

Facing the Music

The Quest for Hidden Treasure – Part IX

Proverbs 6:16-19

Introduction

Robert Jeffress included in his commentary on some of the Proverbs an interesting history of a popular phrase we often use today, translated from Chinese into English. A member of the royal orchestra in China was evidently an imposter. In fact, he apparently talked his way into playing in the orchestra, although he had no musical training. Whenever this massive orchestra would practice or perform, he would simply hold the flute against his lips and pretend to play. For some time he got away with it, enjoying the prestige of being in the orchestra as well as receiving a handsome salary.

One day, however, the emperor requested that each member of the orchestra come to the palace and perform one solo piece for him – as he intended to enjoy several days of music. The flautist knew that in a matter of hours he would be discovered, his family shamed, and he would more than likely be executed for fraud. He feigned illness, but the court physician found nothing wrong with him. So, on his appointed day and hour to perform, this man took his own life rather than stand before the emperor and be exposed as a thief and an imposter.

From this event came the phrase, “He refused to face the music.”¹

We use this phrase today to talk about someone who refused to be accountable; to take his just desserts; to stand up and own up to who he really was – “He refused to face the music.”

When we study the book of Proverbs very long, we get the distinct impression that the Emperor of Heaven has called each of us in for a personal

evaluation. And there is no hiding our performance. In fact, it is impossible to escape Him in life or in death.

Perhaps this is the reason the apostle Paul was so passionate about his development and performance for the glory of God when he wrote,

***It is my ambition to be pleasing to Christ.
(II Corinthians 5:9 paraphrased)***

The hard truth is that we are often not very pleasing to our Lord. We are in constant need of challenge and correction.

One of the greatest dangers to the Christian growing up in Christ is the danger of believing he already has grown; he has arrived.

This is the reason Paul wrote,

***I have not attained yet . . . not that I am perfect, or mature already, but I press on . . .
(Philippians 3:12 paraphrased)***

It is dangerous to believe that we have arrived. This is the reason it is a good thing to face the music – to evaluate the scriptures for an exposure of who we really are and where we really need to be diligent.

In Proverbs chapter 6, God calls us in, as it were, to face the music. Look at Proverbs 6:16-19.

***There are six things which the Lord hates,
yes, seven which are an abomination to Him:***

***haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands
that shed innocent blood,***

***a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that
run rapidly to evil,***

a false witness who utters lies, and one who speaks strife among brothers.

This is one of those passages in which we are not only having to appear before the Emperor, but it is as if we are also getting a physical from the divine Physician. He takes a look at our body. Did you notice that He references our eyes, the health of our heart, the condition of our tongue, the use of our hands and even our feet?

Have you ever enjoyed getting a physical? “Oh, look what month it is – it’s time for me to schedule a physical. Oh joy; oh delight. I get to be poked and prodded after sitting for two hours in a waiting room reading magazines I would never buy with my own money.”

What little I know about Oprah I owe to doctors and dentists. And it is more than I want to know.

Eventually, I get to have my blood drawn – that is my favorite part of the day. I do not know about you, but I still get queasy! The palms of my hands get clammy and I have to grit my teeth and look away until that uncaring nurse fills hundreds of vials with my blood, weakening me for the rest of my life. I am not exaggerating.

However, it is through this that danger to our health is exposed. It is necessary for our physical health and well-being.

So the divine Physician uses His word to poke and prod us – to completely examine and check us out. This is when danger to our spirit is exposed.

So often, in reading through Proverbs, we find unmistakable passages that hook us and bring us in for a close inspection. Solomon is collecting these proverbs for those who are seeking for the hidden treasure of wisdom. The world will hardly stop in and read,

. . . for [this] is foolishness to [them] . . . because they are spiritually discerned. (I Corinthians 2:14b NIV)

Now if you have a particularly good doctor, he will tell you not only what to do, but what to stop doing, right? He will tell you some things you need to start practicing and what to start eating, and he will also tell you what to stop eating. He is such a busybody. No, he is a good doctor.

In the same way, our divine Physician tells us the truth as He personally diagnoses our condition.

Why List Seven Sins?

Before we look at each of the body parts spoken of in Proverbs 6:16-19 and the ways they can sin, let

us discuss the reason for being given a poetic list of seven sins.

1. This list aids the believer with his memory.

My wife will occasionally say, “Honey, while you’re out, will you stop at the grocery store and pick up a couple of things?”

