

take hold of God and pull

by Calvin Seerveld

Uncover wrong to heal things straight

If it is the burdened glory of God to hold back from uncovering something, it is the burdened glory of kings to ferret out what's going on (not that you can get to the bottom of the heart of kings like you search out the span of the heavens or deepest pits of the earth):

when impure metal is removed from silver,
the refiner starts to get something sound;
well, when the underhanded wrongdoer is removed from where the king rules,
then his seat of kingly authority starts to get truly established
by the doing of what is straight!

[But] don't ever push yourself forward to get kingly authority,
and don't try to get standing room in the place where important people meet;
better they say to you, "Wouldn't you like to come up here?"
instead of their putting you down in front of the prince.

[Do you understand?]
Don't hurriedly bring whatever your eyes have seen out into the open for judgement
lest you can't do a thing as the affair comes to its final crunch when
your fellow man confounds *you!*
Go ahead, fight out your lawsuits, dispute things with your neighbour,
but never, never betray the intimacy or confiding trust another shared with you.
Otherwise, whoever hears it will distrust *you*,
and your calumny shall never stop begging *you!*

Add to that:
it's simply never good to play favourites when you are called to judge what is
, right and just.
People come to detest whoever says to an underhanded wrongdoer, "In my
judgement, what you're doing looks all right";
people come to really despise- those who judge what's crooked as if it be straight.

But it goes well with those who call evil to account; the
blessing of genuine well-being covers those
who search out what is wrong to heal things straight. ...

(Proverbs 25:2-10, 24:23b-25)



When this proverbial paragraph of Solomon, copied over by the wise-men of Hezekiah's court (25: 1), says "king," "kingly authority," "important people," and "prince," read "anyone with governing authority," "anyone who must oversee men and women," "anyone who is ever responsible for leading and ordering other people." That is, this passage speaks not just for kings and queens and princes, but for anyone who rules somehow in society. People in political office, business men, school teachers, parents, leaders of a church, journalists, any adult who judges others and has ruling power of sorts over his neighbour. Proverbs 25 calls them to root out what is undercover and ruining God's order if they would expect to receive blessing. But with all your uncovering, says Holy Scripture, respect the God-given identity of the other person, so that new life can begin.

Only God can really dispose of things, finish off something - either by destroying it or bringing it to completion. That is why it is the peculiar glory of God to hold back, to wait, to give people and creation time to repent and change their ways before He says, "That's it, now." An enormously patient and inscrutable Mercy characterizes the just dealings of the Holy One with mankind.

Isaiah 49-55 notes near the end, so highly contrary to your thoughts is

my way of doing things, says the Lord (55:8-9): it is the glory of God that He held back from uncovering Israel's sin till the servant of Yahweh might suffer so they could by faith enter into a new covenant of Grace. At the end of Romans 9-11, Paul bursts out with, "How inscrutable are God's judgements! How unable to be figured out, are His ways!" (11 :33). It is the glory of God that He waited with final judgement till- He provided for us pagans to be saved as well as His chosen people. It is the almost unbelievable, burdened glory of God the Holy One that He stoops to our weakness, forgives sinners, and actually straightens out things, *historically!*

Now it is the burdened glory of those who call the shots in the courtroom, in the living room, schoolroom, corporate executive room, broadcasting, consistory or press room - each within the bounds of his God-given authority - it is the burdened glory of those who must take care of something till the Lord returns (cf parable of Matthew 25: 14-30) to get their metal pure, to not live with wrong as if it's right, to get their terrain pleasing to God so He will want to establish it. And do it, says Proverbs 25, with a careful and compassionate reluctance to judge people. Let it be your human-burden to get to the bottom of things, to get people walking in the light rather than doing things in the dark (cf I John 1:5-10), not just to "set things straight," but to heal things straight.

