

(Proverbs) ch.3:1 - 4:9

by Zac Poonen

True enjoyment and fulfillment come from living a life of righteousness, obedience, and humility, as taught in the Book of Proverbs.

Duration: 1:01:29

Scripture: Proverbs 3:1-30, Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Faith And Trust", "Spiritual Discipline"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of having genuine faith that comes from the heart, rather than just being a mental belief. He encourages the listeners to pray for revelation from God so that their faith can be deeply rooted and unwavering in times of trial. The speaker also highlights the need to trust in the Lord with all aspects of life, surrendering control to Him in every area. He warns against falling into Satan's traps and advises against withholding repayment of debts and being hesitant in helping others when it is within our power to do so. The sermon references verses from Proverbs and encourages listeners to not be discouraged or offended when God rebukes and corrects them.

Transcript

We were considering chapters 1 and 2 in our last study and we concluded with these verses in verses 21 and 22, for the upright will live in the land and the blameless will remain in it. Or as the Living Bible says, verse 20, follow the steps of the godly, for only good men enjoy life to the full. Evil men lose the good things they might have had, and they themselves shall be destroyed.

The world is full of people who want to enjoy themselves, but they don't realize that true enjoyment comes only through righteousness. This is the great deception of Satan, where he fools people into thinking that by cheating, telling lies, and committing sin, they can really enjoy life. Here is a word that goes against all that.

Only righteous men enjoy life completely. This is one of the great truths that comes in the Book of Proverbs, that it is through righteousness, the fear of God, and humility, that we can enjoy all the good things that God has prepared for those who love Him. So in chapter 3, verse 1, Solomon continues with his instruction to those who will submit to his teaching as a son to a father, addressing all those who will accept the principle of submission.

He says, My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments. I mentioned in our last study that the Book of Proverbs is like a New Covenant book found in the middle of the Old Testament, and we find a lot of New Covenant teaching, a foretaste of it anyway, in this Old Testament book. We find words like wisdom, grace, and faith, which are found in almost no other book in the entire Old Testament, but which are found in this book.

And that's why it has a special message for us in the times in which we live. It says here, Let your heart keep my commandments. In other words, even there the Holy Spirit was trying to point out that keeping the commandments was not just an external thing.

Notice, Let your heart keep my commandments. In other words, that obedience must be inside the heart. Even there, there was a foretaste of what was going to be fulfilled in the New Covenant age, of the righteousness of the law being fulfilled inside.

And that's what the Spirit of God is saying here through Solomon, Do not forget my law, but let your heart keep my commandments. In other words, since the heart is the seat of love, what he's saying is that your obedience to my commandments must come out of love. It must not be a legalistic obedience, but an obedience that comes from the heart.

He speaks later on in verse 5 about faith that must come from the heart. And we can say that he's speaking really about two things, faith and obedience, or the obedience of faith that comes from the heart. And you can see so clearly, this is a New Testament concept.

This is not found so clearly in the Old Testament, but here it comes through so clearly. Obey me from your heart and trust in the Lord with all your heart. And if you obey the commandments, verse 2, length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you.

Peace, that inner peace is another thing which is almost never mentioned in the other Old Testament books. And in that sense, Proverbs is unique. It speaks about that word which is distinctively a New Testament word, peace.

If you keep the commandments, you will have peace. Take my yoke upon you and you will find rest unto your souls. And then in verse 3 it says, don't let kindness, or we can say grace and truth, leave you.

Notice again, that grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ is foretold here. Bind them around your neck and write them, not on tablets of stone like the Old Testament, but write them on the tablet of your heart. Solomon was the wisest man that lived.

God told him there wouldn't be a man wiser than him. And he knew that God desired truth in the inward part. And that kindness and truth he desired in the heart.

And he said, write them on the tablet of your heart. Two things, he says, that must characterize. Let me read it to you in the Living Bible, Never forget to be truthful and kind.

Hold these virtues tightly. Two virtues, truth and kindness. To always be kind and to always be truthful.

What a wonderful thing if we can follow these two simple rules just in one area, and that is in the matter of our speech. The things that we say to one another at home, in the office, to our neighbors, to other people. If we can ask ourselves two questions, what I'm saying, is it truthful? What I'm saying, is it kind to say that?

It will cleanse our speech tremendously.

Just these two questions. Is it truthful? Is it kind? And Solomon says, you want wisdom? Begin with cleansing your speech of things which are not truthful and things which are not kind. If we don't take it seriously, if we don't write this on the tablet of our heart, if we don't get gripped with it, it says, hold on to these virtues tightly.

That's the meaning of bind them around your neck. Hold on to them tightly. Write them deep within your heart.

In other words, it's not just a question of appearing to be kind on the outside. It's not just a question of appearing to be truthful on the outside, but being really kind from within. For example, we can hear in the meeting that Jesus was kind to little children.

