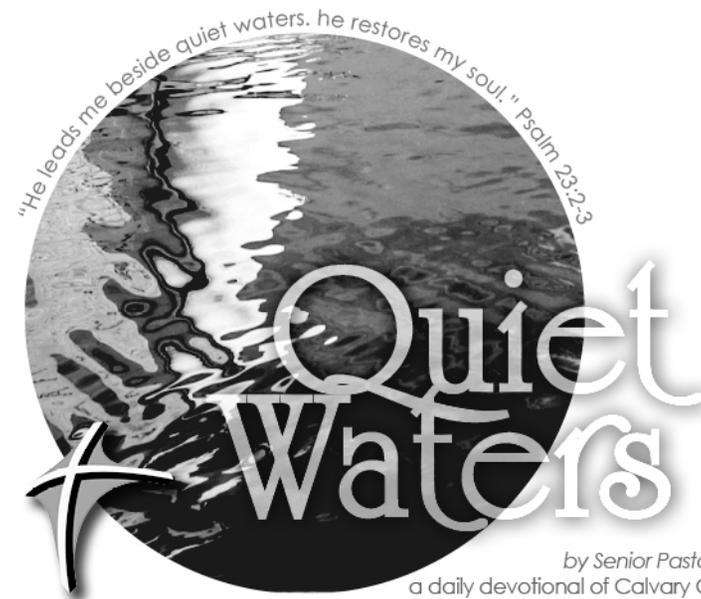
The prudent man sees danger and takes refuge, but the simple keep going and suffer for it.

Proverbs 22:3

As I ponder this proverb, I can't help but ask myself how many times I have suffered for being simple in my thoughts. More than I care to remember. I see something that looks like a roadblock and I am so tempted to just pound my way through it. Worse yet, I see the warning signs—if I dare to proceed—and I ignore them and assume that I can just protect myself. This makes me think of Proverbs 4:23, which tells me to guard my heart. So many times it is my heart that suffers when the warning signs are telling me to take refuge and I choose to advance. There is a place of refuge for my heart. There is a place of refuge for the prudent man when he sees danger. I think of the birds at the feeder in my backyard. It is very near to a large blue spruce tree. The birds love to come from the tree and make their way to the feeder. There are times when a shadow will appear and the birds quickly scatter back into the safety found in the boughs of the tree. They know that there are times when that shadow comes from a hawk. I can learn much from these little miracles of nature. I dare not move too far from the refuge that is provided by God. When the shadow appears, if I am prudent, I will flee to the boughs of refuge. I consider all the psalms that speak of this safe place (7:1, 9:9, 16:1, 17:7, 18:2, 31:2, 57:1, and so many others).

Dear God, I long to be this prudent man. I long to be one that flees to You for refuge instead of the simple man that suffers for going forward. Thank You that each time I find my refuge in You it reminds me all the more of the safety found in Your strength. Amen.

February 11 - 16, 2019



by Senior Pastor Chuck Cervenka
a daily devotional of Calvary Community Church

Monday, February 11, 2019

Stupid

Proverbs 11-12

Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates correction is stupid.

Proverbs 12:1

I remember being told not to call someone “stupid.” It would appear, however, that there are times when it may be appropriate. In my life, I have been blessed to know people who are life-long learners. These people have been examples of the first part of this verse for me at times when I was living as an example of the second part. Through this, I have developed the resolve to be a life-long learner myself. This requires humility. A proud person has little to learn and everything to teach. On the other hand, a humble person is longing to be told how they can improve. Their significance is not found in how they are perceived. I strive to love correction and discipline in my life. Sometimes that comes through Scripture. Sometimes it comes as I read other things. Sometimes it comes from people who care enough to help me know the places I need to improve. Sometimes it comes from people who are trying to hurt me. These are usually people who are hurting themselves. No matter what the source, if I can learn to love that discipline, I can love and gain knowledge that will help me become more a man of God. I need to make myself open to discipline as I seek to continue to learn all I can about God and His plan for my life. I have an option of being stupid as well. I have found there to be much greater joy in being an example of the first half of this verse than in being an example of the latter.

