

Proverbs Pt. 3

Pastor James Foley – Shared Sunday, August 15, 2021

SUMMATIONS

We are in the midst of an extended summer series on the wisdom of the Book of Proverbs. Please feel free to review previous installments at your convenience at www.NewLifeBarre.org. In recent weeks we have taken the time to explore the following points and principles...

1) The Mandate for Wisdom

Ephesians 5:15–17 (NIV, Emphasis Mine)

15 Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as **wise**, 16 making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is.

2) The Nature of Wisdom

Wisdom is defined as insight into how to live properly before God and among men (i.e., in a manner that is both pleasing and healthful). It is understanding how to navigate life and living in a spiritually-informed yet deeply practical manner.

3) Sources of Wisdom

We glean wisdom from: a) personal experience; b) the experience of others; c) supernatural impartation; and d) Scripture. Of course, the Bible is the greatest source of wisdom since (2 Tim. 3:16), “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.”

4) Proverbs: A Singular Source

Of all the varying books of the Bible, no single book is a better resource of wisdom than the Book of Proverbs! In fact, this work was specifically penned for the purpose of providing spiritual wisdom and practical instruction for the reader or hearer (cf. Prov. 1:1–6).

5) An Available and Invaluable Commodity

God has made divine wisdom available to all who would have it. He wants us to be wise and to know the blessing(s) it brings for both time and eternity. To reject wisdom is folly, so let us seek, receive, treasure and diligently apply the insight and understanding He so freely gives. Thus said...

KEY – Let us now move into new material...

SETTING THE STAGE PT. 1

NOTE 1 – The opening of the Book of Proverbs identifies its primary purpose (i.e., impartation of wisdom)...

Proverbs 1:1–6

- 1 The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel:
- 2 for gaining wisdom and instruction;
for understanding words of insight;
- 3 for receiving instruction in prudent behavior,
doing what is right and just and fair;
- 4 for giving prudence to those who are simple,
knowledge and discretion to the young—
- 5 let the wise listen and add to their learning,
and let the discerning get guidance—
- 6 for understanding proverbs and parables,
the sayings and riddles of the wise.

NOTE 2 – Let us now look to verse 7 (which identifies the first step on the path unto divine wisdom)...

Proverbs 1:7 (Emphasis Mine)

- 7 The **fear of the Lord** is the **beginning** of knowledge,
but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

NOTE 3 – The Hebrew word for “beginning” is significant. The term means “the start” of something. Thus, the starting place of wisdom is “the fear of the Lord.” We cannot gain and/or acquire wisdom if we begin at the wrong point of origin, so this necessitates a vital question...

Q. What is the fear of the Lord? [key Q of the AM]...

KEY 1 – Clearly the author of the text believed the fear of the Lord to be critical, functioning as the starting point for the acquisition of wisdom. In fact, verse 7 serves as the first proverb in a book or compilation of proverbs (i.e., setting the stage for everything else that would follow).

KEY 2 – Moreover, the importance of this theme is evidenced in how often it appears in the Book of Proverbs. We should take note of biblical repetition! In my research I found twenty occasions wherein the phrase “the fear of the Lord” or some variant is penned. Consider this sampling...

Proverbs 3:7 (Emphasis Mine)

- 7 Do not be wise in your own eyes;
fear the Lord and shun evil.

Proverbs 10:27 (Emphasis Mine)

- 27 **The fear of the Lord** adds length to life,
but the years of the wicked are cut short.

Proverbs 14:16 (Emphasis Mine)

- 16 The wise **fear the Lord** and shun evil,
but a fool is hotheaded and yet feels secure.

Proverbs 14:26 (Emphasis Mine)

- 26 Whoever **fears the Lord** has a secure fortress,
and for their children it will be a refuge.

Proverbs 23:17 (Emphasis Mine)

- 17 Do not let your heart envy sinners,
but always be zealous for **the fear of the Lord**.

SETTING THE STAGE PT. 2

Q. So what exactly does it mean to “fear the Lord”?

A1. The fear of the Lord is a nuanced term with a multi-faceted meaning...

A2. The Hebrew term for “fear” (yara’) has two primary meanings: a) a sense of dread or terror in response to something frightening (e.g., what you might feel toward a menacing lion coming in your direction); and b) a sense of reverence or respect for a superior (e.g., a parent, elder or king). Thus...

A3. Any understanding of the fear of the Lord must find connection with these two elements. The fear of the Lord is a sense of dread or terror in relation to the Lord. Moreover, the fear of the Lord is a sense of reverence and respect for Him. Thus said, let us explore these elements...