And then we can try to imitate that and act kind to little children on the outside and have no kindness in our heart at all towards them. That is just hypocrisy. And so he says, write them on the tablet of your heart.

Let it begin there. And to judge myself and to cleanse myself of unkind and untruthful attitudes towards others. And if we let kindness and truth cling to us closely, we will find favour and good repute in the sight of God and man.

It says about Jesus in the early days that he grew in favour with God and with man. And here it says how we can find favour in the sight of God if we take care to be kind and true deep down from within our hearts. Then we come to verses five and six, which are fairly well-known verses.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Again, the emphasis is on the heart, and you'll find how often this emphasis comes in the book of Proverbs. And do not lean on your own understanding.

Now, here we see again that faith is not a matter of the mind. And it's interesting that Solomon himself understood that in the Old Testament. But sometimes we can make that mistake.

We can understand a certain truth. For example, God is a loving father, or God loves the disciples of Jesus. Not everybody, by the way, not all believers, but God loves the disciples of Jesus who have forsaken everything.

He loves them as much as he loved Jesus. But that's something we can understand in our head. And in the moment of trial, I get anxious because I don't believe it from my heart.

There's a lot of difference between believing something in the head, that's the type of faith the devil has, and trusting in the Lord with all our heart. For that, we need revelation of the Holy Spirit. To believe something in our head, all you need is a good Bible teacher who will expound it so well, and then you have understood it.

We think it is faith, but in the moment of trial, we discover it's not faith at all. We think we have got money, but when we go to the shop, we find it is a counterfeit currency. It's only a photograph of money.

It's not the real thing. And the moment of trial reveals that our faith has not come from our heart, but it's only something in our head. That's why we have to pray much that God will give us revelation so that faith does not just sit in our mind, but comes deep down in our heart, so that in the moment of trial, it holds us and we don't shake.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart. And then he says in verse 5, do not lean on your own understanding. My own understanding is my reason.

That's my mind. He says don't trust your mind, but trust in the Lord with your heart. He's drawing a contrast there between the mind and the heart.

He says your mind is unreliable. Your mind tells you that you really believe that God's a loving Father, but in the moment of trial, you get anxious, which proves that you don't believe He's a loving Father at all from your heart. Don't lean on your own understanding.

And that is what we have spoken of often in the church, that the number one enemy of faith is our own clever reasoning. And that's why it's very difficult for clever people to come to faith. It's not impossible, but it is difficult, because they tend to lean on their own cleverness.

And you find clever people get anxious, even though they understand so much of the scriptures. They don't have faith. They can't come to victory over sin.

They don't have faith. They're clever. They lean on their own reason.

And this is the big mistake of all Bible schools and Bible colleges. They teach people to do the very thing Jesus said word of God says you should not do. That is to lean on their own understanding in trying to understand scripture.

It says don't lean on your own understanding. But there they are taught to lean on their own understanding in trying to expound scripture. And there's no emphasis placed on the revelation of the Holy Spirit.

The result is that what comes out of Bible schools and colleges becomes the biggest hindrance to God's work everywhere. Because they violate this word. You can't get faith by studying in a Bible school.

That comes by revelation from the Holy Spirit. Do not lean on your own understanding. The same thing in the church.

We're not just to try and grasp the doctrines intellectually and trying to dish it out to other people. We have to be gripped in our heart, trust in the Lord with all your heart. And do not lean to your own understanding.

Verse six, in all your ways acknowledge him. In other words, give every area of your life over to God. Let him control your money matters.

Let him control what you read. Let him control how you spend your time. Let him control every area of your family life.

Let him control the ambitions you have for your children. Let him control you in your profession. Let him control you in every area, in all your ways.

And then he will make your path straight. Or he will direct your paths. He will give you guidance.

There are many people who would like guidance in a particular area. And they can say, Lord in this area I'm willing to do anything you want me to do. Guide me.

And the Lord says, I can't guide you because I want you to acknowledge me in all your ways. Not just in this area, but in every area. If you're willing to let me have control of your life, then I will guide you.

But if you want guidance only in one area, and you want to yield that one area to God, there's no promise that we'll get guidance. But if in all our ways, in every single area of our life, we want to acknowledge him and let him direct our paths, then he will guide us. And not only guide us, it says he will clear, one translation says, he will clear the road up for you.

That road that's obstructed with so many obstructions. He will clear the road up for you. And if you find that in your life, brother, sister, there are obstacles and all types of things hindering you in your onward path, just think of this word.

That if you acknowledge God in all your ways and trust in him with all your heart, don't lean to your own understanding, he will clear the road for you. You can't clear it yourself. You've tried so long.

He will clear the road for you. Think what a life you can live where he clears the road up for us as we keep going forward. That's the life of the man who trusts God with all his heart, doesn't lean on his own cleverness, and acknowledges God in every single area of his life.

And verse seven, don't be wise in your own eyes. This is a word that's quoted also in Romans 12, 16. It's a New Testament exhortation, really.

