

"Do Not Boast About Tomorrow"  
(Proverbs 27:1)

Introduction: Today is the last day of 1995, and we are on the verge of another new year. Because this is so, it is fitting for us to reflect briefly on this last year. Doubtlessly, each of you had certain goals that you had wanted to accomplish this year. You made plans, and you sought to carry them out and to bring them to completion. Now is a good time to remember what those goals were, and whether or not you reached them. You probably had goals in the material realm. You had, perhaps, goals in the area of finances. Maybe you wanted to save toward certain things that you wanted to buy. Or maybe you wanted to begin to make some long-term investments for the future. Or maybe you had goals in the area of your health. Maybe you wanted to start an exercise program and get yourself into better shape. Maybe you wanted to take off those extra pounds so that you would be and look healthier. You probably had at least some goals like these that you were hoping to reach.

But you probably had spiritual goals for yourself as well, at least, I hope you did. Many times we set priorities for ourselves in the things that we would like to do in life and leave the most important things out. What spiritual goals had you set for yourself in 1995? Maybe you had as your goal to read the Bible through at least once. Maybe you had planned to begin having family devotions this year. Maybe you decided to begin reading one of the Christian classics which has been a source of blessing to the people of God throughout the centuries. Maybe you had planned to reach out more to your neighbors with the Gospel and to pray daily that the Lord would open the doors for you to do so. And maybe you had decided to make a concerted effort, not only to know more of God's truth, but also to really do what the Bible says that you ought to do.

Well now is a good time to take account of these things, as to whether or not you were able to accomplish them. If you did, then you may thank the Lord. He is interested in both areas of life, the physical and the spiritual, and everything that you were able to accomplish, you did so by His grace. But if you didn't reach those goals, then you need to ask yourself the question, why not? Was it because your goals were not realistic? Were they things that you really could not have done in that amount of time, or in any amount of the time? On the other hand, maybe your goals were realistic. But because of certain sinful patterns in your life, you were not able to get them done. And so now what are you faced with? You still have the same goals to accomplish for this year, except you now have one year's less time in your life to accomplish them, which means also that you are going to get that much less done in the short span of your life. This morning, we are going to look at an exhortation from Solomon in Proverbs that will help all of us who struggle in this area.

The book of Proverbs was written mainly by King Solomon, the son of David. You will recall that Solomon was especially endowed by God with wisdom that surpassed any who had lived before him or who would come after him. Solomon had gone to Gibeon to make an offering to the Lord, and there he offered 1000 burnt offerings. After that the Lord appeared to him in a dream and told him that he may ask for whatever he wanted. But Solomon did not ask for a long life, or wealth, or even for revenge on his enemies. Rather, he asked for an understanding heart, that he might judge the Lord's people and discern between good and evil. The Lord was pleased with his request and granted him what he had asked for. He said, "BEHOLD, I HAVE

GIVEN YOU A WISE AND DISCERNING HEART, SO THAT THERE HAS BEEN NO ONE LIKE YOU BEFORE YOU, NOR SHALL ONE LIKE YOU ARISE AFTER YOU" (1 Kings 3:12). The Lord also gave him that which he did not ask for, namely, riches and honor. It is this Solomon, endowed with the Spirit of wisdom, and inspired by the Holy Spirit, who wrote the book of Proverbs. And he plainly tells us what his purpose was for writing it. In Proverbs 1:1-6, we read, "THE PROVERBS OF SOLOMON THE SON OF DAVID, KING OF ISRAEL: TO KNOW WISDOM AND INSTRUCTION, TO DISCERN THE SAYINGS OF UNDERSTANDING, TO RECEIVE INSTRUCTION IN WISE BEHAVIOR, RIGHTEOUSNESS, JUSTICE AND EQUITY; TO GIVE PRUDENCE TO THE NAIVE, TO THE YOUTH KNOWLEDGE AND DISCRETION, A WISE MAN WILL HEAR AND INCREASE IN LEARNING, AND A MAN OF UNDERSTANDING WILL ACQUIRE WISE COUNSEL, TO UNDERSTAND A PROVERB AND A FIGURE, THE WORDS OF THE WISE AND THEIR RIDDLES." It should be obvious to us that if we want to learn how to please and serve God in the most fruitful way possible in life, that we would do well to listen to what the wisest man in the world, who was also inspired by the Holy Spirit, has to say to us. Our passage this morning gives to us the wisdom of God in the area of plans and goals and the carrying out of them. And what this text teaches us is,

