

"The Blessings of Wisdom"
(Proverbs 3:13-18)

Introduction: People of God, you are blessed to hold within your hands the revelation of God's will. There are many people in the world who do not have the Scriptures. There are many people who are in this country who have it, but do not read it or pay attention to it. Many people will perish forever for a lack of knowledge. But Jesus said, "BUT BLESSED ARE YOUR EYES, BECAUSE THEY SEE, AND YOUR EARS, BECAUSE THEY HEAR. FOR TRULY I SAY TO YOU, THAT MANY PROPHETS AND RIGHTEOUS MEN DESIRED TO SEE WHAT YOU SEE, AND DID NOT SEE IT; AND TO HEAR WHAT YOU HEAR, AND DID NOT HEAR IT" [Matt. 13:16-17]. You have a treasure which is worth more than all the money in this creation. Solomon tells you this morning that you do. And he is someone who should know. He was the richest man in the world at the time that he wrote this. But even before the Lord granted to him these riches, there was something that he desired even more: God's wisdom. It was because Solomon chose wisdom, when God had told him that He would grant him whatever he asked, that the Lord gave him all the riches he had to enjoy, besides making him the wisest man in the world. Solomon saw the value of godly wisdom, and by God's grace I hope that you will see it as well in this passage this morning, where Solomon tells you,

The man who finds wisdom and holds her fast is more blessed than the one who lays hold of the world's greatest riches.

The Lord is telling you this morning that the pursuit of wisdom and living according to it in the long run will bring you greater blessing by far than any treasure you could desire on earth.

I. *First, Solomon Mentions Here Many Blessings that Will Be Yours If You Can Gain God's Wisdom.*

A. *Remember, It Was for the Purpose of Giving You Wisdom and Understanding that Solomon Wrote this Book.*

1. *Let me just quickly remind you what these two words mean.*

a. *Wisdom is most widely used word in the Old Testament that refers to intelligence. It is a way of thinking about life's experiences in all areas, such as in your secular affairs, the arts, morality, and especially in your walk with the Lord (TWOT 282). It is the ability to skillfully apply knowledge to any situation in life the right way with the right results.*

b. *The word translated here "understanding" is one of the synonyms used in Hebrew for wisdom. It refers to the gaining of knowledge (TWOT 103-4).*

(i) *When you apprehend a truth in your mind, you are said to understand it. It is possible, after all, to know some facts in your mind, and yet not to understand them.*

(ii) *For instance, you can memorize your catechism and your children can memorize their's. But merely memorizing them does not guarantee that you will understand them. Understanding truth comes gradually as you think about it and learn how it relates to everything else.*

(iii) *But even if you can memorize God's truth and understand it, you must never forget that only the Lord can give you a saving love of that truth, so that you embrace it with all your heart. But if you do love it, it will greatly enhance your ability to understand it, for your mind*

can't help but to delight in thinking about what it loves, and the more you think about it, the more you will understand it.

2. It was for the purpose of teaching you knowledge and giving you the ability to skillfully apply it to your life that Solomon wrote these Proverbs in the first place. This is what he told us in 1:1-6. "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 NATIVE, 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" (1:1-6).
 - a. This book is especially important to you who are first beginning in life. Solomon wrote it to "GIVE PRUDENCE TO THE NAIVE, TO THE YOUTH KNOWLEDGE AND DISCRETION."
 - (i) Maybe you children have never thought about what it is that makes a child grow into an adult. There is more to becoming a mature man or woman than just the passing of several years. It doesn't happen automatically. Some children mature into adults at a young age, some at an older age. Some never grow up at all. But what is that makes the difference?
 - (ii) Growing up and maturing can be explained in two things: learning what is true, and then living according to that truth.
 - (iii) Throughout your whole life you are learning from your parents and teachers instructions, and your own experiences of what is right and wrong, what is good and bad, what works and what doesn't, what is important and what is not.
 - (iv) And once you've learned these things, what makes you mature is that you consider them important enough to live by them.
 - (v) By the way, the same things make a mature Christian: knowing the truth and living according to as a matter of conscience. The more of God's truth you know and live by as rule of life, the more mature you will be.
 - (vi) It is not only a matter of age. If you could place the mature mind of an adult into a child's body, that person would technically be an adult. And if you could place a child's mind in an adult body, that person would technically be a child. There are some persons whom the Lord has made who are mentally retarded and will never leave the child stage no matter how long they live.
 - (vii) However, reaching maturity normally takes several years, several years of instruction and example. And Solomon has given you this book in order to help you reach that goal.
 - b. But this book was also written to be a constant companion of you who are older. "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."

