

Better Way Apostolic Church- Bible Class

Subject: God has spoken - how are you responding to His Word?": Proverbs 1:7

The first part of Proverbs examines the nature of wisdom, and applies wisdom to specific issues. But what according to the Bible is wisdom? And how will the wise person live?

The nature of wisdom. The Hebrew word group that expresses the idea of wisdom has as its root the verb hakam (OT:2449). Words in this group occur in the Old Testament over 300 times!

Hakam- deals with an individual's approach to life itself It is practical in nature, and yet is spiritual. For, biblically speaking, "wisdom" provides the insight to master life's challenges through a responsive personal relationship with God. In essence wisdom has to do with choosing what is right and good as we live our daily lives.

A wise person is one who is sensitive to the Lord and who subjects himself to God. A wise person will apply guidelines revealed by God and make his daily decisions based on these truths. In its deepest meaning "wisdom" unites God's words and everyday experience, and it is only in the way a person lives his life that wisdom can be demonstrated.

Proverbs 2 sums up this perspective.

For the Lord gives wisdom, and from His mouth come knowledge and understanding... Then you will understand what is right and just and fair - every good path. For wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul... Wisdom will save you from the ways of wicked men, from men whose words are perverse.

In Scripture then there is a clear distinction drawn between intelligence and wisdom. One may have great intellectual capabilities. But unless a person accepts the words of God and applies them to make his or her choices in life, that person can hardly be called "wise." There is, in fact, many an intelligent person who makes wrong moral choices and thus, in biblical terms, is a fool! The Book of Proverbs is intended to be a word to the wise. It is a book with a moral foundation, designed to help us make godly choices. Thus the book's opening explains that the Proverbs are:

For attaining wisdom and discipline; for understanding words of insight; for acquiring a disciplined and prudent life, doing what is right and just and fair. Proverbs 1:2-3

In Scripture morality always has spiritual roots. Thus Proverbs says that:

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.

"Fear" in this context is not terror but respect. The person who has a deep respect for God, who acknowledges Him as Creator and Lord, is the one who will listen attentively to God's Words and will apply them daily. For this reason wisdom begins with faith in God. But for a person of faith to be wise, he must act with Proverbs 1-9

Benefits of wisdom (Proverbs 2-3). On the other hand, the person who gains wisdom wins many benefits. Among those mentioned are deliverance from the ways of wicked men (2:12), deliverance

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from the adulteress (v. 16), a long life (v. 21), a good name and prosperity (3:2), health (v. 8), wealth (vv. 9-10), safety (v. 22), grace (v. 34), and honor (v. 35).

These chapters make it very clear that wisdom is moral in nature, for they specify some of the choices that wisdom will lead a person to make. The wise person will receive wisdom from the Lord and as a result will choose:

* against the ways of the wicked (2:12); * against involvement in adultery (v. 16); * for goodness and righteousness (v. 20); * for love and faithfulness (3:3); * for disciplined giving to God (v. 9); * for giving to the needy (vv. 27-28); * against plotting to harm anyone (v. 29); * against false accusations (v. 30); * against envy (v. 31).

Christ's Sacrifice Opens the Way to God (Heb. 10:19-39)

No Old Covenant worshiper would have been bold enough to try to enter the holy of holies in the tabernacle. Even the high priest entered the holy of holies only once a year. The thick veil that separated the holy place from the holy of holies was a barrier between people and God. Only the death of Christ could tear that veil (Mark 15:38) and open the way into the heavenly sanctuary where God dwells.

I discovered this note at Ex 26:31-35: "Josephus reported that the veil was 4 inches thick, was renewed every year, and that horses tied to each side could not pull it apart. It barred all but the High Priest from the presence of God, but when it was torn in two at the death of Jesus of Nazareth (see Mark 15:38), access to God was made available to all who come through him." (Even at face value, this is an enigmatic note, in that Exodus 26 describes the Tabernacle, and the veil that was torn in two was part of Herod's Temple. Ryrie's representation of "the veil" certainly implies that the veil that Exodus describes is the veil that Josephus describes, which is to be identified with the veil that was torn in two.)

The Veils before the Most Holy Place were 40 cubits (60 feet) long, and 20 (30 feet) wide, of the thickness of the palm of the hand, and wrought in 72 squares, which were joined together; and these Veils were so heavy, that, in the exaggerated language of the time, it needed 300 priests to manipulate each. If the Veil was at all such as is described in the Talmud, it could not have been rent in twain by a mere earthquake or the fall of the lintel, although its composition in squares fastened together might explain, how the rent might be as described in the Gospel

A gracious invitation (vv. 19-25). "Let us draw near... Let us hold fast . . . Let us consider one another." This threefold invitation hinges on our boldness to enter into the holiest. And this boldness ("freedom of speech") rests on the finished work of the Saviour. On the Day of Atonement, the high priest could not enter the holy of holies unless he had the blood of the sacrifice (Hebrews 9:7). But our entrance into God's presence is not because of an animal's blood, but because of Christ's shed blood.

