

# Schadenfreude

Proverbs 24:17-18 (PART 2)

Baxter T. Exum (#1726)  
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Good morning, and welcome to the Four Lakes congregation! If you are visiting this morning or joining us online or on the phone, we are glad to have you with us. We'd like to ask that you fill out a visitor card online if you can, or you can use one of the cards from the pew in front of you. Whatever works for you, we would love to hear from you, and we invite you to pass along any questions or prayer concerns.

In terms of our calendar, I'd like to give some encouragement concerning the breakfast and Bible study that's coming up at the South Beloit congregation this next Saturday. Our relationship with this congregation goes back many years. I have done some fill-in preaching there a number of times through the years, and brother Larry Wofford seems to be doing a great job down there and has been for several years now. They finally found a preacher at least one notch more stubborn than they are, and I say that with love for both brother Wofford and the congregation! They have a big ladies day in September (and a number of you have gone to that), but this sounds like a men's breakfast that the women are invited to. One thing is obvious: They do not have a graphic design deacon like we do; but, we have the information, which is what is important. I went to this event a few years ago, and it was outstanding! So, if there is any chance that you can make it, I would strongly encourage it. We need to encourage our sister congregations, and we need the encouragement ourselves. I have a few seats open, so let me know, or I will just look forward to seeing you down there.

We are here this morning to preach the good news that God loves us. As Jesus explains to Nicodemus in John 3:16, ***"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."*** This is the good news, that Jesus came to this earth and died on the cross, he was buried, and he was raised up on the first day of the week. We obey this good news by being buried with him in baptism, and by rising out of the water to live a new life. And we do have several examples to share this morning, starting with an update from the Lord's church down in Cowan, Tennessee, not far from where our daughter lives. They posted this week, and they say, "God gave the increase! Rejoice with us in welcoming our newest sister in Christ, Brenda. One of our dear sisters in Christ lives next door to Brenda and started talking with her about Christ two years ago. She attended our [clothing] give away day and has been visiting with us since. This week we got to sit down with Bibles open and study God's word together. Brenda was hungry for the Word and we completed 3 studies in 4 days. Today, she concluded that she needed to obey the gospel and be baptized for remission of her sins. The angels in heaven are rejoicing and so are we! Salvation is so sweet (Acts 22:16, Acts 2:38, Romans 6:3-4)."

There are many others we could share, but I had to share this next one, coming to us from the Lord's church down in Buford, Georgia. They start with a quote from 2 Corinthians 5:21, where Paul says, ***"For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."*** And they continue by saying, "The righteousness of God can now be seen in our newest sister in Christ, Kaleigh! Last night she obeyed the Gospel of Jesus Christ when she came up from those waters of baptism. The Lord Almighty has washed all of her sins away! Join us in celebrating God's plan for salvation and thanking Him for His willingness to add us into the Kingdom of Christ! Blessed be the name of the Lord!" So good to see this, I've rearranged things up here just a bit this week to include our contact information right on the wall (or on your screen at home, if you'd like to pause it or take a screenshot). If you'd like to study God's plan for your life, if you have any questions or concerns, please get in touch. You can email us at [info@fourlakeschurch.org](mailto:info@fourlakeschurch.org), or you can either call or text me at 608-224-0274. I can't answer it right now, because I'm preaching, but I have answered the church line and I have taken some interesting calls from a kayak in the middle of a lake, I've taken calls on hikes, I've taken calls in the middle of the night, but if I can't answer, please either text or leave a message, and I would love to get back with you.

This morning, we are returning to our very sporadic and long term study of Proverbs by studying a request that has been turned in by one of our senior saints a number of times over the past ten years or so. The request was for a lesson on Proverbs 24:17-18 and "not gloating over our enemies' defeat or misfortune." I'm putting a different view of my little "Proverbs Research Zone" on the wall up here (from the cabin in Michigan's Upper Peninsula several weeks ago), just to give some further insight on the scope of the study. Over the past several years, we've covered Proverbs 1-9 on a chunk by chunk basis, but in Proverbs 10, pretty much any sense of context disappears completely. So, I've been working on dividing the rest of the proverbs up topically, and hoping we can cover the rest of the book in this way on and off over our next several decades together. But last week and today, since we've had this request, we are looking at two of the Proverbs that stand on their own.