Don't become wise in your own eyes. That means don't think that you have wisdom. You see, this is the trouble with so many people.

The exhortation is another translation as it is, don't think of yourself as wise. If any man like wisdom, let him ask God, and we should be the first to jump up and say, Lord, that that's me. That's me, Lord.

I like it. And if we have that attitude always, then we can get wisdom. But if I sometimes think of myself as wise, and I'll tell you where we are in danger of that.

We are in danger of that when we see another brother or sister doing something foolishly. And then when we begin to judge them, we have become wise in our own eyes. I would not do that.

He does it, but I would not do it. What have I become? I have become wise in my own eyes compared to that brother. And then I've become a spiritual idiot, according to 2 Corinthians 10, 12.

Those who compare themselves with others are spiritual idiots. Brothers and sisters, don't become a spiritual idiot by comparing yourself with other people. Always humble yourself.

There was a man called Socrates who lived years before Christ, and he had a reputation as one of the wisest men in Greece. And somebody asked him, what was the difference between him and other people? And he said, the difference is this, all of us know nothing, they know nothing, and I know nothing. The only difference is that I know that I know nothing.

And all the others, they don't know that. That's the only difference. And if I am a little wiser than the others, the reason is that I know that I know nothing, and those people are so stupid, they don't even know that.

And we can take some, we can learn a lesson from Socrates for the church, that the wise man is the man who recognizes that he really knows nothing, compared to the ocean of God's wisdom. He's got a little few drops inside his cup, and he thinks that he's wise. He says, don't be wise in your own eyes.

No, and that's such a terrific danger. It's a hindrance. Don't think of yourself as wise, but concentrate on the fear of the Lord, and on turning away from evil.

Let that be your aim. Not to find out how wise you are compared to other brothers, but do I fear the Lord more? Am I turning away from evil? Yeah, then you're all right. And if you do that, it says you'll even get healing in your body.

It'll be healing to your body and refreshment to your bones. Not only will you get wisdom in your life, but the fear of the Lord brings health in our body. That's a good verse for physical healing.

Fear the Lord. Don't be wise in your own eyes. Humble yourself.

Humility and the fear of the Lord can bring healing in your body and refreshment to your bones that are diseased. Wonderful. And then it speaks about our attitude to mammon.

See, that's a big area where we need to acquire wisdom. Our attitude to material wealth. And the first thing that Solomon says in the book of Proverbs concerning material wealth is, honor the Lord from your wealth.

Or in other words, glorify God with your money. Can you take that exhortation? Glorify God with your money, with that expenditure. Can you say, I'm spending this for the glory of God? And that will give us a quick answer concerning whether we should spend our money in certain ways.

Glorify God with your money. And use all of your money to glorify God. Honor Him.

And from the first of all your produce. That means give Him the first part of all your income. I noticed one thing today in Genesis chapter 4 as I was looking there.

In the offerings that Cain and Abel brought, we know that God accepted Abel's offering, but He didn't accept Cain's offering. And there's one significant thing mentioned there about the two offerings, which indicated the type of heart attitude that Abel and Cain had. It says about Cain, the only thing that the Holy Spirit records about Cain's offering, is that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground.

It wasn't the best. It wasn't the first, but it was an offering. But when Abel brought an offering, he brought the first of his flock, and of their fat portions, which means the very best.

And the Lord had regard for Abel because he brought the best. And the Lord sees the heart attitude when we bring an offering to Him. Even today in the church, people can bring an offering like Cain.

They can put money in the box, they can bring an offering of something to God, but it's not their best. It's not that which has cost them something. There are people who serve God today, but it's not their best.

We must never bring to the Lord an offering like Cain, just a casual offering. Everything we offer to God must be the very best. That's the meaning here.

That's the example we learned from Abel. He gave the best, and God accepted it, because his heart attitude indicated God deserves the very best in my life. Cain's attitude was, yeah, I have to give something to God, okay, and I'll give something.

And there are these two attitudes you find even among believers. Those who say God deserves the very best of my life, He deserves the best of my children, He deserves the best time of my life, all of my energy,

all of my time, He deserves the best. There are others who, as a token, give something to God.

And there you can think of Cain and Abel, and it says, honor the Lord from your wealth, from what God has given you, honor Him. And from the first of all your produce, you remember Jesus said in Luke 12, verse 21, about the rich man who wanted to build up his barns, because he had so much. And God said to him, you fool, you're going to die tonight.

And then Jesus said, so will it be with everyone who is not. You know the phrase he used in Luke 12, verse 21? Rich towards God. To be rich towards God.

The wonderful phrase Jesus used there. To be rich towards God. And we can ask ourselves this question, am I rich towards God? Then I'm really a rich man.

Am I not rich towards God? Then even if I'm a millionaire, I'm a poverty-stricken beggar in God's eyes. Be rich towards God. That's the exhortation of Solomon here.

