

PROVERBS

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to the book of Proverbs as we begin our study in this rich and practical book. Proverbs is just that, practical help that comes from God for weak people who are trying to go through life. How many of you fit into that category? I hope all of you feel that way because we are all weak and there are some very valuable lessons for how we as Christians are to conduct ourselves, how we are to walk.

Now some see the book of Proverbs like the wisdom we find in fortune cookies. Make no mistake about it, that is not even close. In fact, the wisdom that is found in the book of Proverbs is a matter of life and death. Now some of you may think that is an over exaggeration, but I don't think it is. In Proverbs 13:14 we are told, "**The law of the wise is a fountain of life, To turn one away from the snares of death.**" So these words are very important for us to not only read but apply to our lives!

The Hebrew word for "**Proverbs**" is MASAL, (maw-shawl') and it means "to be like, to be compared with." And what the writer will do is draw from life's experiences and he will write down short, concise thoughts that we can learn from and apply to our lives. We are told in I Kings 4:32 that Solomon wrote 3,000 proverbs and what we have here in the book of Proverbs is several hundred of them.

So the book of Proverbs is a collection of writings, mostly from Solomon, the rest are the words from Agur and King Lemuel with Hezekiah's men copying down and arranging some of Solomon's words. That would make the timeframe for the writing of these somewhere between the 900's B. C. for Solomon and possibly to around the late 700's B. C. for Hezekiah's men arranging these. We are not too sure about when Agur or King Lemuel lived or exactly who they are. Some believe that these are names for Solomon, but we can't be sure.

As we will see, Proverbs 1:1-7 give us an introduction to what this book is about. In verse 1 we see the title of this book, "**The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel.**"

Then, in Proverbs 1:2-6 we see the goal or purpose of the book, "**To know wisdom and instruction, To perceive the words of understanding, To receive the instruction of wisdom, Justice, judgment, and equity; To give prudence to the simple, To the young man knowledge and discretion - A wise man will hear and increase learning, And a man of understanding will attain wise counsel, To understand a proverb and an enigma, The words of the wise and their riddles.**"

And finally, Proverbs 1:7 gives to us the theme or motto of the book, "**The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, But fools despise wisdom and instruction.**" And we will cover this in detail as we come to these verses, but that is the general theme of the book of Proverbs. In fact, chapters 1-9 are kind of an introduction and then, starting in chapter 10 and on we see short sections, each verse being its own unit instead of the more lengthy unified ones we find in the first 9 chapters.

And this is important. The fear of the Lord, as we will see is both the doorway to eternal life and it is a pathway for eternal life. You come into that relationship with the Lord through the door, Jesus Christ and you continue down that pathway every day of your new life in Christ. All you have to do is allow God to be God to you, surrender your life to Him and follow where He is leading you!

It is as Derek Kidner wrote regarding this book of Proverbs, “It is not a portrait-album or a book of manners: it offers a key to life. The samples of behaviour which it holds up to view are all assessed by one criterion, which could be summed up in the question, ‘Is this wisdom or folly?’”

As I have said, the Hebrew word for “**Proverbs**” is MASAL, (maw-shawl’) and it means “to be like, to be compared with.” Now when we think of a proverb we tend to think about what this English word means, which is a short saying of practical truth which is easy to remember. You may remember this one, “Look before you leap!” Or, “A stitch in time saves nine.”

But the Hebrew word is different. It is a verbal representation of some aspect of our daily lives and as we look at these over and over again, we can glean things we can apply to our lives. And the topics that are covered here in Proverbs are amazing. It deals with parenting, speech, borrowing and lending, envy, false balances and weights, justice and injustice, old age, pride and humility, temper and patience, wine, the wise man and the foolish man, the Word and obedience to it, wealth, and-so-on.

David Hocking made these remarks regarding the book of Proverbs,
The book is filled with problems of life and discovering the solution. . . . Proverbs is looked at from the standpoint of maturity – not of age, but of wisdom. It’s an excellent study for all of us. . . .

- David Hocking, Proverbs for Today, p. 1

With that said, let’s begin reading in Proverbs chapter 1, starting in verse 1 and see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word.