- (i) Some of you who are wise according to your years will still find that you have need to increase in the two areas of knowledge and conviction. These are two things that you cannot have enough of. The more that you know and the stronger your conviction of God's truth, the more useful you will be in God's kingdom.
- (ii) But some of you may never have reached the level of knowledge and commitment to His Word that you should have according to the number of years that you have been in Christ. This could be for a number of reasons. This book will help you as well if you will heed its instruction and its discipline.
- (iii) One of our biggest problems in our age is that we are unaffected by the truth. We don't seem to think that it is very important, at least we don't seem to live as though it is. May God grant us the grace to make His Word and truth a matter of conscience.
- (iv) Wisdom and knowledge are important for you for your own personal growth. But there are other benefits which come from wisdom that Solomon tells us of.

B. Solomon Says that If You Embrace Her, You Will Gain Many Blessings.

1. He says, "HOW BLESSED IS THE MAN WHO FINDS WISDOM, AND THE MAN WHO GAINS UNDERSTANDING."
 - a. Obviously, if you are to gain these blessings, you must seek after them.
 - b. A man only "finds" what he seeks for. Jesus said, "SEEK, AND YOU SHALL FIND" (Matt. 7:7).
 - c. A man only "gains" what he sets out to obtain.
 - d. And as you seek for wisdom and understanding, Solomon says that you will be blessed if you find them.
2. The blessings which he lists are not comprehensive, but they are precious.
 - a. He says, "LONG LIFE IS IN HER RIGHT HAND."
 - (i) The Hebrews says literally "length of days."
 - (ii) Wisdom protects from danger, for it keeps you on the path of righteousness, which is generally a safe path to travel, except during times of persecution.
 - (iii) Walking according to God's wisdom also brings the blessing of the Lord which is often a long life. We have seen before how the patriarchs of old died at a ripe old age and full of years.
 - (iv) We often think that there is only a promise of long life attached to the fifth commandment for those who will honor their father and their mother (Ex. 20:12). But we fail to recognize that the same promise is attached to the keeping of the commandments as a whole. In Deuteronomy 6:1-2, Moses wrote, "NOW THIS IS THE COMMANDMENT, THE STATUTES AND THE JUDGMENTS WHICH THE LORD YOUR GOD HAS COMMANDED ME TO TEACH YOU, THAT YOU MIGHT DO THEM IN THE LAND WHERE YOU ARE GOING OVER TO POSSESS IT, SO THAT YOU AND YOUR SON AND YOUR GRANDSON MIGHT FEAR THE LORD YOUR GOD, TO KEEP ALL HIS STATUTES AND HIS COMMANDMENTS, WHICH I COMMAND YOU, ALL THE DAYS OF YOUR LIFE, AND THAT YOUR DAYS MAY BE PROLONGED."

Remember, Solomon said that "THE FEAR OF THE LORD IS THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM" (Proverbs 1:7). To fear the Lord is to listen to His wisdom which is contained in the commandments, and to keep His commandments is what brings the blessing of a long life.

- b. He further says, "IN HER LEFT HAND ARE RICHES AND HONOR."
- (i) When God offered to Solomon whatever he wanted, and Solomon chose wisdom, the Lord commended him for not choosing a long life, nor riches, nor the life of his enemies. And because what he had asked for pleased the Lord, the Lord gave him what he had not asked for, "BOTH RICHES AND HONOR" (1 Kings 3:13).
 - (ii) Riches, of course, refers to great material wealth, and honor refers to an impressive appearance before men (Holl. 151).
 - (iii) By embracing wisdom, you find the God-honoring path to earthly wealth and reputation. To seek to gain them in any other way is to set up an idol and to bring down God's wrath on your head.
 - (iv) And you can easily see the blessing of having from both the right and left hand of lady wisdom. If you have a long life without your daily necessities, then you have a long and hard life, which is not a blessing at all.
 - (v) And if you have riches, but lose your life before you have a chance to enjoy them, this is a curse.
 - (vi) Therefore long life and riches and honor enhance each other and are brought about by wisdom.
- c. But there is more. "HER WAYS ARE PLEASANT WAYS, AND ALL HER PATHS ARE PEACE."
- (i) Again, to have riches and honor, coupled with a long life is good, but to have it without a pleasing and peaceful life would also be hard.
 - (ii) To be unpleasant in life can take away all the blessedness of the other blessings. Just as Solomon said that, "IT IS BETTER TO LIVE IN A CORNER OF A ROOF, THAN IN A HOUSE SHARED WITH A CONTENTIOUS WOMAN" (Prov. 21:9), so one might have all these other blessings and have something unpleasant ruin it all.
 - (iii) And the Shalom of the Lord is also important. It has to do with peace, wholeness, and health. It is that completeness inside and out. To have this blessing adds to the others, for apart from it, the others are of no value. To be without it, is to be like the fictitious man who was granted three wishes. For his last wish, he asked for immortality, not realizing that he had an incurable illness which would leave him miserable the rest of time.
 - (iv) Without a pleasant and peaceful life, no amount of money, honors or even a long life will be a blessing. But if you have them, they will greatly enhance those blessings.
- d. Lastly, Solomon says, "SHE IS A TREE OF LIFE TO THOSE WHO TAKE HOLD OF HER, AND HAPPY ARE ALL WHO HOLD HER FAST."
- (i) The tree of life is a figure which expresses God's gracious renewal, both physically and spiritually.