This open way into God's presence is "new" (recent fresh) and not a part of the Old Covenant that "waxed [grows] old [and] is ready to vanish away" (Hebrews 8:13). It is "living" because Christ "ever Giveth to make intercession" for us (Hebrews 7:25). Christ is the new and living way! We come to God through Him, our High Priest over the house of God (the church, see Hebrews 3:6). When His flesh was

torn on the cross, and His life sacrificed, God tore the veil in the temple. This symbolized the new and living way now opened for all who believe.

On the basis of these assurances - that we have boldness to enter because we have a living High Priest - we have an "open invitation" to enter the presence of God. The Old Covenant high priest visited the holy of holies once a year, but we are invited to dwell in the presence of God every moment of each day. What a tremendous privilege! Consider what is involved in this threefold invitation.

Let us draw near (v. 22). Of course, we must prepare ourselves spiritually to fellowship with God. The Old Testament priest had to go through various washings and the applying of blood on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16). Also, during the regular daily ministry, the priests had to wash at the laver before they entered the holy place (Exodus 30:18-21). The New Testament Christian must come to God with a pure heart and a clean conscience. Fellowship with God demands purity (1 John 1:5-2:2).

Let us hold fast (v. 23). The readers of this epistle were being tempted to forsake their confession of Jesus Christ by going back to the Old Covenant worship. The writer did not exhort them to hold on to their salvation, because their security was in Christ and not in themselves (Hebrews 7:25). Rather, he invited them to hold fast "the profession [confession] of ... hope." (There is no manuscript evidence for the word "faith." The Greek word is "hope")

We have noted in our study of Hebrews that there is an emphasis on the glorious hope of the believer. God is "bringing many sons unto glory" (Hebrews 2:10). Believers are "partakers of the heavenly calling" (Hebrews 3:1) and therefore can rejoice in hope (Hebrews 3:6). Hope is one of the main themes of Hebrews 6 (vv. 11-12, 18-20). We are looking for Christ to return (Hebrews 9:28) and we are seeking that city that is yet to come (Hebrews 13:14).

When a believer has his hope fixed on Christ, and relies on the faithfulness of God, then he will not waver. Instead of looking back (as the Jews so often did), we should look ahead to the coming of the Lord.

Let us consider one another (vv. 24-25). Fellowship with God must never become selfish. We must also fellowship with other Christians in the local assembly. Apparently, some of the wavering believers had been absenting themselves from the church fellowship. It is interesting to note that the emphasis here is not on what a believer gets from the assembly, but rather on what he can contribute to the assembly. Faithfulness in church attendance encourages others and provokes them to love and good works. One of the strong motives for faithfulness is the soon coming of Jesus Christ. In fact, the only other place the word translated "assembling" (Hebrews 10:25) is used in the New Testament is in 2 Thessalonians 2:1, where it's translated "gathering" and deals with the coming of Christ.

Christian Fellowship

Christianity is a social religion. It loses power whenever the social element is left out. I have heard many people say that they did not care to go to a certain church because the people were not sociable, but I have never heard anyone say yet that they stayed away from the church because the people were so friendly and sociable they could not stand it. Rich or poor, learned or unlearned, we all have a craving for fellowship. The saloon has much of its power in this hunger of the heart to find some sort of fraternal greeting. I asked a man the other night why he went to the saloon and put himself in the way of drinking, when he really desired to stop it, and his answer was: "All the people who are willing to talk to Dr. Harold Durham- Pastor B- God has spoken - how are you responding to His Word March 29, 2017

me are there. I must go where my friends are." Let us make the church so full of social kindness that the people who come in will find friends with us.

The three great Christian virtues are evidenced here: faith (Hebrews 10:22), hope (Hebrews 10:23), and love (Hebrews 10:24). They are the fruit of our fellowship with God in His heavenly sanctuary.

A solemn exhortation (vv. 26-31). This is the fourth of the five exhortations found in Hebrews. It is written to believers and follows in sequence with the other exhortations. The believer who begins to drift from the Word (Hebrews 2:1-4) will soon start to doubt the Word (Hebrews 3:7-4:13). Soon, he will become dull toward the Word (Hebrews 5:11-6:20) and become "lazy" in his spiritual life. This will result in despising the Word, which is the theme of this exhortation.

The evidence of this "despising" is willful sin. The tense of the verb indicates that Hebrews 10:26 should read, "For if we willfully go on sinning." This exhortation is not dealing with one particular act of sin, but with an attitude that leads to repeated disobedience. Under the Old Covenant, there were no sacrifices for deliberate and willful sins (Exodus 21:12-14; Numbers 15:27-31). Presumptuous sinners who despised Moses' Law and broke it were executed (Deuteronomy 17:1-7). This explains why David prayed as he did in Psalms 51. Because he deliberately sinned "with a high hand," he should have been slain; but he cried out for God's mercy. David knew that even a multitude of sacrifices could not save him. All he could offer was the sacrifice of a broken heart (Psalms 51:16-17).

