

THE FOREST HILL NEWS

Published weekly by the Forest Hill church of Christ

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Forest Hill

Church of Christ

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VISIT US SOON!

Sunday:

Bible Study..... 9:30 A.M.
Morning Worship..... 10:30 A.M.
Evening Worship..... 6:00 P.M.

Wednesday:

Bible Study 7:00 P.M.

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KINGS AND RULERS IN PROVERBS

(Part Two)

Barry M. Grider

Toward whom should the king be kind? First, he should be kind toward those who do right. Wicked rulers should listen carefully to the following, **“Also, to punish the just is not good, nor to strike princes for equity” (Prov. 17:26)**. This passage is a parallelism and princes in the latter clause refer not to position but one of noble character. Sometimes we compliment another by saying he is “a prince of a man.” A good king will uphold what is right and be kind toward those who do right. Punishment is for the evildoer, not the good citizen (Rom. 13:3,4). In fact, those who sit in positions of authority have the responsibility of protecting good citizens from evil. Even a child realizes when he has been wrongfully punished. Yet, since we live in a society that is bent on calling “evil good and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!” (Isa. 5:20), no wonder there are so many inequities in our justice system. Likewise, who can forget about innocent babies who die through abortions because political leaders do not have the courage and strength to oppose this infanticide?

Second, kings should be kind to the poor and needy. Hear these words of admonition, **“Open thy mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy (Prov. 31:9)**. Far too many who have reached the highest echelons of power have forgotten their roots. No one has more opportunity to help the less fortunate than the one who holds the reins of power. It seems the principle stated in Luke 12:48 would apply here. “...For unto whom much is given, of him shall much be required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.” In the spiritual realm Jesus pleads the cause of those who cannot help themselves (1 John 2:1). Likewise, those who sit in positions of authority have the responsibility to defend those who cannot defend themselves. While there is much abuse in our tax system, most Americans understand the government should require tax dollars to help our fellow citizens who for legitimate reasons are struggling and downtrodden.

It is true there are those who will take advantage of such kindness. **“Many will entreat the favor of the prince: and every man is a friend to him that giveth gifts” (Prov. 19:6)**. However, God’s favor is upon the ruler who shows favor toward the poor. **“The King that faithfully judgeth the poor, his throne shall be established forever” (Prov. 29:14)**. His throne will be perpetuated.

What about a King who is not kind? The writer of Proverbs says, **“As a roaring lion, and a ranging bear; so is a wicked ruler over the poor people” (Prov. 28:15)**. No one wants to come face to face with a beast that is out for prey. So a king who does not care for the poor is likened unto these vicious ani-

mals. He is out to devour them and what belongs to them. He robs them of their children, plunders their land, and takes away their dignity. Again, we read, **“the king’s wrath is as the roaring of a lion; but his favor is a dew upon the grass” (Prov. 19:12)**. Just as the dew is welcome in the dry season, so a kind king is refreshing toward those oppressed.

Like Rehoboam, the king who is unkind to his subjects is unwise. **“The prince that wanteth understanding is also a great oppressor: but he that hateth covetousness shall prolong his days” (Prov. 28:16)**. Notice, again, what preserves the King’s throne.

What should the righteous remember when the ruler of the land is not kind, but evil, and the people likewise are evil.

When the wicked are multiplied, transgression increaseth: but the righteous shall see their fall...many seek the ruler’s favor, but every man’s judgement cometh from the Lord (Prov. 29:16,26).

Do not rebel nor become disheartened. Do not seek vengeance. The Lord will judge all men, including all those in authority (Rev. 20:12).

THE KNOWLEDGE OF KINGS

When Solomon became king over Israel, he prayed unto God,

Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people? And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing (1 Kings 3:11).

It is good to pray for wisdom (Jam. 1:5). With so much responsibility given to rulers, for sure they need guidance from above. For this reason, rulers should seek the counsel of God, as did Solomon. His prayer was answered. His wisdom is clearly displayed when two harlots come before him, each one claiming that she is the mother of a particular child (1 Kings 3:16ff). Solomon’s call, “Bring me a sword” (v.24), caused his fame to spread far beyond his own kingdom (Luke 11:31).

