

ADRIAN ROGERS

LEGACY

C O L L E C T I O N



PROVERBS

These transcripts are taken straight from live audio recordings of Adrian Rogers during his tenure as pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee. As such some of the transcripts may contain stutters, stammers, transcription errors, and other authentic remarks as would be common in a live setting.

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Raising Kids that Count

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: January 6, 2002

Main Scripture Text: Proverbs 1:7–9

*“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge:
but fools despise wisdom and instruction.”*

PROVERBS 1:7

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Introduction

Would you find the Book of Proverbs? We’re going to be in the Book of Proverbs altogether this morning, so get it, lay it out in your lap, and study these verses with me. We’re talking today about “Raising Kids that Count.” One of my life verses from the Book of Psalms is this: *“the generation of the upright shall be blessed”* (Psalm 112:2). And, I’ve held God to that promise—that God will bless my children. My chief desire for my kids is not that they be wealthy, not that they be famous, not that they always be praised or whatever, but that they will love the Lord Jesus Christ and count in His cause—kids that will count for God.

Now, may I ask you a question? How would you like to have a gifted child? I know all of us think our children are gifted, especially our grandchildren, but how would you like to have a gifted child? Well, that’s a doable thing. You just make the gifts. I want to talk to you today about some gifts that you can give to your children. The Book of Proverbs tells us about these gifts, so let me mention seven of them, if you’d like to have a gifted child, okay? If you’d like to have a kid that counts or kids that count—not that can count,

but that count. They will amount to something.

I. Give Them an Example

The first thing you ought to give them is you need to give them an example—give to them an example. Notice in Proverbs chapter 1, verses 7 through 9: *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge”*—now, if they don’t learn to respect God, they’re not going to have a modicum of genuine knowledge—*“but fools despise wisdom and instruction. My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: For they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck”* (Proverbs 1:7–9). Now kids, he’s not talking about an iron chain to drag you around with; he’s talking about a gold chain that will be something beautiful.

And then, Proverbs chapter 20 and verse 7: *“The just man [walks] in his integrity: his children are blessed after him”* (Proverbs 20:7). Now, I’m gonna tell you something, folks: your kids are gonna learn more from your lifestyle than they’re going to learn from your words. You need to give to them a godly example. Now, if that makes you nervous, let me tell you something: you don’t have to pretend perfection. You know you’re not perfect, and I’ve got news for you: they already know you’re not perfect. And so, if you try to pretend perfection, you’re going to come across as a phony. Your kids don’t want to know that you’re perfect; they want to know that you’re real. Your kids want to know that you are genuine. They’re gonna be watching you to see how you handle your mess-ups. Do you ever mess up? Nod your head. There’s not a parent here who doesn’t mess up.

I heard about a man, one time—gonna rob a bank. He was an old farmer, couldn’t pay for his food, and seed, and everything else. His wife was sick; his kids needed tuition. He decided the only thing he could do was rob a bank—never robbed a bank, but he studied about it, thought he’d know what to do. So, he got him a bag, got him a rusty old gun, wrote a note—and wrote on there, “Don’t mess with me. This is a stick-up. Give me all your money,” and went to the teller, got all confused, and handed the teller the gun, pointed the bag at her, and said, “Don’t stick with me; this is a mess-up.”

Well, a lot of us mess up—we just mess up. And, our kids want to know, how do you handle your mess-ups? How do you handle your failures? How do you handle your problems? That would be better to them than your phony perfectionism. Share with your kids; give them an example. You know, the problem with this—real problem—is about the time you’re experienced being a parent, you’re out of a job. Isn’t that right? And so, the two hardest times, I guess, in life are middle age and teenage, and somehow God puts them together. But, give your kids an example. Your kids are gonna learn more from your example than, actually, from your words.

I found out when I was a grown man I was mispronouncing a word over and over

again. I'd done it all of my life. Now, I know I mispronounce many words, and please don't write me notes about all of them that you've noticed, but this was one word I just constantly mispronounced. Finally, somebody called my hand on it and said, "Why did you say that word that way?" I said, "What way?" And, they said, "You said, 'So-and-so.'" I said, "No, I didn't. I said, 'So-and-so.'" They said, "That's what I said you said." I was hearing it one way in public, but I was saying it another way and thinking I was saying it the right way. And, I said, "Did I really say that that way?" He said, "Yes, you did. Say it again. Listen to yourself carefully." And, I said, "That is amazing. I am a grown man. I've been through seminary, and I have all of my life thought I was saying that word correctly. Then, one time..." And, I straightened it out. I made myself say it rightly. And then, one time I was at home with my dear precious mother, and I listened to her, and she said the same word the wrong way. Now, I listened to my brother; he said the same word the wrong way. I listened to my sister; she said the same word the wrong way. And, I realized my dear, sweet, sainted old mother had infected us with a bad word—not an ugly word—just by being there and absorbing a word. As a child, I heard her say this word—not an ugly word, just simply a very common word that she mispronounced.

Now folks, we owe to our children an example. Did you know there are a lot of things that they can't learn any other way—they can't really learn in Sunday School; they can't learn in public school. They've got to be demonstrated. What are we interested in with our kids? Well, sports, grades, physical health, popularity, ability. But, who is teaching them character? Let me read some character traits to you: contentment. Now, they're not gonna go to school and learn "Contentment 101." They don't get that in college. Courage, courtesy, discernment, fairness, friendliness, generosity, gentleness, helpfulness, honesty, humility, kindness, obedience, orderliness, patience, persistence, self-control, tact, thankfulness, tidiness, wisdom—where are they gonna learn these things? These things are not so much taught as they are caught. We owe to our kids an example.

II. Give Them Unconditional Love

Now, number two: Not only give to them a godly example—but give to them unconditional love. Now, write these things down; I'm gonna give you seven of them. You want to have a gifted child? Give him unconditional love. Look in Proverbs chapter 4, verses 1 through 4: "*Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding. For I give you good doctrine, forsake ye not my law*"—yes, that's fine—good doctrine, teaching, law, yes. But, notice this—"*For I was my father's son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother. He taught me also, and said unto me, Let thine heart retain my words: keep my commandments, and live*" (Proverbs 4:1–4). Do

you know, we need to give to our kids love that is absolutely, totally unconditional. I've noticed that men who had fathers who did not love them do not really know how to give love to their kids. They have to be taught. And, we have to have a generation of men, now, who are going to mentor some other men who never had a father to actually give them love and to show them unconditional love. We have to break that cycle.

A. **Show It with Words**

Now, unconditional love doesn't mean that you give to a child everything he wants; that's not really love at all. *True love is not giving someone what they want; it's giving to someone what they need.* But, there must be unconditional acceptance regardless of the child's misbehavior: "I may not accept what you do, but I accept you." They need to know that enough so that when they are in trouble, when they do misbehave, they can still come to you—they'll still come; they won't be afraid to come to you. Now, if they don't have the sense that "my dad loves me no matter what I do; my mom loves me no matter what I do," they're not going to share their mess-ups with you. There needs to be that unconditional love.

B. **Show It with Touch**

And, you know, that love must needs not to be merely in words, but it has to have some physical attachments to it. We have to be constantly touching them, and hugging them, and holding them. Now, your big, old teenage boy—he'll act like he doesn't want that, but do it anyway. It's biblical. Luke chapter 15 and verse 20: when the prodigal son comes home, his father sees him, falls on his neck, hugs him, and kisses him (Luke 15:20). I saw a bumper sticker that said, "Kids need hugs, not drugs." They need somebody to physically teach them. You know what happens to teach them about this love that is a very physical thing? We have a generation of kids today who associate physical touching with sexual intimacy. They need to see beyond this. They need to be touched affectionately, and supportively, and playfully, and tenderly. If they don't get that, they're not going to feel your sense of true love. Let your kids see you and your wife, you and your husband, hugging one another—not just simply romantically or erotically, but let them learn how to be touched.

Charles Swindoll, whom we all love, wrote this—I want you to listen to it: "many a young woman who opts for immoral sexual relationships does so because she can scarcely remember a time when her father so much as touched her. Unaffectionate dads, without wishing to do so, can trigger a daughter's promiscuity. All of this leads me to write with a great deal of passion: dads, don't hold back your affection. Demonstrate your feelings of love and affection to both sons and daughters, and don't stop once they reach adolescence. They long for your affirmation and appreciation. They will love you for it. More importantly, they will emulate your example when God gives them their own

family.”

C. **Show It with Sympathy**

Love them unconditionally. Show it by touching. Show it by sympathy when they have their problems—and friend, they have their problems. Now, you may think that the problems that kids have are not big problems compared to your problems. They’re big to the kid, and that’s what matters. And lo, cry with them when they hurt, when their little grade-school romances break up. Be concerned about them with all of these things—when a pet dies. Did you ever attend a funeral for a turtle or a dog? We’ve had some of those at our homes, and I know what it is to hold a grown daughter in my arms and literally cry with her as she cries. Show them sympathy.

And, the point I’m trying to make is this—that not only do you need to give them an example, you need to give to them unconditional love. Got it? Say, “Got it.”

III. **Give Them Constant Encouragement**

Okay, now, number three: You need to give to them constant encouragement—constant encouragement. Listen to verse 21: *“My son, let them not depart from thine eyes: keep sound wisdom and discretion. So shall they be life unto thy soul, and grace to thy neck. Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble”*—do you hear the encouragement here?—*“When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid: yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet. Be not afraid of sudden fear, neither of the desolation of the wicked, when it cometh. For the LORD shall be thy confidence, and shall keep thy foot from being taken”* (Proverbs 3:21–26). Now, here’s the wisest man who lived—purely human—outside the Lord Jesus, who was Solomon, and can you see the sense in which he’s talking to his son and who is encouraging his son.

You bless your children with encouragement. When you regularly encourage a child, what you’re doing is giving to that child confidence, and confidence is so needed. What you’re really doing is blessing the child. Over and over again, we ask our Heavenly Father what? What is the one thing we probably say more than any thing else when we pray to our Heavenly Father? “O God, bless me—God, bless me.” You want your Heavenly Father to bless you. I’m telling you, your child needs a blessing from his earthly father, and that blessing is encouragement.

Children need encouragement like a plant needs water. Somebody gave me a houseplant a while back. I put it in my study. It was beautiful for about a week and a half; and then, I looked over at it, and it was doing this. I thought, “What happened to my plant?” I said, “Well, come to think of it—it’s been two or three weeks. I haven’t put a drop of water on it.” I went and got a Styrofoam cup and poured about three or four cups of water on it, and I’m telling you, in several hours, that plant was just like this.

Encouragement is to a child what water is to a dehydrated plant.

Encourage them. Rather than trying to catch them doing something wrong, try to catch them doing something right. Let your speech not always be negative; let it be positive.

Now, I want to tell you something: there is a difference between praise and encouragement. A lot of us think we're encouraging a child when we're praising a child, and we may really be discouraging a child by praise. Let me show you the difference between praise and encouragement.

Praise said, "Son, you got all "A"s; I'm proud of you," or, "Son, boy, you really did great in the game. We would've lost the game had it not been for you. Son, you're really a great athlete." And, you praise him. What are you saying to that child, really? You're saying, "You know, my dad is really proud of me because of what I do." Now, suppose sometimes he doesn't do so well. Suppose sometimes he does not achieve; suppose he does not make straight "A"s. Now, what does that say to his mind? You see, that's praise.

What is encouragement? Encouragement might be to say—say, "Son, we didn't win the game, but son, I saw you were really trying. Thank you, son, for that. Well, you didn't make straight "A"s. I'll tell you one thing you have done: I saw you study; you did your homework, and I'm grateful for that. I really believe that you tried as best you know how." Do you see the difference? It may be a subtle thing, but learn to encourage these kids. Encouragement says, "I love you; I'm grateful for you—not necessarily because you achieved, but because of who you are."

Bill Glass was a great football player in my generation, now is a prison evangelist and is a good friend. Bill Glass goes into prisons, and many times he'll ask those prisoners a question like this: "How many of you had a father who said to you, 'You will never amount to anything. One of these days you're gonna end up in prison'?" Almost every one of them lifted his hand—almost every one. "You'll never amount to anything. One of these days you're going to end up in prison."

IV. Give Them Wise Instruction

Friend, give them an example. Give them unconditional love. Give them encouragement. Now, it's time to give them wise instruction. Look in Proverbs 2, verses 1 through 7—here's the instruction; listen to it: "*My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; If thou seekest her*"—that is, knowledge—"as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh

knowledge and understanding. He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: [and] he is a buckler to them that walk uprightly" (Proverbs 2:1–7). And then, the corresponding passage—Proverbs 22, verse 6: *"Train up a child in the way [that] he should go: and when he is old, [he'll] not depart from it"* (Proverbs 22:6). Now, we give them wise instruction, but wise instruction is always joined to training.

By the way, when your children are little, it's always good to have family worship, to start the day with the Word of God. Now, my wife and I tried all kinds of things with our kids for family worship. I want to give you one of the simplest, easiest forms of family worship. I don't know why I didn't discover it a long time ago; it is such a blessing. We still do it with our grandchildren, with our grown children, at breakfast when they're there. Say, we just let somebody choose a proverb—one of the little children old enough to read, or a grown child—choose a proverb. And, they take the Bible and choose a proverb. They can do it at random or at, like sometimes they do, a... Book of Proverbs is basically the same as the number of days in the month. Choose a proverb for that particular day. If it's the seventh, choose from the seventh chapter of Proverbs, and read a proverb—just one—and let that child explain what he thinks that proverb means. And then, everybody else just talk about it for a few moments. It is so simple. But, what you're doing when those children are learning those proverbs and having to think about what it means—that is distilled wisdom. That is something that's just a nugget of truth that they can carry with them to school and to work. But, what I'm trying to say is give them wise instruction, but let that instruction be joined with training. *"Train up a child"* (Proverbs 22:6).

Brother Howard and I were in my office back there, and Jim Shoemaker, a few moments ago, and we were talking. And, I said, "You know, the thing I appreciate about Crown Ministries is that it's going to be training. Now, Brother Howard could come give a lecture, as he said—we'd get all excited. But, Crown Ministries is training; it is getting in there where we train." Now, I used to play football. You say, "You probably played without a helmet." I used to play football. I'll guarantee you one thing, friend: nobody ever learned to play football by merely reading a book about it, right? You have to train to play football. You have to train to learn particular things.

You ever watch a man train a dog—a hunting dog? By the way, it's an amazing thing to go out hunting. I've done that a few times, and you animal rightists don't write me a letter. I know how you feel; here's how I feel. All right. Now, go out bird hunting—we eat the birds, too—go out bird hunting. Watch your dog that has been trained. That is an amazing thing. You have to train a dog. I saw a man the other day downtown—he had a dog on a leash...a little stick...he had a bird on a thing. I thought, "My goodness! I wonder, if he has any kids, I wonder what he does with his kids." If a man would spend that much time just training his dog—I mean, if he spent that much time with his kid as

he does with his dog—I don't know. But, probably that man ties his dog up at night and lets his kids run wild.

Train—train. Give instruction—line upon line, precept upon precept. The prime educational institution is the home. Did you know, sadly, we have a generation of kids today who don't even know right from wrong? They really don't. Josh McDowell said this—and he's talking about church kids; listen to this—according to his research—this is frightening; listen to it—57% of our young people cannot even say that an objective standard of truth exists. That's church kids! More than half of them don't even believe that there is a fixed standard of right and wrong, and 85% of our kids are liable to reason like this: “just because it's wrong for you doesn't mean that it is wrong for me.” Over half—55%—agree with this statement: “everything in life is negotiable.” There's, in their mind, no distinction between a fixed standard of right or wrong as given in the Ten Commandments.

Look up here, and let me ask you a question: How many of you—don't answer these questions out loud, but—think it's a disgrace that the Ten Commandments have been taken from the walls of America's schools and some are trying to remove them from public places? Most of us would agree with that. Second question: How many of you have the Ten Commandments posted in your home? Don't answer that; it'd be too embarrassing. Third question: How many of you parents who grouse about your kids not being able to read the Ten Commandments in school know the Ten Commandments? There are some of you, if I were to pull you out and bring you up here—you've been members of this church for years—you couldn't name the Ten Commandments in order if I gave you a Ferrari. That's right—you couldn't do it. Oh, our kids need to know. Our kids don't know the difference between right and wrong. How are they gonna learn it if we do not give them wise instruction and that instruction is joined with training? Secular humanists have taken us over.

V. Give Them Reasonable Restrictions

Number five: Give them reasonable restrictions. Now, underscore the word reasonable. Proverbs 6, beginning in verse 20: *“My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother: Bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them [around] about thy neck. When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee. For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light, and [the] reproofs”—notice this—“[the] reproofs of instruction are the way of life”* (Proverbs 6:20–23). Now, we set goals for our kids—at least, encourage them to set goals for themselves. But, we also need to give them limitations. There are some things that need to be denied; they are restrictions.

Now, we have a society today that believes that's wrong, but I want to say that God

had some children, put them in the Garden of Eden, and God gave them some limitations. God gave some restrictions to His original pair, Adam and Eve. Limitations don't bind the child; really, they set them free. When you give a child limitations, restrictions, he will push against them. If they give, that child will have no confidence whatsoever; he will feel unloved if those restrictions move. And, if you don't put limitations on him, he will allow somebody else to do the same thing. It is an amazing thing. No limitation on a child implies that you have rejected that child, and that's the reason so many children are conquered by somebody else.

Now, limitations today are looked on as something bad, but they're not. And, sometimes we, as parents, need to stop trying to win popularity contests and just simply say there are some restrictions. Now, don't make a lot of little rules; make a few big ones, and keep them. As a matter of fact, I tried, when I was praying this message, I tried to think about what the big rules were in our home, and basically only two—basically only two—but they were iron-clad. Number one: No dishonesty—don't you ever lie to me. That's wrong. No dishonesty. Number two: No disrespect—no disrespect. And, especially, you better not disrespect your mama while I'm around. Now, there are some things I'll look the other way; there are some things I'll wink at, but don't tell me a lie—no dishonesty and no disrespect.

Now, there are some subsets of those things, but have some limitations. Have them real. One—talking about no disrespect—one of our deacons here in our church (and I'll not call his name, because one of his kids is involved), but one of his kids sassed his mama. I like what this deacon did. He said to that boy, teen—I believe he said, “Son, you've sassed your mother, and you sinned against God when you did that. And, that's between you and God. You're gonna have to get it right with God, and you've sinned against her. And, that's between you and your mother, and you're gonna have to get it right with her. But, I say”—he said something else; I like this—“not only is she your mother, but she's my wife, and you can't talk to my wife that way.” I like that: “she is my wife, and I'm not gonna have any man, you or anybody else, disrespecting my wife.” I bet he didn't do it again—for a short time, anyway. All right. Now, you owe to them restrictions, and and find out what they are.

VI. Give Them a Listening Ear

Now, next—and we've got to hurry—give to them a listening ear. Proverbs 18, verses 13 and following: *“He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is a folly and shame [to] him. The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity”—*that is, “his weakness”—*“but a wounded spirit who can bear?”*—I mean, if a child's spirit is broken, it's terrible—*“The heart of the prudent getteth knowledge; and the ear of the wise seeketh knowledge”* (Proverbs 18:13–15). You have to be willing to listen when they want to talk.

Now, many times they won't talk. Our oldest son—he's a dear kid; I love him, but there are times when he's like the sphinx. And, he just wouldn't talk, and then, suddenly, it would always be after midnight—he'd open up, and talk and talk and talk and talk. And, Joyce and I would say, "This is a golden moment." And, we'd sit there and listen. You have to be ready when they're ready.

And, you have to make time. Take that daughter, that granddaughter, on a date; go take them out to a meal. One of the best things to do if you have a kid that just won't open up to begin with—take them on a drive. Drive 150 miles, and neither one of you have to say anything. And then, suddenly it will begin to happen, where you can talk and listen to these kids. Make it happen. Be ready. Don't be in a rush. Listen to them. Never be too busy to listen to your child, especially a teenager. I must rush past that to get to the last thing.

VII. Give Them a Happy Environment

Give them a happy environment—give them a happy environment. Listen to Proverbs 15, verse 13: *"A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance: but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken. The heart of him that hath understanding seeketh knowledge: but the mouth of fools feedeth on foolishness. All the days of the afflicted are evil: but he that is of a merry heart hath a continual feast. Better is little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble therewith. Better is a dinner of herbs"—that's a vegetable plate—"where love is, than a stalled ox"—that's filet mignon—"and hatred therewith"* (Proverbs 15:13–17). That's what he's talking about. A vegetable plate is better than a steak dinner if you have love, if you have joy, if you have happiness.

Let your home be filled with laughter and fun. So many times kids ask my kids, "What's it like being raised in a preacher's home? Does your father go around the house preaching all day long? What's it like?" I dare say that our home is far above the average in laughter, and fun, and joy, and silliness.

Let me tell you how to raise kids: be firm, be fair, and be fun. Don't be ashamed if you have a sense of humor. Psychologists tell us that a good sense of humor is one of the highest signs of intelligence, and laughter lubricates the home. And, let your home ring with laughter. This verse talks about those that have a broken spirit. Now, when the string is snapped, the spark, the zest, the enthusiasm, the fight is gone. Now, I'm not talking about coarse, unclean laughter. And, the Bible warns in Ephesians 5, verse 4: *"Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving thanks"* (Ephesians 5:4).

You say, "Does God believe in laughter?" Let me give you a verse—Genesis 21, verse 6: *"And Sarah said, God hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me"* (Genesis 21:6). God gave her a son. Do you know what she called her son?

Isaac. Do you know what Isaac means? Laughter! By the way, learn to laugh at yourself. Learn to laugh at your problems. You'll have plenty to laugh at.

When I was a kid down in Florida we had a terrible hurricane to come through and my dad was out there with the other men nailing up plywood on the windows and doing all this stuff and the wind was chilled. My dad came in and he shivered and all the electricity was off and my dad came into the house and shut the door against the wind. I'm a little boy there, eyes wide, wondering if our house is gonna blow away, is this it? My dad so cold. He looked at my mother and said, I'd give five dollars for a cup of coffee. My mother went to the tap, filled the pot with water, put it on the gas stove, made him a cup of coffee. He forgot we had a gas stove. He looked at her, reached in his pocket, and gave her five dollars, and we just had a big laugh, just a big laugh, just a time of tension. Just learn how to laugh.

Conclusion

Friend, listen—you can have a gifted child, if you'll give a child these seven gifts. And, I promise you on the authority of the Word of God it'll make a difference in your home. I thank God for Christian homes. I don't know of any thing any better than a Christian home. Your home doesn't exist so you can do your business; your business exists so you can have your home. And, may I tell you this—that God ideally wants everybody to have three homes? You know what they are? A family home, a church home, and a heavenly home. Jesus is the greatest homebuilder; Satan is the greatest home-wrecker.

God wants you to have a family home. Now, maybe you're an orphan. Maybe you're divorced. Maybe you're separated. Then, you need some friends that'll be sort of a family to you. That's one of the good reasons we have Bible fellowship classes in churches. But, you need some kind of a family home; and then, you need a church home. You need a place with your brothers and sisters in Christ. And then, you need to know that you know that you know that when you die, you're going to Heaven, to the Father's house. Now, Jesus is the key to all three. You have to know the Lord Jesus Christ.

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed. If you'd like to receive Jesus Christ, I invite you to pray this prayer after me. Now, don't just repeat words; make it your prayer: "Dear God, thank You for loving me. I need to be saved. I'm a sinner. I'm lost. My sin deserves judgment, but I need and I want mercy. Lord Jesus, thank You for paying for my sin with Your blood on the cross. Thank You that You suffered, bled, and died for me, that I might be saved. Thank You, Jesus. Lord Jesus, I open my heart. I receive You now by faith as my Lord and my Savior. Come into my life. Forgive my sin. Cleanse me. Forgive me. Save me"—pray it from your heart—"save me, Lord Jesus."

Did you ask Him? Then, thank Him for doing it. Pray this way: “Thank You for saving me, Jesus. I receive it by faith, and that settles it. You’re now my Lord, my Savior, my God, and my friend. And, Lord Jesus, I will not be ashamed of You. I will make this public. In Your name I pray. Amen.”

How to Be the Father of a Wise Child

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: June 16, 1996

Main Scripture Text: Proverbs 1:20–22

“How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?”

PROVERBS 1:22

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Conclusion

Introduction

Sometimes children are caught up in the mistakes, and the pride, and the arrogance of their parents, and more than often it's the pride and arrogance of the father.

*It was the schooner Hesperus,
That sailed the wintry sea;
And the skipper had taken his little daughter,
To bear him company
Blue were her eyes as the fairy flax,
Her cheeks like the dawn of day,
And her bosom white as the hawthorn buds,
That ope in the month of May.
The Skipper he stood beside the helm,
His pipe was in his mouth,
And he watched how the veering flaw did blow
The smoke now West, now South.
Then up and spake an Old Sailor,
Had sailed the Spanish Main,
"I pray thee, put into yonder port,
For I fear a hurricane.
"Last night the moon had a golden ring,
And to-night no moon we see!"
The skipper, he blew whiff from his pipe,
And a scornful laugh laughed he.
Colder and louder blew the wind,
A gale from the Northeast,
The snow fell hissing in the brine,
And the billows frothed like yeast.
Down came the storm, and smote amain
The vessel in its strength;
She shuddered and paused, like a frightened steed,
Then leaped her cable's length.
"Come hither! come hither! my little daughter,
And do not tremble so;
For I can weather the roughest gale
That ever wind did blow."
He wrapped her warm in his seaman's coat
Against the stinging blast;
He cut a rope from a broken spar,
And bound her to the mast.*

*“O father! I hear the church bells ring,
Oh, say, what may it be?”
“Tis a fog-bell on a rock bound coast!”—
And he steered for the open sea.
“O father! I hear the sound of guns;
Oh, say, what may it be?”
“Some ship in distress, that cannot live,
In such an angry sea!”
“O father! I see a gleaming light.
Oh, say, what may it be?”
But the father answered never a word,
A frozen corpse was he.
Lashed to the helm, all stiff and stark,
With his face turned to the skies,
The lantern gleamed through the gleaming snow
Oh his fixed and glassy eyes.
Then the maiden clasped her hands and prayed
That saved she might be;
And she thought of Christ, who stilled the wave,
On the Lake of Galilee.
And fast through the midnight dark and drear,
Through the whistling sleet and snow,
Like a sheeted ghost, the vessel swept
Tow’rds the reef of Norman’s Woe.
And ever the fitful gusts between
A sound came from the land;
It was the sound of the trampling surf,
On the rocks and hard sea-sand.
The breakers were right beneath her bows,
She drifted a dreary wreck,
And a whooping billow swept the crew
Like icicles from her deck.
She struck where the white and fleecy waves
Looked soft as carded wool,
But the cruel rocks, they gored her side
Like the horns of an angry bull.*

*Her rattling shrouds, all sheathed in ice,
With the masts went by the board;
Like a vessel of glass, she stove and sank,
Ho! ho! the breakers roared!*

*At daybreak, on the bleak sea-beach,
A fisherman stood aghast,
To see the form of a maiden fair,
Lashed close to a drifting mast.*

*The salt sea was frozen on her breast,
The salt tears in her eyes;
And he saw her hair, like the brown sea-weed,
On the billows fall and rise.*

*Such was the wreck of the Hesperus,
In the midnight and the snow!
Christ save us all from a death like this,
On the reef of Norman's Woe!*

—HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

There are many children who are going to be shipwrecked because of the pride and the arrogance of their fathers, who will not do what they ought to do to guide those children into a safe and secure haven. And, they make shipwreck not only of their own lives, but the lives of their children bound to the mast of their own ignorance.

Listen to God's Word here—Proverbs chapter 1, verse 1: *"The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel; To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding; To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity"*—now, watch, especially, verse 4—*"To give subtilty to the simple, [and] to the young man knowledge and discretion. A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels"* (Proverbs 1:1–5). And then, begin to read with me in verse 20: *"Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets: She crieth in the chief place of the concourse, [and] the openings of the gates: in the city she uttereth her words, saying, How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?"* (Proverbs 1:20–22).

Now, if you don't mind marking your Bible, I want you to take your Bible and underscore three words in that passage. I want you to underscore in verse 22 the word *simple*. Then, I want you to underscore the word *scorers*, and then I want you to underscore the word *fools*. I want to talk to you today about "How to be the Father of a Wise Child."

And, what you have here in this one verse in Proverbs chapter 1, verse 22, is what I want to call “the evolution of a fool.” And, God have mercy upon the man, the woman, who has a fool for a daughter, a fool for a son. Children begin as simple. The word *simple* simply means “open”; it means “naive.” The Hebrew word is the word *open*. It has nothing to do with intellectual ability. We’re not talking about a simpleton; we’re not talking about a person who does not have gray matter. As a matter of fact, a simple child may grow up to be a doctor, lawyer, an architect, a politician—may even grow up to be a minister. Simple—simple—just simply means “plastic mentality, open, naïve.” So, just write the word “naïve” by the word *simple*.

And then, the next word he mentions is the *scorner*. Now, here, the scorner is different from the simple. The simple is more or less innocent, but the scorner—today, just write the word “smart aleck”—“smart aleck.” Or, in business, write the word “cynic.” Or, in the university, you might write the word “sophisticate.” These are the scornful—the scornful.

But then, the next step is the fool—the fool. Now, write by the word *fool* the word “rebel”—“arrogant,” “wicked.” Again, the word *fool* does not have the idea that a person is lacking in mental ability. He may be very wise to do evil. The word has a moral base; it means “without any ability to discern.”

Now, we are in serious trouble in America. And, I’ll tell you what happened in America: in 1962, prayer in public schools was declared unconstitutional. In 1963, in America, Bible reading in the public school was declared unconstitutional. In 1973, the killing of pre-born children was declared to be a right guaranteed by the Constitution. In 1980, the Ten Commandments were deemed to be illegal to be posted on school walls. And, one of the reasons why they said so—if a child read those commandments, he might be tempted to emulate them. And so, they’re taken down. You see, the secular humanist had proven to be great strategists. They tried to find one segment of life that almost every American school child will pass through—that is education. So, they targeted public education to be the Sunday Schools for their humanistic philosophy. And, in order to do that, they wanted to purge out any vestige of Christian influence.

So, what has happened in the last years? Well, prayer is out; policeman are in. Bibles are out; “values clarification” is in. The Ten Commandments are out; rape and armed robbery, gang warfare, murder, and cheating are in. Instruction that tells us that we were created in the image of God is out; evolution is in. Corporal punishment is out; disrespect and rebellion is in. Traditional values are out, and unwed motherhood is in. Abstinence is out, and condoms and abortion are in. Learning is out, and social engineering is in. History is out, and revisionism is in. One hundred thousand of America’s children are in prison. Sixty-five out of 1,000 children between 7 and 11 have already received psychiatric help. One million girls between the ages of 12 and 17 will

get pregnant this year and bear a child. That does not count those who will have an abortion. One in five of America's children use drugs at least twice a week. Ten million American children are infected with venereal disease. The suicide rate among children is staggering: between 10 and 15% of America's children try suicide or at least seriously contemplate it—some of them as young as 6 or 7.

And, the problem, primarily, believe it or not, is with fathers—arrogant fathers who fail to accept their responsibility. I want to talk to dads today, and I want to tell you how not to be the father of a fool—“How to be the Father of a Wise Child.” Now, go back to these three categories of persons that we looked at here in verse 22 and let me describe them more carefully, and I think you'll recognize some children that you know.

I. The Simple

First of all, let's think of the ignorance of the simple. How is he described?

A. The Simple Loves Simplicity

Look, if you will, in verse 22: *“How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity?”* (Proverbs 1:22). That's his first mark: he loves his simplicity. He enjoys being a child. He enjoys the carefree life. He doesn't like any serious thoughts. One teenager said, “I am worried: my dad slaves away at this job so I won't have to need for a thing and so I can have a college education; my mom spends every day washing, and ironing, and picking up my things, and looking after me—and she takes care of me when I'm sick.” His friend said, “You're worried? What are you worried about?” He said, “I'm afraid they might try to escape.” We... The children just love having everything done for them—the carefree, simple life.

B. The Simple Lacks Understanding

But, not only that—he lacks understanding. Go to Proverbs chapter 9. And, by the way, we're going to stay in Proverbs, so get your Bibles open and keep them in your lap. Proverbs chapter 9, verses 1 to 4: *“Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars: She hath killed her beasts; she hath mingled her wine; she hath also furnished her table. She hath sent forth her maidens: she crieth upon the highest places of the city”—*that is, “Wisdom has prepared a banquet of learning knowledge and truth.” And, notice to whom the invitation goes—*“Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: as for him that wanteth”—*or, “needeth”—*“understanding”* (Proverbs 9:1–4). Now, a simple person loves his simplicity; he lacks understanding. As I say, one day he may be a lawyer, a banker, a surgeon, but he lacks spiritual wisdom and spiritual understanding. He just doesn't know.

C. **The Simple Is Easily Led into Error**

Now, because he's carefree and because he lacks understanding, he is easily led into error. Turn to Proverbs 14 and look in verse 15—here's a key verse about the simple: *"The simple believeth every word"*—now, just put that down—*"the simple believeth every word"* (Proverbs 14:15). Remember I told you that the Hebrew word for simple means "open." He *"[believes] every word"*—that is, he's easily led—*"but the prudent man looketh well to his going"* (Proverbs 14:15). And so, a simpleton, or a simple child, is easily led.

Now, listen—let me tell you something: it doesn't mean he doesn't believe something. He will believe something. He'll believe anything. He's an easy target for Madison Avenue. He's an easy target for MTV, for *Beavis and Butthead*, for false religions, for sinful friends. He's like a sponge. He believes everything. He's easily led into error because he's so open.

I heard about a young, simple boy who had some puppies, and his mama said, "You have to get rid of all of them but one." So, he's trying to sell the last puppy, and he was trying to sell it for five dollars. And, a grown man said, "Son, the reason you can't sell that puppy is that you didn't put a high enough price for him, and people don't think he's worth much." And so, when he came back the next day, the boy said, "Well, sir, I have decided that I am going to sell this puppy for 100 dollars." "Well," the man said, "son, I didn't mean that much, but see if you can do it." Later on, he saw the man and said, "Sir, I want you to know I sold my puppy." He said, "Did you get 100 dollars?" He said, "Indeed, I did." He said, "Well, not exactly"—said, "I took two 50-dollar cats." Now, that's the simple child. He's easily led into error. You can you can trick him. You can flim-flam him.

D. **The Simple Is Living in Danger**

And, but, he's living in constant danger. Look at that verse again in verse 15—chapter 14, verse 15: *"The simple believeth every word: but [a] prudent man looketh well to his going"* (Proverbs 14:15). Now, a child doesn't do that. He doesn't look forward. He doesn't plan for the future. And, therefore, he's living in danger.

Look in chapter 22 and verse 3: *"A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished"* (Proverbs 22:3). What does that mean? That means that if a person were wise and prudent, he would see danger. But, the simple child thinks he's indestructible. They never think about the future. And, therefore, your child is like a pig being led to the slaughter.

Now, Madison Avenue knows this. Joe Camel knows it. The brewers know it. A *USA Today* report said, "Every 22 minutes someone dies in a drinking, driving crash. Odds are 1 in 3 that the victim is 15 to 24. Most likely, beer is involved." And yet, you can go

to Memphis State for a basketball game and see beer advertised all over the stadium—see beer advertised there every time you took up to the score. But, listen to this statistic again. This is not coming from a Baptist preacher; this is *USA Today*: “Every 22 minutes someone dies in a drinking, driving crash. Odds are 1 in 3 that the victim is 15 to 24. Most likely, beer is involved.” Now, that’s the simple for you. He’s careless. He’s carefree. He’s easily led. He thinks he’s indestructible. He has no idea about danger. He just passes on and is punished.

II. The Scorner

Now, let’s move and think not only about the simple and think about the scorner. You see, the next step—after a person is naïve, he becomes, if he’s not led by his dad and his mom, he becomes a smart aleck. He’s the cynic in business; he’s the mocker at the university. Now, what are his marks?

A. The Scorer Delights in Scorning

Well, go back again to chapter 1—Proverbs chapter 1 and verse 22—and look at it: *“How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity?”*—now, watch this—*“and the scorers”*—now, watch this—*“delight in their scorning”* (Proverbs 1:22). He delights in his scorning. He gets his jollies out of being a smart aleck. And, what a terrible condition this is! It breaks my heart to say it, but most teenagers—older teenagers—in America, are now scorers. We’ve lost a generation. They are now scorers. They have the devil’s initials carved in their hearts. They have his slimy fingerprints on their minds.

B. The Scorer Defies Instruction

And, because he delights in scorning, he defies instruction. Turn to Proverbs chapter 13 and look, if you will, in verse 1: *“A wise son heareth his father’s instruction: but a scorner heareth not rebuke”* (Proverbs 13:1). Boy, underscore that. Dads, you need to learn this: *“A wise son heareth his father’s instruction: but a scorner heareth not rebuke”* (Proverbs 13:1). You can always tell a scorner, but you can’t tell him much. He won’t listen. He’ll tune you out. He has ears, but he will not hear. And, when you talk to him, it’s like pouring water on a rock; it’s like talking to a brick wall.

C. The Scorer Despises the Good and the Godly

But, not only does he delight in his scorning, not only does he defy instruction, but he literally despises the good and the godly. Look in chapter 15, verse 12: *“A scorner loveth not [the] one that reproveth him: neither will he go unto the wise”* (Proverbs 15:12). A scorner will never come to his dad and say, “Dad, I need help. Will you help me out?” He’ll never go to his teacher, his pastor, his youth pastor, and say, “Will you help me?” Oh, no. As a matter of fact, when you try to correct the scorner, what’s going

to happen is he is going to look at you and he's going to say with his eyes, "I hate your guts." Rebuke a scorner, and he will insult you. Turn to Proverbs 9—chapter 9—and verses 7 and 8. I told you you were going to be turning a lot, so just do it. Listen to it: *"He that reproveth a scorner [giveth] himself shame: and he that rebuketh a wicked man [giveth] himself a blot. Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee: rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee"* (Proverbs 9:7–8). And so, you just rebuke a scorner, and he will fire back at you. You cannot tell him anything—he will shoot off the lip at you.

