

A Commentary on the Book of Proverbs

Chapter 6:1-35: Wisdom's Warnings

Verses 1-15: Money, Laziness: A parent [father/mother] instructs the youth in prudent use of money. One must think before making financial commitments on behalf of others. Borrowing money or letting oneself be in debt to others shouldn't be based on mere trust. One must have independence in managing one's own wealth. Wisdom appeals to insight into human affairs in financial decision making. Being in the 'money power' of others would destabilize or destroy life. The youth must come to know and admit his/her mistakes; in setbacks one must not fall into laziness and shame. Laziness is often visited by 'poverty'; it strikes like an armed robber [not social situation of poverty but as outcome of imprudent living]. The lazy is his/her own victim; therefore, learn from mistakes and rise to advance in life. In money matters one must know one's limits and act responsibly. To the sluggish, wisdom gives the example of Ant to learn how to adapt wisely to changing life situations. There is greater harmony in the animal world than among humans. Ant is not under the command of another; it acts according to the order given by God to plan for the future [not anxiety] with diligence. The story of Joseph in Egypt [Genesis 40-45] is a model of wise manager of wealth, who saved grain for future adverse weather!

Verses 16-19: Seven things which are an abomination to the Lord: 1. Haughty eyes: In Psalm 8, eyes are agents of God to marvel at the wonders of creation and praise God, to lift up the eyes to God in love and trust. A wise person's eyes are symbols of humility and modesty and not of arrogance. 2. A lying tongue: tongue is used as a weapon of lies, incite to commit crimes. The foolish live in a twisted, unreal world and damage others' lives by false accusations. They would call darkness light and light darkness [Isaiah 5:20]; and teach evil as good and good as evil! 'Wicked judges decide the crooked is right' [Micah 3:9]. 3. Hands that shed innocent blood: it is will to power through crooked means. 4. Heart that devices wicked plans: heart is used as a source of evil [deceit] by those who ignore wisdom. Heart's true function is to perceive the good and prompt the eyes, tongue, hands and feet to do good! 5. Feet that makes haste to run to evil: organ of the body acting according to wrong disposition of the heart to inflict disaster. 6. False witness who breathes out lies: the wealthy, powerful often manipulate witnesses for their own advantage. 7. A man/woman who sows discord among brothers and sisters: Proverbs main concern is integrity of family. Bonds of harmony in family, community and nation is violated by intentional sowing of discord which results in quarrels and litigations. These organs of the body represent the whole person and one who uses human faculties for destructive ends is called a 'scoundrel' [belial in Hebrew]. Act properly in the present time for well-being in the future!

Verses 20-35: Warning against Adultery: This section revisits previously addressed issue of adultery. 'Do not desire another's wife or husband' [verse 25]. Such desire is 'fire carried in the bosom that burns one's clothes; can one walk on hot coal without scorching the feet' [verse 27-28]. Adultery is a theft. If one steals material goods, they can be restored but adultery ends in disaster. Proverbs warn that adultery is cause for jealousy, revenge, violence and bloodshed. Seductive, tempting speech and gestures of woman/man violate marital commitment. Consider parental counsel in matters of matrimony as God's voice. Adorn wisdom of sages in the heart,

like a necklace around the neck, to remain faithful to one's marital vows [wedding ring as sign of marital fidelity]. Proverbs encourage self-mastery over one's passions to achieve greatness in life!

Father Jose