And as we noted last week, the request is tied to an interesting German word that's made a comeback over the past few decades, the concept of SCHADENFREUDE, coming from two words meaning "harm" and "joy." So, it's the idea of taking pleasure (or joy) in the pain or misfortune of others. And this is a perfect summary of this request we're studying. Last week, we looked at the warning and the reason for the warning. The WARNING is:

***Do not rejoice when your enemy falls,  
And do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles;***

And the REASON for the warning is:

***Or the LORD will see it and be displeased,  
And turn His anger away from him.***

Last week, I said we would continue our study today by noting some examples of this concept, both negative and positive. So, that's what we hope to do, because we do see this concept illustrated for us over and over again in scripture, both in good ways and in bad ways.

**I. So, let's start this morning by thinking about some situations in Bible times when people did NOT have a good attitude toward their enemies.**

And like I said, there are several, but let's note two of the most glaring examples of those who did, in fact, rejoice at the misfortune of their enemies. And I want us to start by thinking about a situation explained to us in the book of Obadiah. One author has said that the book of Obadiah is like a rare bird – experts can be expected to appreciate it, but most folks are barely aware of its existence. Another has suggested that Obadiah is like the spleen of the Old Testament – we may know it's there, but we may not be exactly sure what it does. Well said! Obadiah is one of only five one-chapter books in the bible, and the only one-chapter book in the Old Testament. Obadiah was a prophet. Now, most of the prophets preached to either Judah or Israel. But Obadiah is one of those who had a message for some outsiders. Obadiah had a message for the Edomites. The Edomites were the descendants of Esau. We have Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Jacob and Esau are brothers. Esau is the firstborn, but he sells his birthright for a bowl of soup, and Jacob ends up with practically everything. Esau's descendants eventually make their way down toward what is modern-day Petra. We shared some pictures of Petra in our Sunday morning adult class a few months ago. Petra, as featured in *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, was a city built into the cliffs in a huge canyon, with only one way in and out, and it caused the Edomites to be arrogant. They thought they were so secure. And when God eventually sent destruction on Jerusalem, the Edomites practically jumped on the pile. They were elated, mocking the destruction of their long-lost brothers. And at that moment, God sent Obadiah to the Edomites with a terrifying message (among other things), in Obadiah verses 12-13,

***Do not gloat over your brother's day,  
The day of his misfortune.  
And do not rejoice over the sons of Judah  
In the day of their destruction;  
Yes, do not boast  
In the day of their distress.  
Do not enter the gate of My people  
In the day of their disaster.  
Yes, you, do not gloat over their calamity  
In the day of their disaster.  
And do not loot their wealth  
In the day of their disaster.***

God, then, rebukes the Edomites for doing exactly what Solomon warns about in Proverbs 24:17-18. The Edomites, then, are the first example of what NOT to do in this regard. But from a human point of view, we understand what was going on there. Their great-great-great-grandfather had been cheated out of the birthright (meaning that they also had been cheated), and now the descendants of the cheaters are getting humiliated by the Lord, and the Edomites are thrilled. We understand that. But, Solomon gives a very wise warning here. Do not gloat, or else God may turn his attention to you instead (which he does in the book of Obadiah).

