

PEARLS FROM PROVERBS – Lesson 2

The Fear of the Lord

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. The book of Proverbs is a book of wisdom.

1. The Hebrew word for "wisdom" means "skill or ability to achieve in certain areas, especially as it relates to morality, spiritual duty, and ethics."
2. True wisdom comes only from God.
 - a. Job asked the profound question, **Job 28:12** – "*But where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding?*"
 - b. Job finally came to understand:
 - 1) It does not come from man's ingenuity. **Job 28:1-12**,
 - 2) It cannot be purchased. **Job 28:13-19**
 - 3) It cannot be seen among men, nor can death reveal it to the living. **Job 28:20-22**
 - 4) God understands and is characterized by infinite wisdom, and He used it in creation. **Job 28:23-27**
 - c. The revealed answer to Job was, "*And to man He said, 'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding.'*" **Job 28:28**
 - 1) God says, "*I will give it to you, if you will have the proper attitude toward me and my Revelation.*"
 - 2) Contrary to the modern idea that the book of Proverbs is simply a human compilation of folklore, it is the revelation of God's wisdom concerning man's relationship with:
 - a) God,
 - b) with oneself,
 - c) with his family,
 - d) with his neighbor,
 - e) with his government,
 - f) in his work,
 - g) with his co-workers,
 - h) in his finances
3. The greatest questions of the ages involve:
 - a. What is life all about?
 - b. Where did I originate?
 - c. What is my purpose here?
 - d. Where am I going?

B. Genuine wisdom is supremely and vitally important.

1. Wisdom is revealed in both the Old Testament and the New Testament, which are both the inspired word of God.

2. Because it is inspired by God, it is also inerrant, which means that it is “incapable of being wrong”.
 3. One who doubts the inspiration of the entire Bible will never have the proper respect for the principles and commandments contained in it.
- C. The very epitome of wisdom was Jesus Christ, the only begotten of the Father.
1. He came to reveal God to mankind and to “seek and save the lost”.
Luke 19:10
 2. The sacred message Christ gave the world is divine wisdom.
 - a. It is mankind’s guide from earth to heaven.
 - b. It is also the sole motivation and means of becoming “like Christ” in morality, ethics, and love.
 - c. This wisdom meets man’s every legitimate aspiration and need.
- D. God expects to rule in every aspect of the lives of His children.
1. No part of life is out of God’s domain, whether thought or word or deed.
 2. There is never a time in the life of a Christian when he is not responsible for representing God to others.
 3. Being a Christian (child of God) is a seven-days-a-week commitment.
 4. Divine wisdom, then, is to permeate every moment of life.
- E. Some questions we should consider in our own lives are:
1. How does one acquire wisdom from above and allow God to regulate his life?
 2. What blessings will it bring?
 3. What tragedies will result if one does not acquire wisdom?
 4. These challenges will be examined in light of those passages in Proverbs which discuss the subject of “the fear of the Lord.”

II. THE FEAR OF THE LORD

- A. The “fear of the Lord” is often called the motto or key statement, or concept, of Proverbs.
- Proverbs 1:7** – *“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.”*
1. The phrase “fear of the Lord” is defined by as “reverence or holy fear” which recognizes God as the creator of all things.
 2. This is in stark contrast to the type of “fear” that a child would have of an abusive parent, who is afraid of being punished arbitrarily at any time.
 3. Some have pictured God as one who “toys” with and frustrates His creatures for no reason and then when He is through “playing” with them, He snuffs them out. (This is a blasphemous idea!)

