

Work Prepared

by Thomas Bradbury

The sermon emphasizes the importance of preparation, performance, and perfection in the work of redemption, highlighting the significance of Christ's work in fulfilling the Father's will.

Scripture: Proverbs 24:27, Isaiah 42:21, Zechariah 4:7, John 17:4, Acts 15:18, 1 Corinthians 3:11, Ephesians 1:5, Ephesians 5:25, Hebrews 9:11, 1 Peter 2:5

Topics: "Divine Guidance", "Christology"

Description

Thomas Bradbury preaches on the profound spiritual teachings found in the Book of Proverbs, emphasizing the importance of seeking divine guidance and understanding through the Holy Spirit to grasp the true meaning of Solomon's proverbs. He delves into the revelation of Christ throughout the book, from His eloquent speech to His role in the everlasting covenant of grace, highlighting the central theme of the testimony of Jesus in Proverbs. Bradbury explores the divine order of the books written by Solomon in the Bible, from Proverbs to Ecclesiastes to the Song of Solomon, illustrating the journey from understanding moral maxims to the realization of vanity and the ultimate joy found in Christ's love and salvation.

Transcript

"Prepare Thy work without, and make it fit for Thyself in the field; and afterwards build Thine house."
(Proverbs 24:27)

THE Book of Proverbs is a wonderful portion of the Scriptures of truth, full of spiritual teaching, and fragrant with the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. It is looked upon by many as a mere collection of moral maxims suitable for young children, and for the regulation of the outward walk and conversation of others. Such persons think that Solomon's proverbs are easier to understand than other parts of Divine revelation, forgetting that every portion is dark and meaningless without the grace and guidance of God the Holy Ghost, Who delights to take of the things of the Father's Christ, and to glorify Him in the heart's experience of the Father's children. This He does most blessedly in the book before us. In the first chapter Christ is discovered as the One with "an eloquent speech," Whose grace-filled lips proclaim the Father's purpose of love in the salvation of His people. In the eighth chapter we see Him as the Wisdom of God in the everlasting covenant of grace, "rejoicing in the habitable part of His earth" "God's elect" and," says He, "My delights were with the sons of men." In chap. 17:17 the faith of God's elect owns Him as the Brother born for adversity, while chap. 30:4 exercises our minds with a variety of

questions concerning Him "Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? Who hath gathered the wind in His fists? Who hath bound the waters in a garment? Who hath established all the ends of the earth? What is His Name, and what is His Son's Name, if thou canst tell?" The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of this Book of Proverbs.

Before proceeding further I would ask you to notice the divinely-appointed order in which the writings of Solomon appear in the canon of Holy Scripture. First, the Book of Proverbs; second, Ecclesiastes; third, Solomon's Song. In the Book of Proverbs we are counselled how to think, look, speak, and act. Yet in all this we learn our deficiency, and "The Fool's Guide Book" proves us to be foolish indeed. This lands us in the dreary regions of Ecclesiastes, where "all is vanity and vexation of spirit." Here heaven is longed for, while hell is dreaded. The smiles of the Father's face are desired, yet His frowns are feared. But in these dark shades the child, whom the Blessed Spirit has taken in hand, cannot be left. The good work begun must be perfected. He Who has taught us our folly and the misery attending it will bring us to prove that His joy is our strength. This we find in Solomon's Song. Look at chap. 1:4, "The King hath brought me into His chambers." How blessed! He strips, He washes, He clothes, He feeds, He teaches, He does everything, He glorifies. "He brought me to the banqueting house, and His banner over me was love." (2:4) Mark "first the blade, then the ear; after that, the full corn in the ear." (Mark 4:28) From strength to strength God's weaklings go, though the progress from Proverbs through Ecclesiastes may prove to be weakness and weariness indeed. We now come to notice the rare beauties and revealed mysteries of this more than proverb to us. The faith of God's elect, with eyes spiritually enlightened, beholds the Father in covenant commands from the Father. Mark minutely every point, consider it well, and receive instruction. Three striking truths arrest our attention,

