

Surrender to the Right God - Prov. 20

Who's in Control?

Promise of Freedom; Delivery of Bondage: There are many things that slip in to try to control a man – and we have to be mindful of them. This proverb is full of these illustrations, with the idea that the contrast is built in trusting the Lord and letting Him have control. (*Think of "take a deep breath and wait..."*)

Numbing the Feelings (vs. 1)

Remember: "Don't be a Winer."

- **Eph. 5:18** – Remember, it's not just about "don't drink alcohol," it's about *anything* that would take control in a "liberate yourself with this" means.
- **Prov. 31:4-7** – Talks about a lot of when and where to use alcohol – and summarizes it to be "you're about to die or in extreme pain and need something to numb it... go ahead, but if you're a decision maker or if you're just struggling to cope... nah."
- **1 Tim. 5:23** – Hints at a use medicinally or in the lack of any good water (alcohol is known to kill bacteria, etc... so that could be how it ties in).
- Expecting "freedom and acceptance" and what does wine do? It mocks and makes you a bigger fool than you were before.

Arrogance (not to live by fear, but know your place) (vs. 2)

Remember: "Mess with the Bull, get the Horns."

- **Romans 13** – Submit to the king, but only as long as you can also submit to God.
- "You brought this down on your own head." (*Think of Psalm 2 – when His rage is stirred just a little.*)
- Fear isn't wrong, just as confidence isn't wrong – but misplaced fear is cowardice and misplaced confidence is arrogance (*Prov. 29:25 is a good balance for this verse*).

"Need to Know" Obsession (vs. 3, 19)

Remember: "Grab a Dog's Ears; you don't get to decide when to let go." (*Curiosity can become Captivity.*)

- There are times where it's good just to let things go – know when not to ask questions and when not to pry.
- **Prov. 26:17** – "Dog by the Ears" principle.
- We have this misplaced idea that because "knowledge is power," it's more honorable to know everything about everything... but that's not how it works.

- It's okay to not know everything – especially if it doesn't concern you.
- A lot of personal issues come because you had to insert yourself into other peoples' problems, and like a dog – if you grab that problem by the ears, you're not in for the "long haul."
- Don't meddle. (1 Peter 4:15)

Love of Leisure (vs. 4, 13)

Remember: Leisure is a break, not the end goal.

- When you have the opportunity to work, do it – because there is coming a time when you won't be allowed to work, and you'll have to live off of what you set aside.
- Don't be like a child who always rushes to others to deliver you. God gives strength and wisdom to allow you to prepare and set aside (*that's why "he that doesn't work shouldn't eat." (2 Thes. 3:10)*).
- Rest is commanded, but too much rest isn't rest anymore... it's an idol to self-indulgence. (*Think of one of the primary reasons Sodom was so reprehensible – Ezekiel 16:49 ff. How many of these sins have to do with refusing to work, refusing to share, and overindulgence in the pleasures of life?*)
- Saving is commanded, but work is still required, even if we have enough. **Luke 12:19** – the end of the parable. The guy has enough, more than enough, and trusted in his wealth (12:13-21). It's not about "earning enough" or "working for the weekend," it's about fulfilling God's commands and taking care of others. (*See notes under vs. 10, 23 for how God's blessing is not measured by how much we can figure out on our own.*)

"I Want It Now" (vs. 5, 22)

Remember: "Easy come, easy Go."

- Scoop water from the surface of the lake – easy (and quick); Get the pure stuff from the depths – hard (and time-consuming).
- So much of life just boils down to consistency day in and day out – don't expect a quick-fix. You took time to get into this mess, it'll probably take time to get out.
- Wisdom is no different... and as vs. 21 points out, if you "inherit" wisdom from someone else without learning what it takes to "earn it," don't expect it to be meaningful.
- Hardship and struggle is how you grow – wisdom, wealth, experience, etc...
- Same reason we don't avenge ourselves – wait for God to do it. He'll do it better.
- Vs. 3 and 5 are almost two sides of the same coin – one says not to meddle with things that don't concern you, the other says it's not a bad thing to dig below the surface to see what's really there. *Again, Proverbs is meant to be a mine that can be dug over and over.*

Self-Importance (vs. 6)

Remember: "Talk is Cheap."

- You can say whatever you want about yourself... make sure it's true. Don't jump into a self-defense mode – you might not be as virtuous as you think you are.
- This is why the Bible relegates all of us as "sinners" so that God can send out a blanket salvation. (**Rom. 11:32**)
- **Romans 2:17** – Paul writes to his Jewish brothers to confront them about this very attitude, and explains it's why they got rejected when they were sitting practically at the door of salvation.

A Look at "Hesed" ("Goodness")

- Note the contrast with "faithfulness" later in this passage. Every man will claim "of course I'm the faithful one, of course I'll stick with it," etc... but the Bible is saying here that the "proof of the pudding is in the tasting." I don't care what you say about yourself, I care what you do.
- At its root, when applied to God, it is centered on "covenantal love." Like a marriage vow - "for better or worse, we're in this together." God covenants with His people, and He won't relent.
- This is a word that is translated a bunch of different ways based on context. In general, it has the idea of "virtuous" in various ways (*through faithfulness, goodness, loving, etc.*). The contrast with faithfulness in this passage explains it, and examining the character of God shows the broad meaning even of the word "good."
- God is "good" in that He shows His character by what He does. (*And He's the most important being in the universe.*) See **Exodus 34:6-7** for God demonstrating His faithful love for us.
- "The 'goodness' of God leads us to repent" (*rather than giving up on us easily*).
- God makes the rain to shine on the just and the unjust, showing that He is kind to humanity in general, even when they are in unbelief. Unbelievably patient (*think of Him with the Amorites – "not yet full" and so He sent His own people away for a while and then came back in judgment*).
- See **Matt. 6:2** for another (quite literal) example of someone "blowing their own horn" to show how righteous they are. As the Bible says "they have their reward."

Self-Righteousness (vs. 9)

Remember: "You Didn't Build That."

- This is taking vs. 6 to the next level (*really a continuation of the same theme*), but you didn't make your heart pure – you didn't "clean yourself" up. That's God's doing.
- Don't be impressed with your "will-power" and "strength" as if it were anything but God's kindness that even led you to this point.
- **Romans 2:4** – The goodness of God leads you to repentance.
- **Ezek. 36:25-27** – When God takes a garden hose to his people.

Favoritism and Respecting Persons (vs. 10, 23)

Remember: We all came into the world wearing the same outfit, and we'll leave the same.

- Divers weights and measures would be used for a few reasons – to trick people out of money.
- Can metaphorically be the "one standard for this guy and one for that."
- God condemns "respecting persons," whether poor or rich – are to be treated exactly the same. You don't condemn the rich to "stick it to them" and you don't condemn the poor because they "can't fight back." Justice, sales, etc... are to be "blind."
- See a bit of this in 19b ("**flattereth with his lips**" - **don't even mess with them**).

Manipulation (vs. 25) - Rash Vows Do Not Please the Lord

Remember: You can't blind someone who sees the heart.

- "I'll do this forever now!" Be careful...
- **Eccl. 5:1-7** – A fool is flippant with His mouth before God.

Saving Evil "Just in Case" (vs. 26)

Remember: There's no point in hoarding that which God hates.

- Destroy it lest it become a snare.
- But remember – your definition of "evil" isn't what we're going by... it's God's definition.
- This goes back to "submit to a king" because a good king is one that's a terror to evil works, not the good.

Notes:
