

Wisdom and the Fear of the Lord

Proverbs 8:1-11

*(1) "Does not wisdom call? Does not understanding raise her voice? (2) On the heights beside the way, at the crossroads she takes her stand; (3) beside the gates in front of the town, at the entrance of the portals she cries aloud: (4) To you, O men, I call, and my cry is to the children of man. (5) O simple ones, learn prudence; O fools, learn sense. (6) Hear, for I will speak noble things and from my lips will come what is right, (7) for my mouth will utter truth; wickedness is an abomination to my lips. (8) All the words of my mouth are righteous; there is nothing twisted or crooked in them. (9) They are all straight to him who understands, and right to those who find knowledge. (10) Take my instruction instead of silver, and knowledge rather than choice gold, (11) for wisdom is better than jewels, and all that you may desire cannot compare with her. (12) I wisdom, dwell with prudence, and I find knowledge and discretion. (13) **The Fear of the Lord is hatred of evil**".*

So with that, we start off today with a warning about wisdom which is laid out in verse 10: "Take my instruction instead of silver, and knowledge rather than choice gold, for wisdom is better than jewels, and all that you may desire cannot compare with her." The love of money (possessions) is dealt with here with a very clear warning. A man that is pursuing an object with his whole heart is foolish! For verse 12 says; *"I wisdom, dwell with prudence, and I find knowledge and discretion."*

Now this is challenging for the church given the culture we live in. If we were Christians in a third world country this might ring more true to us. As Americans in the 21st Century, we are told differently. You see, in our culture we have all the "Possessions" we could imagine. Now you may not feel like that but to put this in perspective, if you make \$3000 a month you make **203% more** than the world average of \$1480 (omitting some of the poorest countries in the world according to the BBC). So regardless of what you make, you are considered wealthy by the world's standards. The culture that we live in tells us that we are "Fools" to not "Get ours." We are "Fools" to not "Step" on others to get what we want. This is America, the land of opportunity where 8% unemployment and people's retirement being diminished by the economy tops our news nightly. Friends, we are not called to be a part of that. We are called to be prudent and wise using discretion with what God has given us. Now, before I go any further. Let me answer a few questions that you may be thinking here. Should you have a job? Yes! Should you provide for your family (even nice things)? Sure! Is it ok to have a good paying job? Yes! You see, the difference is that prudence and wisdom don't seek after the things of this world with all their heart. These verses are directly challenging your heart.

As Christians in America we have an opportunity to provide for poor Christians down the street and around the world in a way that no culture ever has! What are we doing with this? Are we choosing to listen to the instruction of the Lord in verse 10 to choose wisdom which dwells in prudence and discretion or are we choosing the silver with all of our heart?" I can't answer that question for you and I won't begin to try.

Now to fully understand where wisdom comes from we have to read on further. Verse 13 says; **"The Fear of the Lord is hatred of evil."** So to be wise, we must fear the Lord and hate evil. First I'll address, how do we fear the Lord? Well, Jeremiah 32:37-40 helps us understand how. (37) *"Behold, I will gather them from all the countries to which I drove them in my anger and my wrath and in great indignation. I will bring them back to this place and I will make them dwell in safety. (38) And they shall be my people, and I will be their God. (39) I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me forever, for their own good*

and the good of their children after them. Fear of the Lord is a given to us by God. Why? For our own good and the good of our children.

The second part is we must have a hatred of sin and friends we must confess, we don't hate sin. In fact, we love sin! We are born into sin and it is imputed on us by Adam stated in very clearly by Paul in Romans 5:12 – *“Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to **all men** because all sinned.*” It's what we naturally do. God MUST give us fear of Him to have even the slightest desire to hate sin. Much like a wise father disciplines his son out of love to teach him what is right and wrong, good and bad for their own safety. If you see your four year old in the street, can you ask him to get out of it nicely? Not if you want to guarantee their safety! You first SNATCH him out of the street and then put some fear into him. A fear of how dangerous the road is and the consequences for playing in it could lead death. You do it because you love your child so much that you are willing to put fear in them. Through this fear our child sees the love that we have for them to first save them, and then teach them. Our God does this for us in much the same way. **Luke 12:5** *“But I will warn you who to fear; fear him who, after he has killed, has the authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him!”* Christ is warning us of the dangerous path that sin takes us... the wrath of his father!

You see, sin is the ultimate destroyer and is being allowed to run freely in our culture today. You could say that we even cultivate it and encourage it. We idolize our athletes, pornography is a multi-billion dollar industry, racism is still the norm, 33% of American marriages end in divorce, domestic abuse is terrorizing our families, school systems are denying God exists, sitcoms demean men to nothing more than dumb brutes who can't do anything right much less lead their homes, we kill our babies for the sake of idolizing our, “Convenience” and “Planning.” The list goes on and on. Sadly the church has fallen victim to many of these sins just as the world outside has.

As Christians, we are called to hate all these things! Why? Because we have a God that hates sin and has called us out to hate it too. Because God has warned us that sin leads to death. It leads to the death of our families, our relationships, our happiness and most importantly, it leads to the separation of us from our creator for eternity... Our God does not tolerate sin and the “ill- gotten gains” of this world. In fact, God hates sin so much that he reigned down fire on Sodom and Gomorrah. Our God hates sin so much he wiped out the earth with a flood. Our God who hates sin so much he gave us his law to help us avoid sin only to have us break it over and over again. Our God who hates sin so much He willing gave up His own Son to die so that sin may be atoned for.

