

*Pearls from Proverbs*

## **Blessings of Righteous Living**

*Neal Pollard*

**A**t Marah, a couple of day's journey past the Red Sea whose waters had just been parted, the Israelites complained for lack of water. Marah literally meant bitter water, and for this reason Israel would not drink there. The Lord showed Moses a piece of wood which, after he threw it in the water, sweetened it. Then, Moses writes, "There the Lord made for them a statute and a rule, and there he tested them, saying, 'If you will diligently listen to the voice of the Lord your God, and do that which is right in his eyes, and give ear to his commandments and keep all his statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you that I put on the Egyptians, for I am the Lord, your healer'" (Ex. 15:25b-26, ESV). [All Scripture references are taken from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted.] Incidentally, a few miles later they came to a place called Elim, "where there were twelve wells of water" (Ex. 15:27).

The spiritual disease of sin is the continuous cause of devastation and death to the heart and soul of mankind. Yet, in this hopeless atmosphere where sinful men are increasingly miserable, Christians have found the key to a rich, fulfilling life come what may. No book more diversely reveals the blessings of righteous living. In fact, no one lesson could possibly capture all that Proverbs says about the many blessings of righteous living, but consider

## **BLESSINGS OF RIGHTEOUS LIVING**

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a dozen that help show how worthwhile and meaningful it is to live the righteous life.

### **HEAVENLY SUPPORT (Proverbs 2:7; 18:10)**

A blessing of righteous living is knowing that God will take care of you. He protects His children. “He preserves the way of His saints” (Prov. 2:8). He is a tower in Whom we find shelter and safety (Prov. 18:10). When one knows he is living on “the right side of the ledger,” he can be confident that “if God be for [him], who can be against [him]?” (Rom. 8:31).

### **LONG LIFE (Proverbs 3:2)**

Righteous people deliver stillborn children. Godly teenagers die in tragic accidents. Some wonderful Christian folks have had their lives dramatically shortened by terminal illness or untimely death. Thus, this blessing needs qualification. Solomon writes, “My son, do not forget my law, but let your heart keep my commands; for length of days and long life and peace they will add to you” (3:1-2). This rule of thumb certainly has exceptions, like those already noted. Yet, the healthy lifestyle, management of stress and worry, and attitude that seeks to live and serve so long as God wills leads the righteous to a condition of life that lends itself to longevity. This is reiterated in Proverbs 3:16 (the companionship of long life and wisdom), Proverbs 9:11 (days multiplied through fear and knowledge), Proverbs 10:27 (the fear of the Lord prolongs days) and Proverbs 28:16 (those who hate unjust gain prolong their days).

### **TRUE PEACE (Proverbs 3:2)**

There are a great many people in the world today who are disturbed and distressed, and many have not learned that this is very often a lack of true peace available only in Christ (John 14:27; cf. Phil. 4:7). Again, Solomon repeats the presence of peace in the lives of the righteous (3:17; 16:7). There is a false, self-deluding peace with which the ungodly numb themselves (cf. Jer. 8:11), but such is tantamount to building on the proverbial sand (cf. Matt. 7:26-27).

### **SPIRITUAL LIFE (Proverbs 10:16)**

Everyone is building some sort of legacy. For some this will be infamy, for others it will be anonymity. For the righteous, this legacy is excellency. Proverbs 10:16 says that the natural trend is for the efforts of the righteous to produce life. Certainly, the righteous enjoy the blessing of being spiritually alive (cf. 1 John 1:7; Rom. 8:6). Yet, a blessing of righteous living is the good it does for others. A righteous person will be a soul-winner (Prov. 11:30), leading others to spiritual life. He or she will go about doing good works, thus availing others of spiritual life (Prov. 14:14).

### **ANSWERED PRAYER (Proverbs 10:24; 15:29)**

Though the blind man may have been speaking his own theology and not the Lord's (John 9:31), Peter makes clear the principle that "the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayers. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil" (1 Pet. 3:12).

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Since the righteous have their desires properly trained (cf. Jas. 4:1-3), the desires they express to God are granted (Prov. 10:24). He hears the righteous' prayers (15:29). Literally, He listens with a yearning to grant their requests as it befits His own will.

### **GOOD PROSPECTS AND HOPE (Proverbs 10:28)**

The righteous can anticipate that the best is yet to come. Each new day, living a righteous life, produces greater joy, calmer peace and more blessed assurance. Hope anchors the righteous soul (cf. Heb. 6:19). The longer one grows his or her relationship with God, the brighter the future looks.

