

The last time we were together we were going through the different divisions of the book of Proverbs and we had just introduced the 5th section where the writings of Solomon are reintroduced back into the equation but they are reintroduced many years after the death of Solomon during the reign of Hezekiah.

Proverbs 25:1 ^{NAU} These also are proverbs of Solomon which the men of Hezekiah, king of Judah, transcribed.

Remember, there was no king of Judah during the reign of Solomon since there was no division during his reign. It was only after the death of Solomon that the kingdom was divided into two separate kingdoms, that of Judah in the south and Israel to the north.

And all of this was the direct result of Solomon's idolatry about which God warned Solomon and then promised to divide the kingdom after his death.

1 Kings 11:1-13 ^{NAU} Now King Solomon loved many foreign women along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, ² from the nations concerning which the LORD had said to the sons of Israel, "You shall not associate with them, nor shall they associate with you, *for* they will surely turn your heart away after their gods." Solomon held fast to these in love. ³ He had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines, and his wives turned his heart away. ⁴ For when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods; and his heart was not wholly devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father *had been*. ⁵ For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians and after Milcom the detestable idol of the Ammonites. ⁶ Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and did not follow the LORD fully, as David his father *had done*. ⁷ Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the detestable idol of Moab, on the mountain which is east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the detestable idol of the sons of Ammon. ⁸ Thus also he did for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods. ⁹ Now the LORD was angry with Solomon because his heart was turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice, ¹⁰ and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods; but he did not observe what the LORD had

commanded. ¹¹ *So the LORD said to Solomon, "Because you have done this, and you have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you, and will give it to your servant."* ¹²

"Nevertheless I will not do it in your days for the sake of your father David, *but* I will tear it out of the hand of your son." ¹³

"However, I will not tear away all the kingdom, *but* I will give one tribe to your son for the sake of My servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen."

The 5th division of the book of Proverbs goes from chapter 25 – 29, and the last time we were here we briefly touched on a couple of passages from chapter 25. Tonight we'll complete this section as we move through a few more passages keeping in mind that the men of Hezekiah, in the southern kingdom of Judah, are transcribing as the Lord leads them to choose those sayings of Solomon that the Holy Spirit wants in place for our teaching and edification.

Proverbs 26:4-5 ⁴ Do not answer a fool according to his folly, Or you will also be like him. ⁵ Answer a fool as his folly *deserves*, That he not be wise in his own eyes.

This is a portion of Scripture that we all have heard before and as is obvious is addressing the fool and his folly. And what is interesting is that we also see similar passages and similar instructions when Jesus was teaching during His earthly ministry.

Matthew 7:6 ⁶ "Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.

In this case our Lord is addressing the fool as dogs and swine who will not take your pearls of wisdom to heart.

Now, the pearls or holy words of wisdom in the context of what Jesus is teaching are those words that lead to life. What Jesus is not doing is saying that we have the ability to know the heart of a person and based on that we determine who are the dogs and swine, and in that light we get to choose to share such wisdom or not.

We are to give this wisdom, (the gospel of Jesus Christ), to everyone. If they choose to reject it then we may choose to turn from them as they prove themselves unwise.

In fact, in that same passage Jesus then goes on to say this.

Matthew 7:7-12 ⁷ "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ⁸ "For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. ⁹ "Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? ¹⁰ "Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? ¹¹ "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him! ¹² "In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

Does this sound like Jesus is saying to treat people like fools?

No. What He is saying is that the fool will reveal himself, and based on that there is a way to deal with him. In this case the fool is juxtaposed with someone who actually seeks and asks of God for wisdom that leads to life.

When, after you share the pearls and the holy things of God, the fool will not enter into a discussion of such things but only desires to trample those things under their feet and try to tear you to pieces, metaphorically speaking, then it's time to allow the fool to go his own way without any further discussion.

And so, you treat the fool, in that instance, with civility and the respect a person made in the image of God deserves, without allowing God and His word to be trampled under-foot. Back in Proverbs we read in our text.

Proverbs 26:11 ¹¹ Like a dog that returns to its vomit Is a fool who repeats his folly.

Again, this is a portion of God's word that we have all heard before and it too was used in a N.T. setting as Peter was describing the false prophets who were trying to deceive the people of God.

2 Peter 2:22 ²² It has happened to them according to the true proverb, "A DOG RETURNS TO ITS OWN VOMIT," and, "A sow, after washing, *returns* to wallowing in the mire."

In this case the dog is clearly an unbeliever trying to dishonor God in the midst of God's people. And so, the thing we take away from this passage in Proverbs is that the fool is the person we all were at one point in our lives as we too despised the things of God until God opened our eyes.

And so, clearly when Solomon is addressing the fool he is addressing the one who rejects God and the wisdom of God that leads to life.

But there is an interesting thing about the statement in Proverbs that is worth noting.

