

Proverbs 25-26

Justin Beadles

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The fact remains in life that every one of us from one time or another has been babysat. You all have! Either your parents just got tired of you and they needed a little breather or they had something legitimate in mind so they got a babysitter for you. We all have been babysat.

I can remember growing up with my brother Grant and I can only remember two of our babysitters. I know we had several but I remember one high school girl in particular. She was always incredibly nice to my mom while she was standing there but when my mother would leave she would tell my brother and I to go do something and she would get up on the hood of our pickup (back when the hood was made out of metal) and she would sunbathe. If we bothered her at all she would tell us to just go on. So one time my brother ran away. (laughter) And I didn't tell her. An hour later I told her that he was gone. I didn't really realize then what a big deal that was but her little high school mind all of a sudden realized that she should probably return the same amount of kids that she began with. Because we had been entrusted to her.

Now that I have four children I can understand in some sense why my wife asks all these great questions of our babysitters. When she comes home to relieve the babysitter she asks questions about what they ate, if they got along, or if they learned anything new. Were there any new words out of the two tiny ones? While all I typically ask is if there are still four of them. And that is just the end of it.

When you have been babysat, you were entrusted to the care of someone else. The facts are that in every one of our lives, God has assigned a portion of His possessions to our care. Not just children. What does that require of us? That is the question that we want to answer today.

Since God has assigned some portion, big or small, of His possessions to our care...what does that require of us?

We are going to be in 3 particular places in the Bible today. I want you to first turn to the book of Proverbs, Chapter 25, verse 26. It reads:

**Like a muddied spring or a polluted fountain, is a righteous man
who gives way to the wicked.**

This is one of a couple of Proverbs that I think I have spent an abundant amount of time in my life just thinking about...just pondering upon. That is what a Proverb is for...to just think about them. I think this one in particular speaks to answering the question of what is required of me since God has entrusted a certain amount of His possessions to me. When you look in this verse at first you may not understand what I am talking about with the muddied springs and a polluted fountain, righteous people, and giving way to the wicked. Let's think about an agrarian society (a society based upon agriculture) that does not have running water. In this society, you

have naturally occurring sources of water. If you are raising sheep which would be the flock of choice for this part of the world, then you would need to bring your herd to water. They would need to be brought to this water at a minimum of once a day. Sheep typically like to drink from still water. They do not like running or rushing water. They cannot drink from water that is rushing too fast so you would want to bring them to still, quiet water so they could drink.

If you have about 800 sheep, the first few sheep are going to get still and clean water. But as you herd the rest of the sheep through and they are stirring all the water up, what do you think it will look like after you have run them all through it? Neither still nor quiet and certainly not something you would want to drink.

This well is going to be a source of life for this group of sheep. It is a trusted source. It creates an expectation on behalf of the shepherd. When the shepherd is herding the sheep to that water source, he is expecting that water to be drinkable...to be that for which it was designed. If the shepherd gets the sheep to the water source and he then finds out that the water has in some way been sullied or has been poisoned, then that water is no longer a valuable source of life.

We look at this verse and understand that God is not giving us an illustration about how to raise sheep but He is trying to create life-change. When he uses the word "*like*" he means "to *something that could be compared*". A righteous man who gives way to the wicked could be compared to a muddied spring or a polluted fountain. That is an amazing statement. We have seen that this polluted fountain or this muddied source of life is no longer able to do that for which it was designed.

It is a tremendous let down! Imagine being a little boy who is just fired up about getting an ICEE that your daddy has been promising you all day. You get to the store and put your cup up to the ICEE machine and it is broken! It is a BIG letdown because you were expecting that machine to produce that for which it was designed. When it doesn't it is a colossal letdown.

The writer of this Proverb is making the claim that it is *like something else*. A righteous man is not one who has done good things but he is one who is in right relationship with God. What does it mean to be in right relationship to God? It simply means to **believe God**. In Genesis 15:6 it says,

Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness.

This is not just a belief **in God** but believing the right things **about God**. That is we believe that He sent His one and only Son to die on the cross for our sins. As a result of that, we are positionally made righteous.

This righteous man in Proverbs 25:6 doesn't lose his salvation but he is able to give way to the wicked. The NIV has worded it to give a picture of the righteous man standing real strong and all of a sudden the wicked man pushes him over. But the word that is used here for "to" means "in the face of".

So an example of a righteous man would be one of the elders that we just prayed for and who are charged with the spiritual leadership of this church. They are seen as righteous men. You, as a believer in the community and as a believer in your family, are a righteous person. When you give way (has the idea of a sagging bridge or a collapse) in front of the wicked by some sort of moral collapse, your life becomes a muddy and polluted fountain instead of a trusted source of life.

There is a guy in the Bible who had this exact thing happen to him. It happens in 2 Samuel, Chapter 12. You don't have to turn there...I'll tell you the story. He was the king of the nation of Israel. His name was David. David had everything going for him. David is talked about in the Bible as being a man after God's own heart. David was the king at a time when his nation was at war. He once saw one of his prized warrior's wives bathing on the top of her house and he went and got this wife and he had an adulterous relationship with her. This was a phenomenal moral collapse. As a result of this moral collapse, he tried and tried to cover it up and then ultimately had her husband (Uriah) killed. A man named Nathan came to David and told a story that essentially confronted King David with what he had done. In verse 13 of Chapter 12, he tells David that because of what he had done he had given cause to the enemies of God to blaspheme. Because David had conducted himself in such a way that the people who were far from God had an even better excuse for remaining far from God.

