

THRU THE BIBLE SYNTHESIS

"Part XIV: Proverbs - Minimizing Our Risk Of Failing In An Imperfect, Unwholesome World"

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

(1) The New York Times, December 14, 1995 issue ran a story titled, "Flimsy Bosnia Mandate: Congress Accepts the Mission but Shows Strong Undercurrent of Doubt and Anxiety." The President has committed 20,000 troops to Bosnian soil to insure the Bosnian peace treaty when **neither** the Congress **nor** the American public are sold on the idea! Centuries of ethnic and religious strife there will probably not allow real peace to break out in a single year that the troops are there. **Closer to home, a friend of a teen in our Church is off to Bosnia after his short stint in an army boot camp. He has freely admits that he is SCARED!**

(2) This year, the U.S. stock market jumped up in one of the strongest bull markets in history. Problem: Mutual Funds magazine reports that some analysts worry that it is **too** high, that we are set for a steep decline to bring stock prices back down to earth. However, others think that market should keep on climbing for **years!** Well, **should one invest in the market now, or send his money overseas where some of the cheapest and most valuable stocks beckon? Who knows?!**

(3) Fear of failure bites us in **family** life. **This** December.

(a) A parent in our church anonymously asked for prayer at Prayer Meeting for a huge crisis in a dependent's life.

(b) **Three** couples in Nepaug are right **now** facing enormous financial bills or educational needs or life planning challenges due to the **medical** needs of dependents in the home!

With life being so full of uncertainties, is there any way to minimize the risk of failure to enjoy reliable bliss?

(We turn to the sermon's "Need" section . . .)

Need: "Genesis 1:1-31 states that God created the world to be very wholesome, but there is much tragic unwholesomeness in this life! Does MY life have to be troublesome or can I minimize the risk of failing in various avenues of life? How? WHY?!"

- I. **With history's increasing spiritual failure of group institutions, the individual was left dangling without the SECURITY of having his personal life experience CONSISTENT fulfillment!**
 - A. Though God created the world as **wholesome** and set man up as His deputy, **sin** deposed him, bringing on **divine judgment** to plunge man into a life of **trouble**, Gn. 1-5; 2 Co. 4:4.
 - B. The Lord renewed history through the Noahic flood, Gen. 6:1-9:7.
 - C. Yet, Noah's descendant, Nimrod, began an apostasy, foolishly opposing God's rule on earth, Gen. 10:8-10; 11:1-9; Rev. 12:1-3.
 - D. God thus chose Abraham to start a nation to check this sin, Gn. 12:1-3
 - E. After many challenges en route, that nation, Israel, along with its priesthood and monarchy failed to curb Nimrodian evil, but became so seduced by it that God sent her into captivity, Gn. 12:4-2 Chronicles.
 - F. With group institutions proving to be impotent to minimize his risk for trouble, the individual dangled with the effects of sin, feeling **insecure** in his being hurt from **repeated reversals** in his earthly **welfare!**
- II. **Proverbs announces a SURE, righteous ORDER in living to counter the personal CHAOS and HURT that sin produces!**
 - A. Egyptian rulers **observed** what they concluded was a **fixed, moral order** to life that, if followed, would **minimize risk of failure** and bring **happiness!** To give their young princes a head start in life, these rulers put down sayings describing this **order** in a literary genre called a *sboyet*, Bruce K. Waltke, "The Book of Proverbs and Ancient Wisdom Literature," Bibliotheca Sacra, v. 136, No. 543, p. 221-238.
 - B. Archaeological studies show that **Proverbs** conforms in **genre** to that Egyptian *sboyet*. Like the *sboyet*, Proverbs has (a) a prose title, the introduction, (1:1), (b) a long admonition on the value of instruction (1:2-9:18) (c) trailed by collected sayings (10:1-31:31), *Ibid.*, p. 225.
 - C. Proverbs **utilizes** the Egyptian *sboyet* genre to **reveal** that **ISRAEL'S GOD authored that fixed, moral order**, and sovereignly **maintains** it by either blessing or disciplining man in accord to his life's decisions and actions relative to that order!
 1. Where the Egyptian word for this order is *ma'at*, Proverbs uses the Hebrew word, *hokma*, meaning "wisdom," *Ibid.*, p. 232-233.
 2. Proverbs defines the starting point of *hokma*, the **fixed moral order** as being the **respect** for **ISRAEL'S GOD**, Prov. 1:7! Note how perfectly this idea flows into **Moses'** concern in Ex. 20:18-20!
 3. From this **respect** for **ISRAEL'S GOD** flows **obedience** to Him, and from that **obedience** flows **blessing** simply because **ISRAEL'S GOD** authored and maintains that **fixed moral order!** Proverbs displays this truth in all aspects of life, and here are a few examples:

- a. Prov. 30:7-9 and 23:4-5 show the need to avoid the sin of greed in order to produce financial stability!
- b. Prov. 22:1 informs us to establish a righteous reputation above gaining more money as the former opens doors for prolonged future income where the latter at the price of the former closes the door to income possibilities!
- c. Prov. 15:33 shows that being respected is a product of humility, and that humility grows out of fearing God!
- d. Prov. 24:26; 27:6 teach that when one fears God and acts uprightly to others, he conveys a true love by his honesty!
- e. Prov. 30:5-6 teaches that in relating to others, taking a Biblical stand solicits divine support for our cause!
- f. Prov. 16:31 and 20:29 show that one retains his respect with younger generations if he is upright, for that uprightness yields the divine blessings that the young desire!
- g. Prov. 3:5-6 teaches that by honoring God and not ourselves, He will remove the obstacles we face to meeting our life's goals!

III. **God's "Thread of Redemption" in Proverbs is the creation of a "thirst" for righteousness in order to be blessed that directs men to believe in the Messiah for righteousness' BLESSING, Ro. 3:19-22!**

Application: *To minimize risk of failure and promote blessing in life, submit to the AUTHOR of the fixed moral order: this means (1) obeying His order that we believe on Jesus Christ for salvation from sin, Jn. 3:16; Acts 17:30b. (2) Then, we must (a) confess our sins (1 Jn. 1:9) and (b) depend upon the Holy Spirit for behavior and thought control (Gal. 5:16-23) to (b) apply His Word, 1 Jn. 2:3-6. We will then please the One Who sovereignly rules history (Acts 17:24-27) and thus experience a pathway of reliable blessings in life, Prov. 1:7.*

Lesson: *There IS a fixed moral order in life that, if followed, minimizes risk of failure and brings blessing -- an order arising from the Biblical God's blessing or punishing men as He restrains world evil, cf. 2 Th. 2:7!*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the sermon's lesson . . .)

David Mahoney, author of "Confessions of a Street-Smart Manager," executive vice president of Colgate-Palmolive and Chief Executive Officer of the multibillion dollar Norton Simon, Inc. conglomerate, points out that avoiding "the seven deadly sins" will help one survive in the dog-eat-dog business world of top executives. He explains:

- (a) If you are proud, you go down a one-way street which may produce a loss. Humility keeps you open to suggestions and possibly minimizing your risks of loss and opening up new doors of opportunity along the way.
- (b) Of you covet, it makes you unhappy with what you have and that leads to all sorts of foolish choices.
- (c) Avoid lust, for few people who experience this sin can escape its consequences.
- (d) Anger is a big waste of energy, so drop it.
- (e) Avoid gluttony because it can cut your competitive edge, making you lose to the fellow who checks his appetites.
- (f) Envy reveals your weaknesses and makes you powerless to the competition out there. Just don't envy!
- (g) Laziness keeps one careless and disorganized, and that makes him an easy prey his business competitors. (David Mahoney, "Street-Smart Secrets For Success" in Reader's Digest, August 1988, p. 63-64)

So the book of Proverbs, pushing fear of God and adherence to His righteousness, readily predicts the findings of a top executive in American business on surviving in the executive world! There IS a fixed, moral order even on Madison Avenue and Wall Street that brings blessing if followed, for the God of the Bible INFLUENCES history accordingly! We need to be right with HIM!