Do not act as if you be God, or Jesus Christ throwing out the money-changers. Do not judge evil in a pushy way lest you too be judged without mercy (Proverbs 25:7c-10, Matthew 7: 1-5). God holds back executing justice upon wrongdoers. Well, let your human prosecution of what is underhanded and violating the Lord's ordinances also be godly, without glee. Never treat a man-on-the-street, a child or student or assembly line worker, parishoner or interested observer who is a thief, disrespectful, a cheat, lazy, gossip or covetous person as if he be your footstool. Stop the evildoer in his tracks, right! and give him what he *needs* (not "deserves"). Remember, it is the Lord who will finish things off for you with shalom, if possible (Proverbs 25 :2122).

To understand Proverbs 25-27 it is

important to realize that 25:21-22 dominates the whole section. If you show compassion in your dealings with neighbour, and even enemy, then the Lord God of heaven and earth will complete your deed with the fulness of blessing and peace. That promise holds for all of a believer's daily life, when he is unjustly attacked (let your forbearance be known among men - Philippians 4:4-7) or when he is normally at work (Matthew 5-7 - the meek are blessed!)

Proverbs 25:21-22 is the key to understanding 25:2-10 too because it makes clear our passage is not just biblical tips for political life or etiquette at diplomatic dinners (e.g. 25:6-7, cf. the parable in Luke 14:7-11 and its point 14:12-14). Our passage is also not therefore just some scattered admonitions to display fruits of the Spirit, understood in general, moral or devotional terms. Because what "kings" do daily reflects on the Lord God, Proverbs 25 and appendix to 24 gives specific guidelines-direction for ruling life activities:

Probe to the end what should be probed to the end (the curse of evil-doing), and keep covered what should be kept covered (the intimate center of your neighbour's life which can change). Don't hunt witches and don't let sleeping dogs lie; don't play God and don't excuse or hide sin. But un hypocritically (= identifying with the hunted and oppressed, the evildoer and wicked) **get rid of evil to set up healing**; bring re-direction and Jesus Christ's straightening out Rule to bear upon the crook and profligate, the proud and guilty rich, so they become-jealous and desirous of shalomic order rather than embittered, hardened and wasted in their sin.

There are two difficulties with our understanding this Word of the Lord:

(1) Most of us living in this century are so secularized we act as if there be only two alternatives: you either mollycoddle criminals or pin them to the wall, you either get your pound of flesh or get taken for a ride, you either spank kids into submission with the rod or give them the run of the house and school, you either applaud governmental muscling in on industry or champion laissez-faire market speculation. It seems to be either we "good guys" against those

"bad guys," or because we all live in glass houses, one cynically throws no stones at all, affirming the status quo.

But Proverbs 25 repudiates both such abstract alternatives. Evil doing must be stopped, but "the good guys" are just as evil if they denature God's creatures and make healing impossible. It's true, you pull an abscessed tooth to heal your mouth. But it takes more than pulling out a crooked politician and putting him behind bars to heal government, if it was done only so we can get on with our North American standard of living. And journalists out to scoop the truth and set things straight, who treat people in crises like natural catastrophes, push microphones in front of those trapped in their guilt as if they be earthquakes, photograph Solzhenitsyn like he is a forest fire, turn Kissinger's bride into cheesecake, or trump the repented sin of AACCS- ICS and Toronto up into the Land of Mythic Monsterdom - Secular journalism always hunts human heads, despite its good intentions, and affords no healing balm in Gilead ... or Philistia.

(2) It is a measure of our unbelief and stunted biblical vision that so many of us Christians would prefer to have Proverbs 25 and appendix to 24 give us a recipe for reforming untruth, injustice and evil. As if the letter of Proverbs would save us and get us to please God.

But Proverbs 25 calls us' who exercise authority of any kind, to repentance in our daily action. *Us!* not somebody else (cf Psalm 130:3). And promises all those who stop the old way of doing things and judging people to speak the truth in love while building up the body of Christ (Ephesians 4: 1-6:9), who re-form the wicked patterns of this secular world so that men can discern what pleases God (Romans 12: 1-2), who uncover wrong so that the Holy Spirit may heal things straight: of such workmen, judges, schoolteachers, parents, salesmen and journalists are the Kingdom of Heaven.