

Why Private Morality Matters (1)

Scripture Reading — Proverbs 31:1-5

Do not spend your strength on women ... It is not for kings ... to drink wine ... Proverbs 31:3-4 —

When Bill Clinton was embroiled in morality scandals as president of the United States, it was often said that it didn't matter much what a person did in his private life if he performed well in public life. The Bible disagrees. Though we don't know who King Lemuel was, the advice of his mother was clearly seen as something important for all leaders.

Two common vices are mentioned: sexual immorality and substance abuse. And it's important to note that we are dealing here with abuses of good gifts, because sex and alcohol in themselves are not bad.

What's remarkable is the reason given for avoiding abuses of sex and alcohol. Our first thought might be that private sins are just between God and us. But, according to the Bible, leaders who allow themselves to be distracted by life-dominating sins cannot govern justly, and the poor and oppressed will suffer.

Private life does affect public life. When Saddam Hussein's palaces were captured, soldiers confiscated truckloads of booze and pornography. According to Scripture, it should come as no surprise that Saddam's nation was impoverished and on the brink of ruin.

As we who are Christians serve in the offices of prophet, priest, and king, we do well to reflect thoughtfully on how effective our service is in God's world.

Prayer

Lord, grant us strong moral character so that we will not be distracted from our calling to care for people in need and be effective servants for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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