*You must not bank on tomorrow as though it was already your's, for you do not know what tomorrow will bring.*

*First, I want you to see that this passage is not telling us that we should not make plans for the future; rather, it is telling us that tomorrow is not in our power, but in God's.*

I. *This Passage Does Not Tell Us That Preparation for the Future Is Unimportant.*

A. *It Is Your Duty to Prepare for the Future.*

1. *Solomon earlier in this book exhorts his readers to diligent preparation for the coming days.*

a. *He says, "GO TO THE ANT, O SLUGGARD, OBSERVE HER WAYS AND BE WISE, WHICH HAVING NO CHIEF, OFFICER OR RULER, PREPARES HER FOOD IN THE SUMMER, AND GATHERS HER PROVISION IN THE HARVEST" (6:6-8). The ant is wise because it prepares food during the time of abundance and stores it up for the time when there will be no food available.*

b. *On the other hand, he says, "HOW LONG WILL YOU LIE DOWN, O SLUGGARD? WHEN WILL YOU ARISE FROM YOUR SLEEP? 'A LITTLE SLEEP, A LITTLE SLUMBER; A LITTLE FOLDING OF THE HANDS TO REST' -- AND YOUR POVERTY WILL COME IN LIKE A VAGABOND, AND YOUR NEED LIKE AN ARMED MAN" (vv. 9-11). Poverty and want is just around the corner for those who refuse to prepare for the future.*

2. *Again Solomon says, "HE WHO GATHERS IN SUMMER IS A SON WHO ACTS WISELY, BUT HE WHO SLEEPS IN HARVEST IS A SON WHO ACTS SHAMEFULLY" (Prov. 10:5).*

a. *Didn't Pharaoh, being warned by God in a dream and being counselled by Joseph, appoint Joseph to gather up all the excess of the years of plenty that were coming in order to provide for the years of famine which would follow (Gen. 41)?*

b. *Didn't the faithful Gentile Christians store up their possessions to help their brethren living in Judea, after Agabus predicted that there would be a famine throughout the whole world (Acts 11:27-29)?*

c. Even so, to be faithful to God, you must work diligently in the present in order to provide for the future.

B. You Must Not Live as Though Tomorrow Will Not Come.

1. Those who live only for the day, without thought for tomorrow, often find themselves in a great bind.
  - a. The prodigal son probably felt like life was passing him by. He wanted to have fun while he was young, and so he asked his father for his portion of the inheritance, even before his father passed away. He then took the money and squandered it all on loose living, without even a thought of what would happen when the money was gone (Luke 15:11-32).
  - b. In the same way, Belshazzar, when he wanted to give a feast for his nobles, commanded that the holy vessels of the Lord, which had been taken out of the Temple in Jerusalem, be brought in order that they might drink wine from them. He gave no thought as to the implications of using such holy items for his own sin, and in so doing lost his life that very night (Dan. 5).
  - c. To live for today, with no thought of what the consequences of your actions will bring tomorrow, is foolishness.
2. But, as we have seen in the examples of the ant, of Joseph and Pharaoh, and of the Gentile Christians, those who make plans and work toward the future are most often well provided for.
3. So first of all, this text is not saying that you should make no preparations for the future.

II. But What It Warns You About Is, that You Cannot Count on Tomorrow.

A. You Cannot Boast About Tomorrow, That Is, You Cannot Count on Its Being in Your Power.

1. We always assume that we have a tomorrow, even though we know that one day there will be no more tomorrow for us.
2. But because we assume that tomorrow will be there for us, we often put off the things of today, things which may be very important, until tomorrow.