Now, if it is a couple of things, I can remember them. However, if it is more than a couple of things, I am going to forget and I will end up coming home with white powdered doughnuts and diet granola bars – it is my view that they cancel one another out – and who knows what else.

So, my wife will say, “Honey, write these things down on a list.”

Then, I can refer to it from time to time.

A specific list like this one in Proverbs also helps in a second way.

2. It encourages the believer by its brevity.

Certainly, the Lord hates all sin and all sin is equally hated by God, but to summarize and thus pare down so many sins into a short list of six, encourages the believer.

Imagine if the text said, “There are 6,000 things the Lord hates, actually 7,000 that are an abomination to Him.”

Seven thousand! We will never please Him.

So, how about seven? Let us start with these.

This Proverbs list aids the believer with his memory and encourages the believer by its brevity. Let us look at a third reason we are given this list.

3. It surprises the believer with its severity.

These seven, Solomon writes,

. . . the Lord hates . . .

The Lord despises these actions and attitudes, calling them abominations!

This word means “morally repulsive.”ⁱⁱ

So does this mean that the Lord considers these seven sins more repulsive than other sins? No, all sin is an abomination to God.

In fact, the text, “These six things, yea seven” is simply a Hebrew expression that implies the list is not exhaustive.ⁱⁱⁱ

Sin is sin.

However, the sins in the list are surprising. Some of these seven we might expect to sweep under the rug! These are a far cry from the dirty dozen or the nasty nine.

Look at this list. We understand the one about murder (Proverbs 6:17), but we might think, “You mean to tell me that God hates arrogance as much as He hates murder? You mean to tell me that a proud look is just as bad as murder?”

What does this do for the average person who thinks he is going to heaven because he has not killed anyone? “Course I’m going to heaven – I never killed anybody.”

Listen to the physician’s report, “The Lord hates murder and lying and divisiveness and arrogance equally.”

“Face the Music” of Seven Deadly Sins

Let us face the music together. This is what God has to say in Proverbs 6:16,

There are six things which the Lord hates, yes, seven which are an abomination to Him:

1. First, the divine Physician begins with the eyes, speaking of a disdainful spirit.

In Proverbs 6:17a, He talks of “a proud look,” or, *haughty eyes . . .*

In our vernacular we might say that someone is, “looking down their nose at everyone else.”

This is a disdainful spirit. This person literally disdains others.

The eyes serve as the mirror of the soul, which means this haughty look betrays a haughty spirit.^{iv}

This person looks at other people as if they are better than them because they actually believe they are. This is nothing less than the attitude of Satan himself who disdained the triune God, believing he was worthy of God’s own throne.

So the person who views others with arrogance is reflecting the spirit of Satan. This spirit will never bring glory to Christ.

The Scottish preacher James Denney said, “No man can bear witness to Christ and to himself at the same time.”^v

In other words, we cannot be impressed with Christ and at the same time, be impressed with ourselves; we cannot focus our attention on Him and ourselves at the same time.

This phrase refers to someone who is conceited; someone who is caught up with his own reflection. The favorite topic of conversation for this person is themselves.

I appreciate the response of Walt Disney years ago, when someone asked him what it was like to be a celebrity. He said, “It feels fine when it helps to get a good seat for a football game. But it never helped me to make a good film, or command the obedience of my daughter. In fact, it doesn’t even seem to keep fleas off our dogs – and if being a celebrity doesn’t give me an advantage over a couple of fleas, then there can’t be very much to it.”^{vi}

Eugene Peterson, the author of the paraphrased Bible, *The Message*, once remarked that the church today is growing in its list of celebrities and declining in its list of saints.

2. Secondly, Solomon moves from saying the Lord hates a disdainful spirit to a deceitful spirit.

He says further in Proverbs 6:17 that the Lord not only hates haughty eyes, but,

. . . a lying tongue . . .

This, again, mirrors the character of Satan, who is called by Christ,

. . . the father of lies. (John 8:44)

In fact, whenever Satan speaks, he speaks in the dialect of lying for that is his native tongue.

Jesus Christ always delivers the truth. In fact, He is,

. . . the truth . . . (John 14:6)

The believer who is most like Christ and most unlike Satan is the believer who tells the truth.

Over and over again, Solomon challenges the believer to be honest.

Put away from you a deceitful mouth and put devious speech far from you. (Proverbs 4:24)

Devious speech is not just the big whopper of a lie. It could be manipulating the truth to cover your tracks; flattery to get your way; stretching the truth to fit your story and more.^{vii}

The Lord hates the disdainful spirit and the deceitful spirit.

