

21/02/10 am

Speak Up!

Proverbs 31:8-9

Theme: The rights of the poor and needy are to be defended.

People are made in God's image,
cf. Gen. 1:26-27.

Part of this is having an inner
sense of right and wrong.

This sense is heightened in
Christians.

Christians are to speak out against
injustice.

Proverbs 31:8-9 speaks to this.

Background

Identity of King Lemuel is uncertain.

31:1-9 was addressed to him by his mother:

31:3 is a warning against unrestrained sexual gratification;

31:4-5 is a warning to show restraint regarding alcohol;

31:8-9 is an exhortation to speak up for those with no voice.

*Why should we restrict these wise
injunctions within the narrow limits
of royalty?*

(Charles Bridges)

There are many today who are insignificant in the eyes of society.

As God hears the cry of the downtrodden, *cf.* Ps. 10:16-18;
103:6 ...

... so should His people! *Cf.* Ps.
82:3-4; Is. 1:17.

31:8-9 gives **four interdependent instructions** on how to respond to those suffering injustice and exploitation.

1. **Observe Perceptively (31:8-9).**

Implied in verses.

Notice what is taking place!

2. Judge Righteously (31:9a).

Ask, “What should I conclude on the basis of what I see?”

Then make a judgment based on righteousness.

3. Speak Up (31:8, 9a).

The poor and exploited can be socially and economically too weak to defend themselves against the rich and powerful.

They may:

be ignorant of their rights;

lack the ability to state their case
convincingly;

be too poor to command any respect;

be prisoners in the dungeon of
exploitation.

They need someone to be their
voice.

Cf. Clapham Sect of 19th century

4. Act Out (31:9:b).

Defending speaks of action.

Conclusion

God is a God of justice and righteousness.

His children are to be concerned for justice and righteousness, *cf.*
Prov. 19:17.

Let us observe perceptively,
judge righteously,
speak out
and act out.

Is this not part of what it means to
be a good neighbour?