- a. Perhaps some believe this because their own personal history has been shaped by cruel parents who failed in their duty to love and protect their children.
 - b. Our Heavenly Father is one who is the very essence of love, mercy, grace and forgiveness!
 - c. His power is unlimited and His authority is unquestionable.
 - d. That authority requires obedience
4. "Fear of the Lord" also means that we never want to disappoint our Heavenly Father because we honor and respect Him so much. The Bible clearly identifies what displeases God:
- a. **Proverbs 8:13** – *"The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverse mouth I hate."*
 - b. **Proverbs 6:16-19** – ¹⁶ *These six things the LORD hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: ¹⁷ A proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, ¹⁸ a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that are swift in running to evil, ¹⁹ a false witness who speaks lies, and one who sows discord among brethren.."*
 - c. **Romans 1:18** – *"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness."*
 - d. **Ephesians 5:5** – *"For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God."*
 - e. **1 Thessalonians 4:3-8** – ³ *For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; ⁴ that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, ⁵ not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God; ⁶ that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified. ⁷ For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness. ⁸ Therefore he who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit."*
 - f. **2 Thessalonians 1:7-9** – *"...when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, ⁸ in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,"*
 - g. **1 Timothy 4:7** – *"But reject profane and old wives' fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness."*

- h. **Titus 1:16** – *"They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work."*
- B. God's boundless love for His children has been clearly demonstrated.
1. When we experience the deep and powerful love God has for His children, we are compelled to return that love to Him.
 - a. **John 3:16** – *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."*
 - b. **Romans 5:8** – *"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."*
 - c. **1 John 3:1** – *"Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!"*
 2. The depth of our reverence, awe, and fear of God are in direct proportion to the depth of love we have for Him and for our fellow Christians.
 - a. The Law of Moses taught that love for God was their primary commandment. **Deuteronomy 6:4** – *"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! ⁵ You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength."*
 - b. Jesus repeated this commandment when He was asked, "Which is the greatest commandment?" **Matthew 22:37** – *"³⁷ Jesus said to him, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." ³⁸ This is the first and great commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself."*
 - c. With this commandment comes obligations as well. **Deut. 13:4**
 - 1) *"You shall walk after the Lord your God and fear Him."*
 - 2) *"and keep His commandments*
 - 3) *"and obey His voice;*
 - 4) *"you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him."*
 - d. Obedience and service to God should be the result of our all consuming love for God.
 - e. However, if our love for God is NOT all consuming, our obedience can be seen as "duty" rather than love.
 - f. We must examine ourselves periodically to be sure that our love for God remains our highest priority.
 3. The evidence of our love for God can be seen in the way we love and serve others.
 - a. **Matthew 25:34-40** – Jesus spoke of judgment in these terms: *"Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: ³⁵ for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I*

was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; ³⁶ I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.’ ³⁷ “Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? ³⁸ When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? ³⁹ Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ ⁴⁰ And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.”

- b. **1 John 4:20** – *“If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?”*

C. Our Heavenly Father knows how to reward and how to chasten His children.

1. **Matthew 7:11** – *“If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!”*
2. **Hebrews 12:7-9** – *“⁷ If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?⁸ But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons.⁹ Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?”*

III. **WHILE GOD HAS GIVEN MAN THE ABILITY TO GROW IN WISDOM, NOT EVERYONE WILL REACH SUCH MATURITY IN THEIR FAITH.**

A. It is so easy to allow the obligations of everyday life to consume so much of our time that there is little time left to spend in study of God’s word.

1. That fact is pointed out in **Hebrews 5:12-14** – *“¹² For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. ¹³ For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. ¹⁴ But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”*
2. Peter wrote that we have been given “*all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue.”* **2 Peter 1:3**
 - a. It is through the knowledge of Him that allows us to mature in faith and that maturity is made evident as we add the characteristics of moral excellence God expects us to gain: **2 Peter 1:5-7**. These are:
 - 1) Virtue – high moral standards
 - 2) Knowledge – specifically knowledge of God’s word

