

Dr. August Konkell, Proverbs, Session 8

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This is Dr. August Konkell in his teaching on the book of Proverbs. This is session number 8, Four Proverbial Lessons, Proverbs chapter 6, verses 1 to 19.

Welcome to Proverbs. We have completed a review of the 10 talks that the parent has with the child, or the 10 lectures as we have described them, in the introduction to Proverbs in chapters 1 through 9. And we have noted that within these lectures there are various interludes. One of those was the Tree of Life, but the second one is four proverbial lessons. So, we're going to take just a little bit of time to go over the four different lessons that are offered here in the first 19 verses of Proverbs chapter 6. The first of these little lessons which comes in the form of a proverb really is the problem of money, and especially the problem of borrowed money.

Now the practice of borrowing money is something that is as old as civilization itself. It is as old as the time that money ever came to be a means of exchanging the value of goods. This of course really happened with the formation of cities, ancient Samaria, and the old kingdom period of Egypt, more than 3,000 years BC.

And when one is dealing with currencies as a representative of the value of goods, there is always the necessity of sometimes using that currency as a kind of a value to obtain something when you don't actually have the means to get it. So we call that a loan. But of course, a loan has to have some kind of security, otherwise, the person who has borrowed the money could simply default and then it amounts to a simple theft.

Now the Torah, the teaching of Moses, made provision for this. And we have within the book of Deuteronomy, and we see it in the prophets as well, the ways in which security would be given for money that was loaned for a necessity. It could even be food for that matter.

And then when work was done and that money could be repaid, the item for security, the pledge as it were, could be returned. Most often this was a tunic or the outer covering. In ancient times, the outer covering or the cloak was something that you wore for protection from the weather during the day and you slept in during the night.

So, in the Torah of Moses, the tunic, if the tunic was used for security, it always had to be returned by the evening because you couldn't jeopardize the life of the person who borrowed the money in terms of endangering his health by him not being able to stay warm at night. So, this kind of regulation was well known. But what this

proverb is warning against here in the first verses of chapter six is what we actually have in Proverbs 20 verse 16.

If you've loaned money to a foreigner, then you may as well count it as lost. Now the situation envisaged here is that the person who actually owes the money does not feel obligated to the person who is now declaring a security for it. What practice is envisaged is a kind of a mediation.

You have someone who has loaned money to someone outside of Israel, he's called a foreigner, so he's not obligated under the covenant. He's not a brother. And you have been unable to secure, for whatever reason, a sufficient pledge to cover the amount that has been borrowed.

But you need that money and can't get it back. So, you're going now to your friend, your covenant brother, and you're saying to him, look, cover the security of this guy's loan. Well, the proverb here is saying, if you do that, you better plead with your friend to get that money back, because it's gone.

The guy who really owes the money feels no obligation to you who have covered the security for him. And he's not even going to bother to try to pay his loan. So that is the essential warning that is given in these five verses.

But the lesson is very simple, that when you give security for a loan, you'd better have the means to know that if you lose that security, it's not going to hurt your life. It somehow is discretionary income or money that you have. Our second little proverb has to do with work and laziness.

Now, here we come to a principle that we're going to discuss in our last lecture of this series, namely the attitude of wisdom towards work. It's really a most important topic because work is something that is part of every single society. It's one of the things we talk about the most in broad economic terms, our gross national product.

And that is, what are we producing with our efforts and with our work that somebody else wants? Work is a necessity for life. God designed work to be good. God designed work to be that which should be a delight to our lives.

But of course, it became something else. It became something that is often described as toil or as pain. The Hebrew word for that is one that occurs in Genesis, and we encounter it quite often, and we encounter it in Proverbs.

It's the word *etzev*. So, God tells Adam that because you have made yourself like God, working the ground is going to become for you an *etzebon*. It's going to become toil.

It's going to become a struggle. It's going to become a pain. The knowledge that you thought you had about the good is going to turn out to reward you with the trouble of trying to bring a crop from the ground.

And so, when you plant a crop that's going to show up plants you didn't want, and you're going to call them weeds, and you're going to call them thorns, and you're going to call them thistles, you don't have the knowledge that you were claiming. And your work is no longer going to be the kind of rewarding result that it should have been. Many times instead of the reward, what you're going to get is struggle.

However, that struggle is necessary. We get this in the New Testament. The Apostle Paul says to the Thessalonians that it's necessary for them to work, and if they don't work, they can't eat.

Some of the Thessalonians, this is in Paul's early part of his ministry, where he is clearly anticipating that the coming of the Lord is going to be soon, and probably within the lifetime of many of these people, led some of them to think, oh well, we can abandon this world already. We don't need to pay attention to the usual orders of life, and we're not going to work anymore. And Paul had to say, listen, when we were with you, we spent our time preaching, and then we worked so that we would have freedom to preach.

And you people who have now chosen the faith don't have the option of thinking you shouldn't work. Ants. I've watched ants, in places where I didn't want to watch them, namely next to the foundation of my house where they're coming in and raiding my pantry.

But they are the most curious little creatures. They're always on the buzz. I mean, they're just motoring along, all of them, and they all seem to know where they're going, and they all seem to know what they have to do, and they're all carrying these big loads that are three times as big as they are.

And you ask yourself, now why are these little critters doing all of this stuff? And why don't some of them just be like a drone bee, you know, just go and sit off on the side and let somebody else carry the load for them? But you'll never find an ant like that. That's just not the way ants are. And the Wisdom Writer is saying, well, an analogy to human life is that you don't have the option of being the drone bee.

Now, I've often wondered about those drone bees, you know, all they have to do is make sure the queen is stocked with fertilized eggs. That doesn't seem to be too big a job to me. But somehow or another, that's their role.

That's what they do. But you don't find ants like that. And the Wisdom Writer says people are more like ants.

They aren't like bees. In this respect, people have to work at the right time, in the right way, and in order. And if you don't do that, then poverty is going to come knocking.

That's the way that it is expressed numerous times in Proverbs. We'll come back to that in our last lecture. Then there are those people who are always up to some kind of scheme that they think is going to come out best for them.

And so, they squint with their eyes, shuffle with their feet, point with their fingers. These are all sort of clandestine ways of communicating, secret ways of working out a scheme so that you're going to plot a way in which you're going to be able to take advantage of someone else. That never leads to anything other than trouble.

It never leads to anything other than a calamity. I have kind of become a fan of P.G. Woodhouse. And one of his characters is a guy named Ukridge.

And if you ever want an example of the troublemaker, you need to read one of the Ukridge stories. But invariably, he's got a scheme. And he's going to be able to make a pot of big money.

Generally, he ensnares a whole lot of other people in his scheme. And invariably, it is disastrous for him, as well as all of his friends. P.G. Woodhouse understood this really well.

Ukridge was a troublemaker who could always snare his friends into a useless scheme. And then there are things that the Lord hates. The seven abominations.

We talk about the seven deadly sins. Well, Proverbs has seven abominations. Pride, lies, murder, perverse plans, the troublemakers, the false witness, and the stirring up of strife between friends.

And it is interesting how the parts of the body involve the eyes, and the tongue, and the hands, and the heart, and the feet, and the mouth. So, it's obviously a very nicely little laid-out sequence in which you're instructed to know that this is the kind of person you don't want to be. Stay away from all of these seven abominations.

That is the advice of the wise teacher.

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