PROVERBS 1

VERSE 1

1. As I have said, Solomon wrote most of these proverbs for us. And as you will see, Solomon was writing these words down for his son so that he would learn from them. In Proverbs 1:8-9 we see this spoken of, **“My son, hear the instruction of your father, And do not forsake the law of your mother; For they will be a graceful ornament on your head, And chains about your neck.”** You can just feel the emotions of Solomon as he was writing these words to give godly advice for his son to live by. Any parent does this and especially this should be true of parents that love the Lord. We need to instruct them in the things of God! And there is much to say regarding the raising of children. Why does Solomon spend so much time in this area? Maybe because he had so many wives and concubines or maybe he saw the problems that came about because his father, David did not do too well in raising his children, disciplining them.

2. Keep in mind that Solomon became King of Israel when he was young, at least according to our standards today. He may have been 14 or 15 years of age when he became King and I can't imagine all the pressure that was upon him. To lead a nation at that age, for me, I was just getting ready for my learners permit to drive a car, but to rule a nation, that was a heavy burden upon him.

You remember the story. One night as Solomon was sleeping in Gibeon, where the Tabernacle was located; the Lord spoke to him in a dream and said to Solomon, **“Ask! What shall I give you?”** And Solomon, understanding his youth and inexperience, asks for wisdom to lead the people of God. He wanted to know between good and evil. He did not ask for riches, possessions but for wisdom. And God granted Solomon his request, his heart's desire, and He also blessed him with riches and honor.

God blessed Solomon and the nation of Israel mightily during his reign. We read of Solomon's accomplishments in I Kings 4:30-34, **“Thus Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the men of the East and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men - than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol; and his fame was in all the surrounding nations. He spoke three thousand proverbs, and his songs were one thousand and five. Also he spoke of trees, from the cedar tree of Lebanon even to the hyssop that springs out of the wall; he spoke also of animals, of birds, of creeping things, and of fish. And men of all nations, from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom, came to hear the wisdom of Solomon.”**

During the reign of Solomon the Kingdom's borders expanded farther than at any other time. The Kingdom economically was going gangbusters as gold was so prevalent that if anything was made of silver it was thought of as worthless! His wisdom was well known as he wrote 3,000 proverbs, and as I have said, we have some of them in this book of Proverbs. He wrote 1,005 songs, in which we only have 1 of them, the Song of Solomon. He studied the following subjects:

- ***THE STUDY OF TREES - DENDROLOGIST***
- ***THE STUDY OF ANIMALS - ZOOLOGIST***
- ***THE STUDY OF BIRDS - ORNITHOLOGIST***
- ***THE STUDY OF INSECTS - ENTOMOLOGIST***
- ***THE STUDY OF FISH - ICHTHYOLOGIST***

He was a brilliant man and you know what happens when people found out about Solomon's wisdom, people traveled from far lands to hear the wisdom of Solomon! And as great as everything seemed, there was a problem for this man. He didn't listen to what he was telling others and because of that he lived in a backslidden condition most of his life. We will see that when we come to the book of Ecclesiastes. Solomon tried to find joy in things that were under the sun, or things that were apart from God and he never found that joy until he returned to the Lord, towards the end of his life. Our joy is always in the Lord and not apart from Him!

Thus, Solomon is going to speak from his life's experiences, what he has seen, and he wants us to learn those lessons so we won't have to stumble and fall as he did. The world loves to give us answers to life but God has the ones that we need to live by. The world says, "Live and learn." But God says, "Learn and live!" We would be wise to heed the words of God instead of the words of man!

3. Some have called this book of Proverbs the "Words of Wisdom" and the reality is, that is exactly what comes flowing from these pages. You will find that this word "**wisdom**" or "**wise**" are written some 125 times in this book! There are a lot of people today who have a lot of knowledge and that is important, but unless you apply that knowledge to your life, you are not very wise!

Let me give you an example of what I mean. We have seen the studies, read the reports, listened to the dangers of texting while you are driving. The statistics are very sad. The number of people killed while they are trying to text or the people that are killed by someone trying to text is high. And many try to negate this or think that they can do it, it is not a problem for them. They are better than the average person, but they are not and if you feel that way, you are not. Let me share this with you. For every 6 seconds of drive time, a driver sending or receiving a text message spends 4.6 of those seconds with their eyes off the road. This makes texting the most distracting of all cell phone related tasks.