I. The preparation "Prepare Thy work without." In these words we discover the will and good pleasure of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ the counsel of eternal peace the covenant of unchanging love the purpose of indefectible grace. In all this we see the Father abounding towards us in all wisdom and prudence. What is prudence? It is wisdom in forethought care in respect to consequences intuitive foresight. Now all this becomes a God worthy of our admiration and adoration. Such a God is ours as He reveals Himself in covenant relationship to His people in the Son of His love. "Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world." (Acts 15:18) Our God has a mind of His own, and the execution of His will lies in His infinite wisdom and invincible power. "He is in one mind, and who can turn Him? And what His soul desireth even that He doeth." (Job 23:13) This is clearly set forth in the first and second chapters of the Epistle to the Ephesians. His mind and will are fully declared in chap. 1:5,9,11. Mark well "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will." (v. 5) That is good; but in the 9th verse we have something still better, even the revelation and exposition of His purpose and preparation for the formation and perfection of His church. "Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself." In the 11th verse we have that which is best of all down here, the experimental possession of the inheritance which God has prepared for us in Himself. "In Whom" Christ "we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him Who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will." Here we have sufficiency and efficiency revealed, while in the second chapter we see the development and perfection of the work prepared. Read verse 19-22, "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God: and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone; in Whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in Whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."

This brings us to consider that word "without." Without what? Without, or outside the parenthesis which we call time. Time is purely parenthetical a period, as it were, inserted by God in His vast eternity for the accomplishment of His sovereign will in the salvation of His people for the unfolding of His purpose of eternal love for the development of His plan of grace in the erection of the superstructure of covenant mercy. (Ps. 89:2-4) This we see in Prov. 8:22,23: "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning or ever the earth was." Yes, before the worlds were framed the Father possessed the Son in the embracings of eternal love. He knew the Son and the Son knew Him with a knowledge of unerring affection. In after days, when His work of redemption was nearing completion, the Son could say to the Father, "Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world," and of all His redeemed He could also say, "And hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me." (John 17:23,24) In 2 Tim. 1:9 we find salvation and calling "according to His own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." In all this we see God designing, to do willing, to work planning, to perform purposing, to perfect. With a faith well grounded in these covenant verities, the patient patriarch could say, "He performeth the thing that is appointed for me; and many such things are with Him." (Job 23:14)

Our God is infinitely wise and characterized by infallible forethought. In Ps. 50:21 He reproves the wicked thus: "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself;" but in our days Bible readers speak of God as vastly beneath them in will and work. They plan and scheme to ensure success before they work; but God must do no such thing. The God of creation knew all about everything proceeding from His all-skilful hands. The God of salvation knew full well the place and position to be occupied and experienced in time and to eternity by His elect and eternally-loved people.

"All that concerns the chosen race

In nature, providence, and grace,

Where they shall dwell and when remove,

Fix'd by predestinating love."

Prudential preparation is acknowledged and advised by our blessed Lord in Luke 14:28-30, "For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish." The Saviour's teaching is according to His own way of proceeding and the Father's plan and provisions of grace. "Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified." (Rom. 8:30)

This preparation according to predestination is graphically illustrated in David's concern and zeal for the building of the temple recorded in 1 Chron. 29:2, "Now I have prepared with all my might for the house of my God, the gold for things to be made of gold, and the silver for things of silver, and the brass for things of brass, the iron for things of iron, and wood for things of wood: onyx stones, and stones to be set, glistening stones, and of divers colours, and all manner of precious stones, and marble stones in abundance." God's foundation is laid in the holy mountains of His covenant faithfulness, and "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. 3:11) "Who is a Rock save our God?" (Ps. 18:31) In the preparation for the erection of the temple, "the king commanded, and they brought great stones, costly stones, and hewed stones, to lay the foundation of the house." (1 Kings 5:17)

And to this day, after three thousand years have rolled away, there lies intact the foundation corner stone laid according to God's design and at Solomon's command. How clearly and loudly this speaks of our most Glorious Christ according to the declaration of the Great and Glorious Designer, "Behold, I lay in Zion for a Foundation, a Stone, a Tried Stone, a Precious Corner Stone, a Sure Foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste." (Isa. 28:16; 1 Pet. 2:6) This reminds us that "the Foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, THE LORD KNOWETH THEM THAT ARE HIS. And, LET EVERY ONE THAT NAMETH THE NAME OF CHRIST DEPART FROM INIQUITY." (2 Tim. 2:19) This Rock-Foundation lies deep down in the pit of the eternal counsels, and come what will, neither earth nor hell can ever disturb it. The Master Builder has given His judgment concerning the foundation and the building, "Upon this Rock I will build My church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Matt. 16:18) "He is the Rock, His work is perfect: for all His ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He." (Deut. 32:4) The foundation laid and the work prepared, we now consider.