B. But the Scripture Here Is Telling Us that We Do Not Know What Tomorrow Is Going to Bring Into Our Lives.

1. Tomorrow may bring an end to your years on earth.
  - a. There were those in the time of Noah, who would not listen to his preaching, warning them that God's wrath was coming unless they repented. And as a result, they continued life as usual, marrying and giving in marriage, right up until the time that Noah and his family entered the ark, and the floods came and swept them all away (Matt. 24:37-39).
  - b. Abner, after being offended by Ish-bosheth, the son of Saul, promised David that he would deliver the kingdom of Israel over to him. But he was unaware that his life would end on that very day, for Joab sent messengers after him, and when they brought him to Joab, he took him aside as though he would speak to him privately and put him to death (2 Sam. 3).
  - c. The rich man, who had a bumper crop one year and wanted to tear down his barns and build bigger ones to house all of his goods, boasted of many years yet to come, and yet the

Lord said that his soul was required of him that very night (Luke 12:16-21).

- d. Even so, no one is guaranteed that there will be a tomorrow. Who may boast as if there is? Who may set aside the business of today, counting on the fact that there will be time tomorrow?
  - e. Everyone's days are limited on the earth. And that final day is coming for each and every person living.
2. Furthermore, tomorrow may bring unfavorable circumstances which will hinder your plans or make them impossible to fulfill.
- a. Haman on one day had such favor with the king, that the king put his hand forth to destroy the Jews at the request of this wicked man. Little did he know that the king's wife was a Jew and that he would shortly find himself hanging at the end of a rope (Esther).
  - b. Shimei, very boldly cursed David when he was exiled from Jerusalem on account of his son Absalom. He, however, did not know that it was God's plan to defeat Absalom and to bring David back. The arrogance and pomp he displayed one day, was turned to humiliation in the next (2 Sam. 16-19).
  - c. It is not uncommon in the history of our world, for one country to overrun and swallow up another. Under such circumstances, every citizen of the conquered country loses their property and possessions, and often their lives.
  - d. Tomorrow may bring sickness, poverty, grief, and any number of other circumstances that could impede your plans.
  - e. As you think about these things, you can see that the meaning of Solomon becomes even clearer, "DO NOT BOAST ABOUT TOMORROW, FOR YOU DO NOT KNOW WHAT A DAY MAY BRING FORTH."

### III. This Passage Exhorts Us to Two Things This Morning:

- A. First of All, You Must Be Prepared for the Future.
  1. You must not live as though tomorrow will not come.
    - a. If you believed that there would be no tomorrow, then you would be using the whole day in preparation for eternity.
    - b. If every day were used exclusively for this, then your world would be at a standstill, your resources would soon fail, and you would be turned out on the street, or would become a burden to the church.
    - c. You cannot live as though tomorrow will not come for you.
  2. And so you must prepare for the future.
    - a. You must prepare both physically and spiritually.
    - b. You must labor today to meet your needs, and the needs of your family, if you have one, and to store up for the future.
    - c. You must work while you have your youth and strength to provide for the time when you will have neither.
    - d. If you are one of those who never weighs what your actions will produce in your own life, as well as in those whom you love, you need to begin to consider these things; look ahead to what the long term effects of your decisions will bring upon your family; and begin to cultivate industrious and honest behavior which will be of benefit not only to you, but also to those whom you care for.
    - e. You must also sow spiritually as well.

- f. You must sow the seeds of godliness in your heart by the means of grace. A harvest does not come all at once. The field must first be planted, watered, and then after a period of time comes the harvest. You must purpose to use the means of grace to cause spiritual growth in yourself.
- g. But you must use those same means to cause growth in others. You parents must use the means of grace to sow seed in your children. You cannot expect to see the fruits of righteousness in their lives if you do not sow the things of God into them. If you sow in them the things of the world and they see you compromising with the world, then you will reap a harvest of worldly and compromising behavior. But if you sow godly seed, coupled with a godly life, these will be the best means by which, by God's grace, you may reap a harvest of righteous behavior.
- h. And you must sow them with a view to the future. Again the harvest does not come immediately, but one must sow in hope and wait expectantly for it.
- i. And you must sow the seed of the Gospel in your loved ones, your friends and your neighbors. Most likely they will not be converted the first time they hear the Gospel. But, by God's work, they may either be continually softened by it, or continually hardened by it. But if you ever hope to see any of them come to Christ, their soil must be sown with the truth of God's Word. And you must continue to water that seed with your words, your lives and your prayers.
- j. And so you must first of all prepare for the future.