- 3) Self-control – the ability to control one’s behavior in difficult situations.
- 4) Perseverance -- the determination to achieve something despite difficulties, failure, or opposition.
- 5) Godliness – a devotion to God that results in behavior that is pleasing to God.
- 6) Brotherly kindness – love that causes us to cherish our Christian brothers and sister in a way that provides a true sense of “family” among members of the Lord’s body.
- 7) Love – is defined in **I Corinthians 13:4-8a** – *“⁴ Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; ⁵ does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; ⁶ does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; ⁷ bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. ⁸ Love never fails.”*
 - b. The result of possessing these virtues will make us *“fruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Vs. 8)* and will we ensure *“entrance...into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (Vs, 9)*.
 - c. Peter also said: *“He who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.”*
Vs. 9

IV. PROVERBS THAT IMPACT OUR STUDY OF GOD’S WORD

- A. Fearing God brings great blessings and rewards:
 1. In everyday activities of life
 2. In service to God and others
 3. In worship of God
 4. In an eternal home in heaven after this life is over
- B. The theme of fearing God permeates the whole book of Proverbs.
 1. It is a book on living and doing for God.
 2. No one has ever been saved who did not fear God, trust His grace, and do His will.
 3. **Hebrews 11:6** – *“⁶ But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who **diligently** seek Him.”*
- C. The Blessing Of Fear of the Lord
 1. Wisdom – **Proverbs 9:10** *“The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom; and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.”*
 - a. Since the Garden of Eden mankind has been commanded to obey God.
 - b. Wisdom begins with obedience to God’s word.

- c. It is absolutely vital to seek to know God's will for our lives. We cannot obey what we do not know.
- 1) **Romans 12:2** – *"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."*
 - 2) **1 John 2:17** – *"And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever."*
- d. Knowledge of the truth (the will of God) enables us to be "set free" from the law of sin and death.
- 1) **John 8:32** – *"¹³² And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."*
 - 2) **John 17:17** – *"Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth."*
 - 3) **Romans 8:2** – *"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death."*
- e. *The fear of God does not trust the will of man: **Proverbs 3:5-6** – "⁵ Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; ⁶ In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths."*
- f. Without fear of the Lord, we may only attain to worldly wisdom, which is "foolishness to God". **1 Corinthians 3:19** – *"For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, 'He catches the wise in their own craftiness'"*.
- g. The Bible warns against being deceived by worldly wisdom.
- 1) **Colossians 2:8** – *"Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ."*
 - 2) **Matthew 15:9** – *"And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men."*
- h. The absolutes in morals, ethics, and religion are based upon the very nature of God and He has provided the standards in these areas for mankind in His inspired revelation, the Bible.
- 1) God has revealed Himself to His creation.
 - a) The Bible is the story of God seeking man;
 - b) God revealed His own nature through His inspired word.
 - c) Discovery of God's truth can be hampered by our own prejudice, apathy, pride, and/or deception.
 - d) That mental blockage must be cut away so that one can be objective in His searching.
 - e) Stony hearts cannot be softened unless prejudice is overcome and the heart is opened to divine truth
 - 2) Sadly, not everyone will accept the truth of God's word:

- a) **Acts 13:46** – ⁴⁶ *Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles."*
- b) **Romans 22-25** – *"Professing to be wise, they became fools,²³ and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.²⁴ Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves,²⁵ who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever."*
- 3) The knowledge of God's word in a good and honest heart allows one to advance in love, reverence, wisdom, joy, peace, and hope.
- a) Without that, all teaching is folly. But all who earnestly seek wisdom shall find it
- b) **Matthew 7:7** – *"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you."*
- c) Perseverance in the study and the practice of God's word is required for continued spiritual growth.
- d) We are never too old to learn or to change our ways in our search for knowledge and wisdom.
- e) **Proverbs 4:4-7** – *"He also taught me, and said to me: 'Let your heart retain my words; Keep my commands, and live.⁵ Get wisdom! Get understanding! Do not forget, nor turn away from the words of my mouth.⁶ Do not forsake her, and she will preserve you; love her, and she will keep you.⁷ Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom. And in all your getting, get understanding."*
- f) Incidentally, those who were commanded by God through Solomon in the Old Testament to acquire wisdom were able to achieve that very thing without a direct, personal, supernatural, miraculous operation of the Holy Spirit upon their hearts, as some believe is necessary today.
2. **Humility** – **Proverbs 15:33** – *"The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom and before honor is humility."*
- a. Humility is required in order to willingly accept the teachings of God's word.
- b. **Proverbs 22:4** – *"By humility and the fear of the LORD Are riches and honor and life."*