Proverbs 26:4-5 ⁴ Do not answer a fool according to his folly, Or you will also be like him. ⁵ Answer a fool as his folly *deserves*, That he not be wise in his own eyes.

How do we not answer a fool according to his folly and answer a fool according to his folly at the same time?

Well, this is actually the same thing being said in two different ways, from a negative and a positive.

Let's look at the negative first. Do not answer a fool according to his folly. The first thing we notice here is that we are not being told to not answer the fool. Even Jesus pointed this out. His only addition to this is that if the fool tries to trample and destroy you as a result of sharing your pearls, then it's time to graciously bow out.

But Solomon and Jesus clearly shared with fools. But again, notice what Solomon says. Do not answer a fool according to his folly. The implied meaning is that if you are going to answer a fool, (that is a person who rejects God and the things of God), then answer in a way that does not employ his reasoning as the starting point, that which is according to his folly.

For example, if a person says they want to talk about God, but they are not willing to concede that the bible is the word of God, and you concede to that starting point, then you are actually beginning the discussion by answering a fool according to his folly.

And they usually introduce the old tired argument that the bible was written by men and therefore cannot be trusted.

There is no discussion about God who has revealed Himself in the word of God, without first starting at that point. To concede that point gives the fool an upper hand that he does not deserve. And so, an apologetic discussion about God where the fool wants to eliminate that aspect of the discussion, might go something like this.

Well, I can appreciate that you believe that the bible is a book written by mere men, but if you want a discussion with me about my faith in Christ and yet you want me to abandon the very

foundation of where my faith comes from then we really have nothing more to discuss since that would undermine and undercut all that I place my faith in.

At that point you no longer answer a fool according to his folly, but you open the door to answer a fool by eliminating that possibility and force the fool to either listen to the truth or not.

And you learn rather quickly if the fool is really interested in wanting to have a discussion about your God and Savior with the word of God as the bedrock of that discussion.

This is exactly what Paul did in Athens when he shared about the Creator and Savior. The fools in Athens believed in many gods, and Paul acknowledged that, but would not allow them to eliminate the truth of only one true God who created all things and gives life through His resurrection.

Acts 17:22-34 ²² So Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects. ²³ "For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, 'TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.' ***Therefore what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you.*** ²⁴ "The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; ²⁵ nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all *people* life and breath and all things; ²⁶ and He made from one *man* every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined *their* appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, ²⁷ that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; ²⁸ for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we also are His children.' ²⁹ "Being then the children of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man. ³⁰ "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all *people* everywhere should repent, ³¹ because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead." ³² Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some *began* to sneer, but others said, "We shall hear you again concerning this." ³³ So Paul went out of their midst. ³⁴ But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were

Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.

Notice what Paul does. He doesn't enter into a debate at this point as to whether or not His God is one of many. It says that he proclaims a truth. The God who made the world and all things in it is declaring to all men everywhere that they should repent because He has fixed a day of judgment. And this judge is Jesus Christ who has all power and authority to accomplish this since He defeated sin and death in His resurrection.

Paul didn't debate the veracity of that proclamation by going into all of the in's and out's of how the bible was put together over hundreds of years by many different people, as God directed their hands and how this can be proved by looking at all the prophecies that have come to pass.

This doesn't mean that there may not be a place for such things in discussions of God's word. It simply means that answering a fool does not mean we start at their starting point which rejects God's word.

In fact, notice what Paul does after he shares about the resurrection when some began to sneer.

The word sneer in Greek is better translated to mock or jeer which means an outward and audible rejection of this truth. These are the fools who, like the dogs and swine Jesus points out, are only trying to trample and devour Paul, not enter into a discussion about such truths.

So, what does Paul do, according to verse 33?

He doesn't call them jerks or belittle them, he simply leaves. But notice that some of the fools join him and believed. And at that point these fools are given eyes to see and ears to hear that lead to wisdom.

But, again, they didn't receive wisdom because they joined Paul, they joined Paul because God took that wisdom and combined it with His Spirit who opened their eyes, as they took the faith God gave them and they believed.

Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. Paul didn't know who the fools were who were going to embrace the truth as God gave them eyes to see and ears to hear, but he knew that for any of these fools to be proved the elect he must use the

means God has ordained and give them the truth to hear for themselves.

So, we don't answer a fool according to his folly, we answer a fool, according to Solomon,

Proverbs 26:5 ⁵ Answer a fool as his folly *deserves*, That he not be wise in his own eyes.

Which is to say, turn his folly into an advantage by forcing him to make the choice as to whether or not he's truly interested in a discussion about the truth of who God is and what His will is for mankind.

Okay, let's move on.

Proverbs 27:17 ¹⁷ Iron sharpens iron, So one man sharpens another.

What's the application here for us?

Hebrews 3:13-14 ¹³ *But encourage one another day after day*, as long as it is *still* called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. ¹⁴ For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end,

Chapter 29 of Proverbs is the last chapter where Solomon's words are utilized by the men of King Hezekiah. And there are a variety of themes in this last chapter but fools are still on the list for Solomon.

