

God Renders To Every Man...

Proverbs 24:11, 12

“If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; if you say, Behold, we knew it not; does not He that ponders the heart consider it? and He that keeps thy soul, does not He know it? and shall not He render to every man according to his works?” - Proverbs 24:11, 12.

The couple of verses we see here are basically different than many of the verses in the rest of Proverbs. They ask us to consider the danger of unjust treatment or even violence. The word “If” that starts the verse introduces a condition idea that asks us to think about an “either/or” sort of idea. Solomon uses the word “Forbear” to introduce the main content of the verse for us. The basic beginning of verse 11 casts this conditional question back to the prior verse:

“If you are slack in the day of distress,...” where the condition is both clear and obvious. It carries this sense of distress and slackness in the face of the two on into this verse. Hence the idea in the very beginning of this verse “If you...”. The words are not in Hebrew, but it is clearly intended to ride over into verse 11-12. Having clearly stated the idea of falling in our responsibility and in the context (the day of distress), Solomon goes on and speaks of our responsibility to those who are in the process of dying.

The danger in view in these two verse seems to be what Solomon refers to in three basic ways:

1. He speaks, in a general sense, of unjust treatment.
2. He also seems to speak of the idea of death being a result of violence.
3. He also asks us to consider our responsibility to deal with and/or minister to those in that sort of need; be it need resulting from some sort of a failure in justice, or who are dying from violence.

We have an obligation both to give of ourselves and our resources to minister and help to meet the needs of such. We cannot use ignorance, Solomon says, the excuse of ignorance (“I wasn’t aware”) to avoid this responsibility to help another in need. Regarding what Solomon speaks of concerning our obligation to act on their behalf he says:

1. We need to give a true testimony on their behalf
2. We ought to, if able, provide whatever it is that they need to survive.
3. We also have a Biblical, godly necessity to rescue them from some fatal course.

Whatever the end condition of the one in view is, it is interesting that there are no circumstance specified here. I suspect that this is because the specific cause or what brings about the end condition here is not important to Solomon. We've said that it is clear that there can be no excuse for not rendering any help of comfort that we possibly can to the one who is in view and is suffering. In fact, when we think of what Jesus had to say about the same issue during His discourse that we know as the "Sermon on the Mount" as well in other messages during His time of teaching on earth He said the same basic thing several times. As believers, we have the responsibility before God to give what aid and comfort is available to us to the suffering around us.

One thing that Solomon leaves us with at the end of verse 12. It speaks to two truths that have bearing here.

1. We can be certain that God, in His sovereignty and omniscience, stands in positive and sure control over the matters in the lives of all men. The circumstances that brings a man to the conditions that he has mentioned can be seen to be under that control. This is not to say that God causes the lack in view as a punishment, etc. But we can be certain that even the circumstance of the poor or the badly injured have been and are in the hands of the Mighty God. This is NOT to say that, because of the actions of the poor or those who suffer violence do so because of past action, good or bad. It is only to say that the Sovereign God stands as the Controller of all thing, good or bad.
2. Likewise, we can be sure that we, as those who are virtually certainly in the place of being able to offer aid to such will answer to God for our action (or lack of action).

All men, verse 12, at the end, tells us, will answer to God for their actions, whether they leave this world by natural means, violence or whatever manner they do. Because God is sovereign and is the Master of the created (and supernatural) world; they, each and every one of them, will give account to Him.

Just to give some rehearsing of the Verses' Interpretation. The imperative mood is here used, "*Deliver them who are captured for death.*" The admonition would seem to be addressed in the first instance to men whose official rank entitled them in some measure to interfere with, or at least protest against, an unjust sentence, such as in the East, through reckless haste and passion, was not seldom pronounced and followed by immediate execution. But it also reminds *all* of the duty of showing sympathy and compassion towards the fallen, and using what means they may to save them from unmerited or over-severe treatment. The motive being that God, who is man's keeper, requires man to be his brother's keeper. And if this be true as regards bodily death, much more of that which is spiritual and eternal.

Just to take a look at some illustrations:

- The good Samaritan by timely succor earned (like Job) "*the blessing of him who was ready to perish,*" whom the priest and Levite ignored (Job 29:13).

- Of all the Apostles, none more felt himself his brother's keeper than Barnabas. Witness his timely relief (at the cost of his fortune) of the earliest Christian converts, who had risked the loss of their livelihoods.
 - Witness his generous defense of Saul of Tarsus, at a time when to side with such a neophyte was to expose himself to cruel suspicion.
 - Witness the shield he threw over young John Mark, whose tottering steps might else have led to downfall.
- Witness his zeal for souls "captured for death" by Satan (Acts 14:14), and for others needing exhortation and sympathy (Acts 11:23), and see in how true a sense Barnabas was his brother's keeper.

By way of application we can see that the truth here asserted is an answer to Cain's insolent challenge to the Almighty. I *am* my brother's keeper, inasmuch as God deigns to be mine, and demands this recognition of His loving guardianship at my hands. "*Love one another as I have loved you,*" says our Lord Jesus, and inasmuch as "*He died for all,*" this principle applies to all. Ignorance which is more than half willful will not be reckoned for innocence. He that keeps my soul (my life, both physical and spiritual) will one day ask what I have done for the keeping of others, and will render to me according to my works.

Let me aim to be like St. Barnabas, a "good" or "kind" man, to be imbued with that "goodness" or "kindness," which is one of the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22)!