3. Thirdly, the Lord hates the destructive spirit.

Notice further in Proverbs 6:17, as He examines not just the eyes and the tongue, but the,

. . . hands that shed innocent blood,

This is the one we would expect on a list of seven terrible sins.

These are the inquisitors, the murderers, the fomenters of holocausts and genocide.

This is also the euthanasia proponent and the abortionist. This is the court that ordered water and food withheld from a living, disabled woman named Terry Schiavo.

This is for all those who adopt the message of Peter Singer, the bioethicist at Princeton University who said a year and half ago that killing both pre-born and newborn children, as well as legalizing the assisting of suicide, especially for the elderly, is acceptable if it is within the best interests of the family.

Singer said in an interview, which I read on WorldNetDaily, that there will be an upheaval in the concept of life and rights, with only a few “hard-core, know-nothing religious fundamentalists still protecting life as [sacred].” He believes that killing a disabled newborn up to twenty-eight days after birth is acceptable. Of course, he also believes that a man’s life is not worth more than a cow.^{viii}

Singer has a growing following.

A man spoke to me after church today, saying, “Stephen, this week marks the seventh anniversary since you came to our home after our baby boy was born with Down syndrome. I’ve just got to tell you, what a joy Michael is to us and how delighted we are with his presence in our family and in our home. However, we can’t believe what a University of North Carolina professor said this past week. Did you see it in the *News & Observer*?”

I said “No,” and he emailed the article to me this afternoon. A University of North Carolina professor of biology made the comment in class that he believes when a mother discovers her pre-born child has Down syndrome, she should abort it. He said, “It is the moral thing to do.”^{ix}

The word of God says, “I hate this perspective; I hate the industry of death that determines who is valuable and worthy of life.”

People unwittingly are deceived into following the god of this world who is bent on deception and destruction. Christ said, in John 8:44,

... *He was a murderer from the beginning...*

Satan is called the “red dragon” in Revelation 12:3. He is given this name because of his thirst for the shedding of blood. He loves to destroy and kill the image of God because he cannot kill God. So, he will at least motivate and inspire the killing of human beings because we are uniquely created in the image of God.

It is no wonder that the Lord hates the disdainful, deceitful, and destructive spirit.

4. Fourthly, God hates the depraved spirit.

Solomon writes in Proverbs 6:18a,

[the Lord hates] a heart that devises wicked plans . . .

This text refers to those who are plotting to take advantage of others.^x

This is a depraved heart conniving, scheming, and scamming others. (Proverbs 24:8)

By the way, let us turn this one around and challenge ourselves to plan things that will encourage and help others toward purity and integrity. If the world is full of scammers and schemers that will steal our money and our purity and our reputation, let the church be an assembly that plans to enrich our walk and encourage our purity and enhance our character and reputation.

A few weeks ago I read a devotional article by my favorite professor, Howard Hendricks, in which he wrote, “Not long ago, I lost one of my best friends – a dynamic woman, eighty-six years old. The last time I saw her was at a rather [boring] reception. We were sitting there on eggshells, looking all pious, when she walked in, saw me and said, ‘Well, Hendricks, I haven’t seen you for a long time – what are the five best books you’ve read in the past year?’ She had a way of changing a group’s dynamics. Her philosophy was, ‘Let’s not bore each other, let’s get into a discussion, and if we can’t find anything to discuss, let’s get into an argument.’ She was 83 on her last trip to the Holy Land. She went there with a group of NFL football players. One of my most vivid memories of her was seeing her out in front of the bus yelling inside to them, ‘C’ mon, men, let’s get with it.’ She died in her sleep. Her daughter told me that just before she died, she had written out her goals for the next ten years.”^{xi}

Now that is a heart devising plans for good and godliness – to impact others as well for Christ.

5. Fifthly, Solomon moves on to the feet in speaking of a delinquent spirit.

He informs us, in Proverbs 6:18b, that the Lord hates,

... *feet that run rapidly to evil,*

These are wandering feet. This is a reference to a delinquent spirit.

This is the person with feet that have the ability to find trouble. They have the innate skill to sniff the wind and discover in which direction sin is, and with both feet, run as fast as they can toward it. They are

not discovered by evil, they long for it. They live for evil.

This is the high school senior who has already decided that as soon as they are away from home and in some college, they will run to evil.

This is the businessman whose flight touches down in a distant city and his feet are anxious to get going in search of sin.