DREAD AND/OR TERROR PT. 1

Let us begin with the fear of the Lord as a sense of “dread or terror”...

NOTE 1 – We should possess an appropriate sense of dread or terror in relation to the Lord. There should be a healthy fear in response to the more frightening aspects of His nature and work. Of course, this sounds contrary to those who might contend, “How can we dread any facet of a God who is characterized by love?” However, such dread is in fact scriptural.

NOTE 2 – Let us first establish what such a dread or terror is NOT. It is not the fear that God condemns the believing who falter. Christians are not called to live in a state of anxiety, as though He is simply looking for a reason to judge us in this life and the next. This is antithetical to the gospel of grace and the favored position we occupy as the redeemed of the Lord...

Romans 8:1a (Emphasis Mine)

1 Therefore, there is now **no condemnation** for those who are in Christ Jesus . . .

John 3:16–17

16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

DREAD AND/OR TERROR PT. 2

However, we should possess a sense of dread in response to a) His hatred for sin and b) the truth that He will judge all sin that remains un-pardoned through the Cross of Christ. We should know a terror in relation to His wrath toward evil—a wrath that will be unleashed upon the rejecting...

QUOTE – The wrath of God is like great waters that are damned up for the present. They increase more and more, and rise higher and higher, till an outlet is given. The higher the stream is stopped, the more rapid and mighty is its course when it is let loose. If God should only withdraw His hand from the floodgate, it would immediately fly open, and the fiery floods of the fierceness and wrath of God would rush forth with inconceivable fury. They would come upon you with omnipotent power. (Jonathan Edwards)

Romans 1:18

18 The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness . . .

Hebrews 10:26–31

26 If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, 27 but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. 28 Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. 29 How much more severely do you think someone deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified them, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? 30 For we know him who said, “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” and again, “The Lord will judge his people.” 31 It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Q1. How much does God love me?

A. Look to the Cross of Jesus Christ!

Q2. How much does God hate my sin?

A. Look again to the Cross of Jesus Christ!

DREAD AND/OR TERROR PT. 3

This aspect of the “fear of the Lord” plays an intensely practical role in Christian life and living...

NOTE 1 – When we recognized the immensity of God’s hatred for sin, we are moved to accept His offer of divine pardon—resulting in our salvation. Praise God for sending His Son to serve as the “propitiation” (i.e., lit. sacrifice that averts wrath) for our sin (1 John 2:2)!

NOTE 2 – When we recognize the reality of His wrath, we are moved to continually rely upon His grace/mercy!

1 John 1:8–9

8 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

NOTE 3 – When we recognize the immensity of God’s hatred for sin, we are moved to excise sin from our lives.

Mark 9:43, 45, 47–48

43 If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out. . . . 45 And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. 47 And if your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, 48 where “the worms that eat them do not die, and the fire is not quenched.”

ULTIMATELY...

KEY – Why trifle with something He hates, that is (in itself) worthy of judgment, that may well lead me away from Him for time and eternity, and that spurns the gift of pardon through Jesus Christ? Give careful thought to this Q and choose to fear the Lord!

REVERENCE AND/OR RESPECT PT. 1

Let us move along, recognizing the fear of the Lord as a sense of deep “reverence or respect” ...

NOTE 1 – The Hebrew term for fear (yara’) is often used to indicate reverence. Consider...

Leviticus 19:1–3

The Lord said to Moses, 2 “Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: ‘Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy. 3 Each of you must respect [yara’] your mother and father, and you must observe my Sabbaths. I am the Lord your God.’”

NOTE 2 – Many times yara’ is used to indicate a sense of reverence for an earthly ruler...

1 Kings 3:28 (Following Solomon’s Wise Ruling)

28 When all Israel heard the verdict the king had given, they held the king in awe [yara’], because they saw that he had wisdom from God to administer justice.

KEY – To “fear” is to “reverence or respect a superior” (i.e., one whose office demands honor and submission).

REVERENCE AND/OR RESPECT PT. 2

NOTE 1 – It is critical that we understand one thing immediately: God is not our equal and our relationship with Him is not a relationship among equals. We are not on the same level as Him in any meaningful way! When you consider His omnipotence, omniscience, eternality, immutability, holiness, majesty, wisdom, compassion, grace, mercy, love, etc., we are not His equal by any metric.

KEY – He is, in fact, our superior.