Proverbs 29:9 ⁹ When a wise man has a controversy with a foolish man, The foolish man either rages or laughs, and there is no rest.

We've all seen how this works itself out in real life and even in the ministries of the apostles where unbelievers respond in ways that mimic this proverb.

We've seen how the foolish, the unbelievers of the world, as they respond with anger and violence to the truth of the gospel.

But it's usually the second aspect of how a foolish man reacts that we may taste. But again, someone laughing at us because we hold to the eternal truths of God's word is no reason for not giving them the truth.

No one likes to be rejected or belittled and yet a fool can only use this type of tactic when they have no answer for the truths that God exists and that He is the one to whom we will be accountable.

I've been laughed at many times. In fact, I remember sitting in an anthropology class in college where I simply raised my hand and questioned the professor who said that mutations in genes over millions of years are what produces the vast differences in species we have today.

I simply asked how this is feasible when we know that to get to a new species, like going from an amoeba to a fruit fly, there needs to be a tremendous amount of new information added to the DNA to get a higher form of life. But scientists admit that no new information is added within a species to get a different type within that same species.

In other words, when you breed dogs and you are trying to breed them for a specific purpose, let's say tracking bad guys, then you begin with one type of dog and add into the mix another type of dog with the express purpose of making sure that both dogs have very acute olfactory characteristics.

Well in doing so, you are not adding new information to the DNA. You are taking existing DNA and you are actually losing information in the process of combining information. To attach one part of the code in the DNA of one animal, something must be cut out of the other DNA of the second animal, and as a result something is lost.

This is the way it is with all species. So, if information is being lost in every generation as genes combine within species, how in the world is it possible to get additional information to form brand new species out of the existing species, like going from a fruit fly to a fruit bat?

It's impossible to be done today, so what makes us think it happened millions or billions of years ago. And this was my point to the professor.

Since mutations within species are rarely if ever beneficial to the species, how then does a mutation within some living organism go from a lower to a higher form of being when information is being lost not added?

So, I posed this simple question and the class just broke out in wonder with sighs and snickering. And the professor just looked at

me and said, well Drew it's true that most mutations are damaging to the species but there is always the slightest possibility that one would be beneficial and over millions of years it could result in something positive.

By the way, that's called faith.

In other words, we haven't a clue how this could happen since all scientific endeavors cannot prove this, but look, here we are.

Therefore, it had to have happened sometime in the past because the proof is all around us; which is, that is life is diverse and we know it started in a big bang which then allowed non-living matter to leap into life at some point in the past.

The fool has said in his heart that there is not God.

My point in that classroom was not to answer a fool according to his folly but to answer in accordance with his folly. The folly is that life does not come from non-life and once life is here it stays within its kinds. And so, taking their own system of thought you bring that to bear and force them to deal with it in their own foolish way.

But in the process you stay true to the truth of who God is and you always start with Him as the basis for all truth without apology, yet as Peter says, in gentleness and reverence.

We'll touch on one more saying of Solomon's in this section.

Proverbs 29:23 ²³ A man's pride will bring him low, But a humble spirit will obtain honor.

This again, is a theme we see all throughout Scripture because the fool is always trying to bring honor to himself. People, by nature, are prideful, especially when they refuse to acknowledge that God is their Creator before whom they should be humbled.

Now again, it would be easy to relegate these pithy little sayings to mere pragmatic propositions for everyday life.

And to the extent that it is wise to be humble that would certainly be true, but humbleness and pride are being displayed here in much more eternal ways.

Again, this is in the context of those who are fools, in other words, those unbelievers who value themselves higher than others and certainly higher than God.

And so, when we contrast pride and humbleness in its biblical sense we are speaking of an attitude of the heart that God places in a person to where they are able to humble themselves in faith to the one true God.

And the idea is that now that we have been humbled in a spiritual sense, not unlike how Paul was humbled on the road to Emmaus, we too have been humbled, so as to abandon our prideful way to heaven, thinking we can somehow earn that place.

Instead, we acknowledge that God has extended grace and mercy as He has taken that foolish and dead heart of stone out and replaced it with a heart of flesh that humbly seeks God and His salvation. And it should be in this attitude that you and I in Christ humble ourselves on a daily basis to God's honor and glory.

It is also the understanding the meek or humble shall inherit the earth. It is glorying in the fact that the humble will be magnified. And it is this promise that we look forward to.

James 4:10 ¹⁰ Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.

And this exaltation will take our present humble state in this world and will transform us in a way that will exalt us before Him forever.

Philippians 3:20-21 ²⁰ For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; ²¹ who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.

^{NAU} **Colossians 3:4** When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.

To be humbled before Christ now gives us the hope and promise of being revealed with him in glory and honor as He will be our God and we will be His people to His praise and glory.