We get wisdom through being faithful in the use of money. Through honoring God with the material things with which he has blessed us, we grow in wisdom. And that's why mammon becomes a means by which God tests us to see whether he can give us the true riches.

And the true riches are wisdom. That's the true riches. But you've got to first see, what's my attitude to this false riches called money? And if I love it so much, and I'm occupied with that, and I give a token offering to God from that, but my whole life is occupied with that, God will see that he cannot give me the true riches.

We come to that. It comes down later in the same chapter. But first of all, he says that if you do this, God will not be in debt to you.

He will prosper you. Your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine. Seek first the kingdom of God and all the other things you need in life will be added to you.

But God having tested you with prosperity, and verse 10 is a picture of prosperity, your barns overflowing, and your vats overflowing with new wine, then he will test you with adversity. First with prosperity, and then with adversity means trial and difficulty. And that's what's spoken of in the next verse.

My son, do not reject the discipline or the chastening of the Lord, or loathe his reproof, because it is through the trial and chastening and adversity that follows the prosperity. After he's taught you how to abound, and then he makes you suffer needs, he's going to teach you wisdom. For whom the Lord loves, he reproves, even as the Father, the Son, in whom he delights.

If you turn to Hebrews chapter 12, you see that this part of scripture is quoted in Hebrews 12, and it's very interesting to see the place where it is quoted. Hebrews 12, 5, you've forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons. My son, and that exhortation, my son, the Holy Spirit takes here as God speaking to us, not as children, not as babies, but as mature sons.

My son, that is from Proverbs 3, verse 11 and 12. Do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord. And verse 7, God deals with you as with sons, and it is in the context, verse 1, 2, 3, and 4, of following Jesus, who resisted sin to the point of death, and who endured the cross.

Giving the example of Jesus, he quotes this verse in Proverbs and says, when the Lord takes you through trial and chastening, don't get discouraged, don't get offended when God rebukes you, when he corrects you. Don't loathe his reproof. When God rebukes you, maybe not directly, but through an elder brother, don't loathe it.

God doesn't always come to us directly, remember? You remember the story of the man who wanted to collect the rent from the vineyard, he didn't come himself, he sent his servants to collect the rent. If he had come himself, they may have respected him, but when he sent his servants, they despised his servants. And the man said, if they despise my servants, they despise me.

How do we know whether we get offended with God's reproof? When God reproves us through some servant of his, and we get offended, that proves that we loathe God's correction. We hate God's correction. We love his prosperity, in verse 10, oh yeah, we'd like our barns to be filled with plenty, and we'd like our vats to overflow, our bank accounts to overflow.

That's the, we don't have vats today, but bank accounts, our bank accounts overflowing, we'd love that, but what about his reproof? We can be cakes cooked on one side, fried pancakes fried on one side, not turned over, one side all uncooked. God cooks us on one side with prosperity, and then turns us over and cooks us on the other side with adversity, and reproof, and correction. And then we are fully developed.

Otherwise only half our body is developing, the other half is not growing properly. So we see the balance here in Proverbs, whom the Lord loves, he reproves, because his aim is to give us wisdom. His aim is to give us wisdom.

And so it says here, in the Good News Bible, it says, pay close attention when he reproves you. That means when God rebukes you, corrects you, maybe directly or through some servant, listen carefully, and you listen carefully and pay close attention, you can become wise. You get offended, you remain without wisdom.

So wisdom comes through chastening. And then Solomon goes on to say, how blessed is the man who finds wisdom, that is the man who has submitted to the reproofs of God, humbled himself under the discipline of the Lord. How blessed is that man who finds wisdom, and the man who gains understanding.

And the word here means to draw out understanding. That is like lowering a bucket into a deep well, and drawing out that water. Doesn't come by just opening a tap.

Drawing out that understanding, and that well is in the scriptures. To go into it, to dig into it, to meditate on it, and to draw out that spiritual understanding. How blessed is that man.

Brothers and sisters, let me say one thing, let no bible study sessions deprive us of going to the well ourselves. We would like to be like big Maharajas, sitting with our legs crossed outside the well, and somebody else draws the water out from the bucket and gives it to us. But we miss something, if it's always like that.

We miss something if we don't know how to draw out that from the well ourselves. That's a very healthy spiritual exercise, to go into the word of God and to draw out that understanding. How blessed is that man who finds wisdom, who has drawn out this understanding.

And here I was telling you what the true riches are. We spoke earlier about the false riches, that is the wealth of this world, and here it says the true riches. The profit of wisdom is better than the profit of silver.

And it's gained and find gold. What that means is, people keep gold and silver in their homes. You know why they keep gold and silver in their homes? Because they feel the value of gold will keep going up.

And if I store up gold and silver in my house, ten years from now, I spent only a thousand rupees to start with, but now it has become five thousand rupees, the value of the same bit of gold. And they feel very happy when the price of gold and silver goes up in the market. And here it says, that's all nothing compared to the profit and gain.