NOTE 2 – Thus, the only properly response is humility and a corresponding obedience. In this sense the fear of the Lord plays an intensely practical role in Christian life and living. When we recognize the supremacy of God, we are moved to a heartfelt sense of reverent esteem and obedience. This helps to drive a sense of duty in relation to His commandments! This being...

NOTE 3 – Perhaps it is time that we rediscover a sense of awe and wonderment re: the One we call Father...

QUOTE – Awe is the sense that something small feels in the presence of something great. It is what we feel when we stand before the vastness of the ocean. It is what we feel when we stand at the base of a mighty mountain. It is what we experience when we look to the heavens and try to consider the vastness of the universe. It is also what we should feel in relation to the Lord!

Q1. Should we feel love? YES

Q2. Should we feel repose? YES

Q3. Should we feel intimacy? YES

KEY – But we should also feel a sense of humility and awe in the presence of the Lord.

CONSIDER...

Isaiah 6:1–5

1 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. 2 Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. 3 And they were calling to one another:

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty;
the whole earth is full of his glory.”

4 At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.

5 “Woe to me!” I cried. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.”

CONNECTIONS**Q1. What does it mean to fear the Lord?**

- A1.** It means to dread His hatred of sin and the wrath that is to come upon the unbelieving.
A2. It means to respect, reverence, esteem and revere the One who has made and saved us.

THUS SAID AND ONCE AGAIN...

Q2. In what way is the fear of the Lord related to wisdom?**Proverbs 1:7 (Emphasis Mine)**

7 The fear of the Lord is the **beginning** of knowledge,
but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Q3. In what way(s) is the fear of the Lord the starting point for the acquisition of wisdom?

- A1.** How can I hope to attain wisdom if I am unwilling to concern myself with what pleases or displeases God?
A2. How can I hope to attain wisdom if I am unwilling to yield to the One who is the very “source” of wisdom?

FYI 1 – The fool has no regard for the heart or ways of God (v. 7b)—thus, they will never acquire His wisdom!

FYI 2 – However, the wise man or woman operates from a place of godly fear and lives blessedly in kind!

KEY 1 – Let us consider one or two brief real-world examples of the fear of the Lord and its impact...

1) Scene A – Gossip

Let us say for a moment you are at work when shares a bit of gossip about a coworker. Of course, we all love to traffic in gossip as sinful men and women. What would happen if we took the time to consider God’s hatred of gossip as something sinful (i.e., as something deserving of judgment)? What would happen if we took the time to consider what our “superior” says concerning gossip and revered His judgment? In other words, what would happen if we properly feared the Lord? We would—wisely—never give in to gossip, and we would know the blessing of God in kind!

2) Scene B – Lustful Meditations

Let us say for a moment you encounter an attractive member of the opposite sex. Of course, we all know the pull of lust as sinful men and women. What would happen if we took the time to consider God's hatred of lust as something sinful (i.e., as something deserving of judgment)? What would happen if we took the time to consider what our "superior" says concerning lust and reverence His judgment? In other words, what would happen if we properly feared the Lord? We would—wisely—never give in to lust, knowing His favor in kind!

KEY 2 – This works for any and every sin you and I can imagine, and we would be changed accordingly...

QUOTE – With a clear understanding of His wrath, "His mercy becomes all the more precious." His wrath is as real toward the disobedient and stubborn as is His mercy toward the humble and contrite. If only we were more mindful of His wrath than His forgiveness, we might not need to make such frequent use of His forgiving nature."

May the Lord instill within you a sense of dread toward His hatred of human sinfulness!
May the Lord instill within you a sense of reverence that promotes faith-filled obedience!

CONCLUSIONS

Thank you for joining us today! Allow me to close with the following...

NOTE 1 – Those who wish to give online may do so at www.NewLifeBarre.org. Those who wish to give in person can utilize the offering boxes located throughout the church facility. Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting the work of the Lord!

NOTE 2 – Sunday School each week at 9:15am; Thursday Bible Study at 6:30pm; WM 2nd Tuesday; MM & CYC...

NOTE 3 – Katie Barry (Director of the Nursery) is looking for volunteers to participate in the ministry! See her.

NOTE 4 – The annual Church Picnic is coming soon! It will be held on the last Sunday of the month off-campus.

NOTE 5 – Those who wish to linger in this sanctuary may feel free to do so. This is to be a house of prayer, so those who feel the need to pray may do so as they please. Moreover, I would be more than happy to pray with those who have need(s).

Numbers 6:24–26

24 The Lord bless you
and keep you;
25 the Lord make his face shine on you
and be gracious to you;
26 the Lord turn his face toward you
and give you peace.