That is the information on how dangerous it is. People are now aware of this, it is on the news, it is in the papers, magazines, on the radio, it is everywhere! Does that mean people are not texting and driving any longer? Not an all! An AT&T survey found that 75 percent of teens say texting while driving is “common” among their friends. At this point, more than 100,000 crashes a year involve drivers who are texting. That is being unwise, you know that statistics, you know the danger and you disregard it. That is what many do when it comes to what God is telling us. May we learn to listen and obey because He has what is best for our lives and to not listen is just foolish!

Obedience to what God tells us is the best thing we can do. And, as we will see this evening, not obeying is the most dangerous thing we can do. Let me share this with you. We are told,

Roger Staubach who led the Dallas Cowboys to the World Championship in ‘71 admitted that his position as a quarterback who didn’t call his own signals was a source of trial for him. Coach Landry sent in every play. He told Roger when to pass, when to run and only in emergency situations could he change the play (and he had better be right!). Even though Roger considered coach Landry to have a “genius mind” when it came to football strategy, pride said that he should be able to run his own team.

Roger later said, “I faced up to the issue of obedience. Once I learned to obey there was harmony, fulfillment, and victory.”

- Source Unknown

How true that is in our own lives. There is harmony, fulfillment and victory when we learn to obey the Lord!

VERSES 2-6

1. The primary purpose for this book is to make us wise. And wisdom does not necessarily come with age, but it comes as we apply the truths of God's Word to our lives. As Paul reminded Timothy, "**But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.**" II Timothy 3:14-15. And yes, there are times that you have to dig in to take out the nuggets that God has for us, but it is well worth it.

2. One of the problems we have today is that we are always on the move. We don't have time to call people, to talk with them, thus, we text them! What the book of Proverbs does for us is it slows us down; it makes us take a deeper look what God is saying. Nicholas Carr in an article he wrote, "Is Google Making Us Stupid?" writes about where we are at today and how we need to turn back. We need to slow back down and dig deep and smell the roses in a sense. But for us as Christians, we need to slow down and dig into the Word of God. This is what he wrote,

As the media theorist Marshall McLuhan pointed out in the 1960s, media are not just passive channels of information. They supply the stuff of thought, but they also shape the process of thought. And what the Net seems to be doing is chipping away my capacity for concentration and contemplation.

My mind now expects to take in information the way the Net distributes it: in a swiftly moving stream of particles. Once I was a scuba diver in the sea of words. Now I zip along the surface like a guy on a Jet Ski.

- Nicholas Carr, Is Google Making Us Stupid?, The Atlantic, July/August 2008

Thus, we will take our time, as you can see, going through this book as we have done with the other books of the Bible because they are that important and there is a goldmine of information that God has for us to extract out. We will not be able to extract everything because God's Word is rich and it is deep, but there is much we can learn and apply to our lives! May we be teachable; that truly is what wisdom is about, learning those lessons, applying them to our lives.

VERSE 7

1. This really is the theme or the goal of this book, to bring us into that deeper relationship with the Lord, to draw us closer to Him. In other words, wise people humbly revere God and they live to please Him. This book should draw you closer to Him and because of that reverential fear you have of God, because of His great love for you and your love for Him, you will live according to what He is saying.

2. For Christians to say they love the Lord and walk in disobedience is just plain foolishness! Paul put it like this in Ephesians 4:17-19, **“This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.”**

Maybe you don't see it. Maybe you are having a hard time experiencing God with humility. Is there anything out there that can change that in your life? You bet there is something that can change that for you. Just look to the cross! How does that help? Because here is God Almighty, the wisest man to have ever walked the face of this earth, God incarnate. And He died for us fools because He loves us that much. Looking at Him, looking at the work He did for us, looking at the cross melts away all that pride that is in us and causes us to humbly come before Him and worship Him!

In the story, “The Wind in the Willows” Rat and Mole go looking for a baby otter and they stumble into the presence of God. I know, a little far-fetched, but just listen to what transpired in this encounter.

Suddenly the Mole felt a great Awe fall upon him, an awe that turned his muscles to water, bowed his head, and rooted his feet to the ground. It was no panic terror – indeed, he felt wonderfully at peace and happy. . . .