### **DELIVERANCE (Proverbs 11:8; 12:13; 18:10)**

Deliverance is a broad topic. David was delivered from the paw of the lion and the bear, thus deliverance from natural terrors. He was delivered from Goliath, Saul and Absalom, thus deliverance from human threats and opposition. He was delivered from blood guiltiness and personal, egregious sin, thus deliverance from spiritual death. His son, Solomon, must have seen the after-effects of such deliverance in his father's life. By righteous living, much trouble can be averted (11:8).

### **HONOR (Proverbs 21:21)**

As noted above, living godly lives can bring persecution and even death (Acts 7:60), and may cause others to try to shame and embarrass us (Heb. 11:36; 1 Pet. 4:16). Yet, following righteousness is said to lead to honor.

How is this? My grandfather was a cotton farmer in Mississippi for over half a century. He was usually the quietest man in the room. He had no education beyond a high school diploma. By human standards, he had little pedigree to elevate himself in the community. Yet, this righteous, godly man put Christ first, raising two sons who preached, three daughters who married preachers, and half a dozen grandsons who became preachers. He served the Lord as an elder for nearly four decades. His generous giving helped to support several in need. When he died two years ago, he left a legacy of great honor. Whenever his name is mentioned, men and women speak with respect and admiration for this simple cotton farmer. That is the blessing of righteous living.

### **JOY THROUGH GENEROSITY (Proverbs 21:26; 29:7)**

Jesus said it is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35). In this spiritual mindset, Solomon extols repeatedly the blessing that comes in giving of self and sacrificing. The principle that states man cannot outgive God is related in Proverbs 21:26, as the righteous, though generous, does not find himself in want for so doing (cf. Luke 6:38; Mal. 3:10). Proverbs 29:7 states, "The righteous consider the cause of the poor, but the wicked does not understand such knowledge." That is tragic for the wicked one's sake, as he deprives himself of the satisfaction of helping one who cannot help himself. The Macedonians sound like happy people, rich despite their poverty (2 Cor. 8:1-5).

**BOLDNESS**  
**(Proverbs 28:1)**

Fear is sinful (Rev. 21:8). Peter urges Christians, "Do not be afraid..." (1 Pet. 3:14-15). Righteousness breeds boldness (cf. 2 Cor. 3:12). Again, Solomon might have drawn on his father's life. David stood his ground against the gargantuan Goliath, yet Saul would not face him at all. Perhaps this boldness is borne of an attitude that does not fear death or what man can do to him (cf. Psa. 118:6). Even the day of judgment can be faced with boldness, since the victory will be given by Jesus Christ to the faithful (1 Cor. 15:57).

**GLAD SINGING**  
**(Proverbs 29:6)**

One of our songs proclaims, "He took my burdens all away, up to a brighter day, He gave me a song, a wonderful song..." Salvation puts a song in our hearts. Singing will be a benchmark of bliss in heaven (Rev. 15:3). Singing goes hand in hand with continued righteousness. In fact, when one drifts away from God, he or she often loses the desire to sing. The psalmist writing during the captivity in Babylon, when Judah had drifted from God, writes the response of God's people to the requests of the heathen: "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?" (Psa. 137:4). That desire to sing to and praise God is stripped in the "foreign land" of sin and apostasy. Yet, the righteous can sing!

**A HAPPY HOME**  
**(Proverbs 31:28)**

King Lemuel's rehearsal of his mother's lessons yields for us the most glowing tribute of a godly woman's

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life to be found anywhere in Scripture. The “virtuous woman” orders her steps in the community, the home and the marriage. Consequently, she helps forge a happy home, and such is a consequence of righteous living. A home may have the latest gadgets and most extravagant creature comforts, but its happiness is tied to how righteous its members live. What a blessing to have family who live in humble reverence and obedience to the will of God.

It pays to be a Christian. It will pay eternally (Matt. 6:21; 25:46a), but it will also cause one to reap the dividends thereof in this life. There will be tears to sow, and though joy comes in the morning of eternity (Psa. 126:5), there will be blessings accompanying the righteous life which the unrighteous will not experience. The book of Proverbs establishes this fact repeatedly. Thank God for the hope and promise tied to the righteous life.

Neal Pollard preaches for the Bear Valley church of Christ in Denver, Colorado.
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