

Choose Wisely

Proverbs 14:4

Charlie Brackett

It is wise to occasionally stop and reflect back over past practices, and whenever we do, we are reminded of the importance of making wise choices. That is the lesson of Proverbs 14:4:

Where no oxen are, the manger is clean,
But much increase comes by the strength of the ox.

"What does this have to do with choosing wisely?" you ask. Well, primarily, it reminds us that things have relative value. It can't be denied that there is *some* advantage to having no oxen. The manger is clean. In fact, a man with no oxen doesn't even need to provide a place in which to keep them. And, he surely doesn't need to clean up after them. But, when there are no oxen, there is no profit from the strength which they have.

Remember the sayings, "Nothing comes from nothing" and "No pain, no gain?" You have to be willing to suffer a little if you want to profit a lot. It is a very wise thing to prefer the greater over the lesser and it is a mark of wisdom to recognize the difference. Wise is the man who is willing to sacrifice as he trades the one for the other. Therein lies the difference between success and failure.

There will be many opportunities to apply this principle in the days and months ahead. Will the farmer rather have a clean stall or the strength of the ox? Will the homemaker care more for the cleanliness of her house than the comfort of her family? Will the preacher care more for the elegance of his words than the souls he may touch? And what about you and me? Will we value more the fleeting baubles of this world's goods or the eternal destiny of our souls?

Tomorrow is a new day. If you are like me, you will have to admit to some foolish choices in days gone by, some mistakes and some sins. But, the Lord willing, we still will have time to do better; to be wiser. Paul said in Romans 8:18, "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us." I don't know about you, but I'm mustering up at this very moment a new willingness to put up with a smelly, dirty stall for the strength of the spiritual ox that it represents.