“Rat!” he found breath to whisper, shaking, “Are you afraid?”

“Afraid?” murmured the Rat, his eyes shining with unutterable love. “Afraid! Of Him? O, never, never! And yet – and yet – O, Mole, I am afraid!”

Then the two animals, crouching to the earth, bowed their heads and did worship.

- Kenneth Grahame, *The Wind in the Willows*, pp. 180-182

May we have that kind of fear that causes us to fall down on our knees and worship the King of kings and Lord of lords! It is as Psalm 95:6-7a says, **“Oh come, let us worship and bow down; Let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. For He is our God, And we are the people of His pasture, And the sheep of His hand. . . .”** That truly is the beginning of wisdom, to fear the Lord.

3. The contrasting thought in this verse here in Proverbs 1:7 is that if you reject the fear of the Lord, where wisdom begins, then you are a fool. Paul said in Romans 1:22 **“Professing to be wise, they became fools.”** You see, they can profess all they want, because their actions tell us a different story. The wise man will read and learn and apply the lessons in this book and on the other end of the spectrum is the fool who cannot be told anything, he knows it all. And if he even learns any lessons, it is usually the hard way, but for those who follow the Lord, reverentially fear Him, then He will guide us as we walk with Him!

Listen to this illustration that J. Vernon McGee gives to us; it will drive home this point. He wrote,

A man driving down the highway had a flat tire, so he pulled over to the side of the road. It happened he was parked by an insane asylum, and one of the men from the asylum was on the other side of the fence. He was watching the man as he changed the tire. He didn't say anything but just stood there and watched. As the man took off the wheel of the car, he placed all the nuts that he had taken off into the hubcap. Then he accidentally tilted the hubcap so all the nuts fell out and went down into a sewer, and he couldn't retrieve them. He stood there scratching his head wondering what in the world he was to do.

The man behind the fence who had been watching him said, "Why don't you take a nut off each of the other wheels and put them on this wheel? You could drive safely down to the filling station, and there you can buy nuts so that you can fix your wheel." The man looked at him in amazement. "Why didn't I think of that?" he asked. "You are in the institution and I am out, and yet you are the one who thought of it." The onlooker answered. "I may be crazy, but I'm not *stupid*!" Well, this Book of Proverbs is attempting to get you and me out of a position of being *stupid* in life today. I think we shall find it to be a great help to us.

- J. Vernon McGee, Thru The Bible, Vol. III, Proverbs through Malachi, p. 7

I think it speaks for itself. Where do you want to be, on the side of wisdom or being a fool? The choice is yours! Won't you humbly bow before God and ask Him what He wants you to do and then do it? If you do you are wise, if you don't obey, well, then you are a fool! This has to be our starting point, "**The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, But fools despise wisdom and instruction.**" If it is not, we will be all messed up and that is the problem with many today. They don't start off with the fear of the Lord and thus, they are all messed up!

4. One more point here before we move on. The most frequently used Hebrew word that is used for "**wisdom**" is CHOKMAH, (khok-maw') and it is used some 45 times and speaks of the "skill of craftsman, sailors, singers, administrators, counselors." Thus, this book is here to give us the skill for everyday living!

VERSES 8-9

1. Solomon had it all. He had money, wives, possessions, intelligence and the list can go on, and he saw it all as empty. It wasn't until the end of his life that he returned to the Lord. And the picture here is that Solomon is instructing his son. But make no mistake about it, he is also instructing, warning people, especially the young, not to follow down the path of destruction. Learn the lessons. He encourages children to listen to the wisdom of their parents even though you may think it is foolishness, because they are speaking out of experience. If you heed their words, you will be blessed.

The idea of “**graceful ornaments on your head, and chains about your neck**” is just a poetic way of saying that obedience brings honor, it brings moral beauty to your life. Now let me say this, there are no parents that are perfect but there is much you can glean from them. Yes, some are bad and the influence they bring to their children is horrible, but most parents have learned lessons from life that they can instill in their children, if they are willing to receive. And for godly parents, the things you can give to them are invaluable if they would receive them.