D. The Scorer Is Destined for Destruction

Now, I pray God that you'll not raise a scorner. This message may be too late for some people already today. Now, a scorner was once simple, but he became a scorner. And, what is going to happen to him is he is destined for destruction. Look in Proverbs chapter 13 and verse 1: *"A wise son heareth his father's instruction: but a scorner heareth not rebuke"* (Proverbs 13:1). We've already read that, but now I want you to skip on down to verse 13: *"Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed"* (Proverbs 13:13). He won't listen. And, God says he's destined for destruction. He laughs at you, but he'll laugh his way right into Hell. And, once he's there he can't laugh his way out. But, there is some hope for the scorner. The scorner is very hard to reach, but the scorner can be reclaimed.

III. The Fool

But now, I want you to think about the third category. First we said there was the simple, the naïve, the open, the carefree. He becomes, then, the smart aleck—the scorner—if he's not taught. But then, the scorner becomes the fool. Now, go back to the text again in Proverbs chapter 1 and look at in verse 22: *"How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity?"*—the simple one loves his carefree life—*"and the scorners delight in their scorning"*—the smart aleck gets his jollies out of his scorning. But now, notice—*"and fools hate knowledge?"* (Proverbs 1:22). Now, here's the difference: the scorner is insolent, but the fool is immovable.

A. The Fool Rejects Wisdom

Now, notice what he does: the fool rejects wisdom; he hates wisdom. Look in Proverbs chapter 15 and verse 14: *"The heart of him that hath understanding seeketh knowledge: but the mouth of fools feedeth on foolishness"* (Proverbs 15:14). Now that they love foolishness, they literally feed on foolishness. Another word for that is *MTV*. Here he literally rejects wisdom.

B. The Fool Ridicules Righteousness

And then, he ridicules righteousness. Look in 14, verse 9: *"Fools make a mock at sin"*—

“fools make a mock at sin” (Proverbs 14:9). That’s the reason that you have these situational comedies that laugh at drunkenness, that laugh at adultery, that mock homosexuality and perversion. They mock at sin. Do you know who does that? Fools. *“Fools make a mock at sin”* (Proverbs 14:9). That’s what the Bible says: he rejects wisdom; he ridicules righteousness.

C. The Fool Rejoices in Iniquity

But, he’s not finished yet. He literally rejoices in iniquity. Proverbs 15, verses 20 and 21—look at that: *“A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish man despiseth his mother. Folly is [a] joy to him that is destitute of wisdom”* (Proverbs 15:20–21). He just actually rejoices in this wickedness. His moral sense has been so perverted that he thinks good is evil and evil is good.

You might want to put down on your notes, Proverbs, “Isaiah chapter 5 and verse 20”: *“Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!”* (Isaiah 5:20). Now, what’s going to happen to the fool? The fool is going to die and go to Hell. Turn to Proverbs chapter 17 and verse 10: *“A reproof entereth more into a wise man”—“entereth more into a wise man”—“than [a] hundred stripes into a fool”* (Proverbs 17:10). You cannot beat the foolishness out of a child. Don’t even try—don’t even try. Can’t be done! He won’t hear you. He is intransigent. He is fixed. His heart is hardened. His conscience is seared. His mind is defiled. Now, if he were wise, he could still go wrong. But, if he went wrong and God chastised him, then he would repent. *“Whom the [Father loves] he [chastens], and [scourges] every son whom he receiveth”* (Hebrews 12:6).

King David sinned terribly, but King David was a wise man in spite of his sin. And, when God chastised King David, King David repented, and he cried out to God for mercy. Pharaoh was a fool. And, when God judged Pharaoh, Pharaoh just hardened his heart more and more and more. If you have a child, and you have raised a fool, and then you think when he’s 18 and 185 pounds that you’re going to give him a whipping, just forget it! All you’re going to do is just to make him hate you all the more. A hundred strikes on the back of a fool is not going to do him any good. Putting him in prison is not... He needs to be in prison if he commits a crime, but he’s not going to change it. And, by the way, the purpose of prisons is not reformation; it’s punishment. But, it’s not going to change him. It’s going to make society a little safer.

But, you see, God gives us little children, and they’re what we call “simple.” But, if you’re not careful, we have a society that’s going to turn him into a smart aleck. And, if he does—if he’s not rescued when he becomes a scorner and a smart aleck—he’s going to become a fool, and he’s going to end up in Hell. He won’t even know the difference between right and wrong.

Conclusion

Well, let's go back in the few moments that we have left and look at the simpleton, or the simple, rather—not a simpleton, but just simple; the naive, the carefree child. What can you do, dads—what can you do, moms—so as not to raise a fool? I want to mention four things.

A. Expound the Truth

Number one: You need to expound truth. Go back to Proverbs chapter 1 and look in verses 1 through 4: *“The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel; To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding; To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity; To give subtilty to the simple, [and] to the young man knowledge and discretion”* (Proverbs 1:1–4). That's why God gave you the Proverbs.

I have four good and godly children, but if I could start over with my children again, I would saturate them in the Proverbs. We read the Proverbs, but I believe I would saturate them in the Proverbs. I would—I would—emblazon the Ten Commandments into their consciousness. I would teach them the Beatitudes, that they might learn these basic, simple truths. Expound truth. The battle is the mind. *“As the child thinks, so is he”* (Proverbs 23:7). And, who is the major teacher? The major teacher is the father. You read in Deuteronomy chapter 5, where God gave the Ten Commandments, and then in Deuteronomy chapter 6, God says to fathers, *“Teach these commandments to your sons and to your grandsons, that your family would survive and that your home would endure”* (Deuteronomy 6:2). You're going to have to fill in the outline. I'm just going to give you the main points. Number one: Expound truth.

B. Expose Sin

Number two: Expose sin—expose sin. The simple will learn by example. Turn to Proverbs chapter 19 please. This is a key verse, so let me hear the pages. Now, watch this: *“Smite a scorner, and the simple will beware”*—underscore that—*“Smite a scorner, and the simple will beware: and reprove one that hath understanding, and he will understand knowledge”* (Proverbs 19:25). Now, what does that mean? It means that a child who is carefree and careless, who is simple, needs to see the scorner smitten. He needs to see sin exposed and the fruit of sin.

Look in Proverbs 21, verse 11—the same thing is taught: *“When the scorner is punished, the simple is made wise”*—*“When the scorner is punished, the simple is made wise”* (Proverbs 21:11). Now, what does that mean? Do you know the worst thing that could happen to your child? It would be for your child to live in such a sinful society, as we have, and yet for your child not to see the repercussion of sin.

For example, he watches on television, and he sees people sleeping together. But,

he never sees any body get pregnant. He never sees an abortion. He never sees venereal disease. He never sees the breakup of a home—he doesn't see that. He doesn't see the scorner being smitten. He sees the guys in the bass boat hoisting a big can of beer, and smacking their lips, and slapping each other, and hugging each other, and giving each other high fives, and saying, "It never gets any better than this." That's right. It doesn't even get that good as a matter of fact. It always gets worse than that, but they never show him. Madison Avenue never shows him a drunkard in the gutter covered with vomit and flies. He doesn't show the alcoholic with delirium tremens. He doesn't show a man—a beered-up dad—coming home and beating up his kids. Madison Avenue doesn't do that. You see, they don't get to see the scorner smitten. Our children today are insulated. They don't know. That's the reason you need to help them understand. You need to expose sin—not only expound truth, but expose sin.

If you're a dad and you have a 9-, 10-, 12-, 14-year-old, you need to go some Friday and Saturday nights to the emergency room in the hospital about between 11 and 1:00 and let them see these people coming in after having gone through the windshield of an automobile after having been beered up. Let them see these people all sliced up and mangled. And, get the coroner at the county morgue, if you will, to let him let him see a dead body. Let him see somebody decapitated. You say, "Oh, good night!" Yes! They never see this. Take him down to skid row. Take him to the prisons. Let him see this. "Smite the scorner, and the simple will learn" (Proverbs 19:25). He thinks he's indestructible. He does not know. You need to pull back the veil.

You know, we have a society today that doesn't want... It shrinks from punishing criminals, and that's the reason why we're producing more. Let me—let me—give you a verse of scripture. Ecclesiastes chapter 8, verse 11—listen to it; this is a key verse: "*Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men*"—that is, your sons—"is fully set in them to do evil" (Ecclesiastes 8:11). Let me give it to you again: "*Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily*" (Ecclesiastes 8:11). There is one appeal, and then another appeal, and then another appeal, and then another appeal.

A boy in the ghetto can see his friends standing on the street corner selling dope. He can see the undercover agent come and arrest him. He's carried off. He's kind of smiling as they carry him off. He's kind of a hero. Two or three days he's right back on the same corner selling dope again. Now, what does that say? In the hearts and minds of what they say—there's no connection between crime and punishment: "*because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil*" (Ecclesiastes 8:11). What you need to do is expound truth and expose error. Pull away the veil.

C. Expel Scorners

Now, here's the third thing—and I'll get some disagreement about this, but I'm going to say it anyway: expel scorners; expound truth; expose error, and expel scorners. Turn, if you will, to Proverbs chapter 13, and look with me in verse 20: *“He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed”* (Proverbs 13:20). Moms and dads, underscore that: *“He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed”* (Proverbs 13:20). Turn to Proverbs 22 and verse 10: *“Cast out the scorner, and contention shall go out; yea, strife and reproach shall cease”—“cast out the scorner”* (Proverbs 22:10).

Now, ever so often we hear that this disruptive child, for his sake, needs to be able to stay there and disrupt everybody else. But, that's not what the Bible teaches. You're not doing him any good. You're only feeding his ego and depravity, and you are definitely corrupting those that that he is around. The Bible says cast him out (Proverbs 22:10). Now listen, do not let your children hang around with scorners and fools. Just don't do it. You help him select his friends, and that means you may have to be firm and cast out the scorner. Why? Because your child, if your child is naive, if your child is simple, they are going to be susceptible to peer pressure. And, as somebody said, “It's hard to fly with eagles when you're surrounded with turkeys.” And, you just let your kids run with turkeys. And, the Bible says, *“A companion of fools [will] be destroyed”* (Proverbs 13:20).

Now, peer pressure is not bad. It is good if the peers are good. So, that's all the more reason that you need to get the right kids in your home, and that's all the more reason that you need to make your home the headquarters for happiness. You need to say, “Come in, Mary, Susie, Bill, John, Martha”—whomever—“Michelle, come on into our house. You can have the house. You want to have a party? Have it over here. Boys, you want to raid the refrigerator? Go ahead and do it. You want to break down the couch? That's okay. You want to track the carpet? That's okay.” Friend, those things are small compared to your children. Let your home be the happiest place on earth. And, by the way, when you have them there, you can monitor those friends. And, when there's a scorner, a smart aleck, or a fool, you say, “Son, there's the sidewalk. Get on it.” The Bible says, *“Cast out the scorner, and contention...[will] cease”* (Proverbs 22:10).

Joyce and I have always tried to have the right guests in our home and make certain that when the guests are there that the children are there. If we're having important people in our home (what I consider to be important)—I don't mean the high muckety mucks, the rich, the wealthy, and the famous. I'm talking about people who know God and love God, and people of character—we want our children at the dinner table to listen to the conversation, and enjoy the conversation, and participate in the conversation. And friend, the Bible says that *“a companion of fools [will] be destroyed”*

(Proverbs 13:20), but those who are around wise people will be made wise. I wish I had more time for that. Give me two minutes, and I'll be finished.

D. Express Love

Here's the last thing, and you're going to have to fill in the last points. What you need—you need to expound truth. You need to expose sin. You need to expel scorners, and you need to express love. You need to express love. Look in Proverbs chapter 3 and verse 12: the Bible says here, *“For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth”* (Proverbs 3:12). Love your children. Delight in them. Be positive. Don't ever be negative. Words can hurt your children more than an open hand and a slap in the face. Learn to listen to them. Try to see life from their point of view. They're facing things you never faced.

1. Be Gentle

Be gentle. I have observed dads. I say, why is it that some children just adore and worship their dads, almost, and others hate their dads? What is the difference in dads? And, there's one characteristic that I've almost found in all true dads whose children love and follow them: those dads are gentle—they're gentle. And, it starts when they're children. Can you image what a big, harsh, overbearing dad would do to a little guy? I mean, just imagine walking out of this building tonight, this morning—just imagine walking out there on the front porch. There's a guy 17-feet-tall. You're looking at his kneecaps. And, let's say he has a voice like thunder, and he begins to talk to you and tell you what to do. My soul! Well, if he's that big and sounds like that, one thing you sure do hope is that he's gentle, don't you? That's what the children want out of their dads—somebody who's gentle. Oh, they want a dad they can look up to. They want a dad who is the strongest, wisest, smartest, fastest, richest, goodest dad—I know goodest is not a word—the best dad in all the world! But, they want him to be gentle. Touch them; hug them. Show other nonverbal language.

2. Be Transparent

Be transparent. Let them know of your fears, and your joys, and your disappointments, and your failures, and your goals. They already know you're not perfect; they just don't want you to phony.

3. Be Available to Them

And then, be available to them. Oh, I wish I had more time for that, but just take it as a priority that you're going to be available to your child.

Conclusion

You say, “Pastor Rogers, very frankly, I'm not adequate for what you've just described.” I know you're not; I'm not adequate. Listen to me. Don't any body move. Now, listen—

listen: none of us has what it takes to be this kind of a dad or mom. That's the reason we need Jesus, isn't it? That's the reason we need the Lord. That's the reason we've got to have Christ in our hearts—because the Christian life is not difficult; it is impossible. So, there's only One who can do it, and that's Jesus. But, He will do it in us and through us if we'll let Him. So, the best thing you can do for your children is to love God with all of your heart. Give your heart to Jesus.

Let's bow our heads in prayer. Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed—no one stirring, no one looking around. If you would like to be saved today, to be a child of God, if you'd like to know that your sin is forgiven, if you'd like to know that Heaven is your home, if you would like to have the power and wisdom that Jesus alone can give, I want to help you to invite Christ into your heart and trust him. Would you pray like this? "Dear Lord, I need You. I need to be saved. I'm a sinner. My sin deserves judgment. But, I need mercy, not judgment. I want You to forgive me, God. I want You to cleanse me. I want You to save me. Lord Jesus, You said if I would trust You, You would save me. I trust You right now, right this moment. I don't ask for a sign. I don't look for a feeling. I just stand on Your Word, and I receive You now as my Lord and Savior. Come into my heart. Forgive my sin. Save me, Jesus"—pray that prayer. Pray it. Pray it from your heart—"Save me, Jesus"—pray it. Ask Him to save you—"Save me, Jesus." Did you ask Him? By faith, pray this way: "thank You for saving me, Lord Jesus. I receive it by faith, like a little child. You're now my Lord and Savior. Give me the courage to make it public. In Your name I pray."

Your Child: Wise or Otherwise?

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: May 27, 1990

Main Scripture Text: Proverbs 1:20–22

“How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?”

PROVERBS 1:22

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Introduction

My dear friend, may I speak to you for a moment out of my heart? May I tell you, from my observation, that the devil is letting loose with all of the artillery of Hell against the homes of America? The devil knows that if he can hurt us at home, he has hurt us all over—and that's so true. You see, Satan is the greatest home-wrecker; Jesus Christ is the greatest homebuilder. Satan wants to bring discord into your home; Jesus wants to bring harmony into your home. With that in mind, I have written a little booklet called "The Music of Marriage." I'd like for you to have it. I'll send it to you free and post-paid, if you'll simply write and ask for it—"The Music of Marriage." Now, if you can't remember that, or you forget the title, just ask for the marriage booklet, and we'll send it to you with our love and with our blessings. We thank you for standing by this ministry. Thank you for praying for us. Thank you for loving us. And now, let us show our love to you. God bless you, dear friend.

Would you open your Bibles to Proverbs chapter 1, this morning? In a moment, I am going to begin reading in verse 20. I want to talk to you about how to raise a wise son, a wise daughter. The title of our message: "Your Child: Wise or Otherwise?" I was reading about a mother of three notoriously unruly teenagers, and she was asked this question: If she had it to do all over again, would she have children or would she not have children? She said, "I would, but not the same ones." Well, I think she probably was teasing, but she'd at least had thought about it. It was G. K. Chesterton who said that "we spend the first half of our lives fighting with our parents, the last half of our lives fighting with our children." It's kind of sad, isn't it?

Well, that's not the way that God intended it; and yet, we have to realize that something is drastically wrong in America. My dear friend, we are a needy generation. One hundred thousand children in America are in prison—100,000 of them. Four out of every ten live in a broken home. Sixty-five out of 1,000 children between the ages of 7 and 11 have been given or are receiving psychiatric help. One million teenage girls—teenage girls between the ages of 12 to 17—will get pregnant and will deliver a baby. That doesn't count those pregnancies that will be ended by abortion. Ten million teenagers in America are infected with venereal disease, and the suicide rate among children is staggering—between ten and fifteen percent. Did you hear me? Ten or 15% of America's children will contemplate or try suicide. Something is desperately and drastically wrong. And yet, God has given us a book—and a special book—in the book of books: the Book of Proverbs that tells us how to rear wise children.

I. Three Types of Children

Now, begin with me, if you would, in Proverbs chapter 1 and verse 20: the Bible says here, *“Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets: She crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates: in the city she uttereth her words, saying”*—now, here is the key verse; look at it (verse 22)—*“How long, ye simple ones”*—now, by the words “simple ones” just write “gullible teenager”—*“will ye love simplicity? and the scorers”*—by the word scorers write “smart aleck”—*“and the scorers delight in their scorning, and the fools hate knowledge?”* (Proverbs 1:20–22). Fools hate knowledge. By the word fools write the word “rebel.” There you have America’s teenage problem: gullible teenager, smart aleck, and rebel. May I tell you, dear friend, that the land is full of these?

You see, first of all, he mentions the simple; then, he mentions the scorner; and then, he mentions the fool. And, there is a definite progression here. This is the evolution of a fool. Now, no fool ever begins as a fool. Fools are self-made with a lot of help from the parents. But, first of all, a child begins as—what the Bible calls as—“simple”; and then, if he is not dealt with, he becomes a scorner; and then, if he is not dealt with, he becomes a fool. And, once he becomes a fool, there is hardly any help for him and hardly any hope for a fool. Now, what God is showing us here, in His Word, is how to raise a wise child and how to begin with a child, when he is what the Bible calls “simple,” and keep him from becoming a scorner and to keep him from becoming a fool.

A. The Gullible Teenager

Now, let’s look at what I want to call, first of all, the “gullible teenager.” The Bible calls him a “simple person” (Proverbs 1:22). That has nothing to do with his mental ability. Many people who were once simple are now surgeons and lawyers, doctors and ministers. The word, here—*simple*—comes from a root word which simply means “open.” That is, it is a person who is gullible or, as we would say, “naïve”—and that’s the way teenagers are. Now, look at how the Bible describes him in verse 22.

1. The Gullible Teenager Loves Simplicity

The Bible says that he loves simplicity (Proverbs 1:22). That is, he loves being a carefree, happy teenager. He does not want to think about anything serious. He enjoys it... Teenagers enjoy having it easy. One teenager said to another teenager—he said, “I’m really worried.” He said, “My dad slaves away at his job so I’ll never have to want for anything and can have college education. And, my momma—she spends day after day doing the washing, and the ironing, and cleaning up after me, and she looks after me when I’m sick.” His friend said, “Well, what are you worried about?” He said, “I’m afraid they are going to try to escape.” Dear friend, the teenagers like it—I mean, they like it when everything is easy. “They delight,” verse 22 says, “in simplicity” (Proverbs

1:22).

2. The Gullible Teenager Lacks Understanding

But, not only does the simple, the gullible, teenager love his simplicity—he lacks understanding. Look in Proverbs chapter 9 with me. And, by the way, just get your Bibles out, 'cause we're going to look at a lot of verses. Proverbs chapter 9, verses 1 through 4: "*Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars: She hath killed her beasts; she had mingled her wine; she hath also furnished her table*"—that is, "wisdom hath set a banquet"—"*She hath sent forth her maidens: she crieth upon the highest places of the city*"—that is, wisdom says, "Listen, I made a banquet. I want you to come and eat." And, who is the first one that wisdom invites?—"Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: as for him that wanteth understanding" (Proverbs 9:1–4)—that is, it literally means "the one that lacks understanding." He may be intelligent. He may blow the top off the SAT score, but he doesn't have understanding—that is, spiritual wisdom and insight from God's Word.

3. The Gullible Teenager is Led Easily

Now, notice—number one: He loves simplicity. Number two: He lacks understanding. Number three: He is lead easily. Look in Proverbs chapter 14 and verse 15, and here is one of the greatest dangers that face all teenagers—Proverbs chapter 14 and verse 15: "*The simple believeth every word*" (Proverbs 14:15). Do you see that? "*The simple believeth every word*" (Proverbs 14:15). He is a sitting duck for Madison Avenue. He is a sitting duck for anybody who wants to...humanism, false religion, sinful friends. He's just open; he's just naïve. Now, he is going to believe something, and if he doesn't believe what is wrong...

Let me tell you two true stories. True story number one: A man walked into a doctor's waiting room, and all of the people—when he walked in there for his doctor's appointment—all of the people in that waiting room were sitting around in their underwear—all of them. And, their clothes were hung on a rack in that room. That man came in there and surveyed the situation; every last person was sitting there in their underwear. Do you know what he did? He surveyed the situation. After a while, he removed his clothes, and hung them up on a rack, and sat down. True story.

Second true story: A man got on an elevator, and he noticed, on the elevator, that everybody was facing backwards. Everybody was facing the back wall; nobody was facing the door. There was no opening in the back wall, but everybody on that elevator was facing the back wall. This man got on the elevator, looked around, surveyed the situation, and stood there, and began to face the back wall as the elevator went up and down.

Now, those two episodes took place on *Candid Camera*. Remember that story—*Candid Camera* in the '60s and the '70s with Allen Funt? What had happened is they

had set that up, and it actually happened. A man came in, looked around, and said, “Well, everybody else has taken off their clothes; I’ll take off mine.” The other guy said that “everybody else is facing the back of the elevator; I will face the back of the elevator.” Friend, it is incredible—the power of peer pressure, public opinion, and how people want to conform to what other people are doing. It’s amazing; it’s just incredible. And, that is especially true about a teenager; that is especially true about a teenager. He is so easily led.

4. The Gullible Teenager Lives in Danger

Now, we are talking about the gullible teenager. First of all, he loves his simplicity. Number two: He lacks understanding. Number three: He is led easily. And, number four: He is living in danger. I want you to see in Proverbs chapter 22 and verse 3—here is a chilling verse for the simple. Now, we’re dealing with the simple. All of these verses deal with the simple. Proverbs chapter 22 and verse 3: “*A prudent man foreseeeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished*” (Proverbs 22:3). A wise man can look on down the pike, and he can prepare for the future; or, he can see danger, and he can get out of the way—but not a simpleton. Now again, I don’t mean that he is stupid. He just cannot think about danger. That’s the reason your teenager is so liable to maim himself after drinking beer and driving 60, or 70, or 80 miles an hour. He just can’t see the danger. He cannot think out ahead.

I was reading in this week’s *USA Today*. David Gergen reported last week, in *USA Today*, that every 22 minutes someone dies in a drinking and driving crash. And then, he said, “Odds are one in three that the victim is 15 to 24; most likely, beer is involved.” That’s just the simple. I mean, listen—he loves simplicity. He lacks understanding. He’s led easily, and he’s living in danger. That, my friend, is your teenager. That’s what the Bible calls “the simple”—“the simple.” And, the world is full of them. They’re not bad kids; they’re just simple. They need to be taught. They need to be given wisdom.

B. The Scorer

Now, let’s move on, because if you don’t deal with this simple, this gullible, teenager, what does he become? He becomes a scorer. Remember the next category in Proverbs chapter 1, verse 22? And, what is the scorer like? Well, go back to Proverbs chapter 1 and verse 22, and you’re going to see something about the scorer.

1. Scorners Delight in Their Scorning

You’re going to find out, first of all, in verse 22, that the scorners delight in their scorning. Now, what is a scorer? Well, in school, he’s called a “smart aleck.” In business, he’s called a “cynic.” In the university, he is called a “scoffer.” But, they’re all the same person, and the world is full of them. They are so hard to reach for the gospel. The Bible says concerning these in 2 Peter chapter 3 and verse 3: “in the last days

there shall come scoffers”—scorners—“walking after their own lusts” (2 Peter 3:3). Boy, we have plenty of them. They’ve got the devil’s initials carved in their hearts, and their lives are covered with the slimy fingerprints of sin. They’re scorners—they’re scorners. They are the devil’s delight.

2. Scorners Defy Instruction

Well, they delight in their scorning, and they defy instruction. It’s so hard—it’s easy to teach a simple child—but oh, it’s so hard to teach a scorner once he becomes a scorner. Look in Proverbs chapter 13 and verse 1, would you? Turn to it—Proverbs chapter 13, verse 1: *“A wise son heareth his father’s instruction: but a scorner heareth not rebuke”* (Proverbs 13:1). Once your child becomes a scorner, his ability to learn... Oh, dear friend, it is so difficult, because he gets a hardened attitude; he defies instruction. *You can always tell a scorner, but you just can’t tell him much.* Friend, he’ll tune you out. He has ears, but he won’t hear. And, when you talk to a scorner, it’s like talking to a brick wall. Parents, have you ever been there? Have you ever seen that teenager that’s a scorner? Not only does he delight in scorning—he loves to laugh and mock at good things, and holy things, and righteous things—he defies instruction.

3. Scorners Despise the Good and the Godly

I’ll tell you something else: He despises the good and the godly. Look, if you will, in Proverbs chapter 15 and verse 12. Look at it—Proverbs chapter 15 and verse 12: *“A scorner loveth not the one that reproveth him: neither will he go unto the wise”* (Proverbs 15:12). Don’t ever expect a scorner to sit down and say, “Dad, would you help me? I need some advice.” He does not love the person who gives him advice. He despises the good and the godly. And, if you try to straighten out a scorner, a smart aleck, he will look at you; and, if you look into his eyes—he may not be saying a word—but he’ll be saying with his eyes, “I hate your guts.” That’s the smart aleck. That’s the scorner. The Bible says he despises the godly. You rebuke him—he will insult you. Look, if you will, in Proverbs chapter 9 and verses 7 and 8: *“He that reproveth a scorner getteth to himself sham: and he that rebuketh a wicked man getteth himself a blot. Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee”* (Proverbs 9:7–8). The scorner just simply hates those who speak to him. I mean, he feels that the good and the godly are his enemies. He hates his teachers. He hates his parents. He hates his pastor. He hates his Sunday School teacher. He’s just a scorner.

4. Scorners are Destined for Destruction

He delights in scorning. He defies instruction. He despises the godly, and he’s destined for destruction. Look, if you will, in Proverbs chapter 13 and verse 1. What’s going to happen to the scorner? *“A wise son heareth his father’s instruction: but a scorner heareth not rebuke”* (Proverbs 13:1). He won’t listen. And, as a result, go down to verse

13, and see what happens: *“Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed”* (Proverbs 13:13). That’s what’s going to happen to him. The smart aleck—he can laugh his way into Hell, but he won’t laugh his way out once he gets there. And yet, even for the scorner, there is some hope. The scorner is so much harder to reach than the simple. The gullible child is easy to reach; the scorner is harder to reach.

C. **The Rebel**

But now, let’s move to the third category: the rebel, the rebel—what the Bible calls the “fool.” Now, you see, the scorner—he delights in his scorning. The simple loves his simplicity. But, in Proverbs chapter 1, verse 22, the Bible says concerning the fool—I want you to see what it is; it’s frightening. Look at it—verse 22—the Bible says: *“and fools hate knowledge”* (Proverbs 1:22). The first two are known by what they love, but the fool is known by what he hates.

1. **The Fool Rejects Wisdom**

The fool hates wisdom; he rejects wisdom. Look, if you will, in Proverbs chapter 1 and verse 7: *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction”* (Proverbs 1:7). You just can’t get through to him. Look in Proverbs chapter 15 and verse 5: *“A fool despiseth his father’s instruction”* (Proverbs 15:5). He just hates it. I mean, you tell him... He’s worse than a scorner. He literally hates it.

2. **The Fool Ridicules Righteousness**

But, not only does he reject wisdom—even worse than that, he ridicules righteousness. Look in Proverbs chapter 14 and verse 9: *“Fools make a mock at sin”* (Proverbs 14:9). And, by the way, America is filled with fools. Almost all of our entertainment makes a mock at sin, especially the Seventh Commandment that says, *“Thou shalt not commit adultery”* (Exodus 20:14). We got a bunch of fools who are standing up, calling themselves “comics,” and these comedy clubs now. And, all it is, is a fool displaying his foolishness by mocking at sin. You say, “Adrian, you’re not supposed to call a man a fool.” No, I’m letting God call him a fool. Listen, my dear friend, the Bible says that fools mock at sin (Proverbs 14:9). He just simply ridicules righteousness.

3. **The Fool Rejoices in Iniquity**

But now, wait a minute; it’s worse than this. Not only does he reject wisdom, not only does he ridicule righteousness, but he literally rejoices in iniquity. Look, if you will, in Proverbs 15 and verse 20. God have mercy upon the parents who have a child like this, but some who are sitting here do. *“A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish man despiseth his mother. Folly is a joy to him that is destitute of wisdom”* (Proverbs 15:20–21). He actually loves his iniquity. I mean, it’s just a joy to him. His moral sense is so destroyed—he is so perverted—that he cannot tell the difference between good and bad. Put in your margin “Isaiah 5, verse 20”: *“Woe unto them that call evil good, and*

good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter” (Isaiah 5:20).

4. The Fool is Reserved for Hell

He actually... Not only does the fool—listen—not only does the fool, friend, reject wisdom, ridicule righteousness, rejoice in sin, but may I tell you that the fool is reserved for Hell? Proverbs 17 and verse 10—I pray God that your son is not a fool; I pray that your daughter is not a fool—Proverbs 17, verse 10 says, *“A reproof entereth more into a wise man than an hundred stripes into a fool”* (Proverbs 17:10). You say, “My son’s a fool. I’ll beat it out of him.” No, you won’t—no, you won’t. You can put him in prison, but you won’t change him. You can take away his privileges, but you won’t change him. I’m gonna tell you something, my dear friend, I have studied the Book of Proverbs, and I can find hardly any hope whatsoever for a fool. Once he becomes a fool, it seems as though he has crossed the deadline. So, you better do some surveying. I’m not saying to stop praying for your child if he is a fool. Keep on praying. If he’s a genuine fool, keep on praying for him. Maybe God and mercy will save him.

II. What to Do with Your Children

But, I’m gonna show you what the Bible has to say about starting, my dear friend, with what he calls “the simple,” or even dealing, even more than that, with what he calls “the scorner.” But oh, dear mothers and dads, pray God that your child has not become a fool. Now, let me tell you what to do.

A. What to Do with the Simple

1. Start Early

First of all, you start early—you start early. Start with a child when he is a naïve, open teenager, or even way beyond that. Actually, before he is born, give him to the Lord. But, start early.

2. Continue Wisely

And then, continue wisely. Now, how can this tragedy be avoided? What should we do with the simpleton? How do we deal with this teenager? Well, we don’t have to guess. God’s Word tells us very clearly and very plainly. Now, look, if you will, in Proverbs chapter 1, beginning in verse 1. By the way, every father in this building, especially, and mothers included, need to master the Book of Proverbs. You need to read it over, mister businessman, daily, and you need to read this book with your son and explain it to him. Proverbs chapter 1, verse 1: *“The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel; To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding; To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity”*—now, watch verse 4—*“To give subtlety”*—that is, “understanding”—*“to the simple, to the young man knowledge*

and discretion” (Proverbs 1:1–4). What’s he saying? You start with the simple, when he is young—right here—and here is the book that God has given you to teach this child.

Dr. Paul Meyers wisely said there are five keys if you are going to be the right kind of a parent—five things that need to be included. Let me just tick them off. You write them down: love, discipline, constancy, example, and headship—love, discipline, constancy, example, and headship. Now, all of those are involved in raising a child. Now, let’s explore it just a little bit more and look at it.

a. Teach Him by Example

May I tell you that one of the chief ways that the simple learns is by example? Now remember, he’s open, and whatever example is set before him makes the great impression on him. Look, if you will, in Proverbs chapter 19 and verse 25—you’ve got what we call a naïve, gullible, easily led teenager—Proverbs chapter 19 and verse 25: *“Smite a scorner, and the simple will beware”* (Proverbs 19:25). Do you see that? That’s a key verse. *“Smite [the] scorner”* (Proverbs 19:25). It doesn’t say, “Smite the simpleton”; it says, *“Smite [the] scorner”* (Proverbs 19:25). That’s very interesting. Look in Proverbs chapter 21 and verse 11; you get the same thing: *“When the scorner is punished, the simple is made wise”* (Proverbs 21:11). Do you see that? *“When the scorner is punished, the simple is made wise”* (Proverbs 21:11). Do you know what the simpleton needs more than anything else? He needs to see the scorner punished. He needs to understand that you cannot sin with impunity and get away with it. Years ago, I heard about a mother who wrote a teacher a note and said, “Johnny is nervous. And so, if Johnny misbehaves in school, if you’ll just slap the kid next to him, Johnny will straighten up.” Well, there’s a smidgen of truth in that. Now, I don’t recommend that, but what he is saying is this—that when a child sees somebody else punished—a naïve, open, easily led teenager—that has a great effect on him.

Do you know the worst thing that could happen to our teenagers is? And, it is happening to teenagers in America. I’ll tell you what it is: it is what we call a “permissive society.” They do not see sin quickly punished. They don’t see it. You see, the Bible says in Ecclesiastes chapter 8, in verse 11: *“Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil”* (Ecclesiastes 8:11). That’s a great verse. You see, what we need is more punishment to follow quickly on the heels of transgression. You see, your teenager needs to be shown the wages of sin, very clearly and very plainly. He needs to see the scorner being smitten.

I was listening to television some while back, and on the national news program, Dan Rather’s program, he had a judge from Sacramento, California. His name was Gunther. And, he told about what Judge Gunther was doing with teenagers who were D.U.I.—driving under the influence. And, they were coming into Judge Gunther’s court

in Sacramento, and he was sentencing these kids in certain ways. Number one: He would take them down to the jail, and put them in the drunk tank for a while, and let them see those others round about them. Number two: However, he would take them and make them go, on a late Saturday night, to the emergency room of a hospital, and watch them bring the drunks in who were all sliced up in the wrecks and so forth. And then, again, he took them down to the county coroners of ice and let them go into the morgue, and they would pull the sheets back and let these kids see something other than the beer ads and the athletes pushing beer on television. He'd just let these kids see this. I was so impressed that I wrote Judge Gunther. I got his address. And, he and I carried on a correspondence. And, I told him what I thought; I said, "I don't know whether you're a Christian or not, but," I said, "what you are doing is so biblical. It comes right out of the Word of God." Judge Gunther said, "I had these kids"—he wrote me back and said—"I had these kids to write some essays, and," he said, "I'll send you some of them." And, he sent me some of the essays, and I want to share some of them with you.

One wrote, "I was soon placed in a large cell with everybody else who had committed an alcohol-related crime that evening. Most all of the other men were larger than me, and most could have easily crushed me, if that was what they desired. Although I was tired, there was no way that I would have fallen asleep, like so many other people were doing. I sat in fear for six hours before finally being released." And then, he says, "While visiting the county's medical center emergency room, I watched an unsuccessful attempt to revive a car accident victim"—that is, he watched a person die—"Indeed, that person could easily have been me, or, worse yet, the person I crashed in to. After this person was wheeled into one of the emergency rooms, the sheets were removed and discarded on the floor. The huge hole in his chest was now fully exposed and in plain view of my eyesight. I had just witnessed the loss of a human life for the first time." Now, here's a naïve child who is being told that beer belongs... It's the party drink, and all of this; and he can have a big time. There he is, now, looking into the gaping hole in the chest of somebody who has been hit by a drunken driver.

Another said this was his first visit to the morgue. "Mr. Bowers opened the door. I could see about twenty to thirty bodies covered under white linen. Then, he guided me to one particular body that was set in the center of the room. He uncovered the body. I saw this lifeless body that was once a living person less than twenty-four hours earlier. The face of the body was very disturbing. His eyes were blackened all the way around. His head—shaven with staples replacing the stitches that closed incisions. Mr. Bowers explained that the person was killed by a drunk driver while crossing the street." And then, this young person went on to say what he'd learned by seeing these people who'd been smitten.

I tell you what you oughta do, mister: you oughta take time to take your son, and drive him down through skid row, and let him see these drunks in the gutter covered with vomit and flies. You oughta take time to take your son into the courtroom and let him watch these people. You oughta take time to take him down to the emergency room, or take him to the morgue, or take him to the funeral of that drunken teenager. You see, dear friend, he learns that way. The simple learns by example. It's so clear here in the Word of God.

b. Guard His Company

Now, I'll tell you what else to do with him: first of all, you begin early with your simpleton; number two, you teach him by example. Let him see clearly and plainly. He doesn't understand; he thinks he's invincible. *"The simple pass on, and are punished"* (Proverbs 22:3; Proverbs 27:12). Let him see *"the wages of sin"* (Romans 6:23). And then, thirdly, you guard his company. You help him to avoid scorners and fools, smart alecks, and rebels. Look in Proverbs chapter 13, if you will—Proverbs chapter 13, in verse 20: *"He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed"* (Proverbs 13:20). You let your child run with fools—he'll be destroyed. A companion of fools will be destroyed (Proverbs 13:20). Do not let your child link up with a rebel; just don't do it.

Look, if you will, in Proverbs chapter 22 and verse 10: *"Cast out the scorner, and contention shall go out; yea, strife and reproach shall cease"* (Proverbs 22:10). Fools and scorners do not need to be company with your simpleton, because if you let your naïve, gullible teenager get with fools and scorners, before long, he will be one. And, you have to be firm. The Bible says, *"Cast out the scorner"* (Proverbs 22:10). I mean, just say, "Son, there's the sidewalk. Get on it." Don't let them corrupt your child, especially your teenager, who is especially susceptible to peer pressure, and that could be either good or bad. We're all familiar with that old proverb: "It's hard to soar like an eagle when you're surrounded by a bunch of turkeys." You let your kids run with these turkeys, and you're gonna be in trouble. The Bible says, *"A companion of fools shall be destroyed"* (Proverbs 13:20). The Bible says, *"Cast out the scorner"* (Proverbs 22:10).