Friends, we live quietly, conveniently, and comfortably in our daily lives today. Look around you. While I've read in many places that more Christians died in the 20th Century than all previous 19 Centuries combined for their faith, we sit idly by while the culture around us mocks God and is doing everything it can to “Tolerate” sin. Friends, we need to evaluate our relationship to our American culture around us. Are we not being persecuted as a church because we have influenced the American “State” so much or are we not being persecuted as a church because our American “State” has influenced us? Viewed us as “No” threat or even worse, assumed that we are just one of them?

Proverbs 14:26-34 – (26) “In the fear of the Lord one has strong confidence, and his children will have a refuge. (27) The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life that one may turn away from the snares of death. (28) In a multitude of people is the glory of a king, but without people a prince is ruined. (29) Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who has a hasty temper exalts folly. (30) A tranquil heart gives life to the flesh, but envy makes the bones rot. (31) Whoever oppresses a poor man insults his Maker,

but he who is generous to the needy honors him. (32) The wicked is overthrown through his evildoing, but the righteous finds refuge in his death. (33) Wisdom rests in the heart of a man of understanding, but it makes itself known even in the midst of fools.”

So what is wisdom? It is the Fear of the Lord.

So how do we fear the Lord? We hate evil.

How do we hate evil? As a Christian, you fight sin.

I say as a Christian because if you are not a Christian, you do not have the fear of the Lord therefore you cannot hate evil. Your heart is deceiving you to this day. You see, we all owe a debt. A debt that we cannot pay to a God who is Holy, self-sustaining, that needs NOTHING from us. Sin is an act of war and rebellion against our King that is punishable by death. And for a Holy God, death for eternity is all we have to offer Him.

Now, I know I've spoken a lot about our culture but I want to be clear here. As Christians I'm not talking about fighting sin in some social-political arena where we picket congress or boycott products (although those may have their place). What I'm talking about is fighting sin in the arena of our own lives. What I'm talking about is checking ourselves not to our neighbors in 21st century American culture to see whether or not we “measure up” but rather to our God who through his fear teaches us His ways. Through prayer asking for wisdom and fear of our Lord so that we may see sin in our own lives and hate it. **Jeremiah 17:9-10** *“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it? I the Lord search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruits of his deeds.”*

Friends, we are **desperately** sick with a heart that is deceitful above **ALL** things! It is this understanding that we see our very own need for something bigger than ourselves to defeat sin. This reveals to us that we need a savior. You see, if our problem is a deceitful heart that is sinful towards God, and God's wrath is the result of our sin, than we **MUST** have a solution that is from God himself.

God owes us nothing yet he was willing and able to give us that solution through his Son Jesus Christ. Christ gave us the perfect example of obedience to God therefore denying sin. **Matthew 20:28** *“even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”* Christ did not come to “be served but rather to serve.” Christ came to fight and ultimately defeat sin forever! As Christians, we have been given victory over sin! Fear of the Lord and wisdom through the death, burial, and resurrection of God's only Son! Therefore the wisdom of God is manifested through Christ Jesus, and Christ Jesus is the wisdom of God manifested. Paul in **Ephesians 1:16-18** *“I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saint.”* So how are we to respond to what Christ has done for us?

1. **Repent!** Repent of our sins. Friends, true repentance results in an outward change of our lives. A man that says; “He's sorry” for wronging his wife in some way but not changing his behaviors towards her is not showing true repentance. But Aaron, I've helped clean the house, do the dishes, and put our kids to bed for the last month and haven't heard one bit of praise for doing it. When you get over “Getting yours” and move towards “Glorifying God” as Christ did than you have learned what true repentance of sins looks like.
2. **Turn to God!** **Matthew 18:4** *“Whoever humbles himself like a child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”* As Christians, you can't help but be humble the more you understand the magnitude of

the cross. Our sins are so great and the price paid was so high that it should force us to our knees in prayer thanking Jesus for what He did for us and living this out by showing the world that “We” have accomplished nothing but “All things are for God’s glory!

- 3. Believe that Christ saved us!** Paul says in: *Ephesians 2:1-8* “***And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience –among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ – by grace you have been saved – and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God.”***

It’s a recognition of our sins, a need for repentance, and a belief that Jesus Christ paid for our sins. We DID NOTHING to earn salvation (saving from our sins) therefore we can do NOTHING to lose it! We DID NOTHING to defeat sin but through Christ sin is ALREADY defeated therefore we should have the BOLDNESS to stand against it! As the church, we are called to respond to what Christ did by fighting sin daily understanding that it is when sin is forgiven that a sinner can then hate it.

This is in the way we conduct our daily business, how we treated our wives and husbands, how we raise our children through love, grace, and discipline. This is in the way we love our brothers in the church even when they are not being very loveable. This is in the way we forgive other’s of their sins against us knowing that NO amount of forgiveness we can give someone can even compare to the forgiveness we’ve been given through Christ. We are called to show that same grace and forgiveness. We are called to pursue not the things of things of this world but rather to pursue to be Christ-like. (*Matthew 22:37 – 40*) ‘***you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’***

You see, as the church we are called out and given the ability to love God and our neighbor through Christ Jesus. We are given the ability to fight sin. We are given a new heart that gives us new desires. Instead of hating God for his holiness, the forgiven man instinctively loathes the evil in his own heart, and looks with longing for the day when all things in it shall be made new. Such is the blessed fruit of pardon when it comes to a sinner through the blood of Christ.