So that's in contrast to what we were seeing earlier about that earthly wealth. How blessed, verse 13, is the man who finds wisdom, for its profit is better than the profit of silver, and its gain than fine gold. She is more precious than jewels.

And nothing you desire compares with her. There's absolutely nothing in the whole world, no company shares, no gold, no silver, nothing can be compared to divine wisdom. And that comes to the man who submits, verse 11, to the discipline of the Lord, who humbles himself under the Lord's rebukes and reproofs, and obeys God's commandments from his heart, verse 1, trusts in the Lord with all his heart, verse 5, does not lean on his own cleverness, acknowledges God in all his ways.

That man's a blessed man. He really is a blessed man. Long life is in the right hand of wisdom, and her left hand are riches and honor.

Her ways are pleasant ways, and all her paths are peace. That means when you're walking in the way of wisdom, you can never be at unrest in your heart at any time, because all her paths are peace. When I get into unrest, that means I have left the path of wisdom.

Somewhere I left it. I spoke to a brother in a particular way, and I'm very much in unrest about it. I left the path of wisdom.

Or somebody said something to me, and I am very much in unrest. That means I have not reacted in the right way. That's why I'm in unrest.

That's why I'm in unrest. That's not the way of wisdom, and it's God speaking to me through that unrest in my heart. You have left the way of wisdom, because wisdom, all her paths are peace.

Always peace. That's why if you build a church with wisdom, there'll always be peace in that church. They'll never be fighting in that church.

When we speak about a church where there's never been fighting for many years, you see, people don't believe it. But it's possible, if all her paths are peace, and we proclaim wisdom in the church, there's bound to be peace, because all her paths are peace. It's where wisdom is not known and not proclaimed, just a lot of dry old Bible knowledge is dished out.

You don't find peace there. And then, here we are told in verse 18 what that tree of life in the Garden of Eden really was. What was that tree of life? Wisdom was that tree of life.

What was the other tree? The tree of knowledge of good and evil. Knowledge of good and evil is not the same as wisdom. Knowledge of good and evil, one can be clever and say that's right and that's wrong.

But wisdom is another thing altogether. People can have knowledge of good and evil and still fight with each other. But you can't have wisdom and fight with each other.

That is impossible. The tree of life, it's wisdom. It's that divine nature, that wisdom described in James 3, which is first pure and then peaceable.

This is the tree of life which Adam was not interested in, which most believers today, unfortunately, are not interested in either. And the difference between Adam and Christ is this, that Christ was taken up with wisdom. It says concerning Jesus, the very first thing we read about Jesus as a child is that he grew in wisdom.

The first thing we read about Adam is he forgot about the tree of life called wisdom and went after knowledge. And even today, most believers are interested in knowledge and not wisdom. Our pursuit must be wisdom.

And happy are all who hold her fast. To hold her fast means the man who keeps on eating from this tree. The man who comes to this tree and realizes, I haven't understood everything yet, I need to know more, and who keeps on taking part of this tree.

And verse 19, the Lord, by wisdom, founded the earth. By understanding, he established the heavens. By his knowledge, the deeps were broken up and the skies dripped with dew.

The three words used there, all more or less meaning the same thing, that divine knowledge, not the knowledge of good and evil, which brought death, but the divine knowledge, the knowledge of God, understanding and wisdom. And it says God founded the earth and established the heavens, and the fountains of the earth were broken open and the skies poured out with rain through God's wisdom, understanding and knowledge. When you read Genesis chapter 1, you know that it was through God's spoken word that these things happened.

It was through God's spoken word that the heavens and earth were remade. And so we see that God's wisdom is revealed to us through his word. And that is why it's only as we take God's word seriously that we can have an understanding of God's ways.

We have seen this verse before in Psalm 103, of the difference between the Israelites and Moses. And that happens even today among believers, this difference in Psalm 103 verse 7, where it says, God made known his ways to Moses, but his deeds or his actions to the sons of Israel. And even today there are those who can see God's actions and are impressed with it.

He's healing the sick, he's doing a miracle, a physical miracle particularly. They are in the footsteps of the sons of Israel who saw God's actions. But to Moses, God was able to reveal something more than that, and that was his ways.

God was able to teach Moses something of himself, of his nature and his wisdom. You remember when he told Moses, I will show you my glory. And he says, I will show you all my goodness.

And it's the goodness of God, which is his glory. And it's quite another thing to see that. It's something to see God's goodness and to be gripped by that in our lives.

It's quite another thing to see the physical healing of the sick. And you find most believers are occupied with these physical miracles, and very few want to know like Moses, God's ways. And here the book of Proverbs is not teaching us how to do miracles, it's teaching us about God's ways.

And the only person who will be interested, really interested in knowing the depths there are in the book of Proverbs will be one who wants to know God more, wants to know God's ways. There's no verse here that tells us how to raise the dead or how to move the mountain out of the way, but it tells us here what God's ways are. He made known his ways to Moses, but his actions to the children of Israel.