I don't believe that a scorner ought to be allowed to disrupt a school. He oughta be expelled. Cast him out. I used to have this problem in Sunday School. We had a kid who would come into Sunday School class—he's a bad kid—and disrupt the whole Sunday School class. And, I used to have a battle with that. Well, wouldn't it be better to let that kid stay in that Sunday School class and maybe reach him? No. Cast him out—cast him out. Don't let him corrupt the whole class. It doesn't say, "Cast him off"—"cast him out" (Proverbs 22:10). There's a difference. In a church, we have people who—in the churches, sometimes—who want to disrupt the church, and so forth. What do you do, dear friend? You just cast them out.

Now, let's move on. Oh, let me just say one other thing very quickly, here. I've said, if your child is a naïve teenager, you start early. I've said—number two: You make certain that he understands the wages of sin, because he lacks understanding. You help him to see by example; when a scorner is smitten, you point it out to him. Number three: You help him select his friends.

c. Make Your House a Haven for His Friends

By all means, guard his company. And, one of the ways to do that is to make your house a haven for his friends, so you can watch them. Spend some money; buy a table tennis table. Redo the garage. Open up the rumpus room. Put the refrigerator full of refreshments. And, let him know that he is free to invite his friends to your house. You say, "They'll mess up the furniture"—not a bad deal. "They'll tramp on my flowerbeds." So what? You let your home be the happiest place on earth and let him know that you love him and you love his friends, but, at the same time, you are watching his friends, and the scorner and the rebel are cast out. And then, you see to it that the best people are invited into your home.

d. Ensure Your Guests Are the Most Notable, Wise People You Can Possibly Have in Your Home

See to it that you have, as your guests at dinner, or in any situation, the most notable, wise people you can possibly have. All through our life, Joyce and I have tried to have in our homes people that we think are spiritual and moral leaders. And, we don't say, "Now, you kids get out of the way. We're having some big shots for dinner." We're saying, above all things, when they come, our kids are to be seated at the table, listening and learning. My dear friend, that's the way they are going to learn. They are going to absorb it in such a wonderful way.

B. What to Do with the Scornor

Now, very quickly—and my time is almost gone—how do you deal with the scorner? We've talked about how to deal with the simpleton. But, many of you are sitting here and saying, "Pastor, my heart is breaking because my son, my daughter, may not be a fool; but, my son, my daughter, is a smart aleck. I can't tell them anything. They are rebelling. And, they may be a fool." What do you do with a child like that?

1. Do Not Scold or Rebuke Him, but Love Him; Wait for Him and Pray for Him

Well, first of all, remember that scolding and lecturing a scorner does very little good. Look, if you will, in Proverbs chapter 9, verses 7 and 8—Proverbs chapter 9, verses 7 and 8: "*He that reproveth a scorner getteth to himself shame: and he that rebuketh a wicked man getteth himself a blot. Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee*" (Proverbs 9:7–8). Reproving a scorner is not going to do you much good, if any good. Look in Proverbs chapter 15, in verse 12: "*A scorner loveth not one that reproveth him*"

(Proverbs 15:12). Now, if you think that you, all of a sudden, are going to get your smart aleck son and you're going to sit him down and preach to him, you've got another thought coming. You're not going to do it. You're not going to be able to drill it into his head right now. Scolding is going to do little good.

As a matter of fact, it'll probably increase his ability to sin. The Bible says, in Matthew 7, verse 6: *"Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine"* (Matthew 7:6). You need to talk less and pray more. And, love more to that scorner by prayer and love; and then, wait for the open door—not the rebuke, but the open door. Look, if you will, in Proverbs chapter 15, in verse 23: *"A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth: and a word spoken in due season, how good is it!"* (Proverbs 15:23). When you've got a rebellious teenager, you surround that teenager with your love. Let him know where you stand on these issues. Do not constantly be rebuking him, but be loving, and praying; and, wait and pray, "O God, help me to speak a word in due season." And, as you pray, God will open his heart at the right moment.

2. Do Not Shield Your Smart Aleck from the Result of His Sin

Now look, if you will, dear friend, as we continue, in Proverbs chapter 19, in verse 25. And, I'm talking about dealing with the scorner, now. Do not shield your smart aleck son or daughter from the result of his sin. When I said don't rebuke him and lecture him, I don't mean to pamper him and facilitate him in his wickedness. Do not shield him from punishment. Proverbs chapter 19 and verse 25: *"Smite a scorner"*—*"Smite a scorner"* (Proverbs 19:25). If he doesn't learn from his punishment, others will. Now, that doesn't mean to smite him, necessarily, physically. Although, that may be involved, if he's a certain age. But, there's more than one way to smite him. There's more than one way to deal with him, to show him what the wages of sin are.

3. Refuse to Let Him Corrupt Others

And then, refuse to let him corrupt others. Proverbs chapter 22 and verse 10—again, I want to remind you what it says: *"Cast out the scorner, and contention shall go out"* (Proverbs 22:10). Just don't let him ruin everything. If he is absolutely, totally a rebel or a scorner, just say, "You cannot stay here and live that way."

Conclusion

I am speaking, this morning, I'm certain, to some brokenhearted parents. Some of you are saying—listen to me. Now, don't loose... Don't stop... I'm not finished—some of you are saying, "Pastor, I started too late." Well, dear friend, pray, and pray, and pray some more. God is good, and God will give you wisdom. Secondly, there are some of you who say, "Pastor, everything that you said to do, I have done. And, to the best of my ability, I have lived, and prayed, and taught. And, still, my son, my daughter, has gone wrong. What do you have to say to me?" Well, may I say to you, my dear friend, if

you're a hurting parent, that God understands just how you feel because God lost His children, too.

Now, I want you to understand this: God created some children, and He gave them everything they needed. No one can say He didn't raise them right. No one can say that He didn't love them. No one can say that He didn't spend time with them. No one can say that He did not carefully teach them what they should do and even what they should take of and not take of. And, He warned them that their future depended upon their choices; and yet, they did wrong, because God made them human beings, and God gave them a choice. And, a bad influence came on the outside; and, by their own choice and free will, they rebelled against a loving Father.

I want you to understand this: You can be a good parent and lose a child. You say, "What about that verse that says train up a child in the way that he should go, and when he is old, he'll not depart from it?" (Proverbs 22:6). That's a proverb, and that's a principle. We'll deal with that in another following message. But, I want to say, dear friend, that even reading the Bible, you're going to see hurting parents. God is in the same place that you are. God is agonizingly watching your children hurt themselves and hurt others; and yet, God refuses to step in, and storm their control center, and make them machines. He won't do it. I'm going to tell you something else, dear parent, He won't do it with you, either. God is looking down from Heaven, right now, at some grown rebellious children, and He's stretching out His hands, and He's saying, "Come to Me." Let's bow our heads in prayer. Father God, I thank You for Your Word today. Lord, it is encouraging and sobering at the same time. And, I pray, dear God, that in these days when so many forces are pulling at our children, that, dearest Lord God, You would help us to be wise parents, to raise wise children. In Jesus's name. Amen.

Wisdom's Final Call

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: March 18, 1984

Main Scripture Text: Proverbs 1:20–33

“Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets.”

PROVERBS 1:20

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Introduction

Will you to take your Bibles today now and find the Book of Proverbs. The Book of Psalms that you're so familiar with—turn right one book, you come to the Book of Proverbs. We're still in chapter 1 today. We've begun a brand new series on “God's Way to Health, Wealth, and Wisdom.”

Now we want to make certain that it's God's health, God's wealth, and God's wisdom that we're seeking today. The title of our message today is “Wisdom's Final Call.” Proverbs chapter 1, beginning in verse 20: *“Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets: she crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates: in the city she uttereth her words, saying, How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scornors delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn*

you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you. Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD: they would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them. But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil” (Proverbs 1:20-33).

Now in this passage of Scripture wisdom is spoken of as a person—that is, wisdom has been personified. Now what you need to learn today is that the voice of wisdom is the voice of God. When wisdom speaks, God speaks. The authority of wisdom is the authority of God. The invitation of wisdom is the invitation of God. The warning of wisdom is the warning of God. To neglect wisdom is to neglect God. To honor wisdom is to honor God. The blessings of wisdom are the blessings of God. So it is wisdom that is speaking to you today, and it is God speaking to you today.

A while back I had to make a trip, and I made my way through the traffic. I wanted to be certain to be there before the plane took off. And so you know, we always tend to get there a little later than we think we’re going to get there. I took my heavy bags. I had a long way to go, and carried those bags in to the place. And I was jogging carrying that heavy weight, and I thought to myself, “Boy, I hope the old ticker is in shape.” Got there and put my bags through the deal, got my ticket, went up and got my boarding pass, and I looked up, and I had plenty of time. I said, “Well, after all of this, I’m going to relax.” I went down and bought me a cup of hot tea, bought me a newspaper, sat down there at the gate in the waiting room, read the newspaper, and drank my hot tea. After a while, I looked around and the waiting room was empty. I thought to myself, “Where is everyone going?” I went up and asked the man. I said, “When are you going to call this flight?” He said, “I’ve already called it.” I said, “When is it going to leave?” He said, “It’s already left.” And I thought to myself, “That’s about the dumbest thing a man ever did, was to sit at the gate, reading a newspaper, and drinking hot tea, while the airplane took off.” I mean, sitting right there—that’s the kind of pastor you have.

Now folks that’s dumb—to sit right there, so oblivious to that final call, sitting there drinking tea, reading a newspaper, while his airplane left. You say, “Right, preacher, pretty dumb, pretty dumb.” But there’s something more foolish than that, and that would be for you to sit here in this service this morning, at the very gate to glory, and have the

last flight to Heaven take off without you.

One of these days—listen to me—one of these days, God is going to issue his final call to you. There's a deadline in front of everyone. There is a final call. There is a last call. And we're going to read about it here, and we're going to study about it here in this passage of Scripture, as we think about "Wisdom's Final Call."

I. Wisdom's Invitation

Three things I want you to see—first of all, I want you to see something of the invitation of wisdom. Wisdom is here giving an invitation, calling to people. Begin in verse 20, and you're going to see that wisdom's invitation is a public invitation. Notice here in verse 20: *"Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets: she crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates: in the city she uttereth her words"* (Proverbs 1:20-21).

A. It Is a Public Invitation

Now what does all of this tell us? It tells us that the invitation of wisdom is a public invitation, not just to a chosen few. But God loves all people, and wisdom speaks to all people. And the voice of the Bible is, "Whosoever will may come." Amen. It is a public invitation. And that gives me glory, and that gives me joy.

Today, some people join a secret society, and they're member of a lodge or some sort of a secret society, and when you get into that secret society, they give you certain knowledge—there's certain esoteric knowledge, things that other people are not supposed to know. But you have gone through the initiation, and now, they're going to lay all this wisdom upon you. Dear friend, if it's so good, you ought to give it away to everybody—to everybody.

Do you know what Jesus said? I have done nothing in secret, done nothing in secret. Friend, if it's wonderful, if it's good, it ought to be public. I'm so grateful that the Lord God loves the whole wide world, and I'm glad that the invitation of wisdom is a public invitation. Do you know what the Bible says in Matthew chapter 10 and verse 27? *"What ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops"* (Matthew 10:27). That is, let the whole world know that Jesus saves, and the invitation of wisdom is a public invitation.

And by the way, are you making it public? You ought to. *We hear people say, "Keep the faith." Friend, not only should you keep it; you ought to give it away. Now as far as I'm concerned, if you don't want to give it away, you ought to give it up, because, what you have is not real.* You'll never convince me that you know the real thing, and the joy of the Lord Jesus, and you do not want to share it.

B. It Is a Pressing Invitation

The very first thing I want to say about the invitation of wisdom is, it is a public invitation. Secondly—look at it—it is a pressing invitation. Look in verse 20: “*Wisdom crieth without*” (Proverbs 1:20). Look in verse 21: “*She crieth in the chief place of concourse*” (Proverbs 1:21). That is, wisdom is not lackadaisical about this thing; it’s not a *take-it-or-leave-it* type of attitude. Wisdom is speaking with a tear in her voice. There’s a sense of urgency; there’s a sense of emergency. Wisdom is pressing her invitation. She’s lifting up her voice, she’s crying.

How well we ought to do that! Some people don’t like to go to a church where there’s a public invitation. They say, “I just don’t believe in that, urging people to get right with God.” Well, I want to tell you, I do. The Apostle Paul says, “*Knowing...the terror of the Lord, we persuade men*” (1 Corinthians 5:11). And God’s public invitation is also a pressing invitation.

“*Wisdom crieth.*” I’m so glad that when Adam was there in the Garden of Eden that God came seeking Adam with a tear in his voice and he said, “Adam, where art thou?” (Genesis 3:9). It wasn’t the voice of the detective; it is the voice of a brokenhearted God.

C. It Is a Patient Invitation

I want to say something else about wisdom’s invitation: not only is it a public invitation, not only is it a pressing invitation, it is a patient invitation. Look, if you will, in verse 22: “*How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?*” (Proverbs 1:22). It is amazing that she would speak, that wisdom would stretch forth her hands; but notice, she continues to do it.

And there are categories of persons who just seem to be oblivious to the call of wisdom. First of all, there’s the one that the Bible calls the *simple*, and then, there’s the one, in verse 22, that the Bible calls the *scorner*, and then, there’s the one that the Bible calls, in verse 22, the *fool*. And those there categories of persons are with us today.

1. The Simple

Now who are simple? Well, the word *simple* here comes from a root word that means, “open.” He’s just a person open to everything. He is easily led. He’s simple. He’s what we would call today *gullible*. Or, he’s careless. He does not stop to think things through. And I suppose most of the people in America would just be characterized as simple. They never stop to think about the great issues of life. People yesterday—what do they call that? A *pub crawl* or a *saloon slither* or something? These people out there, they’re not all bad people, wicked people, in that sense. They’re just saying, “We want to have a blast; we want to have a good time,” and they never stop to think—they don’t think things through. They don’t. They don’t say, “Well, does this honor God? Does it

dishonor God?” or, “Would God bless this? Can God smile upon us?” They just don’t think serious thoughts. To them, life is a party, one great big continual party. It means, the person who doesn’t have the ability to see the future.

Let me give you a commentary verse on that: Proverbs 22 verse 3—just jot it down in your margin. The Bible says, “*A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished*” (Proverbs 22:3). See, they never stop to think that there’s a death to die, there’s a judgment to face, there’s a Hell to shun, there’s a Heaven to gain. “*The prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished.*” And so the first category of persons that God has patience with is what we call the *simple*, in verse 22. He’s just a careless person.

2. The Scorner

But watch it—after a while, the careless person becomes the cynical person, because the next category there is what he calls the *scorner*. Now who is a scorner? A scorner is no longer a simple person; he’s a person who has decided that he wants to mock holy things, he wants to laugh at holy things, he wants to sneer at holy things. He curls the lip; he shoots out the tongue, at holy things. He is a scorner, and he delights in his scorn; it gives him great joy to scorn holy things.

And again, I want to tell you that God loves the scorner, and God’s heart goes out to the scorner, and wisdom calls the scorner, who is a cynic. Oh, cynics are terrible things to be around. A cynic is a man who knows the price of everything, and the value of nothing.

Now listen to me. A man is not a sinner because he’s a scorner; he’s a scorner because he’s a sinner. Put it down. Whenever you see a person mocking holy things, whenever you see a person who ridicules the Word of God, the Christ of God, the Book of God, when you see that, when you see a scorner—you show me a scorner, and I’ll show you a man with the devil’s initials carved in his heart. You show me a woman who laughs and delights in scorning... How long will you hate knowledge?

Oh, thank God for the patience of our dear Lord! He is indeed a patient God. Patiently, earnestly, tenderly, wisdom is calling at what I have chosen to call this morning *wisdom’s invitation*, and it’s given to everyone here today. It is a public invitation, it is a pressing invitation—wisdom is trying—it is a patient invitation.

II. Wisdom’s Indoctrination

God still loves you, but there’s a second thing I would have you see today; and not only is that wisdom’s invitation, but I want you to see wisdom’s indoctrination. Because, there are some who are sitting here, saying in their mind, “Well, Mr. Rogers, I can’t help it if I don’t understand your Bible. I can’t help it if these things don’t mean something to me. It’s not my fault if I don’t have this wisdom. I wasn’t born with it. Perhaps I don’t have the

gift.” I want to show you that everyone in this building, or anywhere else, who may hear this tape later, is without excuse. Because, if you want God’s wisdom, you can have it. Because, God will indoctrinate you with his wisdom, if you get yourself in the place where God can speak to you.

I want you to look, if you will, in verse 23. Here’s God’s challenge—look at it. *“Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you”* (Proverbs 1:23).

A. The Repentance of the Sinner

Now do you want to know how to know wisdom? Here are the three steps—look at them. Number one, the repentance of the sinner, *“Turn you at my reproof.”* Do you know what the word *turn* means? It means, “repent.” Do you know what *repent* means? It means, “to change your mind.” *“Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon”* (Isaiah 55:7).

If we forsake our ways and our thoughts, then we’ll have God’s thoughts and God’s wisdom. But there must be a point of repentance. Now listen. You, my dear friend, are not going to learn anything from God, until you’re willing to repent. And don’t blame God, if you don’t repent. Wisdom says you must turn, and even if God were to speak to you, you couldn’t hear Him if you did not repent—you couldn’t hear it. I tell you, if God were to give you wisdom, it would be like pouring water on a rock. You must prepare your heart to hear the Word of God.

B. The Revelation of the Spirit

And there must be the repentance of the sinner that makes Jesus Christ Lord, then there will be the revelation of the Spirit. Look, if you will, as we continue to read, *“Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you”* (Proverbs 1:23). Hallelujah! Listen folks. This book is written by God; it is given by inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

He is the Author, and you will never understand it, until God pours His Spirit out upon you. The Bible says, *“The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God...neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned”* (1 Corinthians 2:14). The only way you’re going to know the truth of God’s Word is for the Holy Spirit to turn the light on in your sin-darkened soul. But when there is the repentance of the sinner, then immediately and conjointly there is that revelation of the Spirit, and God’s Holy Spirit comes in.

Oh, you can read the Bible, and get the facts and the dates, and memorize the kings of Israel; and, you can know the names of the twelve apostles, and all of that. But you will never know the wisdom of this book; you will never know the truth of this book, until God the Holy Spirit pours Himself out upon you.

C. The Reliability of the Scripture

But there will be—if there is the repentance of the sinner, there will be the revelation of the Spirit; and, that is followed by what I want to call the reliability of the Scripture. Look again, if you will, in verse 23: *“I will pour out my Spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you”* (Proverbs 1:23).

This book that I hold is the Word of God, and it contains the words of God. *“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God”* (Matthew 4:4). You want wisdom? Folks, this is God’s wisdom book. And when there’s the repentance of the sinner, there will be the revelation of the Spirit, and there will be in your hand the reliability of the Scripture.

Look in chapter 2, verses 6-7: *“For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding. He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous”* (Proverbs 2:6-7). *“The entrance of thy words,”* O Lord, *“giveth light”* (Psalm 119:130). And how wonderful it is when God the Holy Spirit takes the repentant sinner, pours Himself upon that sinner, opens the Word of God, and gives the knowledge from the Word of God, where we have God’s knowledge! Don’t you tell me, friend, that you can’t have wisdom! Don’t you tell me that God cannot give you wisdom! He can! He does! He will!

First is the invitation of the Spirit. And along with the invitation of the Spirit, is the indoctrination of the Spirit. For, where God calls, God enables. Hallelujah! Praise the Lord! Glory to God!

III. Wisdom’s Indignation

Now the third thing I want you to see, however, is not only wisdom’s invitation and not only wisdom’s indoctrination, but I want you to see wisdom’s indignation. Did you know that God may become indignant? Have you ever thought of God as being indignant?

I did a Scripture search the other day, and I was overwhelmed with the passages that deal with the fact that the great God of Heaven, when His holiness and His majesty is insulted, may become indignant. Let me just give you two of them. In Nahum, chapter 1 and verse 6, the Bible asks this question, *“Who can stand before his indignation?”* (Nahum 1:6). Who can stand before his indignation? The answer is obvious. No one can. Hebrews chapter 10, verse 27, speaks of *“fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries”* (Hebrews 10:27).

Well, why would God become indignant? Why does wisdom become indignant? I’ll tell you why. Verse 24 begins with this, *“Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof”* (Proverbs 1:24-25).

Now here’s why wisdom is indignant: because the call of wisdom, the invitation of

wisdom, that public invitation, that pressing invitation, that patient invitation, is time and time and time again swept aside. And there comes a time when invitation turns to indignation.

I want to just say right here, while I'm in the area, you can refuse the call of God. You can refuse the call of God. There is a theology today out there—hyper-Calvinism—that says that Jesus just died for the elect—He only died for a certain few. And there are certain people who are destined to be saved, and there are certain people who are destined to be lost; and, if you're one of those destined to be saved, you're going to be saved, no matter what; and, if you're one of those that are destined to be lost, you're going to be lost, no matter what. And they call that *limited atonement* and *irresistible grace*. That is, He only died for a certain few, but, when He calls those few, they will come. It's absolutely irresistible. You can't help yourself. When He calls, you'll come; and, if He doesn't call, you can't come. And so therefore, some are born to go to Heaven, and some are born to go to Hell. Don't you believe it, it's a lie. "*The Lord is...not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance*" (2 Peter 3:9).

There is not an irresistible call. Man may resist if he wants. Look again at this scripture, "*Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded*" (Proverbs 1:24). God calls. He wants everyone saved. "*The Lord is...not willing that any should perish*" (2 Peter 3:9). Christ is that "*Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world*" (John 1:9). "*He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world*" (1 John 2:2). And I'm infinitely, everlastingly glad that I can, in this pulpit, say, "Whosoever will may come, whosoever will may come, God loves you, Christ died for you, and you can be saved today."

But not only, my dear friend, can you choose Him today, you can refuse Him today. And He can call, and you can refuse. And you can say *no*, and you can so spurn His offer of love, and so, trample beneath your feet His precious blood. But that invitation will turn to indignation. "Because I've called," He says, "and you refuse. I've stretched out my hand and no man regarded; but you've set at nought all my counsel and would none of my reproof" (Proverbs 1:24-25). I see the Lord Jesus on the Mount of Olives. He's looking down over the city of Jerusalem—Matthew chapter 23, tells about it—the great salty tears coursing down His cheeks, His hands are outstretched, He's saying, "*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem...how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! [Therefore], your house is left...desolate*" (Matthew 23:37-38). I would, but ye would not. I would, but ye would not. And I tell you, He will today. He stretches out His hands to you, and He calls you today, and He invites you today.

A. The Derision of the Sinner

I tell you that God has given you the privilege to choose Him or to refuse Him; but, one day, one day, invitation turns to indignation. And what happens when invitation turns to indignation? Well, first of all, there's what I want to call the mocking, the derision, of the sinner.

Look, if you will, in verses 24-25: *"Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof:"* Now watch verse 26: *"I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh"* (Proverbs 1:24-26). Wisdom laughs at the sinner; wisdom mocks the sinner. You see, people have laughed at God, people have mocked God's wisdom; but, there's coming a time when the mocker shall be mocked, there's coming a time when the scorner shall be scorned. As Psalms chapter 2, says, *"The LORD shall have them in derision"* (Psalm 2:4).

Now why does God laugh? Why does God laugh at their calamity? Why is wisdom from God laughing and mocking these sinners? They're reaping what they've sown. *"Whatever a man sows that shall he reap"* (Galatians 6:7). If you sow mocking, you'll reap mocking. If you sow derision, you will reap derision. If you mock wisdom, wisdom will mock you. It is not because God thinks it's funny—there's no humor here, not any humor whatever. This is the laughter of absurdity; it is the laughter of irony; it is the laughter of derision. It is the fool receiving back upon his head that which is his just and due desert.

B. The Desolation of the Sinner

But not only will there be the derision of the sinner, there will also be the desolation of the sinner. Look in verse 27: *"When your fear cometh as desolation..."* That word *desolation* is one of the saddest words in the Bible. Do you know what it means? It means simply "to be left alone."

Did you know that the time may come when God will leave you alone? Did you know the time may come that you can be so oblivious to His call, that you can be sitting there in the waiting room, at the gate, and the airplane will take off without you? Just sitting right there, and no one will speak to you, no one will tap you on the shoulder and say, "The plane just left." I mean, it's over, the last call has been heard and issued forth, and there will be no other call—you're desolate. Jesus said, *"Behold, your house is left unto you desolate"* (Matthew 23:38). No longer will God's voice be heard and be calling. No longer will God's hands be outstretched. You say, "Will that ever happen?" Yes. God has said, in Genesis chapter 6 and verse 3: *"My spirit shall not always strive with man"* (Genesis 6:3). I want to tell you, God loves you. I want to tell you that God is patient. But there comes an end to the patience of God. One day, you may say *no* one too many

times to God, and no longer will He stretch out His hands, no longer will He lift up His voice, no longer will you hear the invitation of wisdom.

C. The Destruction of the Sinner

First of all, there is derision, and then there is desolation, and following that, as night follows day, is destruction. Notice in verse 27: *“When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction”—your destruction—“cometh as a whirlwind...”* (Proverbs 1:27). That is, as a cyclone, as a tornado—think of what happened to our precious friends in Arkansas this past week as that tornado touched down—whirling, churning, biting, blasting, devastating. Who can argue with a tornado? Who can stand against a tornado? And right at the vortex, right at the tip, is unbelievable, destructive power. God has used that as an illustration of His righteous judgment.

D. The Desperation of the Sinner

First, there is derision of the sinner; then, the desolation of the sinner; then, the destruction of the sinner, as the simple is swept away, and the scorner is swept away, and the fool is swept away, and judgment falls upon him. And that, of course, will bring us to the desperation of the sinner.

Look, if you will, in verses 28-31: *“Then shall they call upon me”—when? Ha! When the tornado strikes—“Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD: they would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices”* (Proverbs 1:28-31). There’s coming a time when lost sinners will stand before the judgment bar of God and cry out, “O God, have mercy!” It will be too late.

If you want mercy, you may have it. If you want forgiveness, you may have it. If you want grace, you may have it. But now is the day of grace. Now is the day of mercy. Now is the day of forgiveness. Wisdom stretches forth her hands. Wisdom lifts up her voice. Wisdom calls in the public places. Wisdom says, “I will pour out my spirit upon you.” Wisdom says, “I will open my Word to you, if you will repent.” I will; but if you won’t, there’s coming a time when you call upon me and I’ll not answer you. There is a deadline. Wisdom makes her final call. Listen to me, friend. *If you say no to the God of grace, one day, the God of judgment will say no to you.* That’s what I’m saying. If you say *no* to the God of grace, one day the God of judgment will say *no* to you.

It is not that God is not forgiving. It is not that God will not call upon those who call upon Him, and God will not save those who call upon Him, but you must do it in this dispensation. When judgment begins, when the judgment of God has come, when the tornado of destruction has touched down, then it is too late, too late to call upon Him.

I want to tell you, ladies and gentleman—this is the fearful thing—one of these days,

He's going to call His last call. One of these days, He's going to cry His last tear. One of these days, the last invitation will be given. And righteousness, and mercy, and forgiveness will give way to wrath and judgment and the vindictiveness of God.

And God, who is indignant over his love that has been spurned so many times, cannot...—people cannot continue to trample beneath their feet the blood of Jesus, and do so with impunity. The Bible says that he that *“hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace”* and *“counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing”* (Hebrews 10:29). shall have the *“fiery indignation”* of God which is going to *“devour the adversaries”* (Hebrews 10:27).

Conclusion

You say, “Well, I just don't see how a God of love can do that.” Friend, a God of love doesn't do that. Look, if you will, right here, and see what happens, in verse 31:

“Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way”—now, you just mark that—

“Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices” (Proverbs 1:31). God doesn't do it; you do it. If this happens to you, it will not be because you could not be saved; it was because you would not be saved. And the fruit that you eat will be from the trees that you have planted and cultivated, my friend. And what is coming to you is nothing more, nothing less, than God's law.

In Galatians chapter 6, verse 7, it says, *“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap”* (Galatians 6:7). They will eat of the fruit of their own devices. How God loves you! Jesus Christ died in agony and blood to save you. And there is wisdom's invitation. And wisdom stretches forth her hands, wisdom lifts up a voice, wisdom calls out, and says, “Come to me, I'll pour out my Spirit upon you, I'll open my Word to you, you'll know the things of God.” But there's also wisdom's indignation. In these days, you may find yourself in a church, in the very waiting room of the gate to glory, and the last plane for Heaven will have gone, and you'll be left for Heaven. You missed God's final call.

How Not to Raise a Fool

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: September 16, 1984

Main Scripture Text: Proverbs 1:22–23

“How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?”

PROVERBS 1:22

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Introduction

Today I want to speak to you on a most interesting subject: "How Not to Raise a Fool." Now, most of you are parents, and many of you are grandparents, and so you need to pay attention. Proverbs chapter 1 and verse 22: *"How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorers delight in scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, and will make known my words unto you."* What a marvelous and wonderful promise!

Now at the outset, someone said, "But, Dr. Rogers, the Bible says you're not to call

anyone a fool.” And you’re quite right, and I make it my point never to call anyone a fool as such, because that’s not my right, nor my prerogative. But God is God, and God has every right to call someone a fool. God has aptly described the fool in the Word of God, and He tells us how the fool got to be a fool.

Now, I want to tell you that nobody is a born fool. No, fools are self-made; generally, with a little help from their parents. Nobody is a born fool. The Bible says that foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child. That is, the seeds of foolishness are there, but people generally make a fool of themselves.

When the Bible speaks of a fool, the Bible does not speak of someone who is mentally deficient. A retarded person is not a fool. As a matter of fact, the Bible speaks so sweetly and gently of those kind of people. The Bible tells us how we are to love them and nurture them and care for them. And so a fool is not one who is mentally deficient.

In the Bible a fool is someone who is morally deficient. The problem is not in his head; the problem is in his heart. And many parents are literally inculcating foolishness into the hearts and minds of their children. Many of them are doing it unwittingly. And so, therefore, I want to teach you how not to raise a fool.

Now, in Proverbs chapter 1 and verse 22, you have really the formula for a fool—that is, the three steps that a person goes through in order to become a fool. Now, look at it again. *“How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity?”* Now, first of all, a person begins in life as what the Bible calls “a simple one”—“a simple one.” And, again, the word here does not mean “a simpleton”; it does not mean “a person without good sense.” But we’ll show you in a moment what that does mean. He is simple.

But then he moves from simplicity to scornfulness. Notice: *“How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorers delight in scorning.”* Step number two: He becomes a scorner. And then step number three: *“And fools hate knowledge.”* So there it is: First, he’s simple; then he’s a scorner; and then he becomes a fool. And so this verse is going to be the outline that we’re going to use, though we’ll study many verses this morning in the book of Proverbs. So keep your Bibles open and lick your fingers and let’s go in and see what the Bible has to say.

I. The Ignorance of the Simple

Now, first of all, I want to describe the simple one. And I want to call him an ignorant man, not one who does not have intelligence. You can have a lot of intelligence and be ignorant. See, never equate knowledge with intelligence. Many people have intelligence who don’t have knowledge. So notice what we call here the ignorance of the simple.

A. He Loves Simplicity

Now what makes a simple person? Well, number one: He loves simplicity. Notice

chapter 1 and verse 22: *“How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity?”* He likes his lifestyle. Now, this means an easy, happy-go-lucky lifestyle. He delights in it. No responsibilities, no problems, he takes the easy way. He has no real serious thoughts. He doesn't like to think about serious things. And you know, many people listen to me today, who are simple, and they don't like to think about serious things. And if I get too serious, they'll tune me out.

There was a Greek orator whose name was Demosthenes. Demosthenes, at first, could not speak very well, and so he put pebbles in his mouth and went down and argued with the ocean, spoke against the waves, until he learned to argue and articulate and make his voice heard. One day he was speaking to a great huge crowd about the great vital matters of life and death and eternity and deep things. And the people were doing like some in this audience this morning. They were kind of looking around; their minds were gathering wool. He could tell that they weren't paying attention. So he said, “Ladies and gentlemen, I want to tell you a story.” He said, “Once there was a man who had a great load of sticks on his back, and he had to cross a mountain. And he was very weary and tired. And another man came alongside of him who had a donkey and said, “Why do you carry those sticks on your back? Why don't you rent my donkey from me, put the sticks on the back of the donkey, and let the donkey carry the sticks over the mountain?” The man said, “I'll do it.” And they haggled for a while about the price, and the man rented the donkey. He put his burden on the back of the donkey and started off over the mountain. The man who owned the donkey walked behind.

The sun became scorching hot. The man who was leading the donkey got so hot that he stopped for a while, tied the donkey, and sat down to rest in the shade of the donkey, to let the donkey make some shade. The man who owned the donkey came and sat beside him. And there wasn't room for the two of them, and the man who had rented the donkey said to the owner of the donkey: “I'm sorry you'll have to move.” “Oh,” he said, “I'll not move.” He said, “This is my spot.” The man said, “No. It is my spot.” “No”, he said, “sir, it is my spot because the donkey belongs to me; therefore, the shade of the donkey belongs to me.” He said, “Ah, no. But I rented the donkey, and therefore, while the donkey is your donkey, since I rented the donkey, the shade of the donkey belongs to me.” “Well,” the man said “I said nothing about the shade. I merely rented you the donkey. I did not rent you the shade of the donkey. And so, therefore, the donkey belongs to me, and the shade belongs to me, and you, sir, are going to have to move.”

And they got into a furious argument. Demosthenes described the argument, and then he turned and walked off the stage. After a while the people said, “Come back. Come back here!” And they clamored for him to come back. Finally, he walked out and they said, “What happened? Who won the argument? To whom did the shade belong?”

Did it belong to the man who rented the donkey or the man who owned the donkey? Tell us!" Demosthenes looked at them and he said, "A few moments ago, I was talking to you about the issues of life and death, and you paid no attention. And now you're all exercised over who owns the shade of a donkey."

That's the way a simple-minded man is. You see, he loves simplicity. And you talk to him about God's Word; he doesn't listen; he doesn't pay attention. But he'll watch talk television. He'll talk about a sermon being too long, and yet he'll go sit for hours on end and watch television till his eyes get big as coconuts and his brain, the size of a pea. He loves simplicity. He loves simplicity.

B. He Lacks Understanding

Not only does he love simplicity, but correspondingly, he lacks understanding. Look in Proverbs chapter 9 as the Bible continues to describe the simple one. Proverbs chapter 9 and verse 4—look at it: "*Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: as for him that wanteth understanding.*" Now, what that means is he lacks understanding. He needs understanding, and he needs to come to God's Word to get understanding, because not only does he love simplicity, but it follows, as night follows day, that if a man loves simplicity, he's going to lack understanding. He's not going to know the truths of God's Word. Now, again, he can be very intelligent and lack understanding. Will Rogers said, "Everybody is ignorant, just on different subjects." Isn't that right? I mean, he may be a banker. He may be a lawyer. He may be a schoolteacher. He may be an honor society person—most likely he will not be, but he could be—and still lack spiritual understanding. That is, he has no spiritual wisdom. He has no spiritual understanding.

C. He Is Led Easily

Third mark of a simpleton: He is led easily. Look in Proverbs chapter 14 and verse 15: "*The simple believeth every word: but the prudent man looketh well to his going.*" The simple believes every word. What does that mean? The very word *simple*, the Hebrew word, means "open." He's an open-minded man. He's what we would call today gullible. You can lead him. Now, you see the sequence. First of all, he loves simplicity. Because he loves simplicity, he lacks understanding. Because he lacks understanding, he's easily led. You see, nature abhors a vacuum, and everybody must believe something. And so, if he doesn't believe what is right, he's going to believe what is wrong. Therefore, he is a sitting duck. Madison Avenue has him like putty in their hands. False religions, rock music, entertainment, sinful friends, all of these things—they can just lead the simple around.

Now many of you have simple children. I didn't say stupid children, simple children. They love simplicity; they lack understanding. And therefore, your children, when they get in junior high school and high school, are just going to be led astray. Somebody is

going to tell them something; they are going to hear it, and they are going to believe it. That's what the Bible says here that he just simply believes these things. He's easily led, he's naïve, he's gullible, he's open-minded. He has a plastic mentality, and people can manipulate him in order to destroy.

D. He Is Liable for Judgment

All right now. The fourth mark: He's liable for judgment. Look, if you will, in chapter 22 and verse 3: "*A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself*"—that is, he sees danger coming; he gets out of the way—"*but the simple pass on, and are punished.*" A simple-minded youngster, or an adult for that matter, is oblivious to danger. That's the reason why a simple-minded son will wreck your automobile. Man, he doesn't pay attention to the speed limit. He doesn't pay attention to the laws of safety. "He just passes on and he's punished." He will wait to prepare his exams till the night before, and then he'll flunk. "He just passes on and he's punished." An unsaved man who is a simpleton, he doesn't get right with God. He doesn't see that there is a death to die, a judgment to face, a God to honor. He never gives any serious thought to facing God in judgment. "He just passes on and he's punished."

I was driving along on a major road, traveling at a pretty good clip of speed. And a man came out a side street, a stop street. But he never stopped. He was oblivious to the fact that it was a stop street. And with my adroit, skillful driving, I slammed on the brakes and turned the wheel, and my car went into a skid. He saw me; he slammed on his brakes and went into a skid. And we both just left rubber all over the road and came up with our cars about *that* far apart, my face looking at his face right there face-to-face. When he saw me—he had just seen me a split second before that, didn't see me coming—he said, "Where in the blankety blankety blank blank did you come from?" I started to say, "Well, I was born in West Palm Beach." And I looked at him and I said, "Sir, we almost had a tragic accident. You could have been killed; I could have been killed." I said, "It would have been terrible for you to go out into eternity with that kind of profanity in your heart." He said, "I'll face that when I get there." No, he won't. He'll face it now or he'll face the judgment when he gets there, isn't that right? Sure.

You see the Bible says, "*A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but*"—what?—"*the simple pass on, and are punished.*" They are just oblivious to the fact that we must make preparation for the judgment now. Many people who are listening to this say, "I don't want to listen to all that. Man, I want to have a big time! I don't want to talk about heaven and hell and righteousness and God. And so, "he just passes on and he's punished."

Now those are the marks of a simple person. He loves his simplicity; he's having a good time. He lacks understanding; he has no moral basis to make value judgments. Therefore, he's led easily, and he is liable for punishment. He's going to get himself into

trouble if you don't help him. Now many of you have children that could be described very easily as simple, not stupid, simple. Simple, okay?

