

Connection to Passage

The Book of Proverbs is a collection of wise instructions for living a godly life. In Proverbs 24, the author addresses our commission to actively save lives from destruction.

Introduction/Opening

Our culture is filled with adages about inactivity:

- You miss one hundred percent of the shots you never take.
- Aim at nothing and you hit it every time.
- Defeat is not having tried and failed but having failed to try.

We appear to value taking action, but too many times people find themselves paralyzed by the choice to act on someone else's behalf. Today's passage warns against passiveness when lives need rescuing.

Outline

- I. Be Active in Saving Lives (Prov. 24:11)
 - a. Of all creation, humans alone are made in the image of God. This makes human life the most precious commodity in the universe and worthy of exceptional efforts to save. God wants us to speak up for the defenseless and voiceless.
 - i. Initiative
 1. Performing a rescue requires active initiative, not passive idling. In this text many translations use the word "deliver" rather than the word "rescue." Consider how delivery is different from rescue. For example, when you order a pizza for delivery, multiple active steps are initiated. Products do not "deliver" themselves. A hot pizza will not get from the oven to your home without a delivery person. Something or someone with the means, methods, and authority takes responsibility for the delivery.
 2. The Bible calls upon God's people to "deliver" humans away from life-threatening situations to the places of security. This cannot be accomplished by sitting on the sidelines. God's people must take the initiative by being advocates for human life.

ii. Compassion

1. Compassion is a fitting motivation to intervene on behalf of those people whose lives are in danger. In Jesus' parable of the good Samaritan, the priest and the Levite fail to show compassion to the injured man. The Samaritan, on the other hand, is commended for showing mercy (Luke 10:30-37).
2. Jesus commanded us to "welcome" children compassionately. In Matthew 18:5, He said, "Whoever welcomes one child like this in My name welcomes Me" (HCSB). Aborting a child is the exact opposite of welcoming it.

II. Be Active in Knowledge (Prov. 24:12a)

- a. *Ignorantia juris non excusat* is a Latin phrase meaning "ignorance of the law excuses not." This legal principle states that a person cannot escape responsibility for violating a law merely because he or she is unaware of its content. Otherwise, "I didn't know" becomes a convenient response that excuses responsibility for our actions or inactions.
- b. God, however, holds us accountable to act on what we know. Because He knows our hearts (Prov. 24:12b; Ps. 139:1-3), He is qualified to hold us accountable for our actions and/or our inaction.

III. God Is Active in Justice (Prov. 24:12c)

- a. While our salvation is by God's grace through faith, Scripture also notes that the Lord responds to our obedience with blessings and to our disobedience with woes (Deut. 30:15-18). For example, being idle when action is merited results in limited strength (Prov. 24:10).

Conclusion

The 1959 Italian film *General della Rovere* tells the story of a spy hired to infiltrate a group of resistance prisoners held in a Milan prison during World War II. Among those arrested and condemned to die before a firing squad were a number of people who were not part of the resistance. They were loud and vocal in proclaiming their innocence. One of them repeatedly cried out, "I didn't do anything! I didn't do anything!" A resistance leader standing by him then speaks, "Our nation is being destroyed, the freedoms of men taken away, innocent people are being killed, and you did not do anything? Sir, you deserve your punishment."

Edmund Burke was right: "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing."

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