

Survey of the Bible part 95 Solomon's Proverbs

The book can be divided up into at least seven main sections. Section 1 discusses fearing God as the beginning of understanding (Prov. 1:7 to 9:18), which we discussed last time we were together, and this is a compilation of a number of wise men who lived before or during the time of Solomon.

Section 2 contains the Proverbs of Solomon proper (Prov. 10:1 to 22:16). And it is this section that we'll be discussing today. It is in this section where we notice Solomon writing on a number of different topics, where at times they don't seem to be tied together in any particular order.

Proverbs 10:1-7 ^{NAU} The proverbs of Solomon. A wise son makes a father glad, But a foolish son is a grief to his mother. ² Ill-gotten gains do not profit, But righteousness delivers from death. ³ The LORD will not allow the righteous to hunger, But He will reject the craving of the wicked. ⁴ Poor is he who works with a negligent hand, But the hand of the diligent makes rich. ⁵ He who gathers in summer is a son who acts wisely, *But* he who sleeps in harvest is a son who acts shamefully. ⁶ Blessings are on the head of the righteous, But the mouth of the wicked conceals violence. ⁷ The memory of the righteous is blessed, But the name of the wicked will rot.

It almost appears to be a hodge-podge of pithy little statements about life and ways to advance in life or ways to stifle life.

It almost reminds me of a somewhat less wise man and the many pithy statements he made during his lifetime that are still with us today. Let me give you just a few.

“Always go to other people's funerals, otherwise they won't come to yours.”

“Half the lies they tell about me aren't true.”

As a general comment on baseball: “90% of the game is half mental.”

“When you come to a fork in the road, take it.”

“Never answer anonymous letters.”

Does anyone recognize who said these most wise sayings?

I'm not suggesting that Yogi Berra is in the same league as Solomon but when you read through much of Solomon's proverbs

they can come across as being wise sayings with no apparent rhyme or reason to where they're placed or how they relate to each other.

But we need to remember the premise for Proverbs as it is juxtaposed with Ecclesiastes, and that is that despite all of the wisdom we utilize in this world, it is still all vanity in light of eternity if you're not ready to stand before your creator according to His standard of righteousness.

And so, yes what Solomon says is most true, "A wise son makes a father glad, But a foolish son is a grief to his mother."

And a loaf of bread is still over a dollar and "Half the lies they tell about me aren't true."

These are all truisms but we need to keep the context of Solomon's proverbs in perspective as we move through these truisms, because these are not just any wise sayings like coming to a fork in the road and taking it, but these are inspired by the Holy Spirit of God Himself.

And all of these proverbs are still in the context of living lives before a holy God. And without wise instruction, in light of the fact that we human beings who are prone to sin, we will not have the kind of check in our spirit to consider what we are doing.

This is why the law was given. And this is why the Proverbs can conceivably be used by both believers and non-believers alike.

What unbeliever couldn't benefit from these words from Solomon?

Proverbs 10:4-5 ⁴ Poor is he who works with a negligent hand, But the hand of the diligent makes rich. ⁵ He who gathers in summer is a son who acts wisely, *But* he who sleeps in harvest is a son who acts shamefully.

Anyone can take this wisdom, employ it in this life and benefit from it. Ask any farmer if sleeping during the harvest isn't acting shamefully, or ask any contractor if working with a negligent hand results in poverty.

But like the law there is a reason for its being given to mankind.

Does anyone remember the ultimate reason for the law being given to us by God?

Galatians 3:24 ²⁴ Therefore the Law has become our tutor *to lead us* to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith.

In the same way, the Proverbs are meant to lead us to Christ. Isn't this what the resurrected Jesus told the two disciples on the road to Emmaus?

Luke 24:25-27 ²⁵ And He said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ "Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" ²⁷ Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.

Moses, which intimates the first five books of the bible, along with all the prophets and all the Scriptures are what Christ referred to and would most certainly include the book of Proverbs. And so, unless we see Jesus Christ and His redemption for sinful men in Proverbs, we've missed the ultimate point for the Holy Spirit inspiring it.

Yes, we'll get glimpses of wisdom all throughout proverbs, but we also know that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and as people read through Proverbs they should see that this wisdom should lead us away from ourselves and unto the living God who is all wise.

Romans 16:25 - 27 ²⁵ Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, ²⁶ but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, *leading to obedience of faith;* ²⁷ *to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ,* be the glory forever. Amen.

This is where a proper wisdom derived from a proper fear of the Lord will take you; to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ. And as we have seen this fear only comes from the living God who gives us life and then the ability by faith to reach out to Jesus Christ.

The writer of the hymn, Amazing Grace sums up what the fear of the Lord does and where it leads us.