And we see here in verse 21, my son, don't let these God's wisdom, understanding and knowledge depart from your sight. Keep sound wisdom and discretion, because they will be life to your soul and adornment to your neck. In other words, this is the greatest honor that you can ever get.

No president of any country putting a medal around your neck can be a far greater honor than to get wisdom. That's the greatest honor in so many illustrations Solomon is using to try to show this is better than riches. This is better than getting the Param Vir Chakra or some medal or Bharat Ratna or something like that tied around your neck.

Here is the thing that you need to have tied around your neck, wisdom, so that we make it the main pursuit of our life. When you do that, verse 23, then you will walk securely and your foot will not stumble. That means that God will not allow your feet to fall into Satan's traps.

He will keep you from falling into the traps that Satan has lined up for you. When Paul said we are not ignorant of Satan's schemes, that's because Paul had wisdom that he could say we're not ignorant of Satan's schemes. When you walk, your way will be secure.

Your foot will not stumble. When you lie down, you will not be afraid. And when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet.

I want to tell you, brothers and sisters, it is God's will for every one of us that our sleep should be sweet. Do you believe that? If you don't believe it, according to your faith, be it unto you. But if you believe it, according to your faith, be it unto you.

I believe that with all my heart. It says there, that's God's will for me, that my sleep should be sweet, that I should not have any tension on my mind. Have you seen little children sleeping? You know why they sleep so well? Because they are not worried about anything concerning tomorrow.

They are not worried about anything. Their sleep is really sweet. Think of that, that God can bring us to that place where we have cast our burdens on the Lord so completely, and we have trusted in the Lord with all our heart and acknowledged him in all our ways, and are seeking after wisdom more than anything else, more than riches and honor and all the rubbish that people are seeking after.

Do it when you lie down, your sleep, that is the will of God. You won't be afraid of, it says here in the Living Bible, you won't be afraid of disaster, verse 25, and you won't be afraid of the plots of evil men. Disaster, robbers coming to the house in the middle of the night, or evil men plotting against you in your office when you go there tomorrow, you won't be afraid of a single thing.

Your sleep will be sweet. We got to take that promise and say, Lord, I want that. We won't be afraid of anything.

Freedom from all fear, that is the will of God for us. So we find that our sleep also is a pretty good test of the condition of our heart. It is just like unrest, the way we sleep at night is also a pretty good condition, test of the condition of our heart.

We can think we are all right, but the fact that we are so restless at night proves that everything is not all right, something is wrong. Your sleep is not sweet. We have to ask ourselves, why not? And it's good to humble ourselves and go and ask God and say, Lord, is there something that is causing me tension? Do I need to cast on you? I don't trust in you with all my heart, perhaps.

I believe so many things in my head, but I don't trust in you with all my heart. I'm not saying that to condemn anybody. I'm just saying that to encourage everyone, say, this is your birthright, this is our birthright, don't let the devil take it away from us.

Say, Lord, my birthright is sweet sleep at night. And don't be afraid of sudden fear, because the Lord will be your confidence, and he will protect you from falling into Satan's trap. He will keep your foot from being caught by Satan, from falling into a trap.

And then he gives us some exhortation about getting into debt. Don't withhold good from those to whom it is due when it is in your power to do it. Don't say to your neighbor, go and come back and tomorrow I'll give it when you have it with you.

Let me read that to you in the living Bible. Don't withhold repayment of your debts. Don't say some other time, if you can pay now.

You know what that means? You want wisdom? How many of us are serious about getting wisdom? Pay back your debts. Very practical, this business of getting wisdom. Pay back your debts.

And don't say next year or next month, some other time, if you can pay now. If you can pay that shopkeeper for that bar of soap now, don't tell him to put it in a credit book and I'll pay you on the first of the month. You'll never become wise that way, I'll tell you that.

This whole credit system is for fools, not for those who want divine wisdom. Those who want divine wisdom do not get into a credit system like that. They pay now immediately, when they've got the money in their pockets.

They don't get their name into the shopkeeper's book and get onto a credit list. That's the way people end up in a lot of folly later on. Don't say some other time on the first of next month, when I get my pay, if you can pay now.

That's something for us to remember. We are not to be in debt to anyone, and it's not just to those from whom we have borrowed money. The book of Proverbs speaks later on about the debt we owe to our parents.

Do you know that every one of us owe a debt to our parents? If you calculate all the money that your parents spent on you, and all the time that your parents spent on you, and I calculate the same, you'll find it's a fantastic debt we owe to them. And yet so many believers can take such a casual, light attitude towards the ones to whom they owe more than to any other person on the face of the earth, perhaps. They owe so much, but they take it for granted.

They don't realize that we must do what we can to repay that debt to our parents in their old age. That's a debt. And a man who wants wisdom, who is wise, will repay that debt.

