

January 16th, 2022AM - Kevin Olivier
Proverbs 31:1-9 – “Be Careful & Merciful”

- A. William Ross Wallace’s poem, “The Hand That Rocks the Cradle Is the Hand That Rules the World.”
1. Wise rulers are often the result of wise parents.
 2. The Proverbs were inspired by God along with the rest of the Holy Scriptures “...so that **the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:16).**
 3. Today’s text tells of a godly mother passing-down wisdom to a son who is to rule as a king.
- C. Looking into the context & authorship from (**vv1-2**), there is debate whether or not King Lemuel was an actually the king’s name or not.
- D. **Prov 31** is not the only place where the words of a godly woman are found in Scripture. The words of Deborah along with the prayers of Hannah & Mary were also inspired by the Holy Spirit.

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| God calls you to be careful [cautious] yet merciful in your Christian walk. | I. BE CAREFUL TO AVOID PITFALLS II. BE MERCIFUL TO THOSE IN NEED |
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I. **BE CAREFUL TO AVOID PITFALLS**

- A. In **v3**, “**Do not give your strength to women, or your ways to that which destroys kings.**”
1. Ancient example:
 2. Modern example:
 3. You are told not to give “**your ways to that which destroys kings.**” That can include a host of other sins such as pride, the love of money, love of pleasure, & the addiction to entertainment.
 4. The ultimate answer is to give your strength, your ways— your deepest affections— to the Lord. **Mat 6:33** “**seek first His kingdom & His righteousness...**”
- B. Another way or pitfall that destroys kings, marriages, families, & careers is drunkenness. → (**vv4-5**)
1. Rulers are not to abuse alcohol or other addictive substances because it will impair their mental faculties to rule.
 2. There is a suggested better, medicinal use of alcohol for those in a desperate way: → (**v6-7**)
 - a. It is impossible for God’s Holy Word to promote sin such as drunkenness.
 - b. One who is perishing (i.e. hospice patient) will often be given morphine to deal with excruciating pain. That substance is much stronger & more addictive than alcohol!
 - c. Doctors often prescribe drugs to help those who suffer depression; if used rightly, that can be a good substitute for giving “**wine to him whose life is bitter.**”
 - 1) **Ps 104:14** says that wine “**makes man’s heart glad.**”
 - 2) There is a level of alcohol intake that results in a “glad” feeling or “buzz.”
 - 3) The danger is that some cannot stop there & keep drinking.

II. BE MERCIFUL TO THOSE IN NEED

A. Once a ruler is able to think-straight, he can do what God called him to in a way that brings Him glory.

Lemuel was told in **v8**: **“Open your mouth for the mute, for the rights of all the unfortunate.”**

1. I prefer that we should not use the words “fortunate” or “unfortunate” in this or any other English translation.
 - a. There is a way these words can be understood rightly: a person who has a fortune is rich or at least financial stable. An unfortunate person is considered poor.
 - b. Some claim to look at your palm & tell you your fortune— your future or fate.
 - c. The Hebrew word that the NASB translates as **“unfortunate”** can be translated as “passing-on.” That is why the NKJV translates this as **“all who are appointed to die.”**
2. Some cannot speak for themselves & are destitute; they need the help of others who can act as their advocates. That should be the job of a wise, God-fearing ruler.
 - Rulers should care for the interests of **“the mute”** & others with life-altering disabilities.
3. **v8** is not just for rulers; all you who fear God, ought to find opportunities to **“Open your mouth for the mute,”** the other disabled, & the rights of all who are passing-on from this life.

B. Notice the instruction about how a ruler ought to rule righteously. → (**v9**)

1. In politics, too many rulers spend the bulk of their effort with the focus of get themselves re-elected. Their focus instead is to seek to glorify God with how they exercise justice; that includes defending the **“the rights of the afflicted & needy.”**
3. There is an error to say that the only role for government is law & order, including criminal justice, according to **Rom 13**. Today’s text says rulers ought to help those who are truly in need.
4. **Ja 1:27** says the church should be involved in helping the afflicted & needy as well. He wrote, **“Pure & undefiled religion in the sight of our God & Father is this: to visit orphans & widows in their distress.”**
 - a. God is concerned with our eternal welfare; that is why He sent Jesus to spare us from the wrath to come.
 - b. He is also concerned with our physical welfare; that is why God instituted the office of deacon as a blessing for His church.

Review, further application, & conclusion:

Rom 5:6 **“For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.”**