"T'was Grace that taught my heart to fear.
And Grace, my fears relieved."

In other words the grace of God opened our eyes to a holy, righteous judge who condemns sin and that should cause our hearts to fear such a God and His wrath.

But once we've taken that grace and embraced Jesus Christ by faith, our fears of such wrath are relieved as they vanish under the blood of Jesus Christ.

Solomon knew that with all of his wisdom and the command to walk in that wisdom, no mere man could accomplish such a thing and still stand before a holy God in that wisdom.

But the wisdom from above is the wisdom that Solomon was really promoting in the midst of these pithy statements and we see it interspersed throughout the Proverbs.

Proverbs 10:25 ²⁵ When the whirlwind passes, the wicked is no more, But the righteous *has* an everlasting foundation.

If the wisdom that Solomon is speaking of is only of use for this life then this verse makes no sense.

An everlasting foundation speaks of an everlasting life that must of necessity be speaking of that life with God forever in His presence on the new earth.

Revelation 21:1-5 ^{NAU} Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer *any* sea. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, ⁴ and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be *any* death; there will no longer be *any* mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away." ⁵ And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." And He said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true."

And so, Solomon can dispense wisdom that makes sense for a life that will benefit its hearer.

Proverbs 11:1 ^{NAU} A false balance is an abomination to the LORD, But a just weight is His delight.

Now in what context might this apply to life in general?

But Solomon would never suggest that applying just weights, or fairness in business dealings, with being a delight to God in and of itself.

And so, only three verses later Solomon puts this into perspective.

Proverbs 11:4 ⁴ Riches do not profit in the day of wrath, But righteousness delivers from death.

Solomon has some classic sayings that few would disagree with and we see one here towards the end of chapter 11.

Proverbs 11:22 ²² As a ring of gold in a swine's snout *So is a beautiful woman who lacks discretion.*

Now again, we may delight in such wisdom and find it amusing that we could identify such women in history, but is it really Solomon's point to draw attention to the obvious?

No, and the next verse again puts it into perspective.

Proverbs 11:23 ²³ The desire of the righteous is only good, *But the expectation of the wicked is wrath.*

So, whether it's a woman who lacks discretion, or a man who cheats his neighbor, the only thing the wicked can expect, outside of being given the righteousness of Christ by faith, is the wrath of God.

Proverbs 12:1 ^{NAU} Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, But he who hates reproof is stupid.

As a general rule this is true and a wise saying. But once again Solomon follows up with the real point of such a truth.

Proverbs 12:3 ³ A man will not be established by wickedness, But the root of the righteous will not be moved.

Wickedness cannot establish a man who hates reproof and proves him to be stupid or as it could also be translated, senseless.

The ultimate reproof comes from God who says, if you obey Me you will live, if disobey Me you will die.

The command from God is to repent and trust in the righteousness of Christ. Not to obey that command is to hate reproof and as the Holy Spirit puts it, that is stupid.

But we know that all men, by their very natures, hate reproof of any kind, especially the reproof of God.

Only those touched by the Spirit of God can see and hear what God has to say to them which sometimes includes reproof for us as well, but always it leads to our good and God's glory.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 ¹⁶ All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

Let's move through a variety of Solomon's personal proverbs found from chapters 10-22.

Proverbs 13:7-8 ⁷ There is one who pretends to be rich, but has nothing; *Another* pretends to be poor, but has great wealth. ⁸ The ransom of a man's life is his wealth, But the poor hears no rebuke.

Any thoughts on what this might mean?

Riches in this life account for little whether they are real or imagined. What counts is the wealth that comes from being ransomed from one who has the wealth to buy you back from a death sentence.

Proverbs 14:12 ¹² There is a way *which seems* right to a man, But its end is the way of death.

The apostle Paul took this proverb and gave legs to it when addressing the Christians in Rome who may have been entertaining the notion of doing what is right in their own eyes, choosing not to look through the eyes of their Savior.

Romans 6:20-23 ²⁰ For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. ²¹ Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death. ²² But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life. ²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Proverbs 15:1 ^{NAU} A gentle answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger.

In everyday life this can be a very wise position to take. Who hasn't been tempted to lash out at someone with a harsh word in a circumstance that we thought warranted it?

But, sometimes that approach can come back to bite you. But giving a gentle answer that doesn't threaten that person might in fact bring them to your side without a fight.

The same can be said of the next verse.

Proverbs 15:2 ² The tongue of the wise makes knowledge acceptable, But the mouth of fools spouts folly.

But what's the point? Well, verse three again ties up the loose ends.

Proverbs 15:3 ³ The eyes of the LORD are in every place, Watching the evil and the good.