II. The Insolence of the Scornful

Now, we want to move on. We're talking a little about the ignorance of the simple. Now we are going to move to the second step, which I want to call the insolence of the scornful—the insolence of the scornful, because, you see, a scorner is insolent. Now look again in Proverbs chapter 1 and verse 22. Remember that's our home base. *"How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorner delight in their scorning."* Now, the scorner—he loves his scorning. What is a scorner? Well, if he's in junior high school, we'll call him a smart aleck. If he's in business, we'll call him a cynic. If he's in the arts, or at the university, we'll call him a mocker. But all of these things are just ways he has of feeding his own ego. He wants to feel important, and because he lacks understanding, and because he's not found true fulfillment in his simplicity, he takes on an air of importance where he looks down on other things. He is a know-it-all. He becomes a scorner. He becomes a smart aleck.

A. He Delights in His Scorning

And now, I want you to notice his characteristics. Number one: He delights in his scorning. He gets his jollies out of it. This is his self-fulfillment. This is what he really receives joy from. He really just simply loves it; he delights in it.

B. He Defies Instruction

Now, secondly, not only does he delight in it; he defies instructions. Look, if you will, in chapter 13 and verse 1. Many of you parents have children who have become scornors. Proverbs 13, verse 1: *"A wise son heareth his father's instruction: but a scorner heareth not rebuke."* You can talk to a scorner; he's not listening to you. You might as well be talking to a brick wall. He's like those that Jesus said, "They have ears to hear, but they do not hear." You can always tell a scorner, but you can't tell him much. Why? He already knows it all. I mean, he is a smart aleck. He knows more than his mother, he knows more than his father, he knows more than his teacher, he knows more than his pastor—and he'll tune you out.

C. He Despises the Godly

He delights in his scorning. He defies instruction, and he despises the godly. Look, if you will, in chapter 15 and verse 12 of this same book. *"A scorner loveth not one that reproveth him: neither will he go unto the wise."* Do you think you do him a favor when you reprove him? The Bible, as matter of fact, says don't reprove him. Never argue with a scorner. You're not going to get anywhere by arguing with a scorner. I'm going to show you here in a moment what I'm talking about. He just simply will despise you if you

try to reprove him. Look, for example, in chapter 9, verses 7 and 8: *“He that reproveth a scorner getteth to himself shame: and he that rebuketh a wicked man getteth himself a blot. Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee.”* When it gets to this stage, I’ll guarantee you; you’re not going to argue with him. You reprove him and you’re going to get yourself a shame. What it means is he’s going to humiliate you. He’s going to give you a blot. He’s going to call you a name; he’s going to curse you. He hates you. And if you are a school teacher, and you call a student in, and you sit down with that smart aleck, and you try and straighten him out; he may sit there without saying a word. But if you look in his eyes, you can read these words: “I hate your guts.” That’s what he’s saying to his teacher: “I hate you.” That’s what the Bible says. The Bible says that he hates those who give him instruction.

Now, notice: He delights in his scorning. He defies instruction; he will not receive it. Furthermore, he despises the one who gives it. He despises rebuke. Reprove him; he will insult you—Proverbs 9, verses 7 and 8.

D. He Is Destined for Destruction

Now, he is destined for destruction. That’s the fourth thing. Look in Proverbs chapter 13 and verse 1—look at it: *“A wise son heareth his father’s instruction: but a scorner heareth not rebuke.”* Well, what happens when a man will not listen to instruction? Well, go on, if you will, please, verse 13 of this same chapter. *“Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed.”* The scorner—he’s going to die and go to hell. And he can laugh his way into hell, but he cannot laugh his way out once he’s there. And it’s a terrible, tragic thing for one to become a scorner.

Now listen to me. There is help for the simple. There may be help for the scorner. Now, while you can’t argue with the scorner, you can back off, and you can pray for him, if perchance God will open his heart. And then you can come to him at a right time *for “a word fitly spoken.”* He’ll listen to you. And there is a time to speak and a time to be silent. But, oh, if you are the father or the mother of a scorner, or if you are a scorner, a cynic, how I pray, God, that God will help you parents! How I pray, God, if you are a smart aleck, a scorner today, that God will have mercy on you! And perhaps, a shaft of gospel sunlight will come into that sin-darkened heart of yours! And you’ll see how dangerously you are living, because—listen—there is hope for the simple, there is little hope for the scorner, and friend, there is no hope for the fool that I can find. No hope for the fool. The fool—and a scorner is almost a fool—the fool has passed the deadline! I’ve searched the Scripture and tried to find hope for the fool. And there may be some, but if there is, there is scant hope for the fool.

III. The Immovability of a Fool

Now, what is the mark of a fool? Now remember, first of all, there’s the simple. And then

he becomes the scorner. And then he becomes the fool. He moves from ignorance to insolence to immovability. That is, he gets into a locked-in position, a fixed position. Now, go back again to Proverbs chapter 1, and I want you to notice the difference. Proverbs chapter 1, verse 22: *“How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity?”*—underscore the word *love*—*“and the scornors delight in their scorning”*—underscore the word *delight*. They just simply have something that they love, something they delight in, so that’s what they do.

A. The Fool Rejects Knowledge

But now, notice the sudden change—*“and fools hate knowledge?”* Fools hate knowledge. The simple—he loves his simplicity. The scorner—he delights in his scorning. But the fool hates knowledge. Do you see what’s happened to his character? Do you see what has happened to him? He is now the enemy—the enemy of that which is good, the enemy of that which is godly. Do you remember that God is knowledge; God is wisdom? He has become the enemy of God and so what does he do? Number one: He rejects wisdom. Proverbs 1, verse 7: *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.”* Worse even than a scorner, he hates the truth of God’s Word. He just simply rejects it. He has an antipathy; he has a hatred toward the things of God.

B. The Fool Ridicules Righteousness

Not only does he hate wisdom; he ridicules righteousness. Turn to Proverbs chapter 14 and verse 9. Look—this amazing passage of Scripture. The Bible says, *“Fools make a mock at sin: but among the righteous there is favour.”* Fools mock at sin; that is, they ridicule righteousness. They laugh at sin.

Now, we have a generation. We’ve raised a generation that does exactly, precisely that. We get our fun, we get our jollies, we get our entertainment—this generation does it say—from mocking at sin. Do you know what the majority of Hollywood television and movies are about? Sin. They laugh at sin. Pornography, homosexuality, abortion, drunkenness, divorce, infidelity, premarital promiscuity—these all are the background for the situation comedies that people watch, sitcoms, isn’t that true? You know it’s true. That’s what we laugh at. Why? The devil is very clever. The devil knows that what a person will laugh at is very hard for him to take serious again. And so, we laugh about homosexuality. We laugh about abortion. We laugh about infidelity. All of these things we think are funny. The Bible says that *“fools make a mock at sin.”* They ridicule righteousness. They laugh at being good, at being godly, at being pure. Go home and read the entertainment page. You’re going to find out that if they want people to come to the theater, they have got to tell them how shocking, how sinful, how sexy, how sordid, how sorry it is, in order to get them to come.

C. The Fool Rejoices in Sin

Now, I'm describing a fool. Number one: He rejects wisdom. Number two: He ridicules righteousness. Number three: He rejoices in sin. Look in Proverbs chapter 15 and verse 20: "*A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish man despiseth his mother. Folly is joy to him that is destitute of wisdom.*" I mean, he literally enjoys his folly.

Why is this? How could a man reject knowledge? How could a man ridicule righteousness? How could a man literally rejoice in sin? A simple-minded person may fall into sin, and he may grieve over it and say, "Oh, I shouldn't have done that and I'll try better." But not the fool, his foolishness is an absolute joy to him. Why? His moral sense has been perverted. Isaiah chapter 5 and verse 20, a very poignant verse: "*Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!*"

What is this talking about? God says how terrible when a man comes to the place where he doesn't know any longer the difference between right and wrong. What the Bible calls sin he calls good. The Bible calls sodomy a sin, but he has gay pride week, and he says it's good! The Bible calls drunkenness a sin. I listened to a beer ad yesterday. It talked about a particular beer, and it said, "In these days, that's about the only thing now you can believe in." Can you believe that? The only thing you can believe in now is beer. I couldn't believe my ears. The people, who do not know the difference between right and wrong—they call good bad and bad good, sweet bitter, bitter sweet, light dark and dark light! And they don't know the difference! They couldn't do good, if they wanted to do good! They wouldn't know good, if they saw good with a sign on it! Woe unto them! They reject wisdom. They ridicule righteousness. They rejoice in sin. It is a joy to them; they love it.

I want to show you how bad it is. I hate to do this, but I'm going to do it. I want you to turn to a verse of Scripture. Proverbs chapter 26 and verse 11: "*As a dog returneth to his vomit, so a fool returneth to his folly.*" Told you I hated to do this. Now here is a dog who eats something that has begun to corrupt or rot. And, of course, he has certain reflex actions in his stomach and in his viscera. So that dog, because of the way that God made him, he regurgitates and he vomits up that thing that has soured in his stomach, or it's giving him an upset stomach, and he vomits it. And then the dog walks off, and he looks over his shoulder at that. And he turns around and looks at it again. And then he says, "Well, there's no need to leave a warm meal on the ground like that." I told you it's bad, but it's scripture. And he returns and laps it up. Have you ever seen a dog do that? Disgusting, isn't it?

Now, that's how sin can get its tentacles into a foolish person, I mean, even when the wages of sin are so evident. Every kick has a kickback. He'll get into drugs and they'll destroy him. He'll get into promiscuity and it'll hurt him. He'll get into all of these

things, and while it is harming him and making him, as it were, sick to his stomach, yet, he'll go right back to it! Right back to it, as a dog returns to his vomit.

I'm telling you, dear friend, that a simpleton is ignorant, a mocker is insolent, but a fool is intransigent. I mean, he is locked in! He is fixed! He is immovable! And there seems to be no hope for him because he is destined for destruction. That's the fourth thing. I want you to notice another scripture here in Proverbs chapter 17 and verse 10. Look at it: "*A reproof entereth more into a wise man than an hundred stripes into a fool.*" Do you know what that means? You can beat a fool until he's black and blue, and you're not going to change him. Punishment won't change him. You put him jail; you're not going to bother him. He's still a fool when he gets out.

If you've raised a fool, and then you decide one day you're going to change him, and you take a rod and you say, "I'm going to beat the foolishness out of you, Son." You're not going to do it. You can beat him to his knees, but you'll never change his heart. A hundred stripes on the back of fool will not change him. He'll die in his foolishness! He's become a fool. He is a fool! He can't even describe the difference. He does not know the difference between right and wrong. He hates righteousness! He loves foolishness! It's a sad thing; it's a terrible thing. And he's going to die, and he's going to go to hell because he's a fool.

Now, Pharaoh was a fool, and God sent him one judgment and then another and then another and then another and then another, then another, then another, then another, then another, then another. Do you think ten plagues changed Pharaoh? The Bible says he hardened his heart yet more and more. Pharaoh is in hell today because he was a fool.

IV. The Instructions for Not Raising a Fool

Now listen. First, a child starts out as simple. Then he becomes scornful, and then he becomes foolish. Now how do keep from raising a fool? What hope is there? Well now, let's go back and look at the scripture from another viewpoint. Let me tell you how to deal with your children: how not to raise a fool.

A. The Simple Can Be Taught

Number one: Remember that the simple can be taught. Turn back, if you will, to Proverbs chapter 1, verses 1 through 4: "*The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel; To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding; To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity*"—now watch this—"To give subtilty to the simple." The word subtilty here means "wisdom, understanding, discernment." And God gave us a book. It is the book of Proverbs to help simple children to become wise children. And, ladies and gentlemen, remember that that child can be taught if you start early enough with that child and give him the

Word of God. For the Bible says in verse 4: *“To give subtilty to the simple, and to the”*—what kind of man?—*“young man”*—some of you have started about two hundred pounds and sixteen years too late—*“to the young man to give him understanding.”* And from the time that they are children, you better begin to get the Word of God in them. And every parent in this building ought to master the book of Proverbs and be mastered by the book of Proverbs so he can learn how to teach it to his children. That’s why God gave us this book! This is God’s manual on child rearing. This is God’s book to tell us how not to raise a fool, to give to that simple one understanding! Oh, the wisdom of God is in this book!

Do you know God’s Word? Are you qualified to instill these things into your children? Remember that the word *simple* means “open,” and friend, he’s open to God’s Word as well as he’s open to anything else. And God gave him to you; God gave her to you, with a plastic mentality. Remember that he can be taught; he should be taught early.

B. He Learns By Example

Remember, secondly, that he learns by example. Look in Proverbs chapter 19 and verse 25: *“Smite a scorner, and the simple will beware.”* Isn’t that interesting? He learns from seeing a scorner get smitten.

A mother brought her little boy to school one time, and she said to the teacher, “Now, Johnny is nervous. If he misbehaves, you slap the boy next to him, and he’ll straighten up.” Well, there’s a little bit of truth in that.

Listen to this: *“Smite a scorner, and the simple will beware.”* Let me show you again. Look in Proverbs chapter 21 and verse 11: *“When the scorner is punished, the simple is made wise.”* Now, if you have a child who doesn’t have serious thoughts, you need to show him every time where sin is punished. Listen. When there is an automobile accident and you are driving along, you ought to stop and let that boy look at that automobile. When a teenager is killed for drunk driving, perhaps you ought to take him to the funeral, even though you don’t even know the people. You ought to take him to the morgue, or you ought to read the news to him. You ought to show from the Bible what the Bible teaches about the wages of sin. You see, he doesn’t think about these things! *“A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself; but the simple pass on, and are punished.”* They don’t understand. And so when he sees sin punished...

Do you know the worst thing that can happen to a simple-minded person? It is to be raised in a permissive society. And your children are being raised in a permissive society. And what happens in a permissive society? Sin is not punished. And the Bible says in Ecclesiastes 8 and verse 11: *“Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.”* If people were arrested, brought quickly to trial, quickly adjudicated, quickly punished, and put into prison or put wherever they need to be put, or fined, or whatever,

immediately; the crime rate would go down quickly, quickly. But we live in a permissive society. So you, as a parent, are going to have to overcome that as best you can. And remember that he learns by example, and you are to show him these examples. You are to show him what happens to an alcoholic. Don't let him just see the advertisements, the beautiful advertisements there, on television. Take him to a skid row; show him the drunk in the gutter covered with vomit and flies. Take him to a drug rehabilitation place, and let him see those kids, hollow-chested and pale-faced. Let him see it! When the scorner is smitten, the simple is going to learn. He learns by example. He has just never seen these things.

C. **Guard His Company**

And you guard his company. Look, if you will, in Proverbs chapter 13, verse 20, and that's, by the way, the third point: You guard his company. Look in chapter 13, verse 20: *"He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed."* Don't let him keep company with fools, because he's so open; he's so gullible. Turn to Proverbs chapter 22 and verse 10: *"Cast out the scorner, and contention shall go out; yea, strife and reproach shall cease."* There is a time to expel a kid from school. You just cast him out, not cast him off. You love him; pray for him. But you don't help him, and you don't help the class by letting him take those who are simple and destroy them. The Bible says cast him out. There's a time when people need to be put away from society. There's a time they need to be put away from school. There's a time when people need to be excommunicated from churches and disfellowshipped from churches because they are troublemakers. They delight in making trouble. And the Bible says yes, we're to love them; yes, we're to pity them. We cast them out, not cast them off, but we cast them out!

You choose your children's friends, and you choose them carefully. And you choose them when they are young, and let them bring their friends to your home. And rather than talking about them messing up the house, you be infinitely glad that they want to bring their friends to your house. And make them welcome and you scrutinize those friends. And if one of them is a scorner, you say, "Son, there's the sidewalk; get on it. You're not welcome here." You say, "That's hard." Brother, I tell you, God gave you those children, and you better protect them, and you better take care of your children! The Bible says, *"Cast out the scorner."* The Bible says, "A companion of fools will be destroyed."

Listen. Do you know what means more to a teenager than anything else? Peer pressure. Right? Peer pressure. I mean, listen. Their religion—it's the code of conformity, and the chief hymn is "Everybody's Doing it, Doing It, Doing It." I mean, the sin is to dare to be different. And you say, "Well, that's bad." Well, it may be bad; it may be good. The Bible says, "A companion of fools will be destroyed, but he that walketh

with wise men will be wise.” Peer pressure is a very wonderful thing. You surround your kid with good kids. You see to it that they have the right influence. If he’s a simple person, put something before him he can see, and separate him from these kinds of things. Peer pressure is a terrible thing or a good thing. It all depends on what you expose your children to.

Conclusion

I wish I had more time, but my time is gone. Somebody has said this: “There are four categories of people. There is the man who knows not, and he knows that he knows not. He’s a fool: Avoid him. There is the man who knows not, but he knows not that he knows not. He is simple: Teach him. There is the man who knows but has forgotten that he knows. He’s asleep: Wake him. And there is the man who knows and knows that he knows. He’s a wise man: Follow him.”

God's Way to Health, Wealth and Wisdom

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: March 11, 1984

Main Scripture Text: Proverbs 2:1–9

“My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding;”

PROVERBS 2:1–2

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Introduction

Many people make it a practice to read one chapter of Proverbs every day, and I do not do that everyday, but frequently I will get into a mold where in my devotions I will begin to read through the Book of Proverbs and I am certain that I've read it through many times as you have read this marvelous book too.

We're titling this series of sermons "God's Way to Health, Wealth, and Wisdom." Now there's an old proverb, not a biblical proverb, just an old proverb that says, "Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy wealthy and wise." But the problem is that a lot of people who go to bed early and get up early they're not healthy, they're not

wealthy, and they're not wise. Now because going to bed and getting up early doesn't make you healthy, wealthy, and wise, what is taught in God's Word will make you healthy, wealthy, and wise, if you understand what true health, wealth, and wisdom is, as we're going to see here in a little bit.

Now what is a proverb anyway? Somebody said that a proverb is a short sentence based on long experience—that is, it is a lot of wisdom that has been distilled, crammed into, packed into, a sentence. That is, by a proverb we can learn from the experiences of other people. Somebody says you better learn from the mistakes of others; you'll not live long enough to make them all by yourself. And so you're going to have to learn from mistakes of other people. But these proverbs here are not like earthly proverbs. Earthly proverbs are learned from experience; but what we have here are not necessarily things that have been learned from experience. These are truths that are given to us by divine revelation. These are not just simply things that are being worked out by human ingenuity; these are God's words of wisdom given by inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

You know, proverbs are good, but sometimes they are confusing, sometimes they're wrong, sometimes they even seem contradictory. For example, one proverb might say, "Look before you leap"—you've heard that, sure. Another one says, "He who hesitates is lost." So that's kind of disquieting, isn't it? You don't know which one of those proverbs to take. Or, we hear a proverb like this: "You only get what you pay for." That sounds good until somebody else comes along and says, "The best things in life are free." And it just seems a little bit confusing. Or somebody else has a proverb: "Leave well enough alone." And then, somebody else comes along and says, "Progress never stands still." So these are human proverbs, and there's some truth in all of them, if you rightly see them, and see what the person who was giving the proverb has to say.

But God's proverbs are not merely short sentences based on long experience; they're not little witticisms that sometimes sound good, but not so good until after you examine them. These are revealed truths from the Word of God, and they are God's ways that God's people can know true health, true wealth, and true wisdom.

And today, we're going to be talking about the subject of wisdom, because wisdom is the theme of the entire Book of Proverbs. And if you read the Book of Proverbs—and I hope you'll do it while we're in this series—as you read the book of Proverbs through, you might draw a circle around that word *wisdom*, as God uses it so many times. Wisdom is used over and over and over again. For example, if you were to read the first six verses, you would find the word *wisdom* or *wise* used over and over again—just in those first six or seven verses here in the Book of Proverbs. So wisdom is the key; and we're going to be talking today about wisdom—what it is and how to have it. That's the first in these series of messages.

Now I want to say, dear friend, that we're not going to preach on every proverb. You

say, “Well, praise the Lord for that, because we’d be half way into the millennium and still would not have preached really well on each of these proverbs.” But by God’s grace, I’m going to try to pick out some key passages, and some things that will cohere together, and help at least to whet our appetite for this wonderful book, which is indeed God’s book to health, wealth, and wisdom for his children. Health, wealth, and wisdom, properly understood, as we’ll see—not what some may mean by health and wealth and wisdom, in the eyes and minds of this world today.

What I want us to think about as we think about wisdom today is just two things, and then we’ll get right into the Scripture. First of all, we want to think about the incomparable work of wisdom. And then we want to think about the infallible way to wisdom. Okay? The incomparable worth of wisdom; and the infallible way to wisdom.

I. The Incomparable Worth of Wisdom

Now look if you will in Proverbs chapter 1 and verse 1: *“The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel; to know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding”* (Proverbs 1:1-2). And then, chapter 2, verse 1: *“My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding. He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: he is a buckler to them that walk uprightly. He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints. Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path”* (Proverbs 2:1-9).

Just ask me, what would you like? Choose. Do you want me to give you something? What do you want? What would you ask Him for? Well, if you were hungry, you might ask for food, if you were sick, you might ask for health, if you were an egotist, you might ask for wealth and power. What would you ask Him for? Did you know that God came to Solomon, and God said, “Solomon, son, what do you want? What can I give you?” And we read there in 2 Chronicles chapter 1 and verse 7: *“That night God appeared to Solomon and said, “What do you want? Ask, and I will give it to you!”* (2 Chronicles 1:7).

Now every time in the Old Testament when God appeared, that’s what we call a theophany; that was a preincarnate presence of the Lord Jesus—that is, when Jesus came and took upon Himself a particular form. And here is the Lord Jesus speaking to Solomon, saying, “What shall I give thee?” Now what did Solomon ask for? He didn’t ask for health; he didn’t ask for wealth; he didn’t ask for power over his enemies; he didn’t ask for honor. Do you know what Solomon asked for? He asked for wisdom.

Listen. Here's what Solomon said. He said, *"Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people: for who can judge this thy people, that is so great? And God said to Solomon..."*— and I'm sure that if we could picture God, He'd have a smile on His face—*"And God said to Solomon, Because this was in thine heart, and thou hast not asked riches, wealth, or honour, nor the life of thine enemies, neither yet hast asked long life; but hast asked wisdom and knowledge for thyself, that thou mayest judge my people, over whom I have made thee king: wisdom and knowledge is granted unto thee; and I will give thee riches, and wealth, and honour, such as none of the kings have had that have been before thee, neither shall there any after thee have the like"* (2 Chronicles 1:10-12). That is, "Solomon, I'm going to give you wisdom, because you have discernment enough to ask for wisdom; and with that wisdom, I'm going to give you many other things that people have dreamed for, and schemed for, and sold their souls for. You will have these things because you have asked for the best."

Friend, I want more for my children than anything else that my children have wisdom. Did you know that? As a father, I desire that my children have wisdom. As a pastor, I desire wisdom to lead my people. I want for my church members to have the wisdom of God. I tell you, dear friend, there is nothing more that you could ask for, besides wisdom, that would be greater, because so many other things are included in wisdom. As a matter of fact, this same Book of Proverbs says, in Proverbs chapter 8, verse 11: *"For wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it"* (Proverbs 8:11). There's nothing to be compared to wisdom. Now that's a pretty big statement: everything that is to be desired is not to be compared with wisdom.

So if wisdom is so important, let's think of the incomparable worth of wisdom. Now what is the incomparable worth of wisdom? Why is wisdom worth so much?

A. The Promise of the Father

Well, first of all, I want to say that wisdom is worth so much, because the Father provides it. Now notice in chapter 1, verse 1, these are, *"The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel"* (Proverbs 1:1). Now notice what Solomon said in chapter 2, verse 1: *"My son, if thou wilt receive my words..."* (Proverbs 2:1).

What you have here is a father speaking to his son. Here is King Solomon, who has a son he loves, his son—just as I love my children—and he wants his son to be successful, he wants his son to be useful, he wants his son to have fulfillment and integrity in life. And so He says, "Oh, my son, here is something that I have for you, something that I desire for you: the promise of the father—it is the promise of the father—wisdom." Now a father who is a king is speaking to his son—did you understand

that? Now listen. A father who is a king is still speaking to his children. This is not just what God has said—this is what God is saying; and, not only is Solomon speaking to his son—but God is speaking to his children. You see, we’re children of the King, and this is not only Solomon’s word; this is the inspired Word of God. And these are the words of the King for His children.

I entitle this series, “Wise Words for the King’s Kids,” because that’s what they are. Chapter 2, verse 1 says, “My son, if you’ll just hear my words.” Listen. How important it is that we understand wisdom, because it is the purpose of the Father that His children be wise. God desires for you to be wise. That’s the reason it pleased God so much when Solomon asked for wisdom.

B. The Product of the Spirit

Now secondly, not only is wisdom the promise of the Father, wisdom is the product of the Spirit. Look again, in chapter 2, verse 1: “*My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom...*” (Proverbs 2:1-2). There’s to be a teacher. Who is the teacher? The teacher of wisdom is the Holy Spirit. We are to incline our ear to Him; we are to listen to our teacher. Jesus said He will guide us into all truth. In the Bible, the Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of wisdom.

Now dear friend, there’s a difference between knowledge and wisdom. Did you know that you can get knowledge without the Holy Spirit, but you cannot get true wisdom without the Holy Spirit? Now what’s the difference between knowledge and wisdom? Now there’s nothing wrong with knowledge, and you ought to have knowledge—but knowledge is learned; wisdom is given. Knowledge comes by looking around; wisdom comes by looking up. Knowledge comes from studying; wisdom comes from meditation, and wisdom is the way to apply your knowledge. So don’t fail to have knowledge; don’t fail to study.

The Bible says we’re to “*study to show [ourselves] approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed*” (2 Timothy 2:15). But dear friend, all of that knowledge is but splendid ignorance apart from the wisdom that God will give you to apply that knowledge. The word *wisdom* is related to the word *skill* in the Old Testament. That is, in the Old Testament, when those people built the tabernacle, the Bible says that God gave to them the spirit of *wisdom* to build the tabernacle. Some translators translate that God gave to them the spirit of *skill*, or God gave to them *skill* to build the tabernacle. Now that word *wisdom* and the word *skill* are related together.

Now what does that mean to us? Do you know what wise living is? It is living skillfully, living to the optimum. It is abstracting the most out of life, and making the most out of life. You become an artist; you become a practitioner; you live life with skill. Have

you ever watched a cabinetmaker build something? Boy, I try to build things and I'm a wood butcher. I mean, it's not even fit for the fire when I get finished with it, doesn't make good kindling. But oh, to see somebody who puts things together skillfully! Now dear friend, we're to put our lives together that way—we're to learn to live skillfully—and it is the product of the Holy Spirit.

Do you know the Bible says that great men are not always wise? There are a lot of people who have head knowledge, but they don't have wisdom. I think of Einstein, Albert Einstein—I was reading about his life. Einstein died in 1955. Before he died, he said this—I want to give you what I consider to be a pathetic quote from a brilliant man. He said, "I feel like a man chained." And then, he said, "If I could only be free from the shackles of my intellectual smallness, then I could understand the universe in which I live." "Oh," he said, "my mind is not great enough. Oh, if I could just take the shackles off, if I could just probe into the mysteries of the universe." He would never, no never, know the mysteries of the universe, unless he knew the Man who made it.

You see, a man can have knowledge, but he needs understanding, he needs wisdom. In order for Einstein to know the secrets of the universe, he'd have to know the Lord Jesus Christ; for the Bible says, in Him—in Jesus—are hidden all of the treasures of wisdom—in the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is the secret of the universe; Jesus is the glue of the galaxies; Jesus is the secret of it all. And so this wisdom is produced by the Spirit; and the only way that a man can know it is not by books, but by knowing the Lord Jesus Christ.

There are some things you cannot learn from experience. There was a boy whose father owned some gold mines out west in the early days, the gold mining days—and this father had a number of very successful gold mines. He wanted his son to take over the business, and so, he sent his son, when his son was old enough, to go to school back east, to the eastern seaboard of our country, to study in great universities over there. And the boy studied engineering and mining and metallurgy, and, after he graduated, he came back out west to the gold mine, and he said, "Now father, I'm ready; put me to work." And the father said, "Well, son, I believe the best thing for you would be to put on some old clothes and go down into the mines and work with your hands, and first of all, gain that knowledge that comes by experience—you can get it no other way." And the boy said, "Daddy, I don't need to do that." He said, "We've been to school, we know things you've never thought about." He said, "I have experiences now that I've learned," and he said, "I'm ready to go to work." He said, "If you'll give me the best gold mine that you have," he said, "I'll show you how to really make it produce."

The father said, "All right," and he gave him such a mine. And the boy was doing well for a while. But after a while, he sent a wire to his father, and he said, "Father, I need some help here, I've got a problem. You know, the mine is backed up to a lake,

and the water is beginning to seep in. What do you suggest we do?” The father didn’t answer. After a while, the boy wired his father again. He said, “The situation is getting bad.” He said, “We have shored it up, but,” he said, “the shoring is slipping, and we’re not able to stop the water from coming in. I need some advice.” The father didn’t answer. The boy wired a third time, and he said, “Father, the situation is desperate, the lake is coming in, we’re about to lose that gold mine, and, if you don’t tell me what to do, we’re going to lose the best gold mine we have.” The father wired back and said, “Shove your diploma in that hole.”

C. **The Presence of the Savior**

Now there are some things you can learn in school, friends, and there are some things you can’t learn in school; and wisdom is more than common sense. You see, that boy didn’t even have common sense. But wisdom is a gift; it is a supernatural gift from God. It is a promise of the Father; it is the product of the Spirit. But now, wait a minute. Wisdom is more than the promise of the Father, where he says, “My son, hear my words.” It is more than the product of the Spirit, where the Spirit begins to teach us supernaturally. Wisdom is the presence of the Savior. You will never have real wisdom, until you know the Lord Jesus Christ in your heart. Now notice he says here, if you will, in chapter 1, and verse 2: “We’re to know wisdom”—and then, later on, we’re talking about chapter 2, verse 10—“*When wisdom entereth into thine heart...*” (Proverbs 2:10).

Whose is the wisdom that comes into our heart? I hope that some of you Bible scholars will not think that I’m twisting a point when I tell you that wisdom is Jesus Christ. Jesus is wisdom, and no man has wisdom until wisdom enters him; and wisdom enters a man, when Christ enters a man. Christ is our wisdom. I want to show you something here in 1 Corinthians, chapter 1. Just turn to it with me, just keep one hand there, if you will, in the Book of Proverbs, and look, if you will, in 1 Corinthians chapter 1, beginning in verse 20. God says, “*Where is the wise?*” Now he’s not talking about wise men, he’s talking about the *wise guy* right here. “*Where is the wise?*” He’s talking about the wise of this world. “*Where is the scribe?*” That is, the PhD, the intellectual. “*Where is the disputer of this age?*” He’s talking here about the debater, the man, the philosopher. “*Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?*” We’d have to say *amen* to that, friend. We boast of our wisdom, and civilization is caving in on us. “*For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God...*” (1 Corinthians 1:20-21). I think that’s one of the neatest things in the Bible. God is so wise that he won’t let you learn about Him by human wisdom. In the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knows not God.

We talked about Albert Einstein. But I want to tell you—Albert Einstein had no more of a head start to God than little Shane Smith who was up here today. Did you know

that? That little boy—wasn't he a handsome little fellow? Now listen. Albert Einstein, with all of his brains, doesn't have a leg up on knowing God. The Bible says, “[*God hath hid these things from the wise and prudent, and [hath] revealed them unto babes*” (Matthew 11:25). Aren't you glad?

I'm not against intellectualism. I'm not preaching against that. But I'm telling you, dear friend, *when you come to God, you don't come headfirst, you come heart first*. Did you know that? God hath hidden these things from the wise and the prudent. And before you can know God, you're going to have to lay your intellectual pride in the dust, because—you see—if a person with a big IQ could know God better than somebody else, then God is not fair. God is not fair. Not everybody has a head, but everybody has a heart. Amen? I mean, we can know God, we can love God with all of our hearts, and, in the wisdom of God, He hath hidden these things from the wise and the prudent.

But now, let's go on to see what he says for—verse 22: “*For the Jews require a sign*”—the Jews were looking for a mighty Messiah—“*and the Greeks seek after wisdom*”—the Greeks were looking for sort of a double Socrates; they had intellectualized God, and they had begun to worship of the shrine of their intelligence. But Paul says, “*But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God*” (1 Corinthians 1:22-24).

Jesus is wisdom personified. Let me tell you about wisdom. It commences with conversion; it deepens by discipleship. Real wisdom: “*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom*” (Proverbs 9:10). That is, a man does not even have a modicum of wisdom, until he knows the Lord. When a man reverences God, when a man receives Christ, when a man has a personal encounter, that man receives the wisdom of God. And here is the incomparable worth of wisdom. It, dear friend, is provided by the Father; it is produced by the Spirit; but only by the presence of the Son. When you have the Lord Jesus Christ in your heart, then you are ready to have that real wisdom.

Now that's the incomparable worth of wisdom. God desires it so much that he sent his own dear Son, the Lord Jesus, to die upon Calvary's cross that you might know this wisdom; and he sent his dear Holy Spirit to teach it, the incomparable worth of wisdom. No wonder the Bible says there's nothing to be compared with wisdom—nothing.

II. The Infallible Way to Wisdom

Now let's talk a little bit about the infallible way to wisdom. How can you have this wisdom? Well, look again if you will in our scripture here in Proverbs, chapter 2. There are three things that I see in this scripture, three things that teach me of the infallible way to wisdom. Now pay attention.

A. The Pursuit of the Scriptures

First of all, if you were to have wisdom you must pursue the scriptures, there must be the pursuit of the scriptures. Look again in chapter 2, verse 1: *“My son, if thou wilt receive my words...”* (Proverbs 2:1). It’s all predicated on that. If you don’t want to receive God’s Word, you’ll never have wisdom.

Friend, this book, God’s Word, infallible, inerrant, is God’s handbook of wisdom for His children. You must pursue it. You must pray over it. You must study it. You must saturate yourself with it.

1. We Must Appreciate the Word of God

Now what must you do? Let me tell you about pursuing the Scriptures. First of all, you must appreciate the Word of God. Chapter 2, verse 1 says you’re to *receive* God’s Word. That literally means *welcome* God’s Word, just like you receive somebody into your house—that is, you’re glad to see them.

You know, some people come to church on Sunday morning with a sign hung around their neck. Do you know what it says? “Please do not disturb.” Listen. We’re to receive God’s Word. Are you receiving it today? Are you listening? Is your mind out there gathering wool? You’re thinking about how you’re going to get the onions out of your grass, and you’re thinking about what you’re going to have for lunch, and who is going to be playing basketball. I shouldn’t have reminded you of all of that, should I? And you’re just not receiving God’s Word.

2. We Must Appropriate God’s Word

Oh, my friend, listen. If you will receive Him, we must appreciate God’s Word; but not only must we appreciate God’s Word, we must appropriate God’s Word. Look again—*“and hide my commandments with thee”* (Proverbs 2:1). That means, not only to let it get in, but let it get down. *“Thy word have I hid in mine heart”* (Psalm 119:11). As you appropriate it, as you take it in.

You know, some people don’t even bring a Bible to church, some people never make any notations, some people are not serious—they’re not serious, friend. *If we would possess wisdom, wisdom must possess us.* I mean, we must get into God’s Word, we must hide God’s Word down in our heart.

3. We Must Assimilate God’s Word

Not only must we appreciate God’s Word, not only must we appropriate God’s Word, we must assimilate God’s Word. Look again in verse 2. The Bible says, *“incline thine ear unto wisdom”* (Proverbs 2:2). The words *incline thine ear* literally have the idea of sharpening the hearing, have the idea of tuning in. It’s kind of like when E. F. Hutton speaks; you say, what’s that? I mean, God’s going to give me some wisdom.

4. We Must Activate God's Word

Man, I want to appropriate it, I want to assimilate it, but not yet has it begun to work all the way. You must appreciate it, you must appropriate it, you must assimilate it, but you must activate it. Look here—look if you will—and he says here in verse 2: “...and apply *thine heart to understanding*” (Proverbs 2:2). When you apply it, when it gets out of the notebook into your head, and it gets out of your head into your heart, and when it gets out of your heart into your life, and you begin to live it, and you begin to apply it, and you begin to activate it, at that moment, it becomes wisdom to you. The Bible says, when a man hears the Word and doesn't do it, that man is a fool. You are to begin to apply the Word of God.

Now listen. Study of the Bible gives you knowledge *about* God; obedience gives you knowledge *of* God. Did you hear that? Study of the Bible gives you knowledge about God, obedience gives you knowledge of God. Jesus said, “*He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him*” (John 14:21). That is, when you keep God's Word, when you obey God's Word, then God begins to reveal Himself to you. And the manifestation of God to you, among other things, means that you're going to have wisdom in your life. And so if you would know wisdom, you must pursue the Scriptures, you must appreciate the Scriptures, you must appropriate the Scriptures, dear friend, you must assimilate the scriptures, you must activate the Scriptures. Be a man of the book and you'll be a man of wisdom—that's the first step. You must pursue the Scriptures—there must be the pursuit of the Scriptures.

B. The Prayer of the Saint

Secondly, there must be the prayer of the saint. Look in verse 3: “*Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God*” (Proverbs 2:3-5).

5. We Must Pray with Intensity

Now here, he's talking about the prayer life, and how we're to pray. First of all, we're to pray with intensity. Look at it in verse 3: “*Yea, if thou criest after knowledge and liftest up thy voice for understanding...*” (Proverbs 2:3). This is not a namby-pamby, will-o'-the-wisp, “now I lay me down to sleep,” type of prayer. Oh, with all of the function and unction and emotion of the mind, body, soul, and spirit, a person says God, “I want to know wisdom.” *God does business with those who mean business.*

“*The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much*” (James 5:16). That's what James told us. And James is the one who taught us much about praying for wisdom. Do you really want to know the way of God? Do you cry out after wisdom? Do

you seek wisdom? We're to pray fervently. God forgive our cold, indifferent halfhearted prayer life. If a man really wants wisdom, he'll cry out for it.

6. We Must Pray with Insistency

Not only are we to pray with intensity; we're to pray with insistency. Look in verse 4: *"If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures..."* (Proverbs 2:4).

