

Whoever Digs or Rolls

Falls In!

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“Whoso digs a pit shall fall therein: and he that rolls a stone, it will return upon him.” – Proverbs 26:27 (Cf. 28:10).

As we have said before, Solomon is one for calling on his readers to think carefully about what the result and/or the consequences of our actions are. This is another verse in which he touches on that idea. His point in these things is for us to ponder a bit on what the reasonable and obvious following things will be when we do things that are, perhaps, foolish. We do need to note that his point here is not to speak of just any hole or just any stone. Naturally, especially in the say in which he was speaking, such work was a normal part of the process of, for instance, a farmer working on his land, or of one who tended cows and horses of making their fields ready in which for them to live productively and safely. One simply HAD to dig the holes for water or feed; and he had to move the stones out of the way for those fields to be productive. His point is not so much for this normal and necessary activity, but rather for other such doings that produced a more dangerous and threatening kind of hole or stone.

The words used here are interesting. In the first phrase, “digs” is actually a negative word that can speak of hallowing out, destructing or corrupting and can imply a failure to exercise care or even not taking the proper or needed care that results in this corruption. We should also note that it is in the form of a participle which directs us to think of the verb as it is in its action. We should think of it in process.

We ought also to see here what is often Solomon’s point. It is not just that there is this digging, or corruption is being done. Rather, as is often Solomon’s case, he is speaking of ruin or corruption that one is doing actively with the intention that it see its’ fruit in another will actually see it come back and take that ruin or corruption upon the “digger”!

The same idea is present in the second phrase concerning the rolling of the “stone”.

“Whoso digs a pit shall fall therein: and he that rolls a stone, it will return upon him.”

Solomon’s hint is that this second idea is a bit more dramatic and unpleasant; and perhaps even damaging. One can perceive the first idea, falling into the pit, as one fairly easily come through. But the second? It certainly calls to mind more personal and unpleasant, even permanent damage as the result! Solomon’s point, in the combination of the two phrases, is, as in other of his Proverbs, is that what we take action for against others often could and/or does see realization, instead, in that action taking a corruptive and perhaps even destructive effect on he who set it in motion.

To rehash, for a moment, let's think through once again the matter of our interpretation of this truth, perhaps even a bit more harshly. - The law of retribution is here laid down. To dig a pit for another is for one to plan secret and evil schemes against his neighbor. To fall into it is to be himself involved in the mischief he designed. To roll a stone upwards, to the heights, that it may be hurled down upon the head of an enemy, is to aid in doing another a bad turn at a constant risk to one's self. The proverb states a general law widely verified in history, and sure to be verified universally in the future.

By way of what the Bible tells us of illustration –

- Jacob, who supplanted his brother and deceived his father by means of a kid, was himself thus deceived at the hands of his own sons.
- Abimelech, who had slain his brethren upon a stone, was himself slain by a stone (Judg. 9:5, 53).
- David contrived Uriah's death by the sword, while feigning friendship; and his own friends turned their swords against him.
- The blood shed on Calvary has been on the heads of the Jews, as a nation, ever since.

Thinking of the matter of application we can see that God's will is not to prevent evil altogether in the world. To do this would be inconsistent with man's free agency, and with His own sovereign purposes. But His laws in nature and in Providence tend to discourage and warn against it, and no law does this more strikingly than that of retribution. Both the experience and the observation of this law must convince the most skeptical that "verily there is a God that judges the earth." For how else can I account for the fact that so often a bad counsel proves worst to the giver of it (as in the case of Ahithophel); that so often the contriver of destruction perishes (as in the case of Haman) by his own arts? Even the heathen recognized this truth, and the fabled Sisyphus is the stone-roller of our text—the type of a great multitude, whose mischief has returned upon their own heads, or threatened so to do (Ps. 7:16). God's Word reveals that this is no chance affair, but of a piece with His moral government, and it may be I have felt it in myself in small things, if not in great. To find one's self in the ditch one had dug for another must needs bring very nigh the truth that "Thou God seest me;" and with the confession, "As I have done so God hath required me," ought to come the solemnizing thought, "Sin no more, lest a worse thing happen unto thee" (Judg. 1:7; John 5:14). Though best, far best, not thus to tempt retributive judgment, the next best thing is to profit by it. In which case it will turn out to have been a chastening of the Lord, to the end that we might not be condemned with the world (1 Cor. 11:32).