II. The performance "and make it fit for Thyself in the field." Covenant commands meet with prompt attention. In due time the fullness of the time the time appointed by the Father, the Responsible Builder appears. Where? In the place of the Father's appointment, and of His own agreement "in the field." See Matt. 13:38, "The field is the world." That is a blessed statement by Paul, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." (1 Tim. 1:15) Into the world He came willingly eagerly. Listen to His own mind on the subject "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world; again, I leave the world, and go to the Father." (John 16:28) He came into His own field, His own possessions, His own world but He found no better welcome or treatment there than Abel did in the field from Cain. (John 1:10,11) Yet He would come, and in the face of all the opposition and spite that He knew would assail Him, He came voluntarily, willingly, and with loving determination, to glorify His Father, and make His work fit for Himself in the field. What was His work? It was that in which Adam failed, with the endurance of the curse of the law. In a life of self-sacrifice He obeyed the law in every point and particular. In His agony, bloody sweat, and sin-atonement death, He satisfied Divine justice, vindicated God's holiness, and upheld God's truth: thus securing glory to God, and salvation to His own elect.

Here I am reminded of the words I read at the commencement of our chapter tonight, "The LORD hath called Me from the womb: from the bowels of My mother hath He made mention of My name." (Isa. 49:1) The Covenant Surety here asserts the delight His Father expressed in Him, and in His work of salvation from first to last. From the days of eternity the Father knew Him, loved Him, and trusted Him with the salvation and glorification of His people. The Son also knew, loved and trusted the Father in all His promises of grace to Him for those whom the Father gave to Him for the enjoyment of salvation, grace and glory. In the counsels of eternity the Father gave His elect to Christ as the members of His mystical body, and He gave Christ to them as their Head, Husband, Surety and Saviour. In the fullness of time, true to His appointment and engagements, "He made Himself of no reputation" "did not abhor the virgin's womb" "took upon Him the form of a servant humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." (Phil. 2:7,8) Mark you, not merely obedient in death, or on the cross; but from "the bowels of His mother." I was once a child. "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." (Ps. 51:5) Not so my gracious Head and Lord. Born of Mary, He was "that Holy Thing:" (Luke 1:35) and bless Him, He was all that for me. As I am seen in Him, original sin and guilt are not seen in me. I have been "a transgressor from the womb." From the womb of the virgin to the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea Jesus was the Righteous Servant the Obedient Son. Yes, and He was all that for me. "Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered; and being made perfect, He became the

Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him." (Heb. 5:8,9) In His obedience, living and dying, His own are made everlastingly righteous. (Rom. 5:19)

It is most blessed to notice in all this suffering obedience, the willingness, devotion and self-sacrifice of Jesus. He did no part of it by compulsion; but all of it voluntarily, eagerly, and with determination. Yet it was all by the command of the Father. The command of the Father was the will and delight of the Son. He declares this in Ps. 40:8, "I delight to do Thy will, O my God; yea, Thy law is within my heart." His bowels yearned for the accomplishment of the Father's purpose, and none could accomplish that purpose but Himself. His work must be made fit for Himself in the field ere He presented it for the Father's acceptance. See how He expressed surprise at His mother's ignorance on this subject "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business." (Luke 2:49) Again, He could say to His disciples at the well of Samaria, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work." (John 4:34) Turn to John 5:30, "I can of Mine Own Self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not Mine Own will, but the will of the Father Which hath sent Me." Again He says, "I came down from heaven, not to do Mine Own will, but the will of Him that sent Me." (John 6:38) And here I would not forget His soul-cheering declaration in John 8:29, "And He that sent Me is with Me: the Father hath not left Me alone; for I do always those things that please Him." The things that pleased the Father were those that He must first make fit for Himself in the field. His Father must be glorified; His people must be saved. Sin must be put away. Satan must be thwarted in his designs. At last Jesus appears before the Father, to Whom He says, "I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do." (John 17:4) How blessed it is to know something of the fullness and purport of the prophet's declaration concerning the work of the Father's Righteous Servant "The LORD is well pleased for His righteousness' sake; He will magnify the law, and make it honourable." (Isa. 42:21)