Remember what Paul said of Timothy’s mom and grandmother and how they influenced his life. In II Timothy 1:5 we are told, “**when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also.**”

Timothy and his family came from the city of Lystra, where Paul visited on his first missionary journey, (Acts 14). And Timothy had an unbelieving Greek father, a believing Jewish grandmother named Lois and a believing Jewish mother names Eunice. First his grandmother was saved, then his mother and then Timothy was saved, maybe on Paul’s first journey there, we are not sure.

Timothy's home life was not ideal since his father was an unbeliever, and the husband, the father had authority over the family. But that did not stop his mother and grandmother from teaching Timothy the things of God, and look how God used this young man. You may be in a house situation that is not ideal, but don't let that distract you from God who takes the impossible and makes it very possible. Don't make excuses for your behavior or what you are not doing for the Lord, learn the lessons of faith and continue to grow in the Lord and see what God will do in you and through you for His glory! It is up to you. It is up to you to surrender to His will for your life and walk by faith!

VERSES 10-14

1. How many people today have "gotten in with the wrong crowd"? That is the excuse for our behavior many times and the reality is, we don't have to go down that path. Think about it. How many times are you enticed with evil in a day, a week, a month, a year, a lifetime? Thousands to millions of times we are enticed and yet, why don't we go through with these enticements? The reason is not very complicated; it is because we have taken a stand to say "***NO!***"

And when you think about it, things have not changed much in 3,000 years. We still see people entice others towards evil, towards violence. And the mentality of the gangs is that of a family, or so they would like to portray. They will pool their resources and share in all things. The big difference is they steal and murder for their gain. There is a tremendous amount of peer pressure today for kids to do things that are evil. And please understand it is not just gangs that are causing evil. Man is evil, he is bent on evil apart from the Lord and he will take as many as he can with him. But, with the help of the Lord we can turn that around.

It is always tragic to hear of those random acts of violence that are done upon the innocent. And yet people don't want to be warned of the danger that is out there, the danger that is found in gangs and other evil activities. When "**sinners entice you**" and the idea is that these are habitual sinners, this is the way of life for them and they are trying to get you to follow them, don't go with them, be wise! They are out there; you will encounter them, that is not the issue. What are you going to do when you encounter them is the issue!

And let me also say this. Once you begin to travel down this dark road, it is very hard to turn around. Thus, don't go down that path in the first place and if you do, if you are there now, then you need to repent and get right with the Lord for He alone can transform your life just as He has done with ours!

VERSES 15-19

1. Notice what Solomon is saying here. “Son, I know what they are trying to do, how they are trying to entice you to evil. But stay away from them, don’t follow them, have nothing to do with them. I know they talk about wealth, a quick buck you might say, but in the end you will lose. It is not worth it son! Be a like a bird who sees the net and does not get caught in the trap. Be wise and don’t get caught in their trap that they have set for you. They don’t really care about you and if you get in their way they will take you out!”

This is an important warning. If you follow down this path it will be very hard to break away from it. These gangs, these people don’t let you just walk away, only carried away in a body bag! And I understand that there is a temptation, but never forget that greed is a monster that is never satisfied! The more you feed into it the more it wants until it consumes your life. It is as Jesus said in Matthew 16:26, **“For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?”**

2. I do understand that people don’t want to talk about this or they say things like, “That would never happen to my child.” Think about that for a minute. What parent in their right mind is going to say, “My little Billy, one day he is going to be a drug dealing criminal”? No one thinks that way until it is too late. Let me share this story with you and you will see what I mean.

Steve’s parents noticed that he was hanging around with friends who were questionable to say the least. He adopted their clothing style, their haircut, and their vocabulary.

His grades at school began to slip. Then he frequently missed classes.

When he was home, he spent most of the time in his room with the door closed. He became increasingly withdrawn and disturbed.

His parents tried to win him back to family life, but he was uncooperative. When they showed kindness, he showed no gratitude; he was unpleasable. No matter how they counseled or warned him he didn't care, and it even showed on his face.

His mother and dad were distraught they didn't want to believe what they suspected.

Then one day when his mother was cleaning his room, she found a glass pipe and other drug paraphernalia. Now she understood. Her son was on drugs.

Steve supported his drug habit by stealing. When this proved insufficient, he began pushing drugs.

It all ended abruptly with a call from the police. Their son had overdosed. His body was at the local morgue.