Suppose you knew that in the yard of the house, or somewhere in the house that you purchased, there's a valuable treasure hidden. The former owner had put it there, and when you got the house, you got the treasure. And it's all yours, if you just find it. And you know that it's there. Would you look for it? Of course you would—I would. It'd be a lot easier for me to spade my garden. You'd be looking for it. You'd say, "I know it's here." Boy, wouldn't it be a great day when God's people seek wisdom like they seek wealth?

You know, some people are really upset about that young boy, a football player, Steve Young for the LA Express. Do you know how much they're paying him to play football? Now buckle your pew belts—you ladies don't know this, you men already know this—\$40,000,000! I didn't say \$40,000—\$40,000,000 to get a bag full of zipped up air across a pasture. \$40,000,000! You say, "Well, the President only makes \$200,000 a year." \$40,000,000 for playing football. "Well," you say, "I don't believe in all of that." Well, let me say something to you. Most of you have not even begun to pursue wisdom like that young man has begun to pursue excellence on the football field—"They for a corruptible crown, we for an incorruptible." (1 Corinthians 9:25) I tell you, there's something worth more than \$40,000,000, and that is wisdom. For what effort, what training, what diligence, what persistence? I tell you, these athletes put us to shame—"they for a corruptible crown, we for an incorruptible."

7. We Must Pray with Expectancy

Wisdom—"nothing to be compared to it...more valuable than rubies,"—the Bible says is this thing called wisdom. We're to seek for wisdom, we're to search for wisdom, as a man seeks and searches for a hidden treasure. We are to pray with fervency, we're to pray with persistency, and we're to pray with expectancy. Continue to read here—chapter 2. And read with me verses 5 and 6: *"Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding"* (Proverbs 2:5-6). Do you know what that is? That's a promise: *"The LORD giveth wisdom."* When you get into the Word of God, and then you couple that with prayer, by crying out after God—when there is a fervent, persistent, expectant prayer, I tell you by the authority of the Word of God that the God of heaven, the God of grace, the God of glory, is going to grant to you wisdom. You'll know it.

Now you know, when we pray, the Bible says, if we ask God anything, according to

his will, we know that he hears us. Now we know that it's God's will that we have wisdom. God desires wisdom for his children. James 1 verse 5 says, *"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not"*—do you know the next part of that? *"And it..."*—what?—*"it shall be given him."* It shall. But then, the Bible says: *"But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed"* (James 1:5-6). He's *"unstable in all of his ways"* (James 1:8). *"Let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord"* (James 1:7).

Now when you come to God with fervency, consistency, expectancy, after you have received the Word of God, then you can pray to God for wisdom, and it shall be given. God's not going to scold you, he's not going to upbraid you, he's not going to say, "Is that you again, pestering me again?" Oh no! God is pleased when I come to him daily and say, "God, I need wisdom here. Lord, I'm preparing a sermon. Lord, help me. Lord, I'm making a decision. Lord, help me. Lord, I'm seeking a college, a wife, I need to buy a home, I want to win souls. Lord, I want to be used. God, give me wisdom." God will give it. He will give it. He will give it. He will give it. God wants you to have wisdom. Out of his infinite riches in Jesus, He giveth and giveth and giveth again.

*Thou art coming to a King,
Large petitions with thee bring;
For his grace and pow'r are such
None can ever ask too much.*

—JOHN NEWTON

Hallelujah!

C. The Presence of the Savior

But there's one other thing, and I'll be finished. Not only must there be the pursuit of the Scripture, not only must there be the prayer of the saint, but I want to say it one more time: there must be the presence of the Savior, if you would know wisdom. There must be the presence of the Savior.

Now notice again verses 7 to 9: *"He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: he is a buckler to them that walk uprightly. He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints. Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path"* (Proverbs 2:7-9). Who is our righteousness? Who is our wisdom? It is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now look in verse 7. He speaks of sound wisdom. The word *soundness* means wholeness. Oh, dear friend, I want to tell you, In Christ, there is soundness. In verse 7, he speaks of a *buckler* or a *shield*. In Christ, there is strength. In verse 8 he speaks of preserving his saints. In Christ, there is security. In verse 1, he speaks of every good

path, and in verse 10, he speaks of pleasantness. In Christ, there is satisfaction. In Christ, soundness; in Christ, strength; in Christ, security; in Christ, satisfaction.

Conclusion

Would you know wisdom? There must be the pursuit of the Scripture, there must be the prayer of the saint; but all of these are no good, unless there's the presence of the Savior. It is Christ who is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption. Oh, to know Jesus, the wisdom of God, and the power of God! Christ in the heart. Let's bow our heads in prayer.

Finding God's Way in a Dark Day

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: April 8, 1984

Main Scripture Text: Proverbs 3:5–6

"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding."

PROVERBS 3:5

Outline

Introduction

- I. There Must Be a Trusting Confidence
- II. There Must Be a Total Commitment
- III. There Will Be a Thrilling Consequence
 - A. A Divine Direction
 - 1. God Speaks Through His Word
 - 2. God Speaks Directly to Your Heart
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 - 4. God Directs Us Through Providence
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Conclusion

Introduction

Now, you know that we are preaching through the Book of Proverbs under the general heading of "God's Way to Health, Wealth, and Wisdom." Now, you heard the proverb—the human proverb—that "early to bed, early to rise"—will do what?—"will make a man healthy, wealthy, and wise." A proverb is a short sentence based on long experience. But, the proverbs we're reading about today are not short sentences based on long experience; the proverbs that we're reading about today are short sentences revealed to us by divine inspiration of the immutable, infallible Word of God. This is not just human wisdom distilled and boiled down; this is divine wisdom given from above. And, if you're wise, you'll listen, and you'll be a whole lot wiser.

Now, we're talking today on this subject: "Finding God's Way in a Dark Day." And, these are dark days indeed, but God wants to lead His people. Listen to the scripture here in Proverbs chapter 3, verses 5 and 6: *"Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall*

direct thy paths—“*In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths*” (Proverbs 3:5–6). What a thrilling, exciting promise! Now, notice He tells us that we’re not to lean to our own understanding. Man is a clever creature, but he’s lost his way in the darkness.

If you’re 40 years of age or younger, there have been some amazing things—scientific breakthroughs, the unlocking of knowledge—that have taken place in your lifetime. For example, in your lifetime, man has split the atom and created nuclear devices that are capable of destroying life as we know it on Planet Earth. In your lifetime, space travel has become a reality. Now, you think about it. If you told your great grandfather that, he would have said, “Not only is that improbable; that is absolutely impossible.” But, now man has walked on the moon, and we’ve made probes to Venus and Mars and regions beyond. And then, think of how communications have developed in our lifetime. In our lifetime now television is commonplace and communication through satellites. This is an amazing thing that has happened in our lifetime—these developments.

You know, the Bible says, “In the last days, men shall rush to and fro” (Daniel 12:4). Well, you think about it. We have automobiles now that can travel at 600 miles an hour on land—they’ve done that in salt flats—airplanes that travel at 2,000 miles an hour, spaceships that travel at 24,000 miles per hour. It’s an amazing thing. A man went out here to the airport, I’m told, and asked a clerk, “How long does it take to fly from Memphis to Dallas?” He said, “Just a minute.” He said, “Thank you.” We can get there faster, but we still don’t know where we’re going. About all we’ve really added is speed and noise, but not much light. But, you see, these amazing things have happened in just the past 40 years. But, in those same 40 years, divorce has gone from one in eight marriages to one in two marriages. In those same 40 years—in those same 40 years—crime has increased 500 percent in those 400 years—500 percent in 40 years.

You see, ladies and gentlemen, man is a clever creature, but he has lost his way in the darkness. We don’t seem to be able to find God’s way in this dark day. And yet, I want to give you some scriptures to put there in the margin by Proverbs chapter 3, verses 5 and 6. Listen to this wonderful, wonderful promise in Isaiah chapter 58, in verse 11: “*And the LORD shall guide thee continually*” (Isaiah 58:11). Isn’t that a wonderful promise? Not part-time guide us—“*The LORD shall guide thee continually.*” We don’t have to be misguided men in an age of guided missiles. The Lord will guide us continually. Psalm 32 and verse 8: “*I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go...*”—that’s God’s promise—“*I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye*” (Psalm 32:8). A sweeter promise could not be found in all of the Word of God.

Oh, I love this one. In Ephesians chapter 2 and verse 10, the Bible says, concerning

our salvation and what God has done for us and in us and through us and what He will do with us, he says, “*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works,*”—now, listen to this—“*which [He] hath before ordained that we should walk in them*” (Ephesians 2:10). Do you know what that means? That means that God had a plan for my life before He laid the foundation of this world. “*[He] hath before ordained that [I] should walk in them*” (Ephesians 2:10). You see, God just doesn’t have a plan for nations, and God doesn’t just have a plan for congregations; God has a plan for individuals. “*The very hairs of your head are numbered*” (Matthew 10:30). In Psalm 37, the Bible says, “*The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD...*”—not just his entire life, but every individual step—“*The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way*” (Psalm 37:23)—Psalm 37 and verse 23. How wonderful that God is going to guide us!

And, God has a plan for everyone. God has a plan for the plumber as well as the preacher. God has a will for your life as well as my life. And, I want to tell you, dear friend, if God calls you to be a plumber, and you end up being a preacher, you’re taking second best. Did you know that? You are! Listen. To do God’s will is the highest achievement of any person. What is God’s will? What is success? Success is not spelled *m-o-n-e-y*. Success is not spelled *f-a-m-e*. *Success is the progressive realization of the will of God for your life.* That’s what success is.

Now, if God has a will for your life, God has a plan for your life, we would expect God to reveal that plan for us. Our job, our duty, our privilege, our exciting thrill is to find the will of God, follow the will of God, and finish the will of God, so that we can come when we put the last period upon the last sentence upon the last paragraph upon the last page of human history, when we come to the end, we can say, “*I have finished the work...thou gavest me to do*” (John 17:4). And, He can say to us, “*Well done, [thou] good and faithful servant...enter thou into the joy of thy lord*” (Matthew 25:21; Matthew 25:23). Wouldn’t that be wonderful? That’s what success is.

Now, the Bible tells us clearly and plainly—magnificently—that if in all of our ways we will acknowledge Him, that He will direct our paths—that God will lead us to know His will for our lives (Proverbs 3:6). Now, remember, He has a will for your individual life. God doesn’t make copies; He only makes originals. There’s a will for me, a will for you. God has as many methods as He has men. He has but one purpose for my life and your life. We all have the same purpose: it’s to be like Jesus. But, He has many plans for us, and those plans are individual—and they are marvelous indeed. So, let’s talk a little bit about letting God direct our lives; to have a God-directed way, to find God’s way in these dark days in which we are living.

I. There Must Be a Trusting Confidence

First of all, I want you to see there should be a trusting confidence—a trusting confidence. Look in verse 5: *“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding”* (Proverbs 3:5)—this trusting, complete confidence. Now, notice in whom we’re to trust. We’re to trust in the Lord. I don’t have some scheme here today I’m going to ask you to subscribe to. I’m not asking you to trust in a plan. I’m not asking you to trust in a program. I’m not asking you to trust in a philosophy. I’m asking you to trust in a person, and He’s the only One we ought to trust in: the Lord, right? *“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart”* (Proverbs 3:5).

Now, do you find it difficult to trust in the Lord, especially with all of your heart? You have a half-hearted trust? You want me to tell you why? You may not like what we’re going to hear, but I’ll tell you why. If you’re having difficulty trusting in the Lord—if you’re having difficulty trusting in the Lord—it’s because you don’t love the Lord. Now, you see, you can’t trust a person that you don’t love.

I mean, have you ever had anybody come up to you and say, “Hey, will you do something for me?” Just say, a perfect stranger: “Will you do something for me?” Well, what’s your first question? “What is it?” And, suppose a perfect stranger says, “Well, never mind what it is; just trust me. Will you do it?” I’d say, “No. You’re going to have to tell me first. I don’t know how you are. I don’t know what you might ask me to do.” Isn’t that right? But now, suppose my wife comes to me—my darling Joyce comes to me—and she says, “Adrian, will you do something for me?” I say, “What is it, Joyce?” She says, “Never mind. Just trust me.” I probably wouldn’t do it either. No, I would—I would. My first question would be, “Now, wait a minute. What is it? What do you want me to do?” But, if she were to say to me, “Never mind what it is; just trust me,” I know her enough, I love her enough, I know that she loves me enough that she would not do anything to harm me, or embarrass me, or put me in a position that would not be for my welfare. And, I could say—and I believe I would say, “I’ll do it.” Why? Because I love her. It’s hard to trust somebody that you don’t love.

Now, wait a minute. We’re not finished yet. Why don’t you love Him? Because you don’t know Him. Friend, if you knew Him, you’d love Him, because He’s altogether lovely; He’s altogether trustworthy. The people who do not love Him are the people who do not know Him. How could you know Him and not love Him?

Well, why is it that we do not know Him? It is because we’re not spending time with Him. You can’t love someone that you don’t spend time with, that you don’t know, because you can’t know somebody that you don’t spend time with. There’s no real love at first sight. There may be infatuation, but as we come to know Him, we come to love Him; and as we come to love Him, we come to trust Him. And, as we come to trust Him, we come to obey Him; and as we obey Him, we are blessed by Him. *“Trust in the LORD*

with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding” (Proverbs 3:5). Are you spending that quality time with Him in His Word that enables you to know Him so that you might love Him, so that you might trust Him, so that you might obey Him, so that you might be blessed of Him? *“Trust in the LORD...”*—*“Trust in the LORD”*—*“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart;”*—and notice again verse 5 says—*“and lean not unto thine own understanding”* (Proverbs 3:5).

Now, I want to make something crystal clear here, I trust, by the aid of the Holy Spirit. The Bible does not say we’re not to have understanding—the Bible does not say here that we’re not to have understanding. God wants us to understand. He says, *“Lean not unto [your] own understanding”* (Proverbs 3:5). Verse 7 makes that very clear, if you’ll look at that: *“Be not wise in thine own eyes”* (Proverbs 3:7). Why is that? Well, Proverbs 14, verse 12, makes it very clear: *“[There’s] a way [that] seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death”* (Proverbs 14:12). You can say, “Oh, I’ve got it all figured out. I’ve consulted the banker. I’ve consulted my doctor. I’ve consulted my psychiatrist. I’ve consulted my intellect, and I’ve looked at all of the factors. I have it all figured out.” *“[There’s] a way [that] seemeth right unto a man, [and] the end thereof are the ways of death”* (Proverbs 14:12). Jeremiah said, *“It is not in man...to direct his steps”* (Jeremiah 10:23), and he’s right. But, that doesn’t mean we’re not to understand; it means we’re not to lean upon on our own understanding.

Look in chapter 2 of Proverbs here—verse 1: *“My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to”*—what’s the next word?—*“understanding; yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding”* (Proverbs 2:1–6). So, here God is not saying that we’re not to use that sanctified wisdom that He gives us. He just simply says that we are not to lean to our own understanding; we’re not to be wise in our own sight. *“[There’s] a way [that] seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death”* (Proverbs 14:12; Proverbs 16:25). But, God is to give us His wisdom, and God is to give us His understanding. Hallelujah! How wonderful that is!

And so, number one, if you would find God’s way in a dark day—if you would know the will and way of God for your life—there must be a trusting confidence—a trusting confidence. Not a self-confidence—a confidence in Him. *“Trust in the LORD”*—*“trust in the LORD with all [of] thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding”* (Proverbs 3:5).

II. There Must Be a Total Commitment

Number two: Not only must there be a trusting confidence; there must be a total commitment—a total commitment. Look in verse 6: *“In all thy ways acknowledge him”* (Proverbs 3:6). Do you see it? In all your ways, totally, completely: a commitment to Him that acknowledges Him as Lord over every area of my life. That’s what it means: *“In all thy ways acknowledge him.”* Acknowledge Him how? As Lord, as Sovereign God, as the One whose right it is to rule over my life.

In all of your ways, have you acknowledged Him? Have you honestly, earnestly said, “Anywhere, anytime, any cost”? Now, people, I had to search my heart before I could preach this message, and there are times in my life, after the rest of my family have gone to bed, when I have to get alone with God in the darkness and ask myself a question like that: “Am I willing in all of my ways to acknowledge You? Is there something, Lord, that I’ve laid on the altar that I’ve taken back off the altar?”

III. There Will Be a Thrilling Consequence

Friend, I want to tell you that God has a way that we can know His will, but, number one, there must be a trusting confidence. We’re to trust with all of our heart. Number two: There must be a total commitment in all of our ways. In every way, we are to acknowledge Him as absolute, sovereign Lord of our lives and make a total commitment. Number three: If we have that trusting confidence, if we make that total commitment, there will be a thrilling consequence. Look at it again in verse 6: *“In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths”* (Proverbs 3:6). No ifs, ands, and buts about it, *“he shall direct thy paths.”*

Now, as we’re right here on this verse, I want you to see several things about this. First of all, there’s going to be a divine direction, and that’s wonderful. But, coupled to it and conjoined with it there will be a divine dynamic—and that, friend, is fabulous. Now, I want you to see it. I’ll tell you, if it doesn’t excite you, you’ve got calluses on your soul. You pay attention.

A. A Divine Direction

There’s going to be a divine direction. *“He shall direct thy paths.”* God is going to say, “This is the way; walk ye in it.” Well, how will He direct my path? How can God speak to me? How will He speak?

1. God Speaks Through His Word

One way that God will speak is through His Word. We know clearly the Book of Proverbs is His Word. The Book of Psalms says, in 119, verse 105, *“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path”* (Psalm 119:105). How am I going to find God’s way in a dark day? *“[God’s] word is a lamp unto my feet...a light unto my path.”* I’m

going to know by the Word of God. For example, much of the will of God is revealed in His Word—the moral choices that I have to make.

Sometimes a man will come to me for counseling, and he'll say something like this: "Well, pastor, I'm married to thus and such a woman, but there's another woman that I really feel is God's will for my life. Would you pray with me about it, pastor?" I don't have to pray about it—no need to pray about it. I mean, God's not going to change His Word for you or for anybody else. The Bible says, "Thou shalt not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:14).

We can't be like the man who stood up in a meeting, and read the scripture, and absent-mindedly said, "If there are not additions or corrections to the scriptures, they'll stand approved as read." They stand.

And, we're going to know the will of God through the Holy Bible. If you would know God's way, you'd better know God's Word.

2. God Speaks Directly to Your Heart

But, I'll tell you another way: God will speak directly to your heart when you pray and ask God for wisdom. God speaks to the human heart. There are some that do not believe this. There are some that God speaks to supernaturally—to the inner man. I believe it with all of my heart. How is God going to speak? He's going to communicate to our spirit. For example, after Judas fell by transgression, the apostles wanted to know who should take Judas's place. Acts chapter 1 and verse 24: "*And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen*" (Acts 1:24). "Lord, You know our hearts. Now, show which of the two, Lord, that You have chosen." And, God speaks to human hearts. God gives wisdom when we pray.

Now, He may speak other ways. He may speak through providence, but many times He speaks in the quietness of the heart. That's the reason we need to understand that prayer is a two-way street. When we pray, we don't just pray at God; we talk with God.

Have you ever been in a conversation when a person does all the talking? It's really not even a conversation, is it? They just talk at you. Do you know what an egotist is? An egotist is somebody who talks about himself so much you don't have time to talk about yourself. That's an egotist. That's the reason we don't like to be around an egotist. He has "I" trouble; he's full of self.

I acknowledge Him in my business life. I acknowledge Him in my recreational life. I acknowledge Him in my domestic life. I acknowledge Him in my worship life. I acknowledge Him in my leisure time. In all of my ways—not some of my ways, but in all of my ways—I am to acknowledge Him. There is to be a total commitment to Jesus Christ, if you would find God's way on a dark day. Do you know what you need to do? You need to sign a blank check, and give it to God, and say, "God, fill it in." What you

need to do is to sign the contract at the bottom and say, “Here it is, Lord. I can trust You. Fill it all in.”

One of my favorite preachers is Dr. Stephen Olford. When Dr. Olford was a young man, he was raised in Africa—the son of missionary parents. He was a brilliant boy. He decided he wanted to pursue a course in engineering. He went away to an engineering school, one of the finest schools in all of the world. Stephen Olford was a top student, the equivalency of straight A’s. His plan was to become a successful engineer, to go back to Africa to have leisure, to have the nice things that money could buy, and to help the missionaries and the work of God on the side. It seemed a real fine plan to him. It was one he had worked up in his own mind. And, it seemed good. He had it all set. He was leaning on his own understanding. His father was back in Africa. Olford was away in school. He got sick. He went to the doctor. He was in bed. The doctor came to his bedside and said, “Young man, in two weeks, you will be dead.” His life caved in around him. Here he was, leaning on his own understanding, making his own plans. While he was on that deathbed, that sickbed, a letter came from his missionary daddy, and it took months for the mail to travel. The daddy had no way of knowing the condition of the son and the condition his son would be in when the letter arrived. But, in that letter, Stephen Olford’s dad said to him those words—those poignant words—that you and I have heard and quoted so many times that perhaps they have become trite to us. But, in that letter Stephen Olford’s dad said to him, “Only one life, ’twill soon be past, Only what’s done for Christ will last” (C. T. Studd). God broke through to this young man, and he bowed his head, and he prayed this prayer, and I want you to listen to it—only three words in it: “Anywhere, any time, any cost.” Amen?

Would you be willing to pray that prayer? Would you be willing to say today, “Lord, anywhere, any time, any cost.” “Oh,” you say, “no, I’d be afraid to do that.” I’ll tell you why: because you’re not trusting Him with all your heart; you’re afraid of Him. And, if you’re afraid of Him, it’s because you don’t love Him; and, if you don’t love Him, it’s because you don’t know Him; and, if you don’t know Him, it’s because you haven’t been spending time with Him.

Friend, don’t be afraid of the will of God. The will of God is not something that you have to do; it’s something that you get to do. And, *God will choose for you what you would choose for yourself if you had enough sense to choose it.* You say, “Oh, but I might end time in Africa as a missionary.” If you did, you’d want to go, because “*It is God [that] worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure*” (Philippians 2:13). And, don’t slander the character of God by making it seem like the only choice you have is between doing the will of God, on one hand, or fulfillment, on the other hand. That’s a slander to the character of God. You delight yourself in the Lord, He will give you the desires of your heart. Jesus Christ said, “*My meat is to do the will of him that sent me*”

(John 4:34)—“My meat, My bread, My butter is to do the will of Him that sent Me.” Real satisfaction—real fulfillment—comes in doing the will of God. But, there must be a total commitment. *“In all thy ways acknowledge him”* (Proverbs 3:6).

Now, some of you are saying, “Well, it doesn’t work for me.” Well, before you say that it doesn’t work for you, and before you say that God has not guided you, I want you to ask this question very seriously and very personally: Are you trusting Him with all your heart? Now, many times we come to God this way, and rather than saying, “Speak, Lord. Your servant hears,” we say, “Listen, Lord. Your servant is speaking.” And, we don’t listen to God. We don’t get quiet and still, and let the still, small voice of God’s Holy Spirit speak to our spirit. God can speak to our hearts.

An example—Acts chapter 8 and verse 29. Deacon Philip was out in the wilderness, and the Bible says, *“Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to [that] chariot”*—*“The Spirit said”* (Acts 8:29). Now, how do you think He said it? Do you think He said, “Philip, this is the Lord. Go over there”? Philip was in tune; he was in the stream of the Spirit. He was impressed in his heart to go.

Or again, Acts chapter 13, verse 2—the church is praying, seeking God’s way to spread the gospel, and the Bible says, *“As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them”* (Acts 13:2). And, the great missionary enterprise of Barnabas and Saul was started when the Holy Spirit spoke to the church communally, together, corporately. The Spirit of God gave a corporate consensus as He moved upon the hearts of those people, as they were fasting, praying, ministering, the Bible calls it, to the Lord.

Let me give you another one. In the Book of Nehemiah, Nehemiah wanted to know God’s will about this great building program that God had set before them, and here’s something precious. In Nehemiah chapter 7 and verse 5, here’s what Nehemiah said: *“And my God put into mine heart to gather together the nobles, and the rulers, and the people”* (Nehemiah 7:5). “My God,” he said, “put it into my heart.” That is, God had a plan for His people, and God put it in the heart of Nehemiah. I believe when we pray, God knows how to speak to the human heart.

3. God Will Give Us Wisdom

I’ll tell you, dear friend, not only are we going to know God’s will by God’s Word, not only are we going to know God’s will in direct answer to prayers, when God speaks to heart, but God is also going to give us wisdom. We’re going to know God’s way by God’s wisdom. Now, the Book of Proverbs deals so much with wisdom and understanding, and the Bible doesn’t say we’re not to have understanding. It says we’re not to lean on our own understanding, but contrariwise, *“If any [man] lack wisdom”*—James says in James 1:5—*“let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith...”*—remember this?

“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart” (Proverbs 3:5), only—*“let him ask in faith, nothing wavering”* (James 1:5–6), and it shall be given him. *“He shall direct thy paths”* (Proverbs 3:6). God does give wisdom.

And, what is wisdom? It’s not just feeling warm around the heart and wet around the lashes. It’s not just having goose bumps and liver shivers. Wisdom is sanctified common sense. Wisdom is having the mind of Christ. Wisdom is having understanding from knowing the Word of God and the principles of God’s Word. And, in a multitude of counselors there’s wisdom (Proverbs 11:14; Proverbs 24:6). And so, we can come and find the will of God that way.

Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse said, “I’m convinced that 90 percent of the will of God is found above the neck.” You see, the Bible tells us that we are to appeal to this wisdom. Ephesians 5, verse 17: *“Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is”*—*“understanding what the will of the Lord is”* (Ephesians 5:17). Now, listen again—1 Corinthians chapter 10, verse 15. Paul said, *“I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say”* (1 Corinthians 10:15). That is, use your intellect on fire with the Holy Spirit, having the mind of Christ, thinking the thoughts of Christ after Him.

4. God Directs Us Through Providence

Another way that He directs our paths is through providence. In the Book of the Revelation, He says, *“[I am] he that openeth, and no man shutteth; [I am He that] shutteth, and no man openeth...behold, I have set before thee an open door”* (Revelation 3:7–8). Someone has well said, “The door to the room of opportunity swings on the hinges of opposition.” Paul said, “There’s an open door and many adversaries” (1 Corinthians 16:9). Sure there is—and it will be blood, sweat, and tears, but I’ll tell you, when God opens a door, there’s not a demon in Hell that can shut it. Praise God! Hallelujah!

B. A Divine Dynamic

Now, listen to what I’m saying. I’m saying that we know God’s way by God’s Word. We know God’s way by God’s witness, as He speaks to our hearts. We know God’s way by God’s wisdom, as He gives it to us. We know God’s way by God’s work—His providence, as He opens doors and closes doors. *“He shall direct thy paths”* (Proverbs 3:6). There is a divine direction. But now, wait a minute. Here’s the sweet part; here’s the hallelujah part. That word *direct*—the Hebrew word *yashir*—literally means “to cut a path; to clear the way.” Some of you who have a translation other than the King James will read something like this: “He shall make thy paths straight,” or another translation—“He shall make your paths smooth,” because that is the literal rendering of the word *yashir*. And, the idea actually is this: not only leading, but leading by clearing the way. What happens is that God actually just clears the way for the child of God.

In Isaiah chapter 40, this same phrase is used. Now, I want you to hear how it's used—verses 3 and 4. It speaks of John the Baptist: *“The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD,”*—listen to it—*“make straight in the desert a highway for our God.”* And then, he says, *“Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain”* (Isaiah 40:3–4). Hallelujah!

Do you know what God does for the man of God? Do you know what God does for the boy, the girl, the lady that is walking in the stream of His Spirit? Do you know what God does for a person who trusts Him with all of their heart and acknowledges Him in all of their ways? Friend, He bulldozes a path through the wilderness. That's exactly what it means. It means, “to cut a path.” And, mountains will melt, and valleys will be filled, and crooked places will be made straight. And, God smoothes the way for His people, and God goes before His people to make a way when they walk in the stream of the Spirit. God is saying that if we will trust Him with all of our heart, if in all of our ways we will acknowledge Him, God's going to put an angel with a bulldozer who's going to cut a path through the wilderness. Every mountain shall melt. Every valley shall be filled. The crooked place shall be made smooth. And, the Bible says that if in all of our ways we will acknowledge Him, He will make straight our paths—He will make smooth our paths (Isaiah 40:3–4). God—God—*G-o-d*—is going to clear a way.

Are you listening? No man, no demon, no force, no power on Earth can stand before the people of God when they're walking in the Holy Spirit. Do you believe that? If you don't believe it, you ought to close your Bible and never read it again. Just get out of the whole business, because, dear friend, if the devil is greater than we are—if the devil is greater than the Christ in us, that is—then we're of all people most miserable (1 Corinthians 15:19). But, who can stand against the people of God? Who can stand against the man, the woman, the boy, the girl, the people of God who have trusted Him with all of their heart, who have committed everything to Him and in all of their ways acknowledged Him? Then, God says, “I'm going to rev up that bulldozer, and I'm going to cut a way in the wilderness for God's people.” Hallelujah! Boy, that's a thrill! That's exciting. There is a divine direction, and that divine direction is coupled with a divine dynamic. God makes a way. God makes a way for those who love Him and those who follow Him.

Conclusion

How are you going to know God's will for your life? Listen. God's will is not a roadmap; it is a relationship. Get that big and plain: “In all of your ways acknowledge Him. Trust in the Lord” (Proverbs 3:5–6). I'm glad it's not a roadmap. I'm glad God doesn't say to me, “Now, Adrian, five years from now, you're going to be thus and such. Ten years from

now, you're going to be doing thus and such. And, 15 years from now, it's going to be..." How boring! I'm glad that there's the romance of serving Him. I'm glad that He is the Way. All I have to do is to know Him and follow Him, as He impresses my heart today. I'm not worried about tomorrow. I follow Him today, and today turns into tomorrow. The way to find God's will for the rest of your life is to do God's will for the next 15 minutes.

A man said, "Well, I've been called to be a missionary." His friend asked him, "Well, what are you doing for the Lord now?" He said, "Well, not much." His friend said, "Then please don't go overseas and do it." Amen?

Listen. "*He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in that which is much*" (Luke 16:10). And, if you're not in the small things, and if you're not faithful in the everyday things, why should God reveal to you the big things? I'm telling you again, the way to know God's will for your life is to do God's will in the next 15 minutes, and do God's will today. Get in the stream of God's Spirit. "*In all [of your] ways acknowledge him*" (Proverbs 3:6)—the big things, the little things, the social life, the personal life, all of your life! Acknowledge Him, and God will rev up that bulldozer, and God will clear a way through the wilderness for you, and you'll find God's way in a dark day.

Finding God's Will for Your Life

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: October 5, 2003

Main Scripture Text: Proverbs 3:5–6

"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding."

PROVERBS 3:5

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Introduction

You know, a while back, there was an advertisement that the cereal people that produce Corn Flakes did. I was intrigued by it, because it showed a bowl of Corn Flakes, old fashioned Corn Flakes, the kind we ate years and years ago, and the ad said, "Corn Flakes: taste them again for the first time." You know, sometimes, we get used to certain texts in the Bible, and they're kind of like Corn Flakes. We've heard these over and over again. The text that I'm going to use tonight is one that if you were in a testimony meeting and you were asking people to share favorite verses, somebody would stand and say this verse most likely, because it's one that we all love: Proverbs 3, verses 5 through 6. I invite you to turn to it and taste it again for the first time, and not just simply to take it for granted, because it has much to do with finding God's purpose for your life. Look at it: *"Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths"*

(Proverbs 3:5–6).

Now, that's a good verse—two good verses, two great verses. You know, the question that is often asked: How can I find God's purpose for my life? Or, another way: How can I find God's will for my life?

Do you want to succeed? I was reading recently where Hugh Hefner, the father of the Playboy empire, with his infantile, so-called adult entertainment, was saying, "We won!" Hefner is now 75 years of age. He gave an interview to the L. A. Times, and he said, "We have won. It is now a Playboy world. We have won the war against the pleasure police." Well, they won in ancient Rome; they won in ancient Greece; they won in Sodom and Gomorrah, without winning at all. Do you know what failure is? Failure is succeeding at the wrong thing. That's what failure is. Hugh Hefner is a miserable, abject, pathetic, pitiful failure, and he's coming one day to the final judgment. But, he boasts and struts about having won. What a purpose in life to distort God's wonderful gift of married love!

Now, man, today, with all of his wit and wisdom and ingenuity, is more of a clever creature who's lost his way in the darkness. Now, if you are my age, or a tad younger, you've seen a lot of things happen in your lifetime. In your lifetime, the atom has been split, and man now has the capacity to literally destroy all human life on earth—and, we do still live in a nuclear world and in great danger. In your lifetime and my lifetime we've had space exploration. We have sent a man to the moon. Whether you believe it or not, it happened, and we've sent probes to Venus and Mars and other stellar bodies out there—Jupiter, and beyond. We now live with satellite television. We have instant communication with the entire world. We sat in our living rooms and watched a war happen here recently in Iraq. It's incredible that we can see it not soon afterward, but we can see it in actuality, literally, while it is happening. And, the Internet has come, and we communicate now with something that goes through the air, the information superhighway. Sadly, *our kids are becoming roadkill on the information superhighway*. But, it's out there, and it's not going to go away, this instant communication through the Internet. And, we're headed toward a cashless society more and more. And, now the thing that we've often talked about in our prophecy messages is coming to pass: people are literally having microchips implanted underneath their skin so that they can be tracked and taken care of. We have airplanes now that travel at 600 miles an hour, spaceships 24,000 miles an hour as they flip around the earth in orbit, and some of them are right there now. We're not amazed at anything.

I'm told a man went down to the Memphis Airport and said, "How long does it take to fly to Dallas, Texas?" The man behind the counter said, "Just a minute." He said, "Thank you."

We know so much, and yet I say *we are an age of guided missiles and misguided*

men .

But, here's the good news. Our text tells us, and many other texts tell us, that God will guide. Would you like to have the assurance that God is guiding your life? Would you like to know? Now, just put some verses down in your margin. Isaiah 58 and verse 11 says, *"And the LORD shall guide thee continually"* (Isaiah 58:11). Now, isn't that sweet? Not off and on, not haphazardly: *"The Lord shall guide thee continually."*

A precious verse, Psalm 32 and verse 8. He says, *"I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye"* (Psalm 32:8). Are you close enough to the Lord He can guide you with His eye?

You know what it means to guide with your eye? When my children were little, they would sit on the front row in the little Waveland Baptist Chapel where I preached, and then again at the Parkview Baptist Church in Fort Pierce, and sometimes we didn't have the nursery, so they had to sit on the front row and they had to be good. Their little feet would hardly touch the floor. And, Daddy's preaching and watching them all at the same time. And, sometimes they'd misbehave. Now, nobody else in the congregation might know it, but I could look at them, and I would say, without saying a word, still preaching, *"If you don't straighten up, you're going to get it when I get home"*—just a look.

Have you ever been in a restaurant with your wife and another couple, and you start on a particular part of a conversation, and she looks at you, and she says with her eye, *"Don't go there"*? She just looks at you.

Now, friend, that is an intimate relationship, where you're so close to God that He can guide you with His eye. And, He promised to do that.

And then, I love Ephesians chapter 2, verse 10. We use verses 8 and 9 that tell how to be saved, but verse 10 says, *"For we are his workmanship..."*—that literally means we're His poem, we're His work of art—*"We are his workmanship, created...unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them"* (Ephesians 2:10). I mean, before He saved us, He had a wonderful purpose for our lives. It's great. There's a Father above us who's directing all things. There's the Savior beside us guiding our footsteps. There is the Holy Spirit within us directing our hearts. We are not stumbling around like a ship without a compass or a rudder on a dark and stormy night. We have a God who will guide us. And the wonderful thing is that He has as many plans as He has men and women, boys and girls. The very hairs of our head are numbered. Psalm 37 and verse 23: *"The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD"* (Psalm 37:23). *"The steps"*—step by step by step, our heavenly Father wants to guide us and lead us. And, He has a plan.

I preached this morning about being called to preach and told you how incredibly happy and thrilled I am that God called me to preach. And, some of you may have been thinking, *"Well, maybe God will call me someday."* He has called you. God has a plan

for the plumber as well as the preacher. God has a plan for the merchant as well as the missionary. God has a plan for every mother's child in this building. "If in all of your ways you will acknowledge him, He will direct your paths." And, if you miss God's plan and God's purpose for your life, I don't care what else you do, you'll come in second best, to say the best, second best.

Now, you may think I'm on an ego trip right now, but I'm going to tell you something. I would have to step down to be the President of the United States of America. I mean that with all of my heart. I would have to step down, because I am in the will of God. I don't mean that I'm perfect. I'm light years from perfection, but I'm where God wants me. And, if you're in a business, if you're in a job, if you're in school, whatever you're doing, if you are in the will of God—listen, precious friend—there is no higher place than the will of God. What could be higher than the will of God—to be in the will of God, to find God's purpose for your life?

Now, let me give you four steps that come out of this passage of Scripture that will help us to find, to follow, and to finish God's purpose for our life.

I. Let God Choose the Way

Number one: Let God choose the way—let God choose the way. Look again in verse 5: "*Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.*" And then, verse 6: "*In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.*" Now, in order to let God choose the way, you've got to have a confidence in God, because, you see, we're not told here to trust a proposition. I'm not trying to give you a plan. I'm not trying to give you a formula, per se. I'm trying to say that you have to have a vital connectivity with God Himself. Listen to it again: "*Trust in the LORD*"—"in the LORD." Not a proposition, not an idea, but a person who is totally trustworthy.

Now, let me tell you something. You can't trust somebody that you don't know and you don't love. Let me just back up and say you can't trust somebody that you do not love. Now, you can know them and still not trust them. As a matter of fact, that might be the reason you don't trust them: because you know them. But, if you really love a person...

For example, sometimes my precious wife Joyce will say to me, "Adrian, close your eyes and open your mouth." And, I do. And, what happens is wonderful, because she's got something that she has created that is marvelous and delicious—just waiting. Now, I'm telling you, if a perfect stranger told me, "Shut your eyes and open your mouth," no, because I don't know them—I don't know. I love her, and she loves me, and I know that she loves me so much she would never willingly harm or embarrass or hurt me in any way whatsoever.