And to neighbors, to the government in taxes. Taxes are a debt we owe to the government until we pay it. And the wise man will have no difficulty in his taxes.

He's glad to pay his taxes. He doesn't want to cheat the government in any type of tax. No, he pays his debt to the government, to his parents, to neighbors, and to fellow believers.

He owes no man anything. He makes sure that he behaves like God, who is never in debt to anyone. And I just want to say one other aspect of debt which is mentioned in the New Testament.

It says in Romans 13.8, Owe no man anything except to love one another, which means that because God has given us so much of love, we have a perpetual debt of love to others. That is, we are to take every opportunity to clear that debt of love that we have to other people in the church. That's the meaning of Romans 13.8. Owe no man anything except to love one another means I've got to look at a brother and I've got to see I owe him a debt of love because God's given me something of his love which I have to pass on.

That's included here too. We can move on to verse 29. Don't devise harm against your neighbor while he lives in security beside you.

We could apply that into other words of the New Testament and say be rooted in goodness towards others. Be rooted in a good attitude towards others at all times. And do not contend with a man without cause if he has done you no harm.

Now we see here there were certain things there which make it clear that Proverbs is still an Old Testament book. And here's one verse like that. Don't contend with a man if he has done you no harm.

What if he has done you some harm? Then according to the Old Testament you can do something about it but according to the New Testament you still can't do anything about it. Because Jesus said if somebody slaps you on one cheek turn the other. And I was interested to see this phrase do not contend with a man, don't argue with a man, don't get into a quarrel with a man without a cause.

Means that back in the Old Testament if there was a cause you could get into a contention with a man. And when you turn over to the New Testament in Matthew chapter 5 there's something very interesting. It says in Matthew 5 verse 22.

But I say to you Jesus said everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court. Now shall I tell you something about the people who copied the scriptures in the early days. They felt that can't be right.

How can a man live without anger? And so they inserted something from Proverbs 3 verse 30 into that verse. And you'll find that in the King James Version. If you read it in the King James Version it reads like this.

I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother without a cause shall be guilty. Well that's a very nice escape hole from which we can always escape when we get angry. Because there's no one in the world who's angry without a cause unless he's a madman or somebody in a lunatic asylum.

Everybody's angry with a cause only. I mean have you ever heard of a man being angry without a cause? Do you mean to say that all this fantastic teaching of Jesus was ultimately just to be watered down completely with one little phrase without a cause? Yeah and it says in the margin of the NASB some manuscripts have inserted without a cause because they felt the standard of Jesus was too high. And that teaches us one thing.

That if you don't have faith for that you won't get it. If you have faith that you'll get victory only over anger without a cause then that's all we get. But if we have faith that we'll get victory over anger with or without a cause then we get that.

That's what Jesus spoke. But in the Old Testament that wasn't the standard. In the Old Testament the standard was don't contend with a man without a cause.

But in the New Testament Jesus said but I say to you don't be angry with your brother otherwise you're guilty. So that's just an interesting thing we can see. And then to verse 31 of Proverbs 3 it says here don't envy a man of violence.

That means a lawless man. A man who doesn't keep the laws. Who makes profit by cheating.

Who increases his income by telling lies. Don't envy him. Don't envy a lawless man.

You find other people in your office doing things which are not righteous and they're making money. They're cheating the office or the government or whatever it is by schemes and methods which you as a upright Christian won't adopt and they're making money. You're finding it difficult.

Don't envy them. It's so easy to begin to think what a lot I'm losing by not doing what these other people are doing. Nobody's catching them.

Yeah there we can easily envy them. Don't choose any of his ways. Don't choose the ways of a man who's doing wrong.

Students. When you see other people copying. When you know the question paper has leaked.

And there's a scramble to get the question paper. There you'll find a true Christian student. You say never mind if it's leaked.

I don't want to see it. What an attitude. You know that everybody else is going into the examination hall having seen the question paper.

But you are following Jesus. Do you think Jesus would go looking for that leaked question paper? No. Well neither are we going to do it.

Don't choose his ways because verse 32. Here are the reasons. The crooked man is an abomination to the Lord.

You want to be an abomination to the Lord? Just to get high marks in the examination? Just to make a little more money in the office? The crooked man is an abomination to the Lord. But he is intimate with the upright. He's a close friend of the upright.

Yeah I want to be a close friend of God. Then be upright. The curse of the Lord is on the house of the wicked.

But he blesses the dwelling of the righteous. You see it's very easy to put up a plaque on the wall saying bless this house oh Lord we pray. But he's not going to bless every house even if you hang a plaque there.

Because it says he only blesses the house of the righteous. It's the people who live there that determine whether God can bless the house. He's not interested in the windows and the walls and the doors.

He's not blessing that. The home. The people who live there, if they are righteous, whether they hang a plaque or not, God blesses the house still.

But if the people are not righteous, any number of plaques they hang around the wall, it's not God's going to bless them. That's just superstition. If you are righteous, the blessing comes automatically.