B. Secondly, You Must Not, However, Bank on the Certainty of the Future, for You Can Never Be Assured of It. And So You Must Take Advantage of the Time and Circumstances While They Exist.

- 1. You who are outside of Christ this morning, cannot put off repenting of your sins and coming to Christ until a later time.
  - a. The decision to put off Christ today hoping for another opportunity in the future is foolish. It is a decision to reject Christ in favor of your ungodliness now.
  - b. The apostle Paul spoke to governor Felix about his salvation while he was in prison. "AND AS HE WAS DISCUSSING RIGHTEOUSNESS, SELF-CONTROL, AND THE JUDGMENT TO COME, FELIX BECAME FRIGHTENED AND SAID, 'GO AWAY FOR THE PRESENT, AND WHEN I FIND TIME, I WILL SUMMON YOU" (Acts 24:25). But Felix had no guarantee that there would be time later. His soul could be required of him in the very next minute.
  - c. How many of you who are young think that you will just relax and enjoy the things of the world now, and then when you are older you will serve the Lord?
  - d. Do you think that somehow because you are young that you are immune to death? Haven't you ever seen someone in their youth cut down in the prime of life? Have you ever had a friend who has died at an early age? How many have been surprised by death and ended up in the everlasting furnace and will burn for eternity because they thought that tomorrow would be there for them?
  - e. Won't your refusal to serve Him now, only harden your hearts in the future against serving Him?
  - f. And what about you who are old? Charles Bridges, that saintly

minister of the Church of England in the last century, wrote, "The universe does not present a more affecting sight than an aged sinner, with one foot in the grave, losing all in the world, infinitely more in eternity. A moment, and he is gone. Heaven and hell are no trifles. To-morrow presumed upon, to-day neglected, ruins all. Standing on the brink of the precipice -- how precious the moment for prayer -- ere the door of mercy is closed forever!" (Proverbs 501).

- g. You have no guarantee that another opportunity will be yours. If you are awakened to your need of Christ this morning, then take hold of Him by faith; trust in Christ to save you from your sins. You may sink back into your complacency, and never have your senses aroused to your danger again. Tomorrow may never come for you! Therefore, seek the Lord while He may be found!
2. And you who are Christians here this morning, you must not put off the duties of today in hopes that tomorrow will bring another opportunity.
    - a. How much time has been wasted by setting aside our duties, hoping to find time for them in the future?
    - b. Do you have hopes of reading the Word of God through and knowing what your duty to Him is? Read and study it today!
    - c. Do you desire to be a man or woman of prayer? Don't wait until later. Start now!
    - d. Do you have plans to begin cultivating family worship in your home? Don't put it off until a more convenient time. You can already see from experience that no more convenient time will come. Begin it immediately!
    - e. Are you hoping to reach out to your loved ones, friends and neighbors with the Gospel? Does the love of Christ constrain your heart to be concerned for them? Then start praying and asking God to give you the opportunities to sow the seed of the Gospel today.
    - f. Your obligation to do these things begins when you come to know that they are God's will.
    - g. Isn't the reason why you don't do these things now because you believe that tomorrow is always there for you?
    - h. People of God, remember that you do not know what tomorrow is going to bring forth. The things that are possible today may very well be impossible tomorrow. In light of this, wouldn't it be the wisest thing for you to listen to what God is saying this morning and do what good you may today without setting it aside until tomorrow, to do it this month, instead of next month, this year, instead of next year? Eternity is going to be upon us much sooner than we imagine, whether we are young or old. "THEREFORE", as Paul says, "BE CAREFUL HOW YOU WALK, NOT AS UNWISE MEN, BUT AS WISE, MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR TIME, BECAUSE THE DAYS ARE EVIL" (Eph. 5:15). May the Lord grant to each of us that we might use whatever time is remaining to us to prepare in this world, for that which is coming in the next. May 1996 be a year of unparalleled growth in holiness in all of our lives, by the grace of Christ, and to the glory of God. Amen.