- c. Accepting the authority of God over mankind allows us to realize that we are His creation and He knows best what we need spiritually and physically.
- d. The New Testament repeats this same requirement for humility.
 - 1) **James 4:10** – *"Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up."*
 - 2) **1 Peter 5:6** – *"Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time."*
- 3. Forgiveness – **PROVERBS 16:6** – *"In mercy and truth atonement is provided for iniquity; and by the fear of the LORD one departs from evil."*
 - a. God is the one who is offended by the grievous nature of sin, the transgression of His very nature and His law.
 - 2) **1 John 3:4** – *"Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness."*
 - 3) Even so, God was willing to sacrifice his only begotten Son to make the redemption of mankind possible.
 - 4) This is what makes God's grace so amazing – **Romans 5:8** – *"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."*
 - 5) We did nothing to deserve this gracious response to our disobedience, which reveals the depth of God's love for us.
 - 6) Man cannot continue to live a habitual life of sin and expect to go to heaven after this life; he must "depart from evil."
- 4. A better quality of Life – **Proverbs 14:27** – *"The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, to turn one away from the snares of death."*
 - a. Just as a fountain nourishes plants and trees so that they produce beautiful fruit, so do the commandments of the Law of Christ produce the fruit of the Spirit in the beautiful life of a Christian.
 - 2) **Matthew 5:6** – *"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled."*
 - 3) **John 4:14** – Jesus said, *"...but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life."*
 - 4) A pleasant life on earth is good, but eternal life in heaven is the greatest blessing: **Romans 6:23** – *"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."*
 - b. On the other hand, those who practice the works of the flesh *"shall not inherit the kingdom of God"*.

V. CONCLUSION

- A. The blessings promised to those who fear the Lord are motivational when one has inclined his heart to fear God and is determined to please God.
1. However, Solomon sternly warns those who would refuse to humble themselves, refuse to love God, and refuse to reverence God in their hearts and lives:
 2. **Proverbs 14:2** – *"He who walks in his uprightness fears the LORD, but he who is perverse in his ways despises Him."*
 - a. Some people neither love nor revere God, and their thoughts never contemplate trying to please God.
 - b. The ways of the rebellious are always perverted, because, apart from revelation and inspiration, man is perverted.
 - c. Man's philosophy always creates a perverted religion. **Romans 1:22** – *"²² Professing to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things." (idolatry)*
 - d. Christianity is often rejected today because "tolerance" is a concept worshipped by the world.
 - 1) They reject any teaching that defines good and evil or right and wrong.
 - 2) They are offended at the idea of "sin" and consider those who define sin as judgmental.
 - 3) Obedience to commandments is too great a burden for those who live by the whims of the current society.
 - 4) We must not be surprised when the world expresses their hatred for Christians and the Bible.

John 15:18-21 – *¹⁸ "If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. ¹⁹ If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. ²⁰ Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also. ²¹ But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me."*
 - 5) Those who fail to fear the Lord harden their hearts against Him: **Proverbs 28:14** – *"Happy is the man who is always reverent, but he who hardens his heart will fall into calamity."*
 - a) When a person fails to educate his conscience in the truth of God's word and refuses to fear God, he may reach a point where he cannot be touched with the Gospel of Christ.

- b) The greatest harm a person can do to his soul is to allow his conscience to be hardened to the word of God.
2. In this study of Proverbs, we hope to stimulate our hearts and minds to increase our commitment to love God with all of our hearts, minds, souls and strength and to give more diligence to our study of God's word.

2 Timothy 2:15 – *"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."*