A second example comes to us through Jonah. God, of course, sends Jonah to Nineveh (near modern-day Mosul, in northern Iraq), and the Assyrians in Nineveh were known for complete and absolute brutality. These people were the ones who pretty much invented impaling people on a stick – they would hammer a stick into someone's rear until it popped out through their shoulders, and they would then drop that stick into a hole in the ground and leave it there. Sometimes death was quick, but sometimes people would live for days like that. The Assyrians were brutal, and they were Israel's enemies. Well, God sends Jonah to preach to these people,

and just paraphrasing here, but Jonah basically says, “God, there is no possible way!” And instead of traveling to the northeast by land, Jonah travels west and gets on a ship heading in the opposite direction. And to summarize the rest of the book of Jonah, a storm comes up, the pagan sailors throw Jonah overboard, he’s swallowed by a huge fish, and when the fish spits him out on the shore, Jonah very reluctantly heads up to Nineveh, and when he gets there he preaches the most basic message, “Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown.” Well, surprise, surprise, the people repent; they turn to God. Jonah is the most successful prophet in history! He preaches, and an entire nation turns to the Lord. Jonah converts more in Nineveh than any other prophets converted back home in Judah or Israel combined. But, Jonah is devastated. This is terrible news! The impalers are forgiven!

Well, in Jonah 4:2, Jonah takes his complaint to the Lord and says, ***“Please LORD, was not this what I said while I was still in my own country? Therefore in order to forestall this I fled to Tarshish, for I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents concerning calamity. Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for death is better to me than life.”*** And the Lord says, ***“Do you have good reason to be angry?”*** Jonah doesn’t answer, but he heads out to the side of a hill overlooking the city, and Jonah pouts for a while. And it’s almost as if he’s hoping the repentance isn’t real and that God will end up destroying the city anyway. Well, as he’s waiting, it’s hot, he’s under a shelter, and God causes a vine to come up very quickly to provide shade. Jonah is thrilled at the shade, but the next day God causes a worm to destroy the vine, and now Jonah is irate. And this is how the book ends (in Jonah 4:9-11),

***Then God said to Jonah, “Do you have good reason to be angry about the plant?” And he said, “I have good reason to be angry, even to death.” Then the LORD said, “You had compassion on the plant for which you did not work and which you did not cause to grow, which came up overnight and perished overnight. Should I not have compassion on Nineveh, the great city in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know the difference between their right and left hand, as well as many animals?”***

We don’t have any resolution in the book of Jonah, but we have this prophet basically mad that these terrible people listened to his sermon and didn’t get smitten by the Lord. What a weird little book! But don’t we see an application of Proverbs 24:17-18 here? Jonah is thrilled even at the POSSIBILITY that his enemies might get destroyed, and when it doesn’t happen, he’s mad. He’s so focused on the sin of the Assyrians that he fails to see his own sin. The Assyrians are running to God, and God’s own prophet is running away from God. In fact, the wind, and the fish, and the pagan sailors, the Assyrian king, and even the worm are all more obedient to God than Jonah is. This makes God angry, and just as King Solomon predicted, God’s wrath now turns to Jonah. Jonah is a story about the grace of God and specifically how God’s grace may not always line up with our grace. We preach grace and forgiveness, but sometimes we may struggle with extending it to others, and especially to our enemies. So, instead of being angry, a better response might be to preach (like Jonah did) but then to pray for those who may be against us. How can I bless instead of curse? What can I offer to my enemies that may lead them to the Lord instead of pushing them away from the Lord? Those are the questions raised in the book of Jonah.

These, then, are the two most obvious “case studies” where we see people rejoicing in the downfall (or possible downfall) of their enemies – the Edomites (in Obadiah) and Jonah’s attitude toward the Assyrians in Nineveh.

II. **Before we wrap it up this morning, let's at least briefly think about TWO EXAMPLES WHERE WE PRETTY MUCH HAVE THE OPPOSITE OF SHADENFREUDE, TWO SITUATIONS WHERE PEOPLE HAD EVERY RIGHT TO TAKE REVENGE OR TAKE PLEASURE IN THE DESTRUCTION OF THEIR ENEMIES, BUT DIDN'T.**