- William Macdonald, Proverbs A Devotional Commentary, pp. 15-16

What a tragic story that is played out far too often in our nation today. We need to take the time and instruct our children, pray for them and ask God to help them make healthy, godly choices in life. It is not something we should ignore, Solomon was broken over this and so should we! Our desire is that they would say to those who are enticing them to evil, "I will not go with you to hell. I choose with Jesus Christ to dwell." Sometimes we will have to take a bold stance in this life and we do need to pray for the youth of today because the battle is growing but God is with them and He will equip them to do the right thing, may we do the same and may they listen!

VERSES 20-22

1. Wisdom is personified as a woman. And she is crying out to the people not to continue in their folly but to heed her words, her wisdom. She is calling for them to grow-up and not remain fools. Now Solomon is speaking poetically, but to apply that to us, true wisdom comes from the Lord, Paul tells us that in Christ "**. . . are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.**" Colossians 2:3.

2. Why don't people hear this wisdom from God today? Because there is so much noise drowning it out. And Lady Wisdom, you might say, is right in the middle of all this and she is calling out to them to listen and learn and walk. Make no mistake about it, God is not holding out. He is available. The only thing that He demands is a hearing ear, one that can hear above all the noise that wants to drown this wisdom out! It is available to all, but many refuse to hear and thus, they remain fools!

VERSE 23

1. Now some see this verse as a rebuke and judgment. Since this person won't listen to the Lord, since they won't turn to Him and receive His instructions, then God will pour out His Spirit in judgment upon them. That is what lies ahead for those that reject God's Wisdom. As true as that is, I don't think that is what Solomon is saying here.

I think the idea that Solomon is trying to get across is that of turning from your ways and turning towards God's ways. When you receive that correction and turn to Him then He will pour His blessings upon you by His Spirit and will make known to you these words of wisdom. Again, I lean in that direction because anyone who turns from his old ways and to the Lord as God reproves them is doing what is right! Thus, if you want wisdom what should you do? Come to Christ for He wants to give you wisdom, He wants to pour out His Spirit upon your life.

2. Now we will see what happens if you don't turn from your old ways and turn to the Lord. We will see what happens when you want to be a fool and it is not good.

VERSES 24-28

1. Here is one of those tragedies in life. God wants to give to us His wisdom and we reject it! In fact, God has given us wisdom but we don't have to listen to it. If we close our ears to His wisdom, if we don't listen to His counsel, we will reap the consequences of our actions. And when we find ourselves in trouble it will be too late. You see, there are consequences to our actions. A Proverb for today that helps to illustrate this point is "Don't close the barn door after the animals have escaped." You see, it is too late and you are going to have to deal with the consequences of leaving the door open in the first place. The same is true if we don't heed the wisdom of God.

Barnhouse told this story that portrays this very thing, that there are consequences for not listening to the Lord. Barnhouse told a story that took place at a Washington Zoo. There was this young, small child who had squeezed herself past the metal railing that was there to keep the people away from the lion's cage, which was some six feet away.

When her grandfather saw what had happened, what she did, he ordered his granddaughter to come out immediately. But instead of listening, she backed away teasingly. You know how kids are sometimes. It was at that point a waiting lion grabbed her and dragged her into the cage and mangled her to death. It was a very tragic story and it still is. This is the lesson that Barnhouse made with this story.

God has given us commandments and principles that are for our good; God never gives us a commandment because He is arbitrary or because He doesn't want us to have fun. God says, "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me," not because He is jealous of His own position and prerogative, but because He knows that if we put anything, anything before Him, it will hurt us. If we understand the principle behind this fact, we can also understand why God chastens us. "Whom the Lord loves, He chastens" (Heb. 12:6). He doesn't want us to back into a lion, for there is a lion, the devil, seeking whom he may devour.