Solomon says in Proverbs 15:4, "A SOOTHING TONGUE IS A TREE OF LIFE, BUT PERVERSION IN IT CRUSHES THE SPIRIT," and in 13:12, "HOPE DEFERRED MAKES THE HEART SICK, BUT DESIRE FULFILLED IS A TREE OF LIFE."

- (ii) If you lay hold of wisdom, it will be strength to your limbs, and marrow to your bones; it will bring about renewal of life.
- (iii) And as you think about this figure of the tree of life, it would be hard to imagine that Solomon didn't also have in mind a reference to the tree of life in Genesis 1-3. Wisdom is not only a source of blessing for this life, but also the life to come.
- (iv) The tree of life is a symbol of eternal life. It is that life which God freely gives to those who will come to Christ Jesus in faith and repentance. If true and godly wisdom teaches you anything, it is that you need a means to wash away your sins, and to obtain a righteousness that will make you acceptable to God. And if you lay hold of Christ, who is wisdom incarnate, you will not be disappointed in either respect.
- (v) But as our passage says, you must lay hold of Him. You must come in the way that God requires. You cannot come on your own terms. And you must hold Him fast. You cannot come to Him and then forsake Him. You must persevere in obedience to the end.
- (vi) Wisdom is precious, because it holds promise not only for this life, but also for the life to come. But you must lay hold of it, and do what it teaches.

II. For This Reason, Solomon Says, Wisdom Is More Precious than All of the Precious Things on Earth.

- A. "FOR ITS PROFIT IS BETTER THAN THE PROFIT SILVER, AND ITS GAIN THAN FINE GOLD. SHE IS MORE PRECIOUS THAN JEWELS; AND NOTHING YOU DESIRE COMPARES WITH HER" (vv. 14-15).
 - 1. Silver is valuable, gold more so, and jewels most of all. But wisdom is more valuable than any of these. It is more precious than anything that you could desire outside of God.
 - 2. These precious metals and gems are only of value in this life. Once this life is over, they are worthless.
 - 3. But the wisdom of God has everlasting value, for it brings prosperity in life, and grants the true riches in death.
- B. Do You See the Value of God's Wisdom This Morning?
 - 1. Are you personally searching for it and seeking to obtain an understanding of God's truth?
 - 2. Are you earnestly struggling to rise above a merely superficial understanding of His Word and desiring to know it thoroughly?
 - 3. And are you applying it to your life? Are you maturing in your walk as a Christian? Are your convictions as to its truth and importance being strengthened so that you are compelled not only to practice it, but also to defend it?
 - 4. The Lord says that if you seek lady wisdom in this way, then the blessings which she has to give will be yours. You will not only receive the good things of the Lord in this life, but also in the life to come.
 - 5. But if you are not seeking God's wisdom through Christ, who is

the wisdom of God incarnate, but are seeking something else in its place, you will in the end lose everything. Whatever you have traded Christ for is not worth it. Nothing you desire compares with Him. Whether it be power, or prestige, or pleasure, nothing even comes close. The pleasures of this life are only temporary. Even the very best of them are quickly gone. As I said before, the damned in hell would give everything they have, everything they could ever have, a thousand worlds full of pleasures and wealth, to have the opportunity that is your's this morning. Don't forsake the road of life to walk on a path which leads to destruction, even if it is fun for a while. In the end you will deeply regret it. Come to Christ and find the true riches. Come to Christ and find the true blessings. Come to Christ and find life! Amen.