In our day and time, there are people that don't want to be a part of a church because they think it is full of hypocrites. I like to tell them "just come on brother, we have room for one more!" I do understand that if we who are believers crater in the midst of our family life then we essentially take the ammunition that we have and hand it to the enemy. Can we be forgiven? Of course! Can God restore us to great fellowship with Him? Absolutely! But we have given the enemy bullets so that they can point to our failure and make it the reason they don't want to be a part of Christianity.

This verse scares me to death because I know that I am about two decisions away from being that man. You know it is the same in your own life. The great thing is that we can choose to understand that this is talking about purity and understand that our lives are a fountain. If we tried to see our lives as fountains everyday that people are coming to to drink from...is the water drinkable? In seeing our lives as a fountain it is important to see to it that the water is clear. The way I make sure that my water is clear is by keeping close accounts with God and maintaining a life of confessed sin and not letting it get out of hand. Unbelievers already think we are a bunch of idiots. I don't want to confirm that thinking! I will do that from time to time but I don't want to just go out today and try to make that happen. And I know that you don't either.

There is another aspect that God is calling us to when we understand that He has assigned a portion of His possessions to us. It requires purity, it requires seeing my life as a fountain and it requires a third thing from me. Look in Proverbs 27:23-24:

Be sure (meaning that he is giving a command/the idea that whoever is writing is speaking to a younger son or a collection of people) **you know the condition of your flocks,**

give careful attention to your herds.

This is agriculture advice that he is giving him. He is raising either sheep or goats and the author is telling him that he has to know the physical condition of each one of those. Having come from a farming environment, I understand that you cannot know that from a distance. You have to walk among those sheep and understand them to know when one of them is sick. You have to understand exactly what is going on with them. You must pay vigilant attention. He is calling for vigilance. Why?

for riches do not endure forever, and a crown is not secure

for all generations.

We can see that the author switches from giving agricultural advice to talking about money. He is saying that money doesn't last indefinitely. He is also saying that a crown (meaning kingship in this particular verse) is not automatic. A crown doesn't endure forever. The author is saying that he needs to pay attention to his herds and flocks because there is no autopilot. You can't just run a bunch of them out there and then just go swimming. It is not automatic. I look at this and see that there is a colossal amount of things to think about here. He goes on to say,

When the hay is removed and new growth appears (meaning another year has passed)

and the grass from the hills is gathered in, (meaning when time has taken its toll)

the lambs will provide you with clothing, (you can shear them and make clothes)

and the goats with the price of a field. (you can sell them and have money and make a profit to go and buy more land)

You will have plenty of goats' milk to feed you and your family

and to nourish you servant girls.

He is saying that you must be vigilant with the possessions that God has entrusted to your care. There is no such thing as autopilot.

You and I both know there are a couple of different kinds of babysitters. There is the kind of babysitter who is just in it for the money and the moment they get there they are thinking of ways to get the kids to shut-up and stay out of their hair until they can get the money that they are to receive. When you come home and ask your kids how the babysitter was and they tell you that they didn't like them because they didn't play with us or engage us at all. You will not hire that one again because your children are a possession that you have entrusted to that babysitter's care. At the end of the day you are not just hoping that your kids are still alive. That is pretty much a given...that the babysitter keeps them alive! What you want is a babysitter who does something with the children that was positive.

God has entrusted us with a profound amount of his possessions. Do not just think about your money. Also think about your spouse, your house, your cars, your children, your education,

your job, your language skills and many other things are all a part of God's possessions that you are babysitting. In the Bible passage we learned that vigilance is required for these possessions. God is not looking for the autopilot babysitter. He is looking for someone who is vigilant.

It is important for us as elders to remember that there is no such thing as autopilot in a church. If we don't want to be sitting around here in a few years talking about how great it used to be, then we are going to have to stay vigilant. If you don't want to be sitting around in your own family talking about how great it used to be, then it requires vigilance on your part.

I want to ask you as you look at all your possessions...have you gotten to the point where you are on autopilot? With my own children, I get so tired sometimes that I just think about trying to make it until mom gets home and then it will be better. Remember, there is no autopilot. Vigilance is what is required of us if we are going to secure what we have for future generations.

We will now look at 1 Peter, chapter 5 for another perspective. This in particular will apply to the elders but you can see that there will also be application for you. Peter says in verse 1:

To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers-not because you must but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

Fellows, you do an incredible job of this and we remind ourselves of this from time to time but it is worth making a public statement that says: We must remember that the sheep are not ours. They are not ours! A babysitter cannot treat another person's children like they belong to them. They are not theirs! They should treat the children well but they are not like their own children. Peter is telling the elders that the flock they serve belongs to God. It has just been placed under their care...its God's possession that has been given to them for a period of time. The elders need to do the job because they really want to and not because they have to. In our own lives, God has also entrusted each of us with possessions and we manage them not because we have to but because we want to. The elders are further encouraged to shepherd the flock as people but not lording it over them but as examples to them. The elders are to understand that the sheep belong to God and not to them. The elders are caring for the people on behalf of the Chief Shepherd. They will also have to give an account. That gives perspective.

There are 3 easy words that I try to keep in mind in my life as it relates to the fact that God has assigned a portion of his possessions to me. What does that require of me?

1. Purity
2. Vigilance
3. Perspective

Understanding that they are not mine. Let's be a people that together manage the possessions that God has entrusted to us in the way that we know He would like for us to have it done.

Shall we pray.

Heavenly Father,

We all certainly make mistakes. I am chief among them. I pray, Father, that you would protect us from making those mistakes that are colossal. I ask, Father, that you would continue to guide the good people of Grace Bible Church. That you would protect those who are serving so faithfully. That you would embolden and clear the minds of those who are about to teach Sunday School. That you would give them exactly the words they are to say and that you would give us that are to listen the heart that is necessary to do so.

In Christ's name I pray,

Amen.