He blesses the dwelling of the righteous. And there's a difference in the word used here. And in the original Hebrew there's a contrast.

The house of the wicked means the great mansion of the wicked. And the dwelling of the righteous in the original Hebrew is a small little cottage of that righteous man. He could not make so much money.

But God's blessing is there. Think of that brothers and sisters. To live in a house and have the blessing of the Lord upon us.

Because we seek to be righteous. And then we come to this verse which is quoted by Peter. He scoffs at the scoffers.

But he gives grace, that New Testament word grace, to the afflicted which is quoted by Peter in 1 Peter 5.5 and by James in James chapter 4 verse 6. He gives grace to the humble, but he resists the proud. He resists the proud, but he gives grace to the humble. And so we see that grace is given by God.

We don't need to speak much about that. We've spoken much about that in the church. God resists the proud.

So don't seek the fellowship of the proud. He gives grace to the humble. Seek fellowship with the humble.

There's a verse in a book written by this man called Sirach where he says, as when you touch tar, you know tar which they put on the roads, if you touch it, it dirties your hand in such a way that it's so difficult to remove that tar that's come onto your hands. In just the same way, he says, if you have fellowship with a proud man, you will be defiled in the same way. It comes onto you, it's very difficult to remove that.

And therefore, if you're wise, you'll seek fellowship with humble people, with lowly minded people, and you'll avoid contact with the proud and the haughty. And that's the word of warning we need for our day. The wise will inherit honor, but fools will inherit shame or dishonor.

And then chapter four, verse one, he says, hear, O sons. Now he's speaking to a number of people who are willing to take their position in submission. We notice this phrase, hear O son, listen O son, coming again and again in these first few chapters, indicating, as I said in our last study, a principle of submission to spiritual authority, that God tests our submission in the home and in the church.

Hear O sons, the instruction of a father. When we are willing to humble ourselves and listen to those who have more wisdom than us, and don't become proud and wise in our own eyes, and we are willing to hear, and we are willing to take the place of a son under a father, and don't think that's disgraceful, how can I take that position? Then there is a possibility of our getting wisdom, and there our humility is tested. Hear O sons, the instruction of a father, and it's not our heavenly father, it's Solomon speaking, and give attention that you may gain understanding.

For I give you sound teaching and do not abandon my instruction. And now he tells us something very interesting. When I was a son to my father, Solomon says, you know, there was a time when I was also young, and I had to learn something from someone who was spiritually superior to me, and that was my father David.

You know that David was a man after God's own heart, and he says, when I was a son to my father, tender, as far as we know, we don't know definitely, but possibly Solomon was David's last son, and the only son in the sight of my mother, and you know his mother was, his mother was Bathsheba. Think of that, that the son of Bathsheba was the one whom God chose to be the next king. That's tremendous grace of God, and Solomon never forgot that.

Solomon knew how his mother got married to David. The whole history of that wasn't a very, something to be very proud of. There he saw something of the grace of God, and the only son in the sight of my mother.

Then David taught me and said to me, let your heart hold fast my words, keep my commandments and live. David was the one who told Solomon first to keep the commandments. Think what a father he was, and you know it's very interesting because when you turn to 1 Kings chapter 1 verse 6, we read that David had a number of other children, and one of those sons was called Adonijah, and it says about Adonijah in 1 Kings 1 6 that his father David had never displeased him, never pained him, by even asking him even once, why have you done that? And David had another rebellious son like that called Absalom, another wicked son who raped his sister called Amnon, Amnon, Absalom, and Adonijah.

David had a whole lot of sons, perhaps he treated all of them like that, wouldn't pain them, wouldn't rebuke them, and he saw the damage they brought in his home, and he decided to do it differently with his last son Solomon. And no wonder God picked up Solomon, because his father brought up one of his sons rightly. And so, there we can understand the background of what David tells Solomon, keep my commandments and live.

Proverbs 4 5, acquire wisdom, acquire understanding. And when Solomon finally became the king, and God asked him one night, what do you want? He said, Lord, give me wisdom. Who taught him to pray that prayer? It was David.

There we see, it wasn't Solomon's own idea, it was David who told him, acquire wisdom, acquire understanding, don't forget, don't turn away from the words of my mouth, don't forsake wisdom, wisdom will guard you, love wisdom, and wisdom will watch over you. The beginning of wisdom is acquire wisdom, which means determination to be wise is the first step towards becoming wise, the living Bible says. Determination to be wise is the first step.

I'm going to get wisdom at any cost. And with all your acquiring and understanding, prize wisdom and she'll exalt you, she will honor you if you embrace her, she'll place on your head a garland of grace, and then you'll be a real king. She'll present you with a crown of beauty.

There we understand how Solomon became wise, because his father instructed him. Think that we can be fathers like that to our children. David learned through all his folly with his other sons to train up one son right.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/14/SID14938.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/zac-poonen/proverbs-ch31-49/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net