Now, you cannot trust someone you do not love. And, you cannot love someone you

do not know. And, you cannot know someone you don't spend time with. And, the reason many of us don't know God's purpose for our lives is we don't love Him, because we don't, and we don't trust Him, because we do not know Him. We're to trust in the Lord with all of our heart. To know Him is to love Him. To love Him is to trust Him. To trust Him is to obey Him. And, to obey Him is to be blessed.

Now, notice he says, "Lean not to your own understanding." That's one of the hardest things for us to do, is to set aside our own personal wit and wisdom and ingenuity, and stop trusting in it. Proverbs 3, verse 7, says, "*Be not wise in thine own eyes*" (Proverbs 3:7). Now, many of us are wise in our own eyes. But, again, Proverbs 14:12 says, "*There is a way that seemeth right unto man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.*" It can seem right to you. You can be wise in your own eyes. And, that's where we get in trouble sometimes, because we trust our own wit, wisdom, and human ingenuity rather than trusting in the Lord.

Do you know what Jeremiah said? Put this verse down—Jeremiah chapter 10, verses 23 and 24: "*O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps*" (Jeremiah 10:23). You don't have what it takes. You may have a Ph.D., but you don't have what it takes. Now, he doesn't say, "Don't understand." He says, "Lean not unto your own understanding." The Lord does give understanding, and I thank God for that. Notice in verse 4—just back up: "*So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man*" (Proverbs 3:4). He's not saying, "Just go out without any understanding." He's saying, "Don't trust your own understanding." Lay your pride in the dust and say, "God, I don't have what I need," and don't be afraid to let God choose the way.

Are you willing? I'm asking the question. Answer it individually, but answer it. Are you willing? Dear sir, dear lady, are you willing? Are you really willing to let God choose the way? "*In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.*"

II. Let God Control the Way

Now, number two: Not only let God choose the way, but let God control the way. See, it's one thing to say, "God, I'm willing to do Your will," but then you have to acknowledge Him. Sometimes we acknowledge Him in some of our ways, but it doesn't work. God won't work part-time. *God is not a* part-time God *with a duplex for a* palace. No, He demands that we acknowledge Him in all of our ways. In all of our ways acknowledge Him, whatever we do. What does the Bible say, in 1 Corinthians 10, verse 31? "*Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God*" (1 Corinthians 10:31).

I'm going to ask a question. I want you to answer it again. Are you willing for God to choose and to control your way? I mean, everything—what you eat for dinner, who your

friends are, how you spend your money, how you entertain yourself. Are you willing to say, “Lord, You’re in control”? Now, it’s not a proposition; I say, it is a person. God is not giving you a plan. He’s giving you Himself. *Knowing the* will of God *is not a* roadmap; *it is a* relationship. He is the One who controls your life.

Dr. Stephen Olford is a dear member of our church. Stephen Olford now is in his 80’s, and he’s still a fireball preaching for the Lord Jesus Christ. But Stephen Olford as a young man had said, “Lord, I trust You to save me. I want to live my life for You,” but he had a little reservation there. What he had decided to do was to be an engineer. And, in the world’s eyes he would have been a great engineer, because he has a wise mind; he’s very keen, he’s very sharp, he’s very intelligent. He wanted to be an engineer. What some of you don’t know is that Stephen Olford used to race motorcycles. Can you imagine that? That’s right—Dr. Olford racing motorcycles. His father was a missionary in Africa, and Stephen grew up in Africa, but he after he got his education was on his own way. They didn’t have instant communication like we have today. And, Stephen Olford got sick, sick unto death, and the doctors prognosticated that he was going to die. He was on his deathbed. He received a letter from his missionary father, not even knowing Steve’s physical condition. Steve had worked it out. He said, “I’m going to make a lot of money, and I’m going to give money to God’s work and do my thing”—a little rationale there, a little rationalization. He got a letter from his missionary dad. It said, with a little couplet that many of us have quoted many times:

*Only one life, ’twill soon be past;
Only what’s done for Christ shall last.*

—C. T. STUDD

And, there he was, as a young man, at death’s doorstep. One life, will soon be past, and only what’s done for Christ will last. And, he thought, “Oh, God, here my life is passing away, and I’ve been reserving things for myself, holding out on You. I have not acknowledged You in all of my ways.” And, he prayed a prayer that I want to ask you if you are willing to pray. And, here was the prayer: “Dear God, anywhere, anytime, any cost.”

Are you willing to say that? Anywhere, anytime, any cost. Now, it’s easy to put that down in your notebook. It’s easy to nod your head. But, could you really say that? I mean, Jeff, you’ve got a great business. Are you willing to give it up and go to the mission field if God calls you to do that? Jim, you’re a minister of music and so forth, and you’re a ripe old age. Are you willing to say, “Lord, Linda and I are going to go over here to do something for less money where nobody will know me if You want me to do it—Lord, if You want me to do it?” Now, I’m not saying that God wants you to do that. I’m not saying God wants you to do that. But, friend, you know, it makes good preaching, doesn’t it, if we just say, “Oh, yes, sure.” But, are we fluid enough? Are we

surrendered enough not only to let God choose the way, but to let God control the way? Well, if not, do you know why not? Because we don't trust Him. You see, we feel that maybe He might give us a bad deal.

I love the scripture that says, "*Perfect love casteth out fear*" (1 John 4:18). I used to think that meant if I loved Him perfectly, I wouldn't be afraid. That isn't what it means. Read it carefully. Translate it, exegete it correctly, and here's what it says: "We have no need to fear someone who loves us perfectly." It's His perfect love for us that casts out fear. It's not my perfect love for Him. I don't do anything perfect, but sin. Thank God that He is the One who wants to control my will. Well, you say, "No telling what He'd have me do." Whatever He would have you to do, if you're in the will of God, you'd be happier than you would be out of the will of God. You know what Jesus said? "*My meat is to do the will of him that sent me*" (John 4:34)—meat—*m-e-a-t*—food. "This is what nourishes me, this is what satisfies me: doing the will of God."

Let God choose the way. Let God control the way. And, don't slander the character of God by saying that the choice has to be between what I want to do, and joy, or what God wants me to do, and misery. That's a slander to the character of God, is it not? "In all of your ways acknowledge him." Again, the Bible says, in Psalm 37 and verse 4, "Delight thyself in the Lord, and he'll give you the desire of your heart" (Psalm 37:4). That doesn't mean you're going to have a mansion in Malibu. What that means is, when you delight yourself in God, the desire of your heart will be met, which is God. God is the desire of the human heart. The deepest, the hidden hunger that you have is God Himself. And, when you delight yourself in Him, then you will have the desire of your heart. Now, let God control the way.

III. Let God Confirm the Way

Now, here's the third thing: Let God choose the way. Let God control the way. And then, let God confirm the way. You say, "Pastor, yep, I'm willing to do the first two, but how will I know the will of God? How can I know God's purpose for my life?" Well, I'll tell you several ways God is going to confirm it to you, okay?

A. Through His Word

First of all, through His Word. God is going to confirm it through His Word. Psalm 119, verse 105, says, "*Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path*" (Psalm 119:105). A lot of the will of God for you, precious friend, is found in the Word of God. It's already settled, and when it's properly interpreted you know the will of God, and these major things. And, by the way, if you get them settled, the rest of it is going to be pretty much duck soup.

1. Concerning Salvation

Now, what I mean by that is this: What is God's will? It's God's will that you be saved. Second Peter chapter 3, verse 9: *"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but is long suffering to us-ward,"*—now, listen—*"not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance"* (2 Peter 3:9). Now, there are some people believe God only wants some people to be saved. I believe God wants all people to be saved. The Lord is not willing that any should perish, but that *a-l-l*—all—should come to repentance. I don't know what kind of a Bible scholar you are, but you're going to have to do some fancy footwork to make that say anything other than what it says. The Lord is *"not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."* You want the will of God? Get saved. That's the will of God. Get saved!

2. Concerning Being Spirit-filled

I'll tell you what else is His will: that you be filled with the Holy Spirit. Listen to Ephesians 5, verses 17 and 18: *"Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit"* (Ephesians 5:17–18). Don't be unwise. Understand what the will of the Lord is. Be filled with the Spirit. Now, if you're saying, "Oh, God, show me Thy will, show me Thy will. Lord, I want to know Thy will," may I ask you a question? Are you consciously filled with the Holy Spirit of God? Why should God show you anything else? Why should God do anything else if you're not filled with the Holy Spirit? See, look. The will of God is that you be saved. The will of God is that you be Spirit-filled. That's right in the Word of God.

3. Concerning Sanctification

Not only is salvation and Spirit-filledness in His will, but sanctification is in His will. First Thessalonians 4, verse 3. And, all of these verses now use the exact phrase, "the will of God." Listen to this one: *"For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication"* (1 Thessalonians 4:3). Sanctification means to be holy, to be set aside for the service of God. And, he says, *"This is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication."* If you're living in sexual sin, you have got unmitigated gall and audacity to say, "Lord, show me Your will." It's an insult to God, an insult to God. *"This is the will of God, even your sanctification."* The Lord is *"not willing that any should perish."* Know the will of God. Be filled with the Spirit. Be sanctified. Live a holy life.

Now, those are only three examples of how you can just pick up the Word of God, black print on white paper, and say, "That's the will of God." He may not tell me what college to go to, what girl to marry, what job to take, what house to buy, but, friend, if you'll get these things—salvation, and be filled with the Spirit, and live a holy life—the rest of it will begin to fall into place. Do you agree to that? Say, "Uh-huh."

B. Through Prayer

Okay, listen—listen. This is the will of God. You're going to find the will of God in the Word of God. Number two: You're going to find the will of God through prayer. God does speak mysteriously in prayer. For example, let me give you some verses here. You just jot them down and I'll rattle through them. Acts chapter 1 and verse 24: *"And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen"* (Acts 1:24). "Lord, You know our hearts. We want to know who's going to take Judas' place. Lord, show us." They prayed. I have prayed many times, "God, show me thy will." And, God does show, when we pray.

Philip was praying, in Acts chapter 8, verse 29: *"Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot"* (Acts 8:29). The Holy Spirit will speak to your heart. There is a book written, *Decision Making and the Will of God*, that seems to negate the fact that God just steps in and shows us mysteriously, mystically His will, but I believe He does show us His will this way. Acts chapter 13, verse 2—listen to this: *"As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said,"*—the Holy Ghost said—*"Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them"* (Acts 13:2). These are the first missionaries that are sent out. Now, how did the Holy Spirit say that? I really do not believe the Holy Spirit in an audible voice said, "Separate unto me Saul and Barnabas for the work." They felt impressed in their heart as they prayed, and God the Holy Spirit spoke to their heart.

Nehemiah: when Nehemiah wanted to go back and rebuild the walls around Jerusalem, here's an interesting verse. Nehemiah chapter 7, verse 5: *"And my God put into mine heart to gather together the nobles, and the rulers, and the people"* (Nehemiah 7:5)—"God put it in my heart." There are other things in that verse, but the part I want is that God puts things in your heart. *"The Holy Ghost said..."* God leads us mysteriously when we pray, mystically, but dynamically, through the Holy Spirit. So there is the Word of God. There is the Spirit of God.

C. Through Wisdom

I'll tell you another way that God will lead you, that He will acknowledge and confirm His way for you—and that, friend, is through plain old wisdom that God will give you. James chapter 1, verse 5—a great, unqualified promise: *"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally..."*—now, listen to this—*"...and it shall be given him"* (James 1:5). *"It shall."* It doesn't say it might. No ifs, ands, and buts about it. *"And it shall be given him."* *"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not,"*—that means, He won't scold you—*"and it shall be given him."* "But," He says, "only ask in faith" (James 1:6).

Now, this morning we talked about getting your mind renewed, and I asked this

question: Why would God renew your mind if He didn't expect you to use it? What is wisdom? Wisdom is not getting all wet around the lashes and all warm around the heart and getting goose bumps and liver shivers. Wisdom *is* sanctified common sense. Donald Gray Barnhouse, a great preacher of the Word of God, said, "Much of the will of God is found between your ears." You use the wisdom that God has given you. I already mentioned that scripture over there in Ephesians 5, verse 17, where he says, "Be not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is." Again, Paul says, in 1 Corinthians 10:15, "*I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say.*"

Don't be afraid to use your mind. Don't think you're being humanistic. Don't think that you're being unspiritual if you do what you think you ought to do. Friend, when you're walking in the Spirit, don't be afraid to do what you think you ought to do. When your heart is clean, when your motive is clear, when you are Spirit-filled and sanctified, you have every right to do what you think you ought to do, unless the Holy Spirit checks you and says, "Don't do it." Paul "*assayed to go into Bithynia,*" and the Spirit forbade him (Acts 16:7). Was he out of the will of God? No, he was in the will of God, because he would obey the will of God and turn when God told him. And, by the way, hey, you don't have to pray about what color necktie to wear. Now, you ought to, but, I mean, God gave you a mind. Use your sanctified mind. God gives wisdom, which is sanctified common sense.

D. Through Providence

And then, another way God's going to do it is just through providence—just through providence. Revelation chapter 3, verse 8—God says, "*I know thy works...I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it*" (Revelation 3:8). God opens doors and closes doors. He's done that for my life all the time. So, if you take the Word of God, if you take the Spirit of God the comes through prayer, if you take the wisdom of God that God gives to you, and then the providence of God, you will find God directing your ways.

Let God choose the way. Let God control the way. Let God confirm the way. You will hear God's Spirit saying to you, "This is the way; walk ye in it." Now, it doesn't mean it's a once-for-all thing. It's a continual thing. This is the way that you live. "*The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD.*" Step by step, God wants you to depend upon Him. "As your days are, so shall your strength be" (Deuteronomy 33:25).

IV. Let God Clear the Way

Now, here's the final thing: Let God clear the way. Now, look again, if you will, in Proverbs chapter, 3 and verse 6: "*In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.*" Now, the word *direct* is a very interesting word: *yashar*, the Hebrew word.

And, do you know what it literally means? Let God “clear the way”—let God “clear the way.” The New American Standard translates it this way: Let God “make your paths straight.” The word *yashar* means, “to cut a straight path. Moffatt translates it this way: And He will clear the road for you. Let God clear the way.” He will clear the road for you. This same Hebrew word is used, talking about John the Baptist, who prepared the way for the Lord Jesus Christ, and here’s what it said in Isaiah chapter 40, verses 3 and 4: *“The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain”* (Isaiah 40:3–4).

Now, I want you to get an idea of a bulldozer building a road, and there’s a mountain, and the bulldozer lopes it off. There’s a valley, and he pushes the dirt in the valley. There’s a stone, and he moves the stone out of the way. And, there is a curve in the road, and he straightens the road out. Every valley shall be exalted, brought up. Every mountain is made low. Every obstacle is removed. The crooked is made straight. And, when the Bible describes what John the Baptist would do preparing the way for the Lord Jesus Christ, it is the same word that is translated here, *“In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.”*

Friend, I’m going to tell you something. When you get in the will of God, when you get in the stream of God, when you begin to obey God, God will rev up Heaven’s bulldozers and go in front of you. Don’t tell me it’s not true. It is true.

I’m an old football player. And, every now and then, I would get hold of a ball and start down the field. And, I’ll tell you one of the most beautiful sights that a ball carrier can see is some downfield blockers knocking this guy out of the way, and knocking that guy out of the way, and knocking this man down, so you can run the ball. Friend, when you get right with God, God will do the downfield blocking. When you get right with God, God will rev up Heaven’s bulldozers. And, not only when you let God confirm the way, choose the way, and let God control the way, and let God confirm the way, then God begins to clear the way.

Roland, you’re sitting here on the front row. I can remember, Roland, when we were trying to buy property downtown, and we were trying, trying and trying to get just three more acres, because we had to have just three more acres, and that would not have been enough to build a building. We thought we at least needed a building that seats 6,000, and we knew that wasn’t big enough. And, we had some people around us who thought they would get rich on Bellevue Baptist Church. And, it was a piece of property that the man who bought it began to raise the price on us, because he thought we were desperate to have it. Roland, I can take you to the parking lot where you and I were walking across the parking lot, and you said to me, “Pastor, that man has raised the

price on that property again.” I remember what I said to you like it was yesterday. I said, “Well, praise God—praise God.” And then, I said to you, whether you remember it or not, I said, “No two-legged man whose breath is in his nostrils is going to stop what God is doing.” That’s what I said right then. And, friend, He didn’t. I’ll tell you what God did. God said, “You don’t need that three acres. I’ve got 400 acres for you. That’s what you need. And, I’m going to rev up heaven’s bulldozers, and I’m going to clear the way.”

Man, when you walk in the Spirit, I’ve seen God open and close doors enough in these years to know that we serve a mighty God. You want God’s purpose for your life? “In all your ways acknowledge him; lean not unto your own understanding.” Trust Him, and He will clear the way. He will. And, you’ll know God’s purpose for your life, because God has a purpose for your life, and my life, and for this congregation. And, we need to begin to trust Him to do just that.

Conclusion

Bow your heads in prayer. Would you say, “Lord God, dear God, dear God, choose the way for me. Dear God, control the way for me. Dear God, confirm the way to me. Dear God, clear the way for me.”

How Can I Know the Will of God?

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: December 26, 2001

Main Scripture Text: Proverbs 3:5–6

“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.”

PROVERBS 3:5

Outline

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Introduction

Take your Bibles and turn to Proverbs chapter 3. If you ever had a verse on your refrigerator at one time, probably you had this one. Proverbs, chapter 3, verses 5 and 6. Often notice, if you ask people to stand and give a Scripture verse by memory, this one seems to come to the top so many times. And I pray that familiarity will not breed contempt, but that we will understand why people love these verses, Proverbs 3, verses 5 and 6. Here's what they say: “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him—now here's the promise—and he shall direct thy paths.” The question that is so often asked, how can I know the will of God for my life?

Man is a clever creature, but, friend, he has lost his way in the darkness. If you're fifty years of age, in your lifetime, fifty years or older, you've seen some amazing things happen in your lifetime.

You've seen, for example, the atom split, and you can remember, as I can remember, when you saw on television a nuclear explosion as the atom bomb being tested. Or in our lifetime, we have seen the exploration of space, and a man has actually gone and stepped on the moon. There are some people still don't believe that

happened. They believe it's a trick. But man literally, actually put his foot on the moon, and we've sent space probes to Jupiter and Venus and Mars. We've seen the news coming to us, as I saw this afternoon, from across the ocean and around the world, instant communication by radio and television. We watch events as they transpire overseas in the comfort of our living room. We, in our lifetime, we have seen the development of the information highway with the Internet. We've even watched some of our kids become road kill on that information super highway. We've watched transportation as it has just developed where now automobiles can travel 500 miles an hour, planes, 2000 miles an hour, space craft, 24,000 miles an hour, just 24,000 miles per hour as they whip around the globe in outer space, and we have ceased to be amazed at anything.

Well, I want to ask you a question. If we're so smart, why are we in such trouble? I, we have progressed in knowledge but not in wisdom. And that's the reason that this verse says, "Lean not to your own understanding." *We have a generation of misguided men in a world of guided missiles.*

So, how can I know God's will for my life? How can I find guidance? How can you find guidance? A few verses before we get into our text:

Isaiah 58 and verse 11: "And the LORD shall guide thee continually..." That's a great promise. The Lord shall guide thee continually.

Psalms 32, verse 8: "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go; I will guide thee with mine eye."

These are unqualified promises.

Ephesians 2, verse 10: "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

That means that God has a plan for every life, and every person who is saved is a creation of God, a new creation, created to do good works, which God in eternity past has foreordained that we should walk in them.

So we have the Father above looking down on us, controlling all things. We have the Savior beside us who is guiding our footsteps. We have the Holy Spirit within us energizing us to walk in the ways of the Lord. So why is it that we have so much difficulty? Well, I want us to look at four steps in these two verses that will help us as we face a new year and make a new start—ways that will help us to find our way in a dark day.

I. Let God Choose the Way

Number one: Roman numeral one: Let God choose the way. Let God choose the way. Look, if you will, here again. "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding." God is the one who is to choose your way, not you. It's not

something that you are to figure out in your flesh. You see, what are we to trust? We're not to trust in a proposition. I can give you a lot of propositions. I could give you a lot of ways as to how to plan your future, ha, ha, but that may be my understanding communicating with your understanding. It's not a proposition that we're called to trust in. We are called to trust in the Lord.

Now, in my humble but accurate opinion, you will never know the will of God without trusting the Lord. Now that brings up a, a question. How do you trust the Lord? Well, you cannot trust someone that you do not know.

For example, have you ever had anybody say, "Will you do something for me?" Well, you say, "What is it?" They say, "Well, just trust me." Now your next answer may be yes or no. If you know and love that person and know that person loves you, you may say yes.

For example, if Joyce says to me, "Close your eyes and open your mouth." Now I would do it because I know her. I know her so well, I know that she would never willingly embarrass me, hurt me, harm me. If she wanted, if she asked me to do something like that, I would do it. But if a perfect stranger comes up to me and say, "Close your eyes and open your mouth," I'm not going to do it. I'm not going to do it. Why? Because I don't know them. You see, you can't trust somebody you do not know.

Now listen, friend. Here it is: If you want to be blessed, to know the Lord Jesus is to love Him. To love Him is to trust Him. To trust Him is to obey Him. To obey Him is to find God's will for your life. And to find God's will for your life is to be blessed. And so, number one, you have to let God choose the way. You're not to choose your own way.

Now He says, "...lean not unto your own understanding." He doesn't say you're not to have understanding. He said it is your understanding that you're not to have. It's God's understanding that you are to have. Look. Just back up to verse 4: "So shalt thou find, so shalt thou find favor and good understanding in the sight of God and man." Now there is understanding. He's just simply saying make sure that it is God's understanding you get and not your own understanding. Proverbs 14:12 says, "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." You may think everything is perfectly logical, perfectly right in your mind, but God says, "Don't lean on your own understanding."

I went to seminary in New Orleans. I spent four years in New Orleans, Louisiana going to seminary. They call New Orleans the Crescent City. I was going one night down to the inner part of New Orleans to preach at a rescue mission. And I went down there, and I preached, and I got in my automobile and was going to go back out to the east part of New Orleans, 3939 Chef Mentour Highway, where the seminary was. But I kept ending up at the river, the opposite direction. The river was west. I wanted to go east. I got in my car and drove around again and came back to the river. I got in my car,

drove around some more, came back to the river. I said, "This is crazy. I know that I know that I know I'm going east. How do I keep ending up at the river?" Ha, ha. Well, finally I said, "Adrian, forget what you know and start reading the signs," and I went straight home, ha, ha.

Now, sometimes, we are so sure we're right, but we're dead wrong. Is that not true? That's the reason the Bible says, "...lean not to your own understanding."

Now you're in Proverbs 3. Just go back to Proverbs 2 and look in the first six verse. "My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and shall find knowl, the knowledge of God. For the LORD giveth wisdom: and out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding."

So, when the Lord says that you're to lean not to your own understanding, He's not saying you're not to have understanding. You're to have the understanding that comes from the Word of God, and you're to seek wisdom as you seek hid treasure.

Let me ask you a question: If you bought a piece of property, and you knew in the back yard of that piece of property there was a buried treasure; I mean, you knew it, no ifs, ands, and buts about it. You knew there was a buried treasure in that back yard. Would you not wish for a shovel for Christmas to go out there and dig for that treasure? I mean, if you know it's there. You know it's there. You'd be searching for it.

How many of us dig into the Word of God? How many of us say we really believe that the Bible is a treasure? He says we have to search for truth as with hid treasure. That's the reason so many of us don't understand the Word of God because, friend, we are not digging, isn't that true? How many believe everything you read in the newspaper, let me see your hand. Not a hand. How many believe everything you read in the Bible, let's see your hand. All right. Now I'm not going to ask the third question. How many people spend more time in the newspaper than they do in the Word of God? Ha, people are fools who spend more time reading something they don't believe than studying something they do believe. It is a trick of the devil.

Now we're to trust in the Lord with all of our heart and lean not to our own understanding. It doesn't mean we're not to understand. We are to understand. But the only way we're going to understand is to get into the Word of God. Do you understand? Now listen. We've got to get into the Word of God.

II. Let God Control the Way

Now number one: You let God choose the way. Number two: Let God control the way. Let God control the way. Look at the verse again. He says, "In all thy ways acknowledge

him....” That is, to put Him first, to acknowledge Him. Let Him be in control. “Whatever you do in word or deed, do all to the glory of God.”

You see, you don’t surrender to a plan. You surrender to a person. God’s will is not a road map. God’s will is a relationship. You don’t really find the will of God as much as the will of God finds you when you’re walking in the Spirit. Jesus is the way. Isn’t that what He says? Now we’re looking for the way. Friend, Jesus is the way. That means that in all of our ways we acknowledge Him. That means that we sign a blank check and give it to God. We sign a contract at the bottom that hasn’t been filled out and give it to God. I do that sometimes. I mean, I literally do that. I mean, I pick up a pen and sign a, a piece of blank paper, and hold it up over my head, and say, “There it is, Lord. There it is.” I mean, it’s only symbolizing and making it real to me, that in all of thy ways acknowledge Him.

Now some of us have the idea that a tenth of our money and a seventh of our time belongs to God, but that’s wrong. One hundred percent of our money and all of our time belongs to God. In all of our ways acknowledge Him.

A dear member of our church is Stephen Olford. I love Stephen Olford. He is a dear man of God. Wou, would you believe that when Stephen Olford was a young man, do you know what he did? Raced motorcycles. I mean, now you think of Stephen Olford. You know who I’m talking about? It’s a man that looks more holy, I guess, than any man I know, unless it was the late Sidlow Baxter. And the two of them, just to be around them you just think, *Well, man, that is a man of God.* Stephen Olford used to race motorcycles. He has an engineering mind. He could take motorcycles apart and put them back together. He was a missionary’s son. He had made up his mind that he was not going to be a missionary. He was not going to be a pastor. Not going to be a preacher. He was going to be a very successful businessman with an engineering firm. And here’s the way he worked it out in his mind:

He said, “I’m going to be successful. I’m going to make a lot of money, and I’m going to be able to support the work of God with my money. And I’ll, at the same time, be able to do what I want to do.” Sound like a pretty reasonable thing. A lot of people think that way. That’s, that’s the way he just had it all figured out.

But Stephen Olford got sick, sick unto death. The doctor had given him two weeks to live – two! Stephen Olford got a letter from his missionary dad who did not even know he was sick. And in that letter that father wrote these words: Often “tis one life, will soon be passed. Only what’s done for Christ will last.” And Stephen knew that his life would be over if the doctor was correct in two weeks. His one life will soon be passed. Only what’s done for Christ will last. The finger of God touched the heart of Stephen Olford, and Stephen Olford bowed his head and he prayed a prayer: “O God, anywhere, any time, any cost. O God, anywhere, any time, any cost.”

That's what I mean by signing a blank check. "In all thy ways acknowledge him..." Have you done that? Have you said, "Well, I'll just give God some of my time, some of my money. I, and, you know, I'll go to church," like I'm doing God a wild favor. Is your life totally sold out to Him? You see, friend, when you let God choose the way – lean not to your own understanding – and let God control the way – in all your ways acknowledge Him – you're on the way to finding the will of God for your life.

Now most of us are, don't want to do that, and I'll tell you why. We're afraid to, right? You say, "Now wait a minute. I mean, man, if I would tell God any time, anywhere, any cost, no telling what He'd have me do." Well, friend, let me tell you. That's a slander on the character of God, that if you surrender to God, He's going to make you miserable.

Stephen Olford to me is one of the most joyful individuals I have ever met in my life. Every time I see that man, he is radiating joy and victory. Now, he's in his eighties, but he's a dynamo for God; a man who is deliriously happy in what he's doing.

You say, "Well, God might send me to the heart of Africa." If God sends you to the heart of Africa, that's where you would want to go. "Delight yourself in the Lord; He'll give you the desires of your heart." God works in you, both to will and to do of His good pleasure. What a slur on the character of God to say that we cannot trust God, but sang anywhere, any time, any cost.

Let God choose the way. Trust in Him. Don't lean to your own understanding. Let God control the way. In all thy ways acknowledge Him.

III. Let God Confirm the Way

All right. Now next, number three: Let God confirm the way. "In all thy ways acknowledge him and—what?—and he will direct your path." When God chooses your way, and when God controls your way, it follows as night after day that God will confirm the way to you.

Now how is God going to show you what He wants you to do in the year 2002, if that year gets here? Well, let me give you some ways that God will confirm the way to you.

A. God Will Guide with His Word

Number one, He's going to direct you by His Word. Jot this down, Psalm 119, verse 105: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path." We've already talked about that. Getting into the Word of God you'll have understanding. You know, the people want to know the will of God for their life – who shall I marry? Where shall I go to school? What business shall I do? Shall I buy this house? Shall I buy this car? Let me tell you some things that we don't have to guess about that are the will of God for you. I'm going to mention three things. And if you'll get these three things straight, and I can tell you beyond the shadow of any doubt, stutter, stammer, apology, equivocation, three things that are God's will for you. You really want to know the will of God? I'm going to

give them to you. I'm going to give you three verses that tell you that this is the will of God for you.

All right, first of all, it's God's will that you be saved. Second Peter 3, verse 9. The Lord is, "...not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." God wants you to be saved. He doesn't want you to die and go to hell. That's God's will for you. Get yourself saved.

All right, let me tell you something else that I know is God's will for you. Not only salvation, but God has a will for you that you be filled with the Holy Spirit. Let me give you a verse, Ephesians 5, verses 17 and 18: "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding—listen—what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit." Is it God's will that you be saved? Say yes. Is it God's will that you be Spirit-filled? Say yes. He said, "Don't be unwise; be wise, understanding what the will of the Lord is."

I'll tell you what else God's will for you is, is this: God's will is that you be sanctified. Now sanctified is a big, double-jointed word that we don't use very often, but it just simply means that you be set aside for the purpose, the service, of God. First Thessalonians 4, verse 3: "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification..."

Now I've mentioned three things that the Bible says, black print on white paper, is the will of God for you—salvation, the Spirit-filled life, and sanctification—right out of the Word of God. Now listen to me carefully. If you'll get saved, filled with the Holy Spirit, and separate yourself to serve the Lord God, the rest of the will of God for you is almost automatic. It's just almost automatic. You get your heart clean, get your motive clear, and you don't even have to be afraid to trust your own mind. You're going to find the will of God's just going to be finding you. It, it's going to be so simply. Do you think that you have to be afraid to use your mind to find the will of God? No! I'll say more about that in a moment.

But let me say, first of all, you want to know how God is going to confirm the way? One way is with the Word. You just pick up the Bible and read it. A man says, "I'll pray about whether or not I ought to divorce my wife and marry somebody else." Nope! You don't have to pray about that. You're tempting God when you do that. God's already said don't do it. You don't have to pray about something God has clearly said. God directs by His Word.

B. God Will Guide Through Prayer

I'll tell you how else God will direct you. When you pray, God will direct you if you will listen in your prayers. You don't say prayers; you pray prayers. Prayer is, is listening to God, as well as talking to God. Let me give you some verses.

Acts chapter 1, verse 24: "And they prayed, and said, Thou, O Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, show whether of these two thou hast chosen." They were trying to

find a successor for Judas. They said, “Lord, You know everything. You show us.” Now they were just talking in prayer. And another later on in the book of Acts, they were praying, and in Acts chapter 8 and verse 29, “Then the Spirit said unto Philip...” Excuse me. Acts 8, verse 29: “Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near and join thyself to this chariot.” There’s Philip out in Samaria in a revival meeting, and God calls him out of Samaria out into Gaza, and then God calls him to a specific chariot. Now how did He know this? Well, God is saying in the Spirit, “Philip, just go do this.”

In Acts chapter 13—listen to this—verse 2: “And as they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate unto me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.” Now how did the Holy Spirit do that? Did He speak audibly? He’s never spoken to me audibly. But I can tell you that when I have prayed sometimes, God the, or, or sometimes when I pray, God the Holy Spirit speaks to my heart. And I can tell you that God the Holy Spirit will speak to your heart. Are you practicing the kind of prayer that listens to God? Through His Word He will speak. Through prayer He will speak.

C. **God Will Guide Through His Wisdom**

And God will speak to you in wisdom. I said I’d talk about this in a moment. I want to talk about it right now. James 1, verse 5: “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God that giveth liberally to all men and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.” That’s an unqualified promise. “Only let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. Let not that man think he shall receive anything of the Word, of, of the Lord. A double-minded man is unstable in all of his ways.”

Well, what’s He saying? You want wisdom? Ask God for wisdom. What is wisdom? Wisdom is not getting warm around the heart and wet around the lashes, goose bumps and shivers, signs and visions and ecstasies. Wisdom implies that a judicious sense, use of your mind.

So many Christians are afraid to use their mind. Why are you afraid to use your mind? God gave it to you. He says in Romans 12:1 and 2, that if you’ll present yourself to Him, He’ll renew it. Well, why would God renew it if you’re not supposed to use it? In Romans 12:1 and 2 He says, “Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, and you’ll prove what is that good, perfect, and acceptable will of God.” And then He says, “For I say by the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly...” In the next two verses He uses the word think three times – think, think, think. And He’s talking about how you’re going to find the will of God for your life.

Again, you get in the Word of God. Make sure that you’re saved, Spirit-filled, and sanctified. You begin to pray, and say, “Lord, direct me.” And then, friend, you do what

you think you ought to do. Don't wait for a vision. Don't wait for an ecstasy. Just do it. You have a sanctified mind. You have the mind of Christ. That's not being humanistic. It's being deeply spiritual. When you are Spirit-filled and praying, you do what you think you ought to do. That's the will of God. You're going to find that God is going to guide you by wisdom. He's going to guide you; it's sanctified common sense.

You don't have to pray about everything. You wake up in the morning, get dressed. You don't have to pray about whether you're going to brush your teeth. You don't have to pray about what kind of a necktie you're going to wear. You just make up your choice because you're walking in the Spirit.

D. God Will Guide Through Providence

Now another way that God's going to guide you. Friend, even though you're in the Scripture, and even though you're praying, and even though you've asked God for wisdom, there are times when God will just step in and open doors and close doors, and He will guide you by providence. Has He done that for you? He's done that all of my life. I'm here because there's an open door. I didn't one day say, "You know, I'd really like to be pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church." There was a door open to me, and some dear people invited me to come and be the pastor of this church. Now, even if I didn't want to come, if they said, "We don't want you to be pastor," I couldn't have come. There had to be an open door. There could have been a closed door.

Revelation chapter 3, verse 8. Jesus said, "I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it..." Isn't it wonderful when God opens a door and no one can shut it? That's doesn't mean there's not going to be any difficulties. Paul said, "There's an effectual door open to us, and there are many adversaries." And the door to the room of opportunity swings on the hinges of opposition. The devil doesn't want you to go through an open door. But there are times when God opens a door for you and He says, "I've set before this open door. Nobody can shut it." Now, you can refuse to go through it, but you'd be a fool if you did. I'm saying, you let God, you let God choose the way. Don't lean to your own understanding. You let God control the way. In all of your ways acknowledge Him. And you let God confirm the way. And God will confirm the way clearly and plainly. He will direct your path. He says that He will, and you don't have to worry about it. He will do it.

IV. Let God Clear the Way

Now here's the fourth and final thing I want to say: Not only will God choose the way, and not only will God control the way, and not only will God confirm the way, but here's the blessed part of this verse: God will clear the way. God will clear the way.

Now look again at the verse. "And He will direct thy paths..." In verse 6. Now the word direct has a double meaning. It means to point the way, and it also means to clear

the way. It means more than direction. A New American Standard Version gives it this way: "He will make your paths straight." Some of you have an NAS, and that's what you'll read. If you have a Moffatt translation, here's what Moffat says: "And He will clear the road for you." It's the Hebrew word *vashar*, which means actually to clear the way.

Do you remember the prophesy over there in Isaiah talking about John the Baptist preparing a way for Jesus Christ to come? And here's what the Bible says, a prophesy concerning John the Baptist in Isaiah chapter 40,. Verses 3 and 4: "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD and make straight in the desert a highway for our God." That verb *make straight* is the same word here as direct, *vashar*. And then, here, here's the way it's described: "Every valley shall be exalted..." That is, if there's a dip in the road, you're to fill it up. "...every mountain shall be made low..." If there's a hill, you're to level it off. "...and the crooked place shall be made straight..." If there's a curve in the road, take it out. "...and the rough places shall be made plain." If there's a boulder in the road, remove it. Make a highway for our God!

Now that Scripture that speaks of a divine bulldozer filling valleys, leveling mountains, straightening curves, removing boulders is the word that is used here when it says, "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your path." He will fill your valleys. He will remove your mountains. He will straighten your curves. He'll take away the boulders. He will make a superhighway for you.

I used to play football. One of the great joys of any football player is to get the ball and have one or two people out of front of him cutting other people down. Whap! Knocks this one down. Whap! Knocks that one down. And you just go on down the field. He's running interference for you. Friend, in all of my ministry, and I bless the holy name of God for this, I've had a sense that God has been running interference for me. He put the ball in my hand, and He does the downfield blocking. Or you're driving a, you're driving the spiritual car, and it is God who is there straightening the way. It's God who is filling the valleys. It's God who is lopping the mountains. It's God who is taking the curves out and removing the boulders. Why? Because He wants us to get down the road.

You see, listen. If God were to choose the way, if God, friend, were to control the way, if God were to confirm the way, I still need Him to clear the way. I need Him to clear the way. I mean, how am I going to do the will of God unless God Almighty clears the way for me? He is a God who is able to, to open doors for us that no man can shut, and He's the one who shut doors and no man can open.

There used to be an old evangelist. His name was Henry Morehouse, dear man of God. He always preached on John 3:16. He had a little crippled girl in his home. Henry Morehouse would go off on long trips preaching, and he would try to bring presents home. One day, he brought an especially large present home for the mother in that

house who stayed there to take care of the children. This little girl met him at the door. She walked on crutches when she was out, but around the house she'd put the crutches away and just push herself along on the floor. And she saw her daddy. They hugged and kissed. And she said, "Daddy, what is this?" He said, "It's, it's a present, sweetheart, for Mother." She said, "Let me take it to Mother." He said, "Sweetheart, it's too heavy. You can't take it." She said, "Yes, I can. Let me take it to Mother." Said, "No, no, darl...." She said, "Daddy, let me take it to Mother." He looked at her, and she had a twinkle in her eye. He knew something was up. He said, "All right, there it is," and put it in her little hands. And she said, "Now, Daddy, pick me up and carry me to Mama" (laughter). And so, he picked her up, present and all, and brought her to Mama.

