

A Commentary on the Book of Proverbs

Chapter 24:1-34: Program of Life

Verses 1-9: Right intention: Wisdom promotes good intentions of the heart. The wicked might prosper materially but the lover of wisdom will not envy them; he/she knows that the intent of the wicked is violent and their speech stirs chaos. The upright will cherish friendship with God and remaining in the good will be their program of life. God's wisdom created the world like building a house. Building a house requires correct measurements, harmonious blending of all its components. Just as one furnishes the house, wisdom helps one to adorn life with the riches of justice and love. Motivations of the heart matter for wellbeing in life. Proverbs associate true strength, power with wisdom. Wisdom is the counselor in the heart. Listening to the counsel of sages will put one on the path of success in life. Wisdom is the greatest of all riches one can desire, however it is out of reach for the foolish. Wisdom cannot coexist with malice. Words from a malicious heart has nothing constructive to offer. The wicked in their pride fails to see what wisdom offers! Interior attitude of a scoffer plans sinful acts; he/she pursues what destabilizes family and society.

Verses 10-16: Judge yourself: Wisdom's role is to provide courage and strength to own responsibility for one's actions. God is the all-seeing One; his wisdom helps one to judge one's intentions, words and actions. Justice should be upheld and not given up when pressured. It is despicable to ignore justice due to cowardice, weakness of character or for any sinister motives. Proverbs compare wisdom to honey. Honey is sweet, medicinal and it gives joy to those hunger for it. Wisdom is sweeter than honey; it is both a correcting and guiding gift given to human rational faculty. Wisdom illumines the mind to journey one's path with enthusiasm and hope. Proverbs observe that the wicked might plot harm against a righteous person. The just person might fall but he/she realizes the fault and makes reparations for it and moves to embrace good; the wicked, on the other hand, revel in evil doings and they are heading to ruin. 'Do not lie in wait' to destroy a good person!

Verses 17-22: Dignified heart: The just person will not rejoice over his/her enemy's downfall. He/she will be free of vengeful thoughts. It is the Lord's prerogative to deal with a malicious enemy. A lover of wisdom seeks to love one's enemy and prays for the reform of enemy's mind. In Proverbs' view, it is foolish to envy one who does evil; evil has its own dreadful end; evil is a road to a dead end! 'The lamp of the wicked goes out'; it is a directionless life. Fear of the Lord, his commandments must guide one's life. It is a dangerous plot to incite rebellion/insurrection to trample on God's law/justice. Sin of omission is inexcusable in a matter of justice that should be rendered.

Verses 23-34: Words of the Sages: The commandments of the Lord, his word must be the standard for establishing justice. Partiality, dishonesty is opposed to God's justice. Both judges and witnesses must seek the truth, verifying all facts of the matter and render appropriate justice to the offended party. Human reason has a unique capacity to be dreaming, planning and to be prepared. Like building a house one must be industrious and show workmanship to preserve stability in marriage and family! Verse 29, 'do not say, as he did to me, so I will do to

him'. One may have vengeful thoughts but taking revenge is not wisdom's way. Proper judicial avenue must be sought to solve disputes and harm done to a person. Revenge is a non-stop violent act that destroys each other. A dilapidated field is a sign of a lazy person; poverty, defeatism would rob his life. Care for the land, for creation shows the dynamism of creator God in a person. If life is about feeling good all the time, one wouldn't need wisdom's counsel. Wisdom comes to assist because the human mind is complex, while some adhere to righteous path others follow more sinister path; there is conflict between these two ways often found in the same person. God renders his justice through just and unafraid humans who have 'the fear of the Lord', who love wisdom!

Father Jose