And the first of these comes in the well-known story of Joseph. Joseph is the dreamer, the young brother who is tormented by his older brothers, and it gets to the point where they beat him up and sell him into slavery. He ends up in Egypt, he gets promoted, and eventually comes to power as second only to Pharaoh, the king. He saves the entire nation from a famine, and a few years in, his older brothers come to Egypt begging for food. And we don't need to re-read the last 15 chapters of Genesis, but basically, if anybody ever had the right to take pleasure in the suffering of his enemies, it's Joseph. He has all the power in this situation, these men have done him wrong in so many ways, he had every right to take revenge and to have fun doing it. But we see none of that. In fact, Joseph is focused on the grace of God. Later in life, when their dad dies, the brothers get worried, "Oh no, what if Joseph has been holding a grudge this whole time? Maybe he's just been waiting for dad to die to get his revenge." They come to Joseph bowed down and begging for mercy, and Joseph sees this and weeps, and he says to them (in Genesis 50:19-21), ***"Do not be afraid, for am I in God's place? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive. So therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones." So he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.*** It wouldn't surprise me at all to learn that Solomon has this in mind when he writes Proverbs 24:17.

And the other example of someone not having schadenfreude comes to us in 2 Kings 6. The king of Aram is harassing the Northern Kingdom of Israel, sending troops on these raids, and whenever they show up, Israel is ready and waiting. This happens again and again, so the king thinks he has a mole. He harasses his military leaders, and they say, ***"No..., but Elisha the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bedroom."*** The king, then, sends his army on a mission to capture the prophet Elisha. Long story short, they find and surround Elisha, but God strikes them blind. Elisha then brings the entire army to Samaria, the capital city of the Northern Kingdom, and has God open their eyes. So, instead of surrounding Elisha, the enemy army is now surrounded by Israel. The king says to Elisha, ***"My father, shall I kill them? Shall I kill them?"*** He can hardly contain his excitement. However, Elisha answers and says, ***"You shall not kill them."*** But instead, ***"Set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink and go to their master."*** The Bible then says that ***"...he prepared a great feast for them; and when they had eaten and drunk he sent them away, and they went to their master. And the marauding bands of Arameans did not come again into the land of Israel."*** Again, that right there is the opposite of schadenfreude! Instead of anger and revenge and rejoicing over the defeat of an enemy, Elisha reacts with mercy and grace, and the hostilities come to an end. And that is what God has done for us.

**Conclusion:**

Earlier today, Stuart read a short paragraph from Romans 12, where Paul tells us to bless those who persecute us, and he reminds us to never take our own revenge, but instead, we are to leave room for the wrath of God. Leave it up to God. Our job is to feed and give a drink to those who are hungry and thirsty, even if they hate us. As Paul explains, the answer to schadenfreude is not to be overcome by evil, but to overcome evil with good. Solomon tells us what NOT to do, but Jesus demonstrates the proper way to love our enemies. Even when we were enemies, he gave himself up for us, and how he's asking us to do the same for others.

All of us have enemies. Our challenge this week is to respond, not by rejoicing when our enemies struggle or fall, but we respond to enemies with love, by treating them just as we ourselves would like to be treated.

When our enemies stumble and fall, we have a unique opportunity to show them God's love. They may not deserve it, they may not even want it, but we're not doing it for them, we are doing it for Him.

I am thankful for the request that led to our study of Proverbs 24:17-18, and I am looking forward to the rest of our study of these proverbs, for as long as the Lord may allow.

Before John leads us in a song, let's go to God in prayer.

Our Father in Heaven,

We pray that you will be with us this week as we live in this world that you sent your Son to save. We pray for wisdom as we live with the people around us, even when it's difficult, and especially when relationships are strained. From complete strangers, to members of this congregation, to people in our own homes, we ask for tender hearts, assuming the best of people, and never responding with a harsh word. Help us to treat the people around us just as we would like to be treated.

Thank you, Father, for loving us, especially when we were enemies. Thank you for Jesus. We come to you today through his name. AMEN.

To comment on this lesson: [furlakeschurch@gmail.com](mailto:furlakeschurch@gmail.com)