I felt like that little girl many times, that God has just picked me up and said, "Here's a job I want you to do, but, really, you not the one doing it at all. I'm the one who is doing it."

Conclusion

Friend, we are facing a new year. I don't know about you, but I'm hopelessly a romantic that makes New Year's resolutions. I've already been thinking. I've already been writing. I've already been making lists. And I have determined I want this year to be the best year I have ever lived for Jesus Christ. And I'm so grateful that the, the Word of God says, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not unto your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths." No ifs, ands, and buts about it. If you let Almighty God choose the way, control the way, confirm the way, and clear the way, what a mighty God we serve. Amen?

Let's bow together in prayer. While heads are bowed and eyes are closed, let me just give you some very practical advice and I want you to think about it. The way to know the will of God for your life next year is to do the will of God immediately and in all things. In all your ways acknowledge Him. Don't wait till tomorrow morning. I mean, starting now! Number two: Obey Him in the small things; the big ones will take care of themselves. Everything big is made of little things. "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much." It's hard to steer a ship that's not moving. I want to repeat again, the way to know the will of God for your life is to do the will of God immediately and to do it in all things. Obey Him in the small things; the big ones will take care of themselves.

Father God, I pray for my own life as, Lord, I face, along with these others, a brand new year. Lord, direct my paths and direct our paths. In Jesus' name, amen.

Lighting the Future

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: December 26, 1999

Main Scripture Text: Proverbs 3:5–6

“In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.”

PROVERBS 3:6

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Introduction

I want you to find a familiar passage of Scripture. As a matter of fact, it may be your favorite passage of Scripture: Proverbs 3, verses 5 and 6. And, we're going to revisit that passage of Scripture, because it is so pertinent for this time of the year as we're thinking about the future: "Lighting the Future."

Did you know what question is asked more than any other question when people ask counselors and Bible teachers a Bible question? What do you think that question would be? What is the number one question? Do you know what the number one question is? How can I know the will of God for my life? That question, more than any other question, is asked: How can I know the will of God for my life? And, that is a great question. That is a wonderful question. And, it applies to Adrian. It applies to you. It applies to all of us.

Now, man is a clever creature, but he has lost his way in the darkness. If you're 50 years old, you have attained at least 50 years, let me tell you what has happened in the

last 50 years. Of course, the atom has been split, and man is now able to destroy himself and the environment with him. In the past 50 years, we've had the exploration of space. We've put those first meager satellites, and now we have the space stations orbiting the earth, and we sent probes to Venus and Mars and Jupiter, and beyond all of that. I mean, that's just in our lifetime. We now, in our lifetime, in the last 50 years, have instant communication by radio and television, and we can watch news as it happens across the ocean—just in our lifetime. An amazing thing! Now, we have the Internet, and the information super highway. And, some of our kids are becoming roadkill on that information super highway, but we have instant communication.

I was speaking in Neyland Stadium at a Promise Keepers rally in Knoxville, and I was on the platform. I came from the platform and went right up to the speakers' place where the speakers were sitting. By the time I got back to my place I had received an e-mail from Australia, a person who had just heard me speak and was responding to my speaking. While I was speaking there on the platform, this man was listening and responded by e-mail. That's the information age in which we live.

And, in our lifetime we've seen a cashless society that is coming, and it is coming on very, very strong. It is just around the corner. And, that's just in the past 50 years. The automobile began in 1903, but we have now automobiles that can travel 600 miles an hour, we have airplanes that travel 2,000 miles an hour, spaceships, 24,000 an hour. And, we can get there quicker, but we still don't know where we're going. We have all of this that has happened in our lifetime. And, the Bible says, in the last days, "knowledge shall increase" (Daniel 12:4). And, that has happened in our lifetimes; I mean, if you're just 50 years of age. But, we live in a day of guided missiles and misguided men. We have lost our way in the darkness. And, that is a pity, and that is a shame, for God has promised to guide us.

Now, I want to give you some verses and I want you to listen to these before we get into our text that I'm going to read in a moment. But, this is just to set the stage for the text, Proverbs 3, verses 5 and 6. We'll read that in a moment, but listen to these scriptures that tell us that God wants to guide us.

In Isaiah chapter 58 and verse 11: "*And the LORD shall guide thee continually*" (Isaiah 58:11). Is that not a great promise? How would you like to say, day by day, moment by moment, "Almighty God is guiding me"? That is what he says: "*The LORD shall guide thee continually.*" Now, either that is true or it is not true.

Let me give you another verse. Psalm 32 and verse 8: "*I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye*" (Psalm 32:8). Do you know what "guiding with the eye" is? Well, that's the most intimate guidance.

Have you ever been with your wife in a restaurant and started a conversation, and she'll look at you, and you shut your mouth? She says, "Don't go there. Just be quiet." I

can guide my kids with my eye. When they were little, they'd be sitting on the front row, and I'd be preaching away. Nobody else would know it, but I'd look at them, and say, "You're going to get it when you get home," and then just go right on. That is guidance with the eye.

That is the most intimate kind of knowledge: that God wants to guide us that way, that He can guide us with His eye.

Ephesians chapter 2 and verse 10. The Bible says there, "*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them*" (Ephesians 2:10). That is, God created us for a plan, the good works that He has before ordained. That is, He has laid out a plan for us. He wants to guide us. And, we are so blessed. There is a Father above us controlling all things. There is a Savior before us so we can walk in His footsteps. And, there's the Holy Spirit within us impressing our hearts so that we can find a way in a dark, dark day.

I want to say something else: that God has a special plan just for you. Now, God doesn't deal with us *en masse*. He deals with us as individuals. God makes no duplicates. Everything that God makes is an original. Just like every snowflake has its own specific pattern, God made you as an individual, and God has a plan just for you. And, the Bible says, in Psalm 37, verse 23, "*The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD*" (Psalm 37:23). Is that not incredible? "*The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD.*" Every step you take is to be in His plan and in His purpose. And, you say, "Well, that's true for those like you, Pastor Rogers, that God has called into His service." No. Listen to me. It is true for you. *The same plan that is true for the preacher is true for the plumber. The same plan that is true for the missionary is true for the secretary. God has a plan for every individual life.*

Now, God called me to preach, but, you see, *a plumber who is being a plumber in the name of Jesus is more pleasing to God than a preacher who's not been called to preach*. You have to understand that. You see, it's not that some things are higher than others. Do you know the highest place? The will of God—the will of God—whether it's in business, whether you're a homemaker, you know, whatever you are, the will of God is the highest place. Now, to preach, when you've been called to do something else, would be to take second best. But, on the other hand, *if you have been called to preach, you'd have to step down to be the President of the United States*, because that is God's plan for you. God has a plan for your life. Do you believe it? Say *amen*. Amen. Now, I want you to believe this. Now, don't let this just blow past. God loves you. God has a plan for you. God says, "I will guide you continually." "*The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD.*"

Now, God deals with us as individuals. Dr. Stephen Olford, who's a member of our church, said that God's great plan is for us to find, to follow, and to finish the will of God

for our lives. That's what it is. So, let's talk a little bit about how to light the future.

Now, go to the text that you turned to there in Proverbs chapter, 3, verses 5 and 6. It says this: *“Trust in the LORD with all [your] heart;—“with all thine heart”—“and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him...”*—now, listen—*“in all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths”* (Proverbs 3:5–6). Now, that's God's Word. I submit to you it's either true or false. I believe it's true. You believe it's true. *“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he [will]”*—He will, He will, He will, I promise He will—*“direct thy paths.”*

Now, let's just break that down and look at it. And, there are three basic things I want you to see in that text that you and I are to do.

I. We Must Let God Choose the Way

First of all, we must let God choose the way. Roman number one: We must let God choose the way. Now, we do that two ways. How do we let God choose the way?

A. Full Confidence

Well, there must be a full confidence in God. Many of us don't trust the Lord enough to let Him guide us. Notice in verse 5: *“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart.”* Now, I'm not asking you to trust in a proposition. Trust a person. *“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart.”* Now, look up here and let me tell you something. You cannot trust somebody you do not know, and you cannot know someone that you don't spend time with. You see, when you trust somebody, it's because you spend time with them. And, if they're trustworthy, you come to love them, then you can trust them. *“Trust in the LORD.”*

Now, do you know Him intimately enough to trust in Him? Sometimes my wife will say to me something like this: *“Adrian, will you do something for me?”* What's my first question? What is it? Now, that's a legitimate question. But, suppose she says, *“Adrian, will you do something for me?”* and I say, *“Well, what is it?”* She says, *“Never mind, just trust me.”* I'd gulp, and I'd say, *“Okay.”* Why? Because I love that girl, and I know her love for me, and I don't have to worry. Have you ever had anybody say, *“Close your eyes and open your mouth?”* Well now, you've got to know a person before you close your eyes and open your mouth, is that not right? But, if you know them, if you love them, and you know that they love you, then you can trust them, because you know them. And, the reason that many of us don't trust the Lord that intimately is that we really don't know Him that intimately.

There's an old story of a man who was walking by a seaside cliff, fell over the cliff, grabbed a scraggly limb, and hanging there with hundreds of feet beneath him, and the waves crashing on the rocks, and he is screaming for help. And, in the darkness he

hears a voice, saying, “You need help?” “Yes, I need help.” And, the voice says, “Trust me.” He said, “I trust you.” The voice says, “Let go of the limb.” He says, “Is there anybody else up there?” Why? Well, if, if we don’t know who’s up there, I mean, how are we going to trust?

No, you’ve got to trust in the Lord with all of your heart. And, in order to trust Him with all of your heart, you have got to know Him intimately.

And, don’t trust your own understanding. Look at it again: *“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.”* And, always here’s the way it is. Over here is God, and over here is our understanding, our reason, and we’re torn between those two things. We take the Word of God and we parade it past the judgment bar of human reason, our understanding, and we try to weigh it out and see if that is really best, rather than just trust Him.

Frankly, that’s the reason people don’t tithe. Do you know why people don’t tithe? They don’t trust. I mean, look. Malachi 3:10: *“Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse...and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.”* Question: If you believe that, you’d tithe, wouldn’t you? Of course you would! Of course you would, if you believe that. I mean, unless you’re insane. God says, “You bring that to me, and I’ll open the windows of Heaven and pour you out a blessing you won’t have enough room to receive it.” The only reason a man wouldn’t do that is, he says, “Well, wait a minute. If I do that, I’ve got to *da-da-da-da-da-da*.” That’s my own understanding. Over here is the Lord. What do most of us do? We just kind of lean to our own understanding, don’t we? *“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.”*

Now, you can’t trust God that way until you know Him that way. We want to trust our own understanding, but the Bible says, in Proverbs chapter 14, verse 12, *“There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death”* (Proverbs 14:12). Our minds sometimes don’t lead us directly. And, again, Jeremiah chapter 10, verse 23: *“O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps”* (Jeremiah 10:23).

Now, most of us, we want to lean, however, to our own understanding. Now, it’s not that we’re not to have understanding, but the understanding is to come from the Lord, not your own understanding. Go back to Proverbs chapter 2. We’re not just talking about flying blind. God gives you understanding. Look, if you will, in verses 1 through 6: *“My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of*

the LORD, and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding” (Proverbs 2:1–6).

God is not saying that you’re not to have understanding. He just says, “Don’t lean on your own understanding.” Get in the Word of God. Search for God’s way, just as you would silver and gold, and God says that you will find it.

B. Faithful Compliance

Now, what we’re talking about is letting God choose your way, and we’re saying, first of all, there must be full confidence in God: “*Trust in the LORD.*” Do you have that confidence in Him? Not only must there be full confidence in the Lord, but there must be faithful compliance—faithful compliance. Now, notice again. Look, if you will, in this passage of Scripture: “*In all thy ways acknowledge him*”—“*In all thy ways acknowledge him*”—in every situation.

Now, you don’t surrender to a plan. Most people want somebody to give them a plan for their lives. *God’s plan for your life is not a road map; it is a relationship.* I’m glad that God doesn’t just write out a plan, seal it, and hand it to us, and say, “This is what you’re going to do the next 50 years, next 20 years.” How boring! Or, maybe how frightening! No, no! We are to trust in the LORD with all of our heart, lean not unto our own understanding, and then in all of our ways acknowledge Him. Every time you come into a new situation, just acknowledge God in that situation. Say, “Lord, what do You want me to do here?”—“Lord, what do You want me to do here?”

Now, most of us want to acknowledge God in certain areas of our lives, but what does this verse say? “*In all thy ways acknowledge him.*” Question: Do you want God to have control of all of your lives? Do you know what some people think? They have really arrived when they say this: “I give a tenth of my money to God. I give a seventh of my time to God. I am a Bible Christian, yes siree. One tenth is God’s, and one seventh of my time is God’s. I’m found in the house of God every Lord’s Day. Every seventh day I’ve given to God, and every tenth part of my income I’ve given to God.” You think that’s good Bible Christianity? I want to tell you it is not. Listen to me. One tenth of your income doesn’t belong to God. Ten tenths belongs to God. One seventh of your time doesn’t belong to God. It all belongs to God. Don’t get the idea that life is like a pie and you can take out, cut it into seven pieces, and take one seventh, and give it to God, and then you eat the rest. Don’t get the idea that you take one tenth and give it to God, and the rest is yours. No. The one seventh and the one tenth is only an indication that it all belongs to Him.

I’m not saying that God doesn’t want you to buy groceries. God knows that you have car payments. God knows all of these things. God knows that you should lay by for retirement. God knows all of that. But, friend, when it comes to finding God’s will for

your life, you must take every red cent that you have and every moment that you have, and, *“in all thy ways acknowledge him”*—*“in all thy ways acknowledge him.”* Don’t segment your life.

Now, don’t say this won’t work if you haven’t tried it. There must be a full confidence and a faithful compliance. That’s what he’s saying. Let God choose your way. Are you really ready for God to do whatever He wants to do in your life? I mean, have you signed the contract at the bottom?

Stephen Olford—I mentioned him a little while back; he’s a wonderful member of our church, one of the greatest preachers in the world, and recognized—was a young man, started out. His father was a faithful missionary. Stephen Olford, as a young man, had a bent, a proclivity, toward engineering. He loved automobiles. You wouldn’t know this about Stephen Olford, but he loved motorcycles, and could drive one, race them, and take them apart and put them back together. He had planned this in his life. Stephen Olford said, “I am going to be an engineer. I’m going to make a lot of money. And then, I’m going to use my money to support missions and the things of God.” That would have been fine if that was what God had called him to do. But, God had not called him to do that, and down in his heart he knew he was running from God. He got deathly ill. His father, a missionary in Africa, not really even knowing that Stephen Olford was deathly ill, and according to Dr. Olford, two weeks from death, he received a letter from his father. And, his father had written to him these words:

*Only one life, ’twill soon be past;
Only what’s done for Christ will last.*

—C. T. STUDD

And, God used that to pierce the heart of young Stephen Olford, and he bowed his head there in that hospital, and he prayed a prayer. Three short phrases in that prayer—listen to it: “Anywhere, anytime, any cost”—period.

Now, was that just for Stephen Olford? Come up close. That is for you, for me, for all of us to say. Have you said that? Well, you say, “Good night, pastor. You want me to say, ‘anywhere, anytime, any cost’? How can I do that?” Do you know why you’re having difficulty with that? Because you don’t trust the Lord with all your heart. So, you’re just afraid if you close your eyes and open your mouth, He’ll put something in there you don’t want. You just really don’t trust Him.

Now, folks, the only way this is going to work is the way it’s written: *“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.”*

II. Let God Confirm the Way

Point number one: Let God choose the way. Point number two: Let God confirm the

way, because, you see, it's one thing for God to choose the way, but it's another thing for God to confirm that this is the way He's chosen. Now, there are a lot of folks here in this building that say, 'Well, yes, sure, I'll do God's will, but I don't know what it is. Yes, I'll say anytime, anywhere, any cost, but what is the time? Where is the place? What is the cost? I don't know.' All right now, the Bible says He will direct your paths. If you'll do this, He will direct your path.

Now, how does God confirm the way? Once God has chosen the way, how does God confirm the way? I want to mention four ways that God will confirm His will to you for your life, and how God will light your future.

A. By His Word

Number one: God directs your way by His Word, by the Bible. Let me give you some Scripture. Remember, we're talking about lighting your path, lighting your future. Psalm 119, verse 105: *"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path"* (Psalm 119:105)—the Word of God. God gave you His Word. Now, many people are wanting to know the will of God for their lives when they are not obeying the revealed will of God in the written Scriptures, and they're wanting God to show them something else when it is as plain as day what God does want in some areas, and they've not done that.

For example, let me mention three times in the Bible where the Bible specifically says this is the will of God—this is the will of God.

1. Concerning Your Salvation

First of all, concerning your salvation. Listen to this. Second Peter 3, verse 9: *"The Lord is...not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance"* (2 Peter 3:9). That's the will of God for you. Have you repented of your sin? Have you given your heart to Jesus Christ? Well, don't quibble with me about wanting to know the will of God for your life when the Bible clearly, plainly, black print on white paper, says God is not willing that you should perish, but you should have eternal life—not willing that any should perish. God wants everybody saved. I believe that. I hope you believe that. Some theologians don't believe God wants everybody saved. I believe He wants every mother's child saved. He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

2. Concerning Being Spirit-Filled

All right, that's one place He just mentions the will of God. We're just talking about finding God's will in the Word. Let me give you another place where He mentions the will of God. Ephesians chapter 5, verses 17 and 18: *"Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit"* (Ephesians 5:17–18). Not only is it God's will that you be saved, but God's will that you be Spirit-filled. That's what He says in that

passage of Scripture. “Don’t be unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. Don’t be drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit.”

Now, sitting there listening to Adrian, are you filled with the Spirit? If not, you’re out of the will of God, because He says clearly and plainly that is the will of God. I mean, look. You don’t have to be a rocket scientist to understand that. God says, “It is my will that you be saved and Spirit filled.” Now, if you’re not saved and Spirit-filled, why are you coming to me and saying, “Oh, I wish I knew the will of God for my life?” I mean, there it is! You’re going to find that in the Scripture.

3. Concerning Your Sanctification

Let me mention a third time in the Scripture where He uses the specific phrase, “*the will of God.*” First Thessalonians chapter 4, verse 3: “*For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication*”—“*This is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication*” (1 Thessalonians 4:3). What is the will of God? Saved, Spirit-filled, and sanctified. And in those scriptures He absolutely says this is the will of God. And, by the way, if you just do those three steps, you’ll find the rest of it is almost axiomatic. Did you know that? If you’ll just do that. And, it’s amazing. He says, “*This is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication.*”

What is fornication? It is sex apart from the sacred bonds of marriage. Sometimes, in counseling—if you’ve ever been a counselor, ever been a pastor—you’ve had a man come to you, or sometimes a woman, with this proposition: “You know, I am married, and my wife and I are not getting along. We really should never have gotten married. We don’t really love one another, and our marriage is a disaster. And, I have discovered true love. I have discovered a God-given love. There is a woman that I love with all of my heart, and she loves me. And, pastor, I’ve prayed about it, and I really feel it’s God’s will that I marry this other woman, because God doesn’t want me to be in bondage, ta-da-da-da. You know, God wants me to be happy, and this is where happiness is. Pastor, would you give me some advice?” I say, “No, I won’t give you any advice. You’re out of the will of God.”

You think God is a liar? Do you think that God is just going to take His Word and set His Word aside and say, “Now, I know this is what I said, and I know this is My will, but since you prayed I’ve changed my mind?” No! Absolutely not!

You say, “Oh, Adrian, you’re so narrow-minded.” Well, some people are so broad-minded their mind gets thin in the middle. I’m just simply saying, folks, God gives His will. You say, “Oh, I’ve got to do the will of God.” Friend, God’s will is best for you. God’s will *is what you’d want for yourself if you had enough sense to want it.* God is a good God. “*The LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly*” (Psalm 84:11).

I'm just talking to you about how to let God confirm His way. Number one is the Scripture. You'll find so much of the will of God in the Scripture. Many of us, are not in the Scripture.

I was reading about a man named Vito Miti. He was a Spanish student in Barcelona. And, he was working on his PhD in Philosophy. And so, he was in the library blowing the dust off some of the old books of philosophy, and he found a book that had been in the library no one knows how long, really. And, as he was going through there, he found some paper inside this book, this library book, and he opened up and read it. And, it was the philosopher's Last Will and Testament. And, he said, "Whoever finds this in this book will inherit my estate," because he didn't think anybody would read his old, dry philosophy book. And, there it was. Vito Miti took that to the authorities. They read it and said, "It is valid," and he was awarded 250,000 dollars, the full estate of the old philosopher. I wonder how many treasures are in God's Word that God wants us to inherit, but we've never blown the dust off the Bible?

B. By Prayer

Now, here's a second way that God will direct you. Number one: through His Word. But, not everything is found in His Word. I mean, some of you guys and gals are thinking about where you're going to go to college, or who should you marry, or whatever. You're not going to find in the Bible, "Go to thus and such a university." The second way that God guides you is through prayer. And, God will guide you through prayer beyond the shadow of any doubt. Let me give you some scriptures that teach that. For example, in the early church, in Acts chapter 1, they were wanting an apostle to take the place of Judas, who fell. And now, listen to what it says here: "*And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen*" (Acts 1:24). They prayed and said, "Lord, show us."

Now, prayer is a two-way street. So many of us want to say, "Listen, Lord, Your servant is speaking," rather than, "Speak, Lord, Your servant listens." Do you have a quiet time in your prayer? This is a lost art of listening to God. God will speak directly to your heart—directly!

Let me give you another scripture—Acts chapter 8 and verse 29. Philip was a deacon. He was actually holding an evangelistic crusade, and the Holy Spirit spoke to him. Listen to this. Acts 8, verse 29: "*Then the Spirit said to Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot*" (Acts 8:29). Philip is out there in the wilderness now being led of the Spirit. Here comes the Ethiopian eunuch riding by in a chariot, and the Spirit says, "That's the one. Go join yourself to him." Now, the point I'm making is this: that God will impress your spirit with the Holy Spirit. That's very mystical, but I can tell you time and time again about when I have felt God speak to my heart in that sweet communion. It's

almost, again, like, I say, guiding you with His eye.

When the first missionaries were chosen—Acts 13, verse 2: *“As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them”* (Acts 13:2). The Holy Spirit speaks.

C. By Wisdom

God guides through His Word. God guides when we pray, and the Holy Spirit of God speaks to us. Now, let me tell you a third way that God will guide you. I’m talking about four ways now to confirm God’s will. The Bible. Through prayer. Number three: through the wisdom that God gives. One of the great, great, great promises in the Word of God is James chapter 1 and verse 5, and it says this: *“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him”* (James 1:5). Now, there’s not a one of us that doesn’t want and need wisdom. Well, here is an unqualified promise: *“If any of you”*—that applies to all of us—*“lack wisdom,”*—that applies to all of us—*“let him ask of God, that giveth to all men”*—not some men; how?—*“liberally...and it shall be given him.”* I submit either that is true or that is not true.

Now, what is wisdom? Wisdom is not reading something in the Scripture, although that’s valid. Wisdom is not praying and letting the Holy Spirit impress our hearts, though that is valid. Wisdom is sanctified common sense. Do you know many of us are afraid to use our mind when it comes to knowing the will of God? We think that if we use our mind we’re leaning to our own understanding. No! No! When your mind is filled with the Spirit of God, don’t be afraid to trust it. Get your heart clean, get your motive clear, search the Scriptures, pray, and then do what you think you ought to do. Donald Gray Barnhouse said, “Ninety percent of the will of God is found between your ears.” God gives wisdom. What is wisdom? Wisdom is not emotionalism. It’s not getting wet around the lashes, and warm around the heart, and liver shivers. *Wisdom is sanctified common sense. It is seeing life from God’s point of view.*

There are certain things that you don’t have to pray about. Now, I’m not against prayer. How many of you prayed about the necktie you would wear this morning? Now, some of you should have, but I mean, how many you prayed about that? No. I mean, you’ve got enough sense to know, when I get up, I shave, I wash my face, I do this, I do that. God gives you a mind. Why would God renew your mind and then not use it? *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service”* (Romans 12:1).

D. By Providence

Now, I see that I’ve got to head on. Let me give you the fourth way that God is going to

guide you, and that is not only through the Scripture, not only through prayer and the Holy Spirit impressing your heart, not only through the sanctified wisdom that God gives to you, but by providence. You're going to find out that God will providentially guide you when you get in the stream of His mercy.

Put down this scripture—Revelation chapter 3, verse 8: *“I know thy works; behold, I have set before thee an open door”* (Revelation 3:8). *“I am he that openeth and no man shutteth; I am he that shutteth and no man opens”* (Revelation 3:7). You're going to find out that God will open doors, and God will shut doors, and God will open doors, and God will shut doors, and God will guide you providentially.

I believe that we're in this building today because God shut doors for us when we tried to build downtown, and God opened a door for us out here. I believe that. I mean, we were praying; we were walking; we were fasting. Morris Mills, you're back there. You know all that we went through. But, God shut doors where we were. We tried, we tried, and we tried. There was a shut door. God opened a door here in direct reverse proportion, and we came out here, and God guided us. And, I am confident we're in the will of God, and God did something wonderful for this church that way. And, He'll do that for you as an individual.

III. Let God Clear the Way

Now, here's the third and final thing, and this is very important. Number one: Let God choose the way. Number two: Let God confirm the way. And, number three: Let God clear the way.

Now, most of us think, “Well, if I just knew the will of God and surrendered to the will of God, then it would all be fine. No, no. God's got to make a way for you. He's got to clear the way. Now, look in verse 6, and it says there, *“And he shall direct your paths.”* The word there is *yashar*. It's a Hebrew word which literally means, “to clear the way.” As a matter of fact, the New American Standard translates it this way: “make your paths straight.” That's what some of you maybe looking at right now. I looked it up in another translation. Moffatt translates it this way: “And he will clear the road for you.” Now, the word *direct* that's used there—“he will direct your paths,” it is a word that has the idea of clearing obstacles. Let me show you another place where it is used in the Bible, and this will make it crystal clear. It's found in Isaiah chapter 40, verses 3 and 4. And it speaks of the ministry of John the Baptist clearing the way for Messiah to come, and it says, *“The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain...shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain”* (Isaiah 40:3–4).

Now, what's the idea? It's like John the Baptist was a bulldozer making a way for the

Messiah. Here is a mountain. He moves it out of the way. Here's a boulder. He moves it out of the way. Here's a crooked road. He straightens that road. Here is a depression. He fills it with dirt until you have a smooth highway for Messiah. *"Prepare ye the way of the LORD."*

Now the same phrase that is used, *"Prepare ye the way of the LORD,"* is the same phrase that is used for *"direct your paths"*—same word. What he is saying is this—listen: God will choose the way. God will confirm the way. And, hallelujah, God will clear the way, when you get in the will of God. God will go before you. God, like a bulldozer, will clear the way. God will open, and no man will shut; and God will shut, and no man will open. And, God Himself will take away the obstacles that keep you from His will for your life. Are you telling me that there is a God in the glory that has something, He has something He wants you to do, but it can't be done because God's not able to make it happen for you? Oh, no! God, I promise you, will clear the way.

Back in the olden days, when the earth's crust first hardened, I played football, and every now and then, I'd get hold of a ball, and I'd start down the field. Well, friend, it's impossible, virtually impossible, to run that ball down the field unless you've got some men out there in front of you. They're blocking, clearing the way for you. Now, you've got to run, but those guys are out there blocking. And, it may sound irreverent to you, but I think of God as my downfield blocker. I mean, He is clearing the way. God is the heavenly bulldozer.

God is the One that opens, and no one shuts; shuts, and no one opens. God moves that mountain. God fills that valley. God straightens that road when you get in the will of God for your life. But, you've got to obey Him. "In all your ways acknowledge Him." "Lean not to your own understanding." "Trust Him with all of your heart."

An evangelist came home. He'd been away for a long time. He had a present for his wife, and it was quite heavy. When he came in the house, his little daughter saw it and said, "Daddy, let me take it to Mommy." This little girl had been crippled. She used crutches most of the time, but when she was at home she put her crutches aside and just kind of scooted along the floor. And, the little girl said, "Daddy, let me take it to Mommy." He said, "Sweetheart, it's too heavy. You can't take it." She said, "Please, Daddy, let me take it to Mommy." He said, "But, sweetheart, it's so heavy." And then, he looked. He saw a little glimmer in her eye and knew she had something up her sleeve. He said, "All right, sweetheart," and he put it in her hands, and she said, "Now, Daddy, pick me up and bring me to Mama." And so, he picked her up, package and all, and brought her. That's what our Lord does. That's what our Lord does. If our God gives us a burden, our God will pick us up. And, He is the One who carries us, and He's the One who clears the way when we get in the stream of His will.

Conclusion

God has a plan for you. God wants to light your path if in all of your ways you will acknowledge Him. Don't lean to your own understanding. Trust Him with all of your heart. Give Him not just one tenth; give Him ten tenths. Give Him not one seventh; give Him the whole week. Give it to Jesus and trust Him, and I'll tell you He will choose the way, He will confirm the way, and my God will clear the way for you—for you. He has a plan for you.

Success, God's Way

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: January 28, 1996

Main Scripture Text: Proverbs 3:5–10

“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.”

PROVERBS 3:5

Outline

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Introduction

Be finding Proverbs chapter 3, if you will. In just a few moments, we're going to read, beginning in verse 5—Proverbs chapter 3, and we're going to begin in verse 5. The question, I suppose, that is asked more than any other question—when a pastor is questioned by a group, ultimately this question will come: How can I know the will of God for my life? That's just another way of saying, how can I be what God wants me to be? Which is another way of saying, how can I be successful?

Now, I want to say that God has programmed you for success. God did not engineer you for failure. God wants you to be successful. God wants you to be victorious. God has a wonderful, wonderful plan for your life. The tragic thing is that few people know the will of God, much less, do the will of God for their lives. Man is a clever creature, but he's lost his way in the darkness.

I was thinking about all that man has been able to do. Just in the past fifty years, the atom has been split, and man has the ability to destroy himself. We've gone out into

space and explored space and sent spacecrafts to the moon and to Mars and Jupiter and Venus. And, beyond that, we've developed radio and television and the computer, and they've all come together now where we have this Internet and this cyberspace superhighway. But, we're becoming road kill on that superhighway. We're getting all of this information; we don't even know how to process it, much less, know what to do with it. We're moving quickly toward a cashless society, where we'll be given numbers rather than even credit cards, and be able to go and make deposits, and withdraw, and buy and sell, without even cash in our hands. It's coming very quickly. We have automobiles now that travel six hundred miles an hour. We have airplanes that travel more than 2,000 miles an hour, and spaceships that travel 24,000 miles an hour.

We're living in an incredible age. As the Bible prophesied, "In the last days men shall rush to and fro, and knowledge shall increase" (Daniel 12:4), but it seems, as we double our knowledge, we triple our trouble, and we seem to be getting deeper and deeper into difficulty, and it seems as though we're looking into the end to the muzzle of a loaded cannon. And yet, if you're a child of God, you don't need to be lost in the darkness. If you're a child of God, God has given you a wonderful, wonderful promise, and that promise is a promise of guidance.

Look, if you will here, in Proverbs chapter 3 and verse 5. Here's the recipe; here's the proposition and the promise: *"Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil. It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones. Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine"* (Proverbs 3:5). What a wonderful, wonderful promise!

And, this promise is a promise that is repeated and reiterated so many places in the Bible. You might jot these down and put them in your margin. Isaiah 58 and verse 11: *"And the LORD shall guide thee continually"* (Isaiah 58:11). Or, you might put down Psalm 32 and verse 8: *"I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye"* (Psalm 32:8). We have the Father above us, watching over us and controlling all things. We have the Savior beside us, guiding our footsteps. We have the Spirit inside us, controlling our thoughts and our inner life. And, we are to be guided. And, God has a plan for you—an individual plan. God doesn't deal with people *en masse*; He deals with them as individuals. The very hairs of your head are numbered (Matthew 10:30; Luke 12:7). And, it's true for the plumber as well as the preacher. It's true for the secretary as well as the missionary. God has a plan for every life. And, if God called you to be a plumber, you'd have to step down to be a preacher, and if God called a preacher to be a president, you'd have to step down to be the

President. God's will for you is special; it is wonderful. And, God has a plan for each of us. Now, Stephen Olford, who attends regularly at Bellevue Baptist Church, said, "It is our duty and it is our joy to find, to follow, and to finish the will of God for our lives." And, friend, that is "Success, God's way."

Now, go back to the text that I read for you; it's found in Proverbs chapter 3 and beginning in verse 5. Let's see if we can find God's recipe, God's formula, God's plan, God's instruction to invest in life and to be successful God's way.

I. Full Dependence

The first thing I find that we're to do is that we are to express a full dependence on the Lord. Look at verse 5: *"Trust in the LORD with all thine heart"—"Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths"* (Proverbs 3:5–6).

Now, what's He saying here?

A. Complete Confidence

Well, first of all, there must be this complete confidence. We've got to trust the Lord with all of our hearts. Now, notice, it's not a proposition I'm asking you to trust; it is a Person. It's not a formula; it is God Himself. "Trust in the Lord with all of your heart."

Now, why do we find it difficult to do that? Why is it difficult for us to trust the Lord with all of our heart? I'll tell you why. It's hard to trust someone you don't know. Isn't that true? It's hard to trust someone you don't know. I mean, if a perfect stranger were to walk up to you today and say, "Will you do something for me?" what's your first question? "What is it?" Isn't that right? If Joyce were to ask me, however—and, by the way, today is her birthday. If you see her—she's not in this service—but if you see her, tell her Happy Birthday—if Joyce were to ask me to do something for her, and she would say, "Adrian, would you do something for me?" I might say, "Well, what is it?" And then, she might say to me, "Just trust me." I'd say yes—I'd say yes. You know why? I know her that well, and I know that she loves me, and if she would ask me to do something and then just say, "Just trust me," I'd probably be thinking she had something real good she wants to do. Or, sometimes she might just say, "Come in here. Close your eyes and open your mouth." That takes a lot of faith, doesn't it? "Close your eyes and just open your mouth." Do you know what? I know she's going to put something real good in my mouth. But, you see, if I walked up to an ordinary person on the street, and he said, "Close your eyes and open your mouth," friend, I wouldn't do it. I don't think you would either, right? Because, you see, you can't trust someone you don't know. And, if you're having difficulty trusting the Lord, I'll tell you why. You have not learned to know Him and to love Him.

Listen, folks. To know Him is to love Him. And then, to love Him is to trust Him. And then, to trust Him is to obey Him. And, to obey Him is to be blessed. So, it begins with knowing the Lord. And, if you're having difficulty trusting the Lord, may I suggest that you spend some time getting to know the Lord. We're not to trust our own understanding. So many times we want to say, "Well, this is the way I think." Well, very frankly, we make a terrible mistake when we trust our own understanding.

Look in verse 7: "*Be not wise in thine own eyes*" (Proverbs 3:7). Now, that's the problem with many of us: we think we know. Proverbs chapter 14, verse 12: "*There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death*" (Proverbs 14:12). We just can't let go. We can't trust God. We want to do it ourselves. Jeremiah said, in Jeremiah chapter 10, verses 23 and 24, "*O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. O LORD, correct me*" (Jeremiah 10:23–24). You see, you don't have what it takes to guide your own life. Why? Because you don't know all of the factors. And so, the Bible says, "Don't lean unto your own understanding." It doesn't mean you won't have understanding. You're going to have plenty of understanding, but it will be God helping you to understand.

Go back to chapter 2. Look in the first five verses of Proverbs chapter 2: "*My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding;*"—now, here's a different kind of understanding; it's God's understanding—"yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God" (Proverbs 2:1–5).

What if you knew in your backyard somewhere there was a million dollars in gold bullion buried four feet deep? You knew it was there. Would you look for it? Somewhere, four feet deep, there's a million dollars in gold bullion buried in your backyard. And, you probably wouldn't be in the service this morning. You'd be out there spading around, looking for that gold. God says we're to search for wisdom that way, as if as for hid treasure.

When we get serious about knowing the will of God, we will know the will of God. Very frankly, most of us are not very serious about searching for this understanding, wanting to know the will of God.

B. Constant Compliance

There must be this complete confidence, and this complete confidence leads to constant compliance. Look again in verse 5: "*Trust in the LORD with all thine heart;*"—that's the complete confidence— "*and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy*

ways acknowledge him" (Proverbs 3:5–6). That, my friend, is that constant compliance. "In all of your ways acknowledge Him," not in some of your ways. God won't take part of it. You can't say, "Lord, I want Your will in this part of my life; I want Your will in my social life; but I don't want Your will in my business life"; or, "I want Your will in my church life, but I don't want Your will in this other part of my life." You just can't do that. "In all of your ways acknowledge Him." Turn it all over to Him. If He's worth part of it, He's worth all of it.

A young man, a young African, wrote these words. I love them. I clipped them. I read them frequently. Here's what he said. I'm talking now about this constant compliance. He said, "I'm a part of the fellowship of the unashamed. The dye has been cast. I have stepped over the line. The decision has been made. I am a disciple of Jesus Christ. I won't look back, let up, slow down, back away, or be still. My past is redeemed. My present makes sense. My future is secure. I'm finished and done with low living, sight walking, smooth knees, colorless dreams, tamed visions, worldly talking, cheap giving, and dwarfed goals. My face is set. My gait is fast. My goal is heaven. My road is narrow. My way is rough. My companions are few. My Guide is reliable. My mission is clear. I won't give up, shut up, let up until I have stayed up, stored up, prayed up for the cause of Jesus Christ. I must go till He comes, give till I drop, preach till everyone knows, work till He stops me. And, when He comes for His own, He will have no trouble recognizing me, because my banner will have been clear." Why, I like that, don't you? You know, we just need a church full of folks like that. We need a pastor like that. We need a choir like that.

You see, "In all of your ways acknowledge Him." Very frankly, my folks, the very reason many of us do not know the will of God for our lives is we have not come to the recipe, "Trust in the Lord with all of your heart; lean not unto your own understanding. In all of your ways acknowledge Him." Until you've done that, don't complain about not knowing the will of God. You say, "Well, pastor, if I were to do that, no telling what He'd have me to do." "Why, Lord, You might send me as a missionary in Africa, if I were to do that. You might make me marry some ugly girl. No telling what You'd do if I just were to say, 'Lord, I want your will.'"