How does an arrogant attitude affect a believer's relationship with God? It is as though he trods Jesus Christ underfoot, cheapens the precious blood that saved him ("an unholy thing" [Hebrews 10:29] = "a common thing"), and insults the Holy Spirit. This is just the opposite of the exhortation given in Hebrews 10:19-25! Instead of having a bold profession of faith, hope, and love, a backslidden believer so lives that his actions and attitudes bring disgrace to the name of Christ and the church.

What can this kind of a Christian expect from God? He can expect severe discipline. (Chastening is the theme of Hebrews 12.) There is no need to "water down" words such as "judgment and fiery indignation" (Hebrews 10:27), or "sorer punishment" (Hebrews 10:29). We have already seen from the history of Israel that hardly anybody who was saved out of Egypt by the blood of the lamb entered into the promised inheritance. Nearly all of them died in the wilderness. "There is a sin unto death" (1 John 5:16). Some of the Corinthian believers were disciplined and their lives taken because of their presumptuous sins (1 Corinthians 11:30, where "sleep" means "died").

God does not always take the life of a rebellious believer, but He always deals with him. "Vengeance belongeth unto Me" was spoken to Israel, God's people. "The Lord shall judge His people!" (Hebrews 10:30, quoted from Deuteronomy 32:35) "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:31).

The major theme of Hebrews is "God has spoken - how are you responding to His Word?" When the nation of Israel refused to believe and obey His Word, God chastened them. Paul used this fact to warn the Corinthians against presumptuous sins (1 Corinthians 10:1-12). Note that the examples given in this passage involve people who died because of their willful sins. When we study the subject of "chastening" in Hebrews 12, we will get greater insight into this awesome aspect of God's dealings with His children.

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In stating that this exhortation applies to believers today, but that it does not involve loss of salvation, I am not suggesting that chastening is unimportant. On the contrary, it is important that every Christian obey God and please the Father in all things. Dr. William Culbertson, late president of the Moody Bible Institute, used to warn us about "the sad consequences of forgiven sins." God forgave David's sins, but David suffered the sad consequences for years afterward (2 Samuel 12:7-15). David had "despised the commandment of the Lord" (2 Samuel 12:9) and God dealt with him.

What should a believer do who has drifted away into spiritual doubt and dullness and is deliberately despising God's Word? **He should turn to God for mercy and forgiveness.** There is no other sacrifice for sin, but the sacrifice Christ made is sufficient for all our sins. It is a fearful thing to fall into the Lord's hands for chastening, but it is a wonderful thing to fall into His hands for cleansing and restoration. David said, "Let me fall now into the hand of the Lord; for very great are His mercies" (1 Chronicles 21:13).

An encouraging confirmation (vv. 32-39). Lest any of his readers should misinterpret his exhortation, the writer followed it with words of encouragement and confirmation. His readers had given every evidence that they were true Christians. He did not expect them to despise God's Word and experience the chastening of God! In fact, as in Hebrews 6, the writer shifted the pronouns from "we" in Hebrews 10:26 to "he" in Hebrews 10:29 and "them" in Hebrews 10:39.

The readers had been willing to suffer reproach and persecution, even to the spoiling of their goods. When they were not being persecuted themselves, they courageously identified with the other Christians who were in danger, even to the point of sharing their bonds (imprisonment). At that time, they had great confidence and hope; but now they were in danger of casting away that confidence and going back into their old religion.

The secret of victory was in their faith and Patience ("courageous endurance"). We have met this combination of graces in Hebrews 6:12,15. It is here that the writer introduced the "text" around which Hebrews is written: "The just shall live by faith" (Hebrews 10:38). The quotation is from Habakkuk 2:4, and it is also used in Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11. Romans emphasizes "the just," Galatians deals with "shall live," and Hebrews centers on "by faith." We are not just saved from our sin by faith; we also must live by faith. This is the theme of Hebrews 11-13.

The believer who lives by faith will "go on to perfection" (Hebrews 6:1). But the believer who lives by sight will "draw back unto perdition" (Hebrews 10:39). What is "perdition" in this context? The Greek word translated "perdition" is used about twenty times in the New Testament and is translated by different words: "perish" (Acts 8:20), "die" (Acts 25:16), "destruction" (Romans 9:22), and "waste" (Matthew 26:8). The word can mean eternal judgment, but it need not in every instance. I personally believe that "waste" is the best translation for this word in Hebrews 10:39. A believer who does not walk by faith goes back into the old ways and wastes his life.

"The saving of the soul" is the opposite of waste. "To walk by faith means to obey God's Word and live for Jesus Christ. We lose our lives for His sake - but we save them! (see Matthew 16:25-27) In my own pastoral ministry, I have met people who turned their backs on God's will and (like Israel) spent years "wandering in the wilderness" of waste.

But we can be confident! As we walk by faith, our Great High Priest will guide us and perfect us!