

January 2, 2022

“A Lack of Vision” Proverbs 29:18

FCF: Need for a reality check

PROPOSITION: (anchor) Because of the necessity of God’s Word,
(magnet) we must prioritize it in our lives.

SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION:

With the start of a new year, it’s often a time for a pause and reflection, to set goals and make resolutions. Let me relay a truism that is applicable across the board. Whatever your goals and resolutions may be for the coming year, we do not create reality. We do not create reality. We enter it. We step into a world already made. That is a fundamental ground level fact point.

Which means we need wisdom as to how to live in this world, this drama that is already underway. That wisdom needs to be true to what is. I have good news. God has given it to us.

SCRIPTURE READING: [Proverbs 29:18](#)

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SERMON INTRODUCTION:

There is a relational context to the book of Proverbs. Broadly speaking, we begin with its covenantal context. The LORD has initiated a covenant with His people. Particularly speaking, we can also speak of its parental context. It is an appeal and instruction to a son. Either way, whether we’re thinking about this in its covenantal or parental context, we can know this. The Proverbs are not about striving to attain a status but about living out of a status already given.

The LORD is saying, “This is what it means to live in this world I have made, according to its design. And this is what it means to live in relationship with Me.” Not surprisingly, out of that come both warnings and assurances. In terms of this particular text, we see warnings and assurances about God’s Word. For there is a necessity to God’s Word. It is vital, essential, and anything but optional. It is described elsewhere as a lamp for our feet and a light to our path. His words are our life. Again, think in terms of who is speaking and who is hearing. So there is this necessity to God’s Word. And because of that necessity, we must, according to Solomon, prioritize it in our lives. We must hear and heed, letting ourselves be challenged and changed.

Let’s take a look at this text, drilling into this sobering warning and sweeping assurance.

I. A SOBERING WARNING

First, the sobering warning. We see this with the first half ([READ Proverbs 29:18a](#)).

A) Clarifications

We need to start with some clarifications. The reason being the oft-quoted KJV, “Where there is no vision the people perish.” Well, meanings change and so we need some clarity here.

1. Prophetic vision

It’s not simply “vision”. To the modern reader, that can sound like a call for planning strategies and making 5-year goals. There’s a place for that but the idea here is “prophetic vision” - in the Old Testament era, divine revelation through a prophet. That is to say, this is the Word of God.

2. Cast off restraint

That's the first clarification. The second is tied to the consequence of being without this. The people do not "perish" in the sense of going bad like moldy produce. The word means to "cast off restraint" - to let loose, to run wild. So those are a couple of really important clarifications.

B) Significance

([READ Proverbs 29:18a](#)) Again, the idea is that the one tragically leads to the other.

1. Terrible situation

It's a terrible situation being described here. It is a frightening punishment to be denied the Word of God. Amos 8 speaks of a famine - not merely of food but of the Word. 1 Samuel 3 alludes to this as part of the background for the nation's woes ([READ 1 Samuel 3:1](#)). A terrible situation.

2. Inevitable result

It is a terrible situation that leads to an inevitable result. No longer willing to govern themselves, people become ungovernable - casting aside any concern for others and indulging in their selfish desires. There is a startling example of this in Israel's history. While Moses was on Mt. Sinai receiving the Law of God, the people began to fear that he would never return. Without input of the prophetic word, they began to cast off restraint - losing all control, dancing around a golden calf, wildly indulging in open immorality. Solomon may well have had this history in mind.

In view of all this and the great stakes, God then gives us this sobering warning.

Application:

What do we do with this? To start, let us not be too quick to point fingers at the broader culture. Obviously, there are trends today demonstrating the truth of these words. But we need to come back to this relational context. Who are these words primarily for? The church. So we need to shift the focus and ask, "How have *we* turned from God's Word and cast off restraint? How have *we* come to resemble the people we are often quick to condemn?" Lord, have mercy.

Again, because of the necessity of God's Word, we must prioritize it in our lives.

II. A SWEEPING ASSURANCE

Which brings us to the sweeping assurance ([READ Proverbs 29:18](#)). A stark contrast.

A) In Keeping the Law

Let's look at two things here - the keeping of the law and the One who keeps it.

1. The law

"The law" in the second half is clearly meant as a parallel to the "prophetic vision" in the first. This is divine revelation, the authoritative inerrant Word of God given to the people of God.

2. Keeping

To keep it is to guard it. The same word is used to describe the LORD's keeping of His people from harm. So to guard the law is to revere it, honestly heed and earnestly strive to observe it.

3. Blessed

And such a person is said to be blessed. They are deeply happy, marked with a joy unshaken by circumstance. Such a person is to be envied and emulated. Again, all in contrast to the first part.

B) The One Who Keeps It

But who is this person? Who is it that is ultimately being described here?

1. Not us

It is not us. Think of the summaries of the law we are given (**READ Matthew 22:37-40**). In our most honest moments, we have to acknowledge that we do not do this. Nor do we live as the prophet Micah commanded (**READ Micah 6:6-8**). We are not law keepers. We are law breakers.

2. But Jesus

So we have a problem. But we also have a Savior. We see this in Jesus' life, mission, and giving of His Spirit. In His life, we have the pattern and model for keeping the law. In His mission, He came to this earth to die for our not keeping the law and to give His record of keeping it Himself. And now, we as His followers have the indwelling and empowering of His Spirit to keep the law, to do this in ways we never could before as He changes and transforms our hearts to be like His.

So, yes, we have that sobering warning. But we also have this sweeping assurance.

Application:

The Lord keeps us. And He has kept the law for us. Which then impels us to be keepers of the law ourselves in glad response to His keeping. We keep it for He has kept it. And us.

How to do we go about this? We need to know the Word so as to keep it. Which means we need to be in it. Which demands personal study. And daily time in conversation with Him.

But this also has to be done together. Our Community Groups are a great avenue for this. The treasures of the Word are too rich to think we can mine all there is by ourselves. It's plain and ugly pride that makes us think we have nothing to learn from other people as we study the Word. We need multiple eyes on this. And then what we find is too hard to carry out ourselves. So friends, we need each other. It's too rich and too hard. The point being we need the Word.

We need it. Because of the necessity of God's Word, we must prioritize it in our lives.

CONCLUSION:

Think of it this way. We are inexperienced travelers in a foreign country, in need of a guide. We are part of a Special Forces unit dropped behind enemy lines, in need of intel reports. We are heart patients recovering from major surgery, in need of a new diet so as to live. Did you note the common thread? Vulnerability and necessity. Just what we see in Proverbs 29:18.

Solomon has set two paths before us. One is clearly marked by a warning. The other is clearly marked by an assurance. There is no need for any foolish talk about our being hemmed in against our will. This is a beautiful beacon to freedom and flourishing. Will we take heed?

There is a necessity to God's Word. It is essential. And we must prioritize it in our lives.

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