With regard to a king’s knowledge, his people expect him to be sound in judgement. Notice, **“A divine sentence is in the lips of a king: his mouth transgresseth not in judgement” (Prov.**

16:10). A king’s word is final and often his word, among many nations and cultures, is said to be a dictum from above (God speaking through the king).

Furthermore, what the king does not know, his people expect him to resolve to know and to work out an answer to any dilemma.

It is the glory of god to conceal a thing: but the honor of kings is to search out a matter. The heaven for height, and the earth for depth, and the heart of kings is unsearchable (Prov. 25:2,3).

A king who cares very little for the welfare of his people will disregard knowledge. Such will bring about his own demise. **“For the transgression of a land many are the princes thereof: but by a man of understanding and knowledge the state thereof shall be prolonged” (Prov. 28:2)**. History has proven where royal families, political parties, and military tribunals did not seek divine counsel; their countries have always been in a state of upheaval, never enjoying stability, with power always changing hands. Likewise, most of these nations have never enjoyed any degree of prosperity, and more regrettably, have never had access to the gospel.

The king who seeks knowledge will also be perceptive. Often our leaders make decisions that are foolish and through these decisions they demonstrate their refusal to seek divine help. Some do not know how to use the intelligence God has given them. However, a king who seeks wisdom from above will be able to clearly discern between right and wrong, good and evil. Solomon had this in mind when he wrote, **“A king that sitteth in the throne of judgment scattereth away all evil with this eyes” (Prov. 20:8)**. Since he is perceptive of evil, he quickly seeks to drive it far away from his people (v. 26). Once this is accomplished, the king brings peace to the land (Prov. 29:4,8).

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF RULERS

If one is interested in righteousness, he is interested in doing right. Often politicians will give lip service to honesty, character, and integrity. However, many in public office are self-serving and have little regard to what is right. One who understands righteousness will seek out the divine standard for righteousness, God’s holy Word.

Righteous rulers bring blessings to the people. **“When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the peo-**

ple mourn” (Prov. 29:2). The people rejoice because of freedom, prosperity, tolerance, justice, and equity abound under a righteous ruler. The nation of Iraq has recently been freed from the tyrannical rule of Saadam Hussein. As a result, that nation’s citizens have been rejoicing in the streets of their cities (**cf. Prov. 28:28**).

Righteous rulers enrich the land. **“Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues without right” (Prov. 16:8).** Some things money cannot buy. Though a nation may fill its coffers full, without morality a nation will fall. The founding Fathers words of wisdom ought to be heeded today. Our system of government will only work for a moral people. The governor of Tennessee, Phil Bredesen, recently signed legislation establishing a lottery in Tennessee. Often those promoting this evil have said, “just think about the added revenue it will bring.” Little thought has been given to the fact that gambling is robbery by mutual consent and along with gambling there is an increase in poverty and crime. However, even if gambling did produce great revenues, I would be opposed because it violates the principles of right.

Righteous rulers bring honor to the nation. **“It is abomination to kings to commit wickedness: for the throne is established by righteousness” (Prov. 16:12).** It has often been said during the last decade, concerning our leaders, “I do not care about his character, as long as he can do the job.” I would submit to you a leader cannot do the job without character. A righteous ruler (one committed to the principles of right) understands the enormity of his position and his influence upon so many. A nation will often take on the character of its leader. Therefore, those who sit in positions of authority understand their public and private behavior is of utmost importance (and the general populace do, as well).

Righteous rulers respect those who do right. **“Righteous lips are the delight of kings; and they love him that speaketh right” (Prov. 16:13).** A righteous ruler understands that honest people can only be beneficial to him. Those who are wicked will undermine him, envy him, and lie to him, while seeking his demise (**Prov. 25:4,5; cf. 29:12**). Therefore, he honors not those who do evil (**Prov. 18:5**), but good.

(To be continued).

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