You can give a gentle answer as a believer and the Lord will see it and delight in it. You can give a gentle answer as a non-believer and the Lord will see it and will not delight in it. He watches the evil and the good apply life principles. But those principles are vanity if they are not seen with eyes of faith before a holy God.

Proverbs 16:18 ¹⁸ Pride *goes* before destruction, And a haughty spirit before stumbling.

Again, a very wise saying, but a humble man without God can humble himself to destruction if his humble attitude is what he depends on to find favor with God, which is why Solomon goes on to say this.

Proverbs 16:19-20 ¹⁹ It is better to be humble in spirit with the lowly Than to divide the spoil with the proud. ²⁰ He who gives attention to the word will find good, And blessed is he who trusts in the LORD.

By the way, during this election year when politicians are calling good evil and evil good, Solomon has a word for them and anyone else who falls into this camp.

Proverbs 17:15 ¹⁵ He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous, Both of them alike are an abomination to the LORD.

Proverbs 18:10 ¹⁰ The name of the LORD is a strong tower; The righteous runs into it and is safe.

What does this teach the believer?

This is one that Solomon may have borrowed from his father, David.

^{NAU} **Psalm 18:2** The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

Proverbs 19:23 ²³ The fear of the LORD *leads* to life, So that one may sleep satisfied, untouched by evil.

Here we see an action that leads to rest and that rest is found in the Lord who delivers us from evil. But the action leads to life as we pursue the Lord who gives that life. The contrary is also true. Inaction or being a sluggard regarding the things of the Lord cannot save. And Solomon has a colorful way of putting it.

Proverbs 19:24 ²⁴ The sluggard buries his hand in the dish, *But* will not even bring it back to his mouth.

Proverbs 20:2 ² The terror of a king is like the growling of a lion; He who provokes him to anger forfeits his own life.

This is a truism within any government on the face of the earth, but this is also a truism of another King.

Any thoughts?

Revelation 19:15-21 ¹⁵ From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. ¹⁶ And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS." ¹⁷ Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he cried out with a loud voice, saying to all the birds which fly in midheaven, "Come, assemble for the great supper of God, ¹⁸ so that you may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of commanders and the flesh of mighty men and the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them and the flesh of all men, both free men and slaves, and small and great." ¹⁹ And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies assembled to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. ²⁰ And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone. ²¹ And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh.

Proverbs 21:30 ³⁰ There is no wisdom and no understanding And no counsel against the LORD.

Here as we begin to reach the end of the second section, which is dealing specifically with the proverbs of Solomon, he puts all of the wise sayings into perspective.

Proverbs 21:30-31 ³⁰ There is no wisdom and no understanding And no counsel against the LORD. ³¹ The horse is prepared for the day of battle, But victory belongs to the LORD.

And Proverbs 22 is the end of the section exclusively for Solomon and he begins chapter 22 with these words.

Proverbs 22:1 ^{NAU} A *good* name is to be more desired than great wealth, Favor is better than silver and gold.

Solomon had both, but this is wisdom for the masses and in general to have a good name means it was earned with good deeds given with good intentions. But is this all that the Holy Spirit is trying to teach us about having a good name?

Isaiah 62:1-4 ^{NAU} For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, And for Jerusalem's sake I will not keep quiet, Until her righteousness goes forth like brightness, And her salvation like a torch that is burning. ² The nations will see your righteousness, And all kings your glory; And you will be called by a new name Which the mouth of the LORD will designate. ³ You will also be a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD, And a royal diadem in the hand of your God. ⁴ It will no longer be said to you, "Forsaken," Nor to your land will it any longer be said, "Desolate"; But you will be called, "My delight is in her," And your land, "Married"; For the LORD delights in you, And *to Him* your land will be married.

Remember last week when Jeremiah spoke to Israel and these haunting words from God were directed to Israel?

Jeremiah 3:8 ⁸ "And I saw that for all the adulteries of faithless Israel, I had sent her away and given her a writ of divorce,...

Isaiah speaks to a future Israel that is given a new name and implied in that a new heart where the people and the land are married to their God.

We know this prophecy is not about national Israel but about the New Israel, the Israel of God from every tribe, tongue and nation. And it is this new name that we have been given in Christ.

Revelation 2:17 ¹⁷ 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give *some* of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.'

Revelation 3:11-13 ¹¹ 'I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown. ¹² 'He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will write on him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name. ¹³ 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

This is the good name we possess in Christ; a new name that was given to us as a gift, a name that identifies us with a new family into which we have been adopted.

Galatians 4:4-7 ⁴ But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, ⁵ so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. ⁶ Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" ⁷ Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.