- Donald Grey Barnhouse, *Words Fitly Spoken*, p. 239

I think that is a very powerful lesson and one we challenge many times in our life. "Pastor Joe, how can you say that?" It is easy, I think that is a very powerful lesson and one we challenge many times in our life. Now listen to what I am saying here. Have you ever told God, "I know I am not suppose to date an unbeliever, but Lord, I think he is saved! Or I can get him saved!" So you think God is trying to hold something back from you that is good? Really, that is what you think? He is not and the warning He gives to us is not to hurt us or keep us from something good, but to protect us! Or, "It is not really a lie; it is more of a half-truth!" No, it is a lie! Or, "Hey, if they paid me more money then I wouldn't have to take these things from work. They owe me these things!" No, you are stealing them. And the list can go on-and-on but I think you get the point. What are you doing that is contrary to God's Word and you are making excuses why you are not listening to Him? Wisdom is calling out to you to get right, repent, turn back to God before it is too late and there are consequences to your actions.

2. Now people may laugh at God, mock what His Word says, but in the end, that laughter will turn to mourning because of their rejection. In Psalm 2 we see God laugh at the nations that are fighting against Him because it is foolish. God is not mocked and judgment will come, not might come upon them. And what a tragic time that is when they have crossed that line of no return and judgment does come. It is as Jeremiah 11:11 says, **“Therefore thus says the Lord: ‘Behold, I will surely bring calamity on them which they will not be able to escape; and though they cry out to Me, I will not listen to them.’”** It is as this poem says,

Be in time! Be in time!
 While the voice of Jesus calls you,
 Be in time!
 If in sin you longer wait,
 You may find no open gate,
 And your cry be just too late.
 Be in time!

- Author Unknown, 19th Century

3. Now why would people do this? Why would they behave like this? Let’s read on and see.

VERSES 29-30

1. Notice that they are stubbornly rejecting this wisdom of God, they don’t want to be corrected, they are willing to do their own thing at any cost, at least that is what they are thinking. What I want you to see here is that you have a choice to make! You don’t have to listen to an all-wise, all-knowing God; you can do your own thing if you want.

But understand this, God does not forbid us from doing certain things to rob us of fun, to be a kill joy, but to protect us from calamity that will come into our life. It is as Deuteronomy 30:15-16, 19-20 says, **“See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil, in that I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may live and multiply; and the LORD your God will bless you in the land which you go to possess. . . . I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; that you may love the LORD your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them.”**

God wants to give us life, abundant life and that abundant life is found in Jesus and obeying His Word. If you reject that then there are consequences and what a hopeless place to be. Maybe that is why so many people are depressed today, they are looking for that abundant life apart from Christ and it will never be found!

Remember what James tells us about what God gives to us in James 1:17, **“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.”** You mean that God, whatever He gives to me, whatever He is saying to me is good for me? Absolutely and if you take anything from our study this evening, take that with you. Why is that important? Because if you believe that then you will trust what God is saying to you through His Word and you will not argue with Him about it!

VERSES 31-33

1. Notice the contrast between those who reject the wisdom of God and those that listen and obey God's Wisdom. For those that reject the Gospel, refuse the wisdom of God in their lives, they will not find rest, they will not be at peace, they will find anguish and distress as they go through life. There are consequences to their self-will, their folly! As John Greenleaf Whittier wrote, "Of all sad words of tongue or pen, the saddest of these are: 'It might have been.'" Don't pass up the gift that God has for you, it will be the wisest decision you will ever make as you receive Jesus into your life as Lord and Savior. But if you reject Him then your doom is your own fault, you can't blame anyone else! We see this in II Thessalonians 2:10-12, "**and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.**"

2. Now for those that come to the Lord and receive His wisdom, there is that peace even in the midst of a storm. And when you move off course, the Lord will chasten you to get you back on track because He loves you that much and wants what is best for your life! There is no judgment for believers because our judgment, the judgment of God that we should have received was taken by Jesus as He hung on the cross of Calvary, paying in full the penalty for our sins!

May we learn the lesson and not seek worldly wisdom, which is foolish compared to Godly wisdom, which God wants to give to us! May we learn to fear the Lord because that is the beginning of wisdom and this fear of the Lord speaks of:

- *Trusting Him for our salvation.*
- *Surrendering our life to Him for whatever He wishes to do with it.*
- *Obeying His Word.*
- *Worshiping Him.*
- *Praying to Him.*
- *Walking in holiness.*
- *Fearing to displease Him.*

Fearing the Lord means living in reverent fellowship with Him while fools despise this life of wisdom! **“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, But fools despise wisdom and instruction.”** Proverbs 1:7. May we not forget that!