Here I would have you to grasp the fullness of meaning there is in those three words, "fit for Thyself." Satan's design and delight is to oppose the Christ of God in His work of salvation, and the building up and beautifying of His church as a holy temple for JEHOVAH. But Satan's designs must be destroyed, and the purpose of grace in the hands of Christ must be a glory for ever. The Father was determined upon this. See John 6:39, "And this is the Father's will Which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." All this must be accomplished by Christ He must see it with His own eyes to the delight of His heart, and for the sight and glory of His Father. Mark well Paul's knowledge of this "Christ loved the church, and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." (Eph. 5:25-27) This we learn also from Jude's doxology, "Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen." (Jude 24,25) In the field Christ saw His work fit for Himself, holy and without blemish free from spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. Ready for the Father's approval and acceptance.

For the Father's glory and for the salvation and glorification of His church Christ undertook the work of obedience and sacrifice, and never ceased in His work of righteousness and sinbearing until He could say, "It is finished." (John 19:30) The Father's attestation to the perfection and glory of the Mediator's work is displayed in raising Him from the dead. Here the Father declares that, "His work is honourable and glorious: and His righteousness endureth for ever." (Ps. 111:3) In the light of His finished work, His accomplished redemption, His perfect salvation, how glorious does Isa. 53:10,11 appear "Yet it pleased

the LORD to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief; when Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand. He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied." Having offered Himself without spot to God, put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, opened the fountain for the purgation of Zion's sins and uncleanness, (Zech. 13:1) made an end of the sin of His people in enduring the curse and condemnation due to them, He now sees His work "fit for Himself" and fit for His Father also. He presents it to Himself, and with it He is satisfied He presents it to His Father, and with it the Father is well pleased. He presents it to His people, and in it they are GRACED IN THE BELOVED and accepted of the Father. In all this neither defect nor deformity can be found. Nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it. "His work is perfect." He has made it "fit for Himself in the field."

III. The perfection "and afterwards build Thine house." On Calvary the work of redemption was completed. "None can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him: for the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever." (Ps. 49:7,8) Turn with me to Heb. 9:11,12: "But Christ being come an High Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building, neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood, He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." His work of redemption is for ever done; but His work of loving attention to His redeemed will never cease. "The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne" is faithful, and wise, and strongable to carry out all the designs of His Father's loving heart. To the building of mercy He will attend in every part until the top stone is raised with shoutings of, Grace, grace, unto it." (Zech. 4:7) In contemplating the erection of the spiritual temple we see not Solomon we acknowledge not Zerubbabel, but Christ. "Behold the Man Whose Name is the BRANCH; and He shall grow up out of His place, and He shall build the temple of the LORD: even He shall build the temple of the LORD; and He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon His throne; and He shall be a Priest upon His throne; and the counsel of peace shall be between them both." (Zech. 6:12,13) Here we have an All-wise Builder, and a perfect, eternal building. "Ye are God's building." (1 Cor. 3:9) "Whose house are we." (Heb. 3:6) "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. 2:5) Mark well again Eph. 2:22, "In Whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."

Our All-wise Master Builder having prepared His work without, and made it fit for Himself in the field having selected for Himself all the materials for His own use having purchased them at so great a cost His own heart's blood, now sets to work according to the command of His Father, to build His house. Listen to His words of gracious determination, "Upon this Rock I will build My church." (Matt. 16:18) I would have you turn with me to the account of the building of the temple by Solomon. See 1 Kings 5:17, "And the king commanded, and they brought great stones, costly stones, and hewed stones, to lay the foundation of the house." Look also at 1 Kings 7:9-12, "All these were of costly stones, according to the measures of hewed stones, sawed with saws, within and without, even from the foundation unto the coping, and so on the outside toward the great court. And the foundation was of costly stones, even great stones, stones of ten cubits, and stones of eight cubits. And above were costly stones, after the measures of hewed stones, and cedars. And the great court round about was with three rows of hewed stones, and a row of cedar beams, both for the inner court of the house of the LORD, and for the porch of the house." As we read faith cries, "A Greater than Solomon is here." (Matt. 12:42)