Friend, don't be afraid of the will of God. I love that scripture that says, "*Perfect love casteth out fear*" (1 John 4:18). That doesn't mean that you love God perfectly. None of us have ever done anything perfectly, except sin. It's not my perfect love for Him that casts out fear. Another translation gives it this way: "We have no need to fear someone who loves us perfectly." It's His perfect love for us. God's will is best. God's will is what you would choose if you had all of the factors. That's the reason the Bible asks this piece of logic in Romans 8: "*He that spared not his own Son...how shall he not...also freely give us all things?*" (Romans 8:32). I mean, if God gave His price, wouldn't He

give us something else?

I bought Joyce a birthday present yesterday, and I took it and I had it wrapped. And, don't tell her, but it cost me almost five dollars just to get it wrapped—just to get it wrapped. Now, listen. If I would buy her the present, don't you think I'd give her the wrapping? If God sent Jesus, you don't have to worry about anything else.

“He that spared not his own Son...how shall He not also with him freely give us all things?” Don't be afraid of the will of God. You say, “Well, He might send me as a missionary.” If He sends you as a missionary, that's exactly where you'd want to be. “It's God that works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure” (Philippians 2:13). Jesus said, *“My meat”—my food—“is to do the will of him that sent me”* (John 4:34). Psalm 37, verse 4: “Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He'll give you the desires of your heart” (Psalm 37:4).

II. Faithful Direction

And so, first of all, there must be this full dependence on the Lord. Now, when you do that—when you do that—here's the second thing that will happen. You got the first one? Dependence. Here's the second word: direction. When there is that full dependence, there will be that faithful direction. Look at it. Here's the full dependence: *“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him,”*—now, watch this—*“and he shall direct thy paths”* (Proverbs 3:5–6). Now, either that's true or not true. How many of you believe it's true? Let me see your hands. It's true—it's true. Either that is true or it is not true. If in all of your ways, not some of your ways, if you trust Him with all of your heart, acknowledge Him in every way, there are no ifs, ands, buts about it; no stutter, no stammer, no hesitation or equivocation: He shall direct your path. And, carry that to the bank. God will lead you. And, friend, where He is leading you is into the paths of success.

Now, how will He direct your paths? I want to suggest four ways that He'll do it.

A. Through the Word of God

Number one: He'll do it through the Word of God; I mean, through His very Word. I keep my Bible, another Bible, in my office opened to Psalm 119. Before I come out to preach, almost every time, I'll snatch a verse from Psalm 119. Let me give you one. Here's one. Psalm 119, verse 105: *“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path”* (Psalm 119:105). The Word of God will show you the will of God. So many people are wanting to know the will of God: “How's God going to direct my way?” Well, through the Word. The Word is a light and a lamp to you.

Now, people say, “I want to know the will of God.” Let me give you three things the Bible says about the will of God—uses the very expression, His *will*.

1. Salvation Is the Will of God

For example, here's God's will concerning salvation. Second Peter 3, verse 9: *"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward,"*—now, listen to this next phrase—*"not willing that any should perish"* (2 Peter 3:9). That's one reason I don't buy this business that says God chose some to be saved and God chose some to be lost. Friend, God is *"not willing that any should perish."* Put it down—put it down. I'm so glad I can say, "Whosoever will may come" (Revelation 22:17), and, "God is not willing that any should perish." You want the will of God? Salvation is the will of God.

2. Being Filled with the Spirit Is the Will of God

Now, let me tell you what else is the will of God: that you be filled with the Spirit. Ephesians 5, verses 17 and 18: *"Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit"* (Ephesians 5:17–18). The will of God: salvation, and to be filled with the Spirit. That's the will of God. Are you filled with the Spirit? If not, why not? May I ask that question again? Are you Spirit-filled? If not, why not? It's God's will. Don't be unwise; be wise. Understand what the will of God is. God's will is for you to be filled with the Spirit. Now, why should you be asking God's will about who you ought to marry, where you're going to go to college, or what house you ought to buy, or what car you ought to buy, when you're not even Spirit-filled? And, God has told you that's His will.

3. Sanctification Is the Will of God

Let me tell you what else is the will of God. First Thessalonians chapter 4, verse 3: *"For this is the will of God, even your sanctification..."*—that's God's will: salvation, Spirit-filled living, sanctification. He just said, "That's the will of God." Sanctification means to be set apart for God. And so, listen to it—*"For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication"* (1 Thessalonians 4:3). That means, "sexual immorality."

Now, you're married, and there's some other woman that comes into your life, or some other man that comes into your life, and you're saying, "Lord, do you want me to divorce my wife and marry this person?" Come up close, and I'll give you the answer. No. No. "Well," you say, "pastor, I'm going to pray about it." You don't have to pray about it. That's an insult in the face of God for you to pray about it. This is the will of God. It's right there. "Don't commit adultery" (Exodus 20:14). "Flee from fornication" (1 Corinthians 6:18). The will of God is right in the Word of God. Now, if you won't do what God says in His Word, don't waste your breath saying, "God, guide me," and, "God, lead me." He already has. Why should God show you something else? I get in the Word of God and read black print on white paper. I don't have to pray about it. Good night!

I was reading about a man named Vito Miti over in Barcelona. He was working on

his PhD, and he had to write a thesis. It was a PhD in philosophy. And, he was writing his thesis, and he was in the library in Barcelona, and he was reading a book on philosophy written by a philosopher, one of these kinds, you know, you have to blow the dust off of, and in there he found a document. And, it was the will of the philosopher, and it said, “My will is bequeathed to whomever reads this book and finds this will.” Vito Miti took that to the courts, and they read it, and they said, “It’s valid,” and they gave him 250,000 dollars. It was right in the book; it was there. But, I thought about how many people fail to find the treasures of God’s Word simply because they will not open the book and read.

B. Through Prayer

One way God will direct your paths is through the Word. Another way is through prayer. Not every thing is found in the Bible. The Bible doesn’t tell you what girl to marry, what university to go to, but God will guide you when you pray. Put these scriptures down. Acts chapter 1, verse 24: “*And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou has chosen*” (Acts 1:24). They were looking for someone to take Judas’ place. They said, “Lord, show us; guide us.”

Now, prayer is a two-way street. Don’t just do all the talking. Let God talk to you. God will speak to your heart directly, if you’ll listen. Acts chapter 8 and verse 29—Philip was a man filled with the Holy Spirit, and the Bible says, “*Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot*” (Acts 8:29). “*The Spirit said*”: that’s the inward direction of the Holy Spirit. He’s spoken to me many times that way. Acts chapter 13 and verse 2: “*As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them*” (Acts 13:2). How do we know what God wants us to do here at Bellevue Baptist Church? What are God’s plans for this church? We have to fast and pray and seek the face of God, and let the Holy Spirit of God, who speaks through the Word, speak also through the witness of the Spirit as the Spirit of God speaks to our hearts.

Nehemiah was trying to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, and he did, by the power of God. But, he said, in Nehemiah chapter 7 and verse 5, “*And my God put into my heart to gather together the nobles*” (Nehemiah 7:5), and so forth. I’m not going to read the rest of it. I’m just going to say that God put it in his heart. Has God ever put anything in your heart? Sure He will. When you begin to commit your way to Him, when there’s that complete dependence, when you totally commit yourself to Him and lean not unto your own understanding, God takes the Word, and He begins to guide you through the Word; God takes the Holy Spirit when you pray, and He begins to guide you by the Holy Spirit.

C. Through Wisdom

I’ll tell you another way God will guide you: wisdom. God will give you wisdom. James 1,

verse 5: *“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not;”—*that means He won’t scold you. And, listen to this—*“and it shall be given him”* (James 1:5)—*“it shall be.”* What is wisdom? Wisdom is not just getting all warm around the heart, wet around the lashes, and goose bumps and liver shivers. Wisdom is judicious, spiritual, common sense. Now, Romans chapter 12 says, “Don’t be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Romans 12:2). Question: Why would God renew your mind if He didn’t want you to use it? Don’t be afraid to think, because when you are surrendered and committed to the Lord Jesus Christ, when in all of your ways you acknowledge Him, and when you pray, He will direct you by the Word of God, He will direct you by His Spirit speaking to your heart, and He will direct you by that wisdom that He has given you, and you will begin to think God’s thoughts after Him. You will have wisdom. The Bible tells us, in Ephesians 5, verse 17, *“Wherefore be not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is”* (Ephesians 5:17)—that is, by wisdom. First Corinthians 10, verse 15: *“I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say”* (1 Corinthians 10:15). So, there are some things you don’t have to pray about. I mean, look, do you have to pray whether or not you ought to put on your socks? Or, you go to get dressed—do you pray about which necktie you’re going to wear? Well, maybe some should do that. There are certain things—you don’t have to pray about those kinds of things. God gives you wisdom—wisdom. Use it.

D. Through Providence

But, here’s another way that God leads. Now, all of this is under the heading, He will direct your paths. First dependence, and then direction. When you trust Him with all of your heart, when you acknowledge Him in every way, then He begins to direct you. How does He do it? Oh, friend, He will direct you through the Word. He will direct you when you pray and the Holy Spirit speaks to your heart. He will direct you by giving you godly wisdom. And, He will direct you by providence—providence. God will guide you through life like a guided missile through providence. How does He do it? He closes doors and opens doors. Revelation chapter 3 and verse 8: *“I know thy works: behold I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it”* (Revelation 3:8). I like that. Then, He says, “I am He that openeth, and no man shutteth; and I am He that shuts, and no man opens” (Revelation 3:7).

How did we get out here into this beautiful place we affectionately call “our Canaan”? Do you know what we endeavored to do? We endeavored to build these buildings downtown. We tried to move heaven and earth to build them downtown. We tried to find property; we talked to our neighbors about buying; we did everything we could do, and it seemed like bang, bang, bang, bang, bang, the doors were shut in our face.

One night when I was down in Orlando, Florida—I told you this before—I tried to

sleep, but I had a rock for a pillow. And, folks, I am a sound sleeper. When my head hits the pillow, it's lights out. All night long, though, God just said, "Adrian, you're going the wrong direction; you're trying to pour water uphill. You're in the wrong place. You need to move out somewhere on the Interstate-40 corridor and see if there's property out there. So, I talked to some of our leadership. That's one of the first people I talked to: that man sitting right there. I said, "Don't think I'm crazy, but let me just tell you something that God has put in my heart. Let's talk about it." And, over there, where God was saying, bang, bang, bang, bang, the doors were shut. Out here, God says, "Come on in"—"come on in, come on in." God just opened the door. That's the way God leads.

When you're praying, when you're walking in the Spirit, you know, "Trust in the Lord with all of your heart, and lean not unto your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths" (Proverbs 3:5–6).

He'll do it through His Word. He'll do it when you pray and the Spirit of God speaks to your heart. He will do it thru sanctified wisdom. God will renew your mind, and use it, and give you wisdom. And then, God will open doors, and God will shut doors. God doesn't leave you just wandering around like a ship without a rudder, a mast, a compass, or a sail, on a dark and stormy night. God will guide His people.

III. Forceful Dynamic

Now, here's the third thing. The first word: dependence. The second word: direction. The third word: dynamic. Listen. When there's a full dependence, there's a faithful direction, and there is a forceful dynamic. Look, if you will, in verse 6 again: "*In all of thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall*"—now, watch—"*direct thy paths*" (Proverbs 3:6). That's the Hebrew word, *yashar*, which literally means, He will "clear your path." It means literally, "to cut a straight path."

Let me tell you how that's used in the Old Testament. For example, in Isaiah chapter 40, talking about the coming of Messiah, verses 3 and 4: "*The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God...*"—same word—"*make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain...shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain*" (Isaiah 40:3–4). What does that mean? When you trust in the Lord, He is going to send a bulldozer in front of you. He is going to make straight your paths. Not only does He show the way; He clears the way. There's not enough for Him to show you the way. If there are obstacles there, He's got to clear the way. He's got to make a way for you. And, God will do exactly that.

When I played football, I was always grateful, if I had the ball, for a man going down the field in front of me, throwing those blocks and moving those obstacles. You know, God does some downfield blocking for you. Did you know that? You may not have even

known He's been doing it. Did you know that God revs up His bulldozers for you, and God makes a way through the desert?

You see, it's not merely enough to know the will of God, not enough to have that direction; we've got to have that dynamic. We've got to have that power, that God makes our paths straight for us through the wilderness.

I read about Henry Morehouse. He was an evangelist, a well know evangelist in his day. He'd be off on the road, and sometimes he'd come home and bring presents. He had a little girl who was crippled, a precious little girl. At the house, she would put her crutches aside and just kind of scoot around on the floor; her legs were very weak. Henry Morehouse had been gone for a long time, and he brought a real nice present to his wife, and the little girl saw it at the door. And, she said, "Daddy, let me carry it to Mama." And, the evangelist knew that she couldn't carry that heavy present. He said, "Darling, you can't carry that." She couldn't hold it in her hands and use the crutches at the same time. He said, "Sweetheart, you can't." She said, "Please, Daddy. I can do it. Let me carry it to Mother." He said, "Sweetheart, you can't do it." She said, "Daddy, I can do it. Let me do it." And, he caught something in her eye, and knew she had something in her mind, and said, "Well, all right. Here, take it." And then, she held it in her arms and said, "Now, Daddy, pick me up and take me to Mama." So, he picked her up and carried her as she carried that.

Friend, God's done that for me so many times. God has given me a job, a message, and then He just picks me up and carries me. He'd do that for you. He is the One who has programmed us for success. "Well," you say, "Pastor Rogers, I thought this was supposed to do with money and finances." It does. Just read verse 9 now: "Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase" (Proverbs 3:9). You see, look, folks. When we get serious about doing the will of God, we're going to find the *all's* in this thing. Look in verse 5: "*Trust in the LORD with all thine heart.*" Look in verse 6: "*In all thy ways acknowledge Him.*" Look in verse 9: "*all thine increase.*" When you worship, in your walk, in your wealth, given over to Him, you'll know the will of God—you'll know the will of God. Put those *all's* in there. Don't play games with God.

Conclusion

Are you serious about doing and knowing the will of God? You say, "Oh, I wish I knew the will of God." Well, just do it in the small things. Do it in the things that are nearest to you. "*He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much*" (Luke 16:10).

You ask: What is the will of God?

Well, here is the answer true.

*The nearest thing that should be done
that He can do through you.*

—E. C. BAIRD

Isn't that beautiful? Listen to it.

You ask: What is the will of God?

Well, here is the answer true.

*The nearest thing that should be done
that He can do through you.*

Just begin that way. It's hard to steer a ship that's not moving.

Financial Freedom

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: October 21, 1984

Main Scripture Text: Proverbs 3:7–10

“Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.”

PROVERBS 3:9–10

Outline

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- I. The Principle of Priority
- II. The Principle of Industry
- III. The Principle of Generosity
- IV. The Principle of Reliability
- V. The Principle of Integrity
- VI. The Principle of Sufficiency

Conclusion

Introduction

I want you to take your Bibles please, and open, if you would, to, to the book of Proverbs, chapter three. We're going to begin reading in just a moment in verse seven. God's holy Word, Proverbs chapter 3, we will begin our reading in verse seven.

Today I'm speaking to you on the subject Financial Freedom, under the general heading, God's Way to Health, Wealth and Wisdom; we've been in the book of Proverbs for quite a while speaking under that heading. As a matter of fact, in our verses today, health, wealth and wisdom are all mentioned. Look at it. "Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil. It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones. Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine."

What a promise the Lord has given: "Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine." I know when I'm talking to you about finances that I'm talking to you about something relevant. Somebody has said the most sensitive nerve in the human body is that nerve that runs from the heart to the pocketbook. That's true, isn't it?

Alright, now, listen. We want to tell you that God has a plan for you, and God's plan

for you is not to be in bondage. God's plan is for you to have liberty and freedom. God does not want His children in bondage to anything or anybody other than the Lord Jesus Christ. And when you're in bondage to the Lord Jesus Christ, that's perfect liberty, for the Bible says, "If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed."

Now, you've been in the book of Proverbs, but every text needs a good illustration, and today we have a great long illustration. And our illustration is found in the book of Nehemiah, so it is very important that you take your bulletin or something and mark the book of Proverbs there, and then turn left in your Bible till you get to the book of Nehemiah. Not too many books left, and you'll find Nehemiah there in God's Word. I want you to turn to Nehemiah, chapter 5 because there in Nehemiah chapter 5, you're going to find an illustration of what we're talking about and what a marvelously wonderful illustration it is. The people of Nehemiah's day were in a building program, just like we're going into. They were in the building program of rebuilding the walls 'round about Jerusalem, and it was God's will, it was God's work for them. God had ordered it done. You know, I believe that whatever God orders, God pays for, and God wanted it done, and so God enabled it to be done. I believe that God wants us to build, and therefore I am claiming that God is going to enable us to do what He has lead us to do. But on the other hand, every time God's people say, "Let us rise up and build," the devil will say, "Let's rise up and stop them." Isn't that right? And that's what he tried to do to these people in Nehemiah's day, and the way he tried to stop them was to bring them into financial bondage because if the people are in financial bondage, they cannot do what God wants them to do. Now, listen let me tell you something. The same devil that tried to put those people into financial bondage is the devil whose going to try to put us into financial bondage. And if you, the members of this church, are in financial bondage, we will not be able to do what God wants us to do because we've gotten out of His will, and we have gotten into financial bondage.

So with that in mind, and that as a background, let's look at the scripture here. Nehemiah chapter 5, verse one: "And there was a great cry of the people and of their wives against their brethren the Jews. For there were that said, We, our sons, and our daughters, are many: therefore we take up corn for them, that we may eat, and live. Some also there were that said, We have mortgaged our lands, vineyards, and houses, that we might buy corn, because of the dearth." Now the word dearth means famine or depression. "There were also that said, We have borrowed money for the king's tribute, and that upon our lands and vineyards. Yet now our flesh is as the flesh of our brethren, our children as their children: and, lo, we bring into bondage our sons and our daughters to be servants, and some of our daughters are brought unto bondage already: neither is it in our power to redeem them; for other men have our lands and vineyards." How sad, how tragic was this financial bondage for the people of God.

Now let's look at the trouble that they had and see if it reminds you of anything. In the first place, look in verse one. The Bible says, "There was great cry of the people and of their wives against their brethren the Jews." There was strife. They were fighting over money. Does your family ever fight over money? Ever argue over money? You ever known of a church that got into a division, a problem over money? Don't look so pious. You know, some marriage ceremonies ought to say, "till debt do us part." Isn't that right? There was strife.

Not only was there strife, there was a shortage of human needs. Look in verse two: "There were that said, We, our sons, and our daughters, are many: therefore we take up corn for them, that we may eat, and live." Now, that meant that there were some of them who were on welfare. People had to take offerings for them, I mean of common food, the staples that they could just stay alive.

And then continue to look. Some of them had mortgaged their houses and their lands, verse three: "Some also there were that said, We have mortgaged our lands and vineyards, and houses, that we might buy corn, because of the dearth." Now, they weren't mortgaging their homes to build a swimming pool. They weren't adding an extra bedroom. Listen. They had mortgaged the house, and they had mortgaged the farm in order to get the daily necessities, just to put food on the table, just to have staples on the table.

Furthermore, they were deep in debt. Look in verse four: "There were also that said, We have borrowed money for the king's tribute..." Now they were borrowing money, not to make an investment. No, no. They had borrowed money to pay their taxes with, to pay their income tax. You ever borrow money to pay your income tax with? That's what they'd done. "We had borrowed money for the king's tribute." That means to pay taxes. It was a time of high taxation. They had borrowed money for what? For these taxes. Taxes ever get you down? I heard of man one time who visited Washington because he wanted to be with his money. Ha, ha. Taxes. In that day, in this day, "the poor you have with you always," and taxes you're going to have with you always, and because of these things, they were in financial bondage.

Look again, if you will, in verse 5: And "now our flesh is as the flesh of our brethren, our children as their children: and, lo, we bring into bondage our sons and our daughters to be servants..." Now what they said is, that we have mortgaged, not only our houses, not only have we mortgaged our lands, we have mortgaged the future of our children. Did you know that this day and this age in which we are living is one of the days, very rare in American history, where the children did not expect to be better off than the parents. That's the way it was in this day. I mean the children—the parents might have a home, but many of the children don't expect to be able to buy a home. They do not really expect to be financially better off than their parents, and that's what'd

happened in this day—that the future of the children were mortgaged and the people were in financial bondage, and because of that, the children themselves were coming into life, not with a legacy, but with a load. And there was a debt hanging over their shoulders, and they were sold into slavery and sold to be slaves and servants. Sounds very much like a lot that we see today. Sounds very, very familiar. It's what I want to call financial bondage.

Hey! Are you in financial bondage? You want to find out? Let's take a little test today and find out whether or not you are in financial bondage. Do you find yourself charging daily expenditures because you don't have the cash to pay for them? I'm talking about daily expenditures – things like drugs and things like gasoline and things like groceries – not because you charge them to keep an expense account, not that you charge them just because you don't want to carry the cash, but do you find yourself using that plastic money because you don't have the real thing for daily necessities?

Let me ask you another question. Do you put off paying a bill that is due until next month when the bill is due and you don't pay it? Let me ask you another question. Do you find yourself borrowing money to pay fixed expenses like insurance, like the house payment, or the rent or taxes? And to pay those fixed expenses, those regular expenses that are coming due, do you find yourself borrowing money to do that? Do you? Let me ask you another question. Do you really know how much you owe or have you been afraid to look. I mean, have you really ever even totaled it up, gotten it out and said literally we owe this month and each week, this much is expected of us in payments or whatever? Many people have been afraid to do that; they literally do not know how much they owe. Let me ask you another question. Do you have bill collectors or creditors that are writing you letters and saying this and that is due? People that are hounding you or people to whom you owe money that perhaps you will cross the street not to meet? Somebody said, "If you loan a man \$10 and never see him again, it's worth it." Are there people that you don't want to meet? Have you been borrowing money, making new loans to pay off old loans? Do you and your wife – listen to this one. Try and keep a straight face, but do you and your wife ever argue about money? I said not to smile.

*"Theirs was a perfect marriage
but for one feminine flaw.
He was quick on the deposit,
but she was faster on the draw."*

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

Do you ever argue—you and your spouse, your mate—about money? I mean deep arguments. I'm not just talking about disagreements. Have you ever considered being dishonest about money – that is trying to get out of paying the rent? Or perhaps to

shave a corner on your taxes? Or perhaps to cut a deal that you know that is really not the will of God, that it's not exactly square, it's not exactly straight and you're tempted somehow to do something that is dishonest? Let me ask you another question. Do you every Lord's day bring ten percent of your income plus for the work of God through His church? Do you on God's day bring God's tithe that God's work might be done in God's way? Or do you say, "I can't afford to tithe," or "the church doesn't need it," or "I need it worse," or whatever and somehow you rationalize obeying God and you're in disobedience to God and fail to honor God with His tithe on God's day? If these things are true about you, and especially if two or three of them are true about you, and doubly especially if most of them are true about you, friend, you're in bondage. You are in financial bondage, and the devil has you right under his thumb right where he wants you because he knows that if you're in bondage, then to the degree that the members of this church are in bondage, then what? This church is going to be in bondage, right? Because we are the church, and how are we going to do what God has told us to do, if the devil has gotten God's people into financial bondage when God does not want His people to be in financial bondage?

Now, "Well," you say, "There's one thing about me – I'm certainly not in financial bondage because I've got plen-tee. I mean I've got a bank full. I mean I've got it socked away. I've got a couple of hundred thou, Pastor. I'm not worried about anything. I've got it made. One thing about me, I'm not in financial bondage." You may be in a bigger bondage than you realize. Did you know that the rich can be in financial bondage as well as the poor? And I'm going to give you a test here, and I'm going to talk to you a little bit about it. Some of you who are rich may be slaves to your money and in bondage to your money, just as those who are poor and indigent may be.

Continue to read here in Nehemiah chapter five. Nehemiah said, in verse six, "And I was very angry when I heard their cry and these words." That is, Nehemiah said, "It grieved me when I saw that God's people were in bondage." And not only did it grieve me, it made me righteously indignant, and, "Then," verse seven, "I consulted with myself..."—evidently he wanted someone intelligent to talk to—"then I consulted with myself and I rebuked the nobles, and the rulers, and said unto them, Ye exact usury, every one of his brother. And I set a great assembly against them." Now, who were the rulers? Who were the nobles? These were the wealthy. These were the people who were shrewd and what they had done is, they took advantage of a situation. They knew that the poor, in this particular sense, were defenseless, and they knew that with shrewdness and manipulations and exorbitant interest that they could rob the poor and take from the poor and make themselves even richer. And they were helping to put God's people into financial bondage, and they were moving in on a situation, and they were manipulating that situation—acquiring land and acquiring money. Now there's

nothing wrong with acquiring land. There's nothing wrong having wealth because "it's the Lord thy God who giveth thee to power to get wealth, but what happened here was, these people were extorting money, they were conniving, they were using unethical methods to get money, and they were getting fat. Now let's get, let's find out, so they were in bondage also.

Let me ask you some questions today to find out if you are in financial bondage, those of you who are rich. Do you find yourself putting more faith in your money than you do in God? Do you? I mean do you just kind of find your – you know what? Let me tell you one way that you can test that to find out. When you pray and ask God, do ask God to give you your daily bread every day? You say, "Well, I don't need to; I've got plenty." Hmm? You're trusting your money. "I don't need to ask God for it; I've got plenty." I tell you every day we ought to say, "God, give us this day our daily bread," in some way. "Lord, today, meet our needs." If not, you're trusting your money, and that money's going to fail you. As a matter of fact, not only should you thank God for the food, you ought to thank God for the water; there're plenty of people around the world who don't have clean water to drink. We just drink a glass of water, and say, "Boy, that's nothing." Tell you there're a lot of people who'd like to have a glass of uncontaminated water right now. Do you find yourself trusting in your riches more than you trust God? Then the devil's brought you into bondage.

Let me ask you another question. Have your personal goals in life, have your personal goals in life, are they no longer God's goals, but your goals? You're in bondage. Let me ask you another question. Is every penny of that wealth that you have available to God? I didn't say a tenth of it – one hundred percent, down to the last one-half of one cent. Is it available to God? That's a hard question, isn't it? I mean, if you said, "God, You can have it all if You want it." Have you said that? I mean all of it! I mean everything! "You can have the shirt off my back, God, if you want it." I'm not saying that God's going to ask for it, but I'm asking you this question: If He does ask for it, and you know that it's not some preacher or some organization, you know that you know that you know it's God that ask it can He have it? Is it available to the Lord? "Take my silver and my gold, not a mite would I withhold," we sing that don't we, and then we hold it with all our might. Huh? Listen. Is it committed to Him? If not, you're in bondage to it. It's not really yours. Friend, you are a steward over it, and the Owner, who is God – "the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof" – He has any right to make any demand at any time upon that which is His. Isn't that right? You do not own it! You're merely a steward. Do you have it or does it have you?

Do you have a burning desire to get more money? Now, God gives some people the ability to make money, but is that what melts your butter? Is that what motivates you, making money? You can only wear one suit at a time; you can only sleep in one bed at

a time. You can only live in one house at a time, I don't care how nice it is. But you want more and more and more and more, and God blesses people with the ability to get more, but why? You know, some people, now, it's not making money; it's just keeping score. I mean they are, they're just simply trying to see how much they can amass, how much they can get. And there's nothing wrong with making money, but do you find yourself, Mr. Richman, Mr. Wealthyman, making money when you ought to be praying? Making money and thinking about money when you ought to be thinking about God. Some of you sit in church and cut a deal in your mind, you see, because you're more concerned, more concerned about the things of this world, and you, my lady, you, my sir, may be in financial bondage. Do you own things or do things own you? You know, God blessed you. Used to be you were in church every Sunday, but God blessed you so much, you got a cabin in the woods, now. And you've got a boat, and you've got a condo, and you've got these things. And now, rather than being in the house of the God who gave you these things, those are the very things that are taking you from that God. Everybody needs some time away; sure they do. Everybody needs some rest, but I'm asking you, "Is there an inordinate time where you are taken out of the house of God because of those things that you think that you own, but you don't own those things. Those things own you. You're in financial bondage.

Do you find yourself, Mr. Businessman, cutting a deal, shaving a point, doing something that is not absolutely, totally, one hundred percent ethical in order to make money, you're in financial bondage. Taking advantage of someone else, you're in financial bondage. Now, God doesn't want His people, whether they be poor or whether they be rich, God does not want His people to be in financial bondage. Amen?

All right, now, I want to give you some principles; I want to give you six principles from the fifth chapter of the book of Nehemiah. I want to back them up with the book of Proverbs, and I want to give you six principles to show you how to be delivered from bondage – financial bondage. These are principles that are true just as surely as I'm standing here.

I. The Principle of Priority

The very first principle I want to call the Principle of Priority. Look if you will now in Nehemiah, chapter 5 and verse 14. Nehemiah is an example of what he was preaching about. And so here's what Nehemiah says, "Moreover from the time that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, from the twentieth year even unto the two and thirtieth year of Artaxerxes the king, that is, twelve years, I and my brethren have not eaten the bread of the governor." That is, I've not taken any salary that was due to me. I've not lived off the government largess that would have been mine. "But the former governors that had been before me were chargeable unto the people, and had

taken of them bread and wine, beside forty shekels of silver; yea, even their own servants bare rule over the people:" but now notice the last part of verse 15, "but so did not I," And why? "because of the fear of the Lord." Now what does that mean? Nehemiah said there's something that controls my life. There's something that does not cause me to take advantage fo the situation that I'm in. Where Nehemiah was, Nehemiah had the ability, if he wanted to, to fatten his pocketbook; Nehemiah had the ability, if he'd have wanted to, to live a soft life. He had the ability to have his hand in the public till of he wanted to, but he said, "I didn't do it." And he said, "I'll tell you why I didn't do it. I did not do it because of the fear of God, that is, I honored the Lord. I respected God. God was first in my life. God is a priority in my life, and whatever I do I do because of God." Now number one, listen, the first principle of pri, eh, at, the first principle of prosperity and the first principle of financial freedom is priority. You've got to get God in His right place, and where is God? Where's the rightful place of God? Matthew chapter 6, verse 33: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you. You put things first and God second, you're going to fail. You put God first and things second, and God's going to take care of the things. Now I didn't say that; God said it. Matthew 6:33 – jot it down – "Seek ye first" first, first "the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." That's the same thing we read over there in Proverbs chapter three. "Honor the Lord with the first fruits of all thine increase," with the first fruits, not the second, the first, "and so shall thy barns be filled with plenty and thy presses shall burst out with new wine." God is not going to take second place to anybody or anything. Now, until you get God in first place, you have no right to expect God to give you financial freedom. Why should God give you financial freedom if He's not first in your life? Is God first in your life? You see, listen, we are to love people, use things, and worship God. Most of us worship money, love things, and use people. Is God first in your life? Now that's not just a rhetorical question. I'm asking you to ask yourself that question; I mean ask it, down in the precincts of your soul, "Is God first?" as you sit here, "Is God absolutely, totally first in your life? Is Jesus Christ Lord of all?" "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you." Nehemiah had a priority in his life. He said, "I live the way I live, I do what I do because there's a divine priority. It is the fear of God." And the fear of God is not only the beginning of wisdom; it's the beginning of wealth. To fear the Lord, to have true wealth, is the fear of the Lord."

II. The Principle of Industry

Second principle: not only the Principle of Priority, but the Principle of Industry. Now what I mean by industry is work. Look if you will in verse 16. We're in chapter 5. we just

read verse 15; now let's read verse 16. He says, "Yea, also I continued in the work of this wall..." Now Nehemiah was the governor. If he'd have wanted to he, he could have gotten out of that work. He didn't have to work, but he made up his mind that he was going to work because, you see, here is a principle. Here is a principle of financial freedom, and it is spelled W-O-R-K, work. And I'm going to tell you this about human nature, and I know there're some – perhaps some in the choir, perhaps some in this this auditorium—do you know why you want more money? So you won't have to work anymore. There're a lot of people who get the idea, "Boy, if I just had enough money, I wouldn't have to work. Everybody else would go to work and I'd do what I want to do. That would be a disaster for you. I don't care how much money you have, God wants you to work! You say, "What about when I retire?" That just means you have more time to serve God; that's all it means. That's all it means. You're not supposed to get indolent. You're not supposed to get lazy. You're not supposed to sit around. God wants you to work. Let me give you some scripture here. Turn to the book of Proverbs, chapter 20, this time. Proverbs chapter 20, and let's look in verse 4. Oh, these are good to turn to and mark and underscore, friend. Just lick your fingers; turn to it. Do you good. "The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing." Now some frosty morning, the old sluggard wakes up, the alarm clock goes off, fields out there needs to be plied, plowed, and he sees a little frost on the window panes, and the, and, and it feels so good under those covers, he said, "Man, I'm just not going out today." So he pulls the covers up under his chin and continues to sleep. Now, he's not going to prosper, and it's not because God has not answered his prayer. It's not because God has not, has failed him. Dear friend, he is just lazy, and God will not bless him. Look if you will in chapter 20, verse 13: "Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty; open thine eyes, and thou shalt be satisfied with bread." Now, that's clear; that's plain. Turn to Proverbs chapter 28, and verse 19, okay? Proverbs 28, and verse 19. Now remember the writer of Proverbs is talking to farmers so you'll have to make the application to your own life, but "he that tilleth his land shall have plenty of bread." The word "till" means to, to farm or to plow his land, to cultivate; "he that [cultivateth] his land shall have plenty of bread, but he that followeth after vain persons shall have poverty enough." You know what a vain person is? That's that guy who says, "Man, you don't have to work. I'll show you a slick deal." The Bible says in verse 20: "A faithful man shall abound with blessings, but he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent." That is, he's going to get himself in deep trouble. Somebody comes along to you and says, "I'll show you how to double your money overnight; I'll show you a get-rich-quick scheme," you watch it! There is not a substitute for work in God's world.

Now we're to pray, "God, give us this day our daily bread," but the Bible also says, "If a man will not work, neither should he eat." (2 Thessalonians 3:10) But we have some

people today who really think that work is a dirty word. And they think that the government, perhaps, owes them a living. Friend, you cannot legislate the poor into freedom by legislating the wealthy out of freedom, and what one person receives without working for, another person must work for without receiving it. The government can't give to anybody anything that the government does not first take from somebody. And when half of the people get the idea they don't have to work because the other half's going to take care of them, and when the other half get the idea it does no good to work because somebody's going to get what I work for, that, dear friend, is about the end of any nation. And the Bible that says, "Six days shalt thou labor," is the Bible that says, "one day shalt thou rest." And so many of us remember the Bible that says, "One day to rest," but we fail to remember that the Bible says, "Six days shalt [thou] thou labor," and you cannot multiply wealth by dividing it. Well, you say, "Don't you think we ought to take care of the poor?" Absolutely, if they cannot take care of themselves. What about the indigent? If they cannot work, they ought to be taken care of, but there's a biblical principle, "if a man will not work, neither should he eat." "Neither should," that's a biblical, that's not cruel. That's God's Word. You're not kinder than God is, ladies and gentlemen, and I want to tell you that there're some principles of financial prosperity; there are some principles that are as clear as, as, as day.

Number one is the principle of priority. If you do not put God first, if you do not "honor God first with the first fruits of all thine increase," "seek ye first the kingdom of God...." The second principle is the Principle of Industry. Nehemiah said, "And I continued my work upon the wall."

III. The Principle of Generosity

Now the third principle that I want to give you is what I want to call the Principle of Generosity. Look, if you will now, beginning in verse 17 where we left off. Nehemiah chapter 5, now and verse 17: "Moreover there were at my table an hundred and fifty of the Jews and rulers, beside those that came unto us from among the heathen that are about us." That is, Nehemiah was responsible for feeding 150 of the leaders and the workers that were in this project, besides that, all of the people who were not even believers in God – he called them heathen – they came in and Nehemiah helped to feed them. Now he did it, not out of the government resources, he did it out of his own pocket. Notice: "Now that which was prepared for me," verse 18, "daily was one ox" and six choice sheep; also fowls were prepared for me, and once in ten" day "days store of all sorts of wine: for all of this required not I the bread of the governor, because the bondage was heavy upon this people." Now what he's said is, that they were so much in bondage, "I couldn't tax them more. And there was a great need, and since I did not use the money that would have been legitimately mine to take care of this expense,

because the people were in such destitute means,” Nehemiah said, “I reached into my own pocket and out of my own pocket, with my personal wealth I fed more than 200 people every day! At my own table, I gave! There’s a principle of generosity. Now listen, folks. You want God to bless you? You’d better learn how to share with other people. Look in Proverbs chapter 11, for a moment, and let’s look in verse 24. Let me hear those pages. All right, now look. “There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth...” Have you ever seen anything the more you scatter it, the more you have? “There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tends to poverty.” God is saying, “The more you share, the more you have; the more you hoard, the less you have.” That’s what He says right here. “The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.” Now that’s what God says. Now, look in Luke chapter 6, verse 38. God says, “Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together ... shall men give into your bosoms.” The Bible says in 2 Corinthians chapter 9:6, if you sow “sparingly” you’ll “reap ... sparingly;” if you sow “bountifully” you’ll “reap ... bountifully.” You need to learn the principle of generosity.

IV. The Principle of Reliability

Now, there’s another principle. It is the principle of reliability, that God is reliable. Go back to Nehemiah, chapter 5 here one more time, and look in verse 19. Nehemiah says, “Think upon me my God for good according to all that I’ve done for this people.” “Think upon me O God for good.” That is, Nehemiah says, “Lord, I have obeyed your Word; I have kept your Word. And God, because I have obeyed your Word and kept your word, Lord, remember me. Lord, I’m counting on you. I am relying on you.” Nehemiah is not bragging. He is just reminding God of God’s responsibility. That “my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” Nehemiah was trusting God. Trusting God.

V. The Principle of Integrity

Now listen. There is another principle that Nehemiah practiced. It is the principle of integrity. I want you to look again at this passage of Scripture here. And how important it is that we see this. Look in verse 16, chapter 5, verse 16. He says, “Yea also, I continued in the work of this wall. Neither bought we any land.” Now what does he mean by that? You see, Nehemiah had the opportunity, if he’d wanted to, to get rich. You know