God hates the sound of feet running with delight away from His pleasure and into the arms of sin. He longs for the sound of the prodigal whose feet race home.

The list is not over.

6. Sixthly, Solomon informs us that the Lord also hates the dishonest spirit.

Notice Proverbs 6:19a.

[the Lord hates] a false witness who utters lies . . .

Solomon wrote in Proverbs 19:22b,

. . . it is better to be a poor man than a liar.

Apply this in your business dealings next week. Will you fib and get the contract – or tell the truth and lose the deal?

In Proverbs 26:28, Solomon wrote,

A lying tongue hates those it crushes, and a flattering mouth works ruin.

They are both not telling the truth, by the way. The liar and the flatterer will ruin lives.

In fact, Solomon's son, Rehoboam, will lose his throne and his kingdom because he will listen to counselors who flatter him and puff up his pride and cause him to make foolish decisions. (I Kings 12)

Now, the implication of this text, in Proverbs 6:19, is that a person is called to take the witness stand and deliver true testimony. And the one who does not and brings dishonor upon the accused is literally performing an act hated by God.

This led to the tradition of witnesses placing their hands upon the Bible before entering the witness stand and promising to "tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help me God."

This tradition is now going away. However, the principle remains – the believer is always to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Think of it this way – the Christian is always under oath!

The Lord hates the disdainful spirit, the deceitful spirit, the destructive spirit, the depraved spirit, the delinquent spirit, the dishonest spirit, and one more.

7. Seventh, the Lord hates the divisive spirit.

Proverbs 6:19 concludes,

. . . and one who spreads strife among brothers.

The Lord hates anyone and anything that will divide His church and separate His saints.

We can either sow the seeds that bring a harvest of blessing (Psalm 126:6) or we can sow slander which brings a harvest of bitter hurt.

By the way, most of these deal with parts of the body, but this last one deals with a person. The Lord hates the one who sows discord among the brethren.

Conclusion - Seven Delightful Acts

If God hates these seven spirits of sin, then He must love their opposite. So, let us turn them around – from the seven deadly sins to the seven delightful acts.

1. Instead of a haughty spirit, demonstrate a humble spirit.

You will have opportunities first thing tomorrow morning. How will you treat someone in your family, your classroom, your church, your job, your bus tomorrow morning? Will you look down on them or look out for them?

2. Instead of lying speech, pursue legitimate speech.

Tell the truth – in big things and small things.

3. Instead of hands that harm, develop hands that help.

4. Instead of a heart that plans wicked deeds, develop a heart that plans wholesome deeds.

5. Instead of racing toward perversion, run for the prize of the high calling which we have in Christ Jesus.

6. Instead of lying under oath, live under oath.

Remember, we are called witnesses for Christ's name sake.

7. Instead of sowing bitterness and disunity, sow seeds of blessing and unity.

In this way, mirror the model of Christ's own life that was the perfect opposite of these seven sins.

- He was the model of humility;

- He was the epitome of truth and truthfulness;
- His hands healed and helped and embraced;
- His heart was pure and sinless;
- His feet walked among us, eventually allowing the piercing nails to silence Him – for a moment;
- All His words were the truth, and nothing but the truth;
- By His Spirit around this truth, we have been unified.

This is the divine Physician’s report – accept the facts, do not argue with the x-rays or the lab report, fill the prescription and take your medicine.

Let us accept the diagnosis and, with gratitude for God’s grace and passion like Paul, be pleasing to Christ. Let us deal with this list of seven – and yield to the Spirit of God our:

- eyes
- mouth
- hands
- heart
- feet.

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ⁱ Robert Jeffress, The Solomon Secrets (Waterbrook, 2002), p. 128.

ⁱⁱ Peter A. Steveson, Proverbs (BJU Press, 2001), p. 84.

ⁱⁱⁱ John Phillips, Exploring Proverbs: Volume One (Kregel, 1995), p. 145.

^{iv} Steveson, p. 84.

^v Warren Wiersbe, Be Skillful: Proverbs (Victor Books, 1995), p. 155.

^{vi} Nelson’s Annual Preacher’s Sourcebook, 2006, ed. by Robert J. Morgan (Thomas Nelson, 2005), p. 10.

^{vii} Jeffress, p. 126.

^{viii} “‘Bioethicist’: OK to kill babies after they’re born”, http://www.worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=51963, Sept. 14, 2006.

^{ix} News & Observer (Feb. 16, 2008).

^x Steveson, p. 84.

^{xi} Stories for the Heart (Multnomah, 1996), p. 99.