From whence does a Greater than Solomon bring His great, costly hewed stones to build up and adorn His spiritual temple? Many would answer at once, From the quarry of human nature. But here I would say,

Long ages before human nature existed, or, ere it was corrupted in the Adam fall, He owned them as the Father's choice and the delight of His own heart. Then He saw them as the gift of His Father to be chiselled and beautified to adorn His spiritual building. Now He calls upon them to look back to their gracious origin "Hearken to Me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the LORD: look unto the ROCK WHENCE YE ARE HEWN, and to the HOLE OF THE PIT WHENCE YE ARE DIGGED." (Isa. 51:1) This is the Rock of God's everlasting purpose of grace. It was in the contemplation of this that Paul cried out in adoring wonder "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" (Rom. 11:33) Look still further at the account of the manner of building Solomon's temple "And the house, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither: so that there was neither hammer, nor axe, nor any tool of iron, heard in the house while it was in building." (1 Kings 6:7) By this the faith of God's elect is interested and delighted with God's preparation and provision in His predestinated purpose for the building of His house. See Rom. 9:23,24: "And that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory, even us, whom He hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles." Also we are taught that "God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Thess. 5:9) In the call and building up of His living stones there is no fleshly free-will bustle and noise. In quietness and freedom from display He brings His prepared ones to grace the place appointed for them in His unerring wisdom.

Here we may notice the finishing and perfection of the building. How blessed it is to know that our Builder has counted the cost, laid the foundation, and finishes His building. This is beautifully set forth in these lines,

"Jesus, the living Corner-Stone

Sustains the fabric rare;

For such a work were vainly done,

If Jesus were not there.

And if each stone be filled complete

By the Eternal Three;

When all the stones in glory meet,

What will the temple be?

Unrivalled will the temple stand,

Unrivalled every stone;

And glory circle Him Who planned

And wrought that work alone."

But, for the building of the temple, wood was required, which reminds us of a command in after days, "Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house, and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, said the Lord." (Hag. 1:8) For the timber of the temple Solomon agreed thus with Hiram, King of

Tyre, "Send me also cedar trees, fir trees, and algum trees, out of Lebanon; (for I know that thy servants can skill to cut timber in Lebanon;) and, behold, my servants shall be with thy servants, even to prepare me timber in abundance: for the house which I am about to build shall be wonderful great." (2 Chron. 2:8,9) Mark well Hiram's answer, "We will cut wood out of Lebanon, as much as thou shalt need: and we will bring it to thee in floats by sea to Joppa; and thou shalt carry it up to Jerusalem." (2 Chron. 2:16) Lebanon is a type of worldly beauty, grandeur and pleasure. From connection and association with the world, with its fashions and follies, every elect child and redeemed sinner must be separated. The axe must be laid to the root of every tree devoted to the service of God. The tall fir and stately cedar must be cut down, and stripped of all boughs and beauty. So by the piercing and dividing power of the Word of God all regenerate sinners who are to be meet for the Builder's use are cut down in judgment and feeling, cut off from fleshly hopes and desires, and carried by the living water of regenerating grace from death unto life from darkness to light from the world to the heavenly Jerusalem, there to stand as a pillar in the temple of God, or to occupy a place of adornment or usefulness, as it may please the Builder of His Church Who ever abounds to His own in all wisdom and prudence. Mark well the cutting down and stripping of the Pharisee of Pharisees in Acts 19 and Phil. 3:4-11. Paul thus learned to reckon himself to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Thus we see the spiritual temple built according to design and measure. "Now all the work of Solomon was prepared unto the day of the foundation of the house of the LORD, and until it was finished: so the house of the LORD was perfected." (2 Chron. 8:16) So, not one stone shall be wanting in the house of our God, nor one line lacking in the carvings of His grace to the ages of eternity.

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