Dear God, help me be open to discipline and correction. I don't want to be stupid. Break my pride so that I can continue to be a man after Your heart. Amen.

Tuesday, February 12, 2019

Longing

Proverbs 13-14

A longing fulfilled is sweet to the soul, but fools detest turning from evil.

Proverbs 13:19

In Ecclesiastes 3:11, Solomon tells us that God has placed eternity in our hearts. I wonder if that is the longing he is talking about in this proverb. There is a longing that is sweet to my soul. For as long as I can remember, I have longed for the peace that comes only from knowing God and living according to His will. I remember the night that God saved me and Jesus placed the Holy Spirit in my life. It was my longing fulfilled. There are many moments of my life that I can remember the sweetness that has come from the longing of intimacy with my Lord being fulfilled by His presence. Each of these moments has been and continues to be sweet to my soul. But this fulfilled longing comes at a price. The price is repentance. It is a sacrifice. I must sacrifice the grip I have on the evil that is inherent in my sin nature. So many times, I play the fool by gripping evil. My longing for the sweetness of the presence of God will not be fulfilled as I grip the sin. I must repent and release evil in my life and embrace the Lover of my soul.

O dear LORD, how many times I have felt the sweetness of this longing fulfilled in my life! Thank You for Your great love for me and for Your presence in my life. Forgive me for the times that I grip the evil of my sin nature and reject the fulfillment You long to bring into my life. Thank You for all the past victories You have given me. More and more, I long for Your sweet presence. Amen.

Wednesday, February 13, 2019

Gossip

Proverbs 15-16

A perverse man stirs up dissension, and a gossip separates close friends.

Proverbs 16:28

The “wicked,” in this verse, is described as perverse, meaning “a man of falsehoods,” a “liar,” a “deceiver.” This is a person whose word cannot be trusted. The things he says are slanted, depending upon the audience. It is usually a manipulative behavior that is seeking to have people join into his view of things. This causes dissension because different people are told different things. It causes quarrels and misunderstandings. A gossip is a person with a need to tell others what should be kept in confidence. These conversations happen in secret with whispers. The conversations would not be the same if the person or persons who are being talked about were in the room. The damage these conversations cause can be irreparable. It can break long-time friendships and will certainly impact the work of the LORD in His Church. I believe that, many times, people who use this language are not even aware, but there are other times where this is the character of the individual. Either way, the outcome is the same. Dissension and division—the goals of the evil pretender prince. I must be very careful with the motives behind my conversation with others. If there is any way in which I am embellishing a story for my own gain, I am in error. If I need to speak in whispers, I am out of line. I must continually ask God to help me in this—and I must surround myself with people who will help me stop.

O LORD, I do not want my conversations to be used to bring dissension or division. Please stop me when I start down this path. Also, please give me the boldness to not listen to this type of talk from other people. Help me see that listening is taking part in the conversation as well. Amen.

Thursday, February 14, 2019

Safe

Proverbs 17-18

The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe.

Proverbs 18:10

Within me is a deep desire to feel safe. I believe that need is put in my heart by God. I am created by Him to find sufficiency in Him. He is my all in all. Yet, in my flesh, I see the need to provide for myself. Many times I do not see what God is offering me. Then I end up settling for so much less than what I could have had. *The name of the LORD is a strong tower.* What does it mean to say “the name of the LORD”? It means all that God is and all that He stands for—his very essence. His very essence is strength and security. He is completely sovereign over everything. He is omniscient (all-knowing), omnipotent (all-powerful), and omnipresent (everywhere at once in place and time). I need to stop and ponder that very carefully if I am to embrace what this proverb says to me. Where will I run for safety? Who will I turn to for security? As one who is righteous (who has been rescued from my sin by God through Jesus), I know who God is! Why would I run anyplace else? Because so many times in the past I have felt as though I needed to trust in other things. I needed to feel safe in what people thought about me or how I looked. I needed to feel safe in how much money I had. I needed to feel safe in what I knew or who I knew or one of a dozen other silly places. None of those places kept me safe—nor will they. *Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God (Psalm 20:7).*

O LORD, You are my strong tower! I have found that every time I run to You I find the safety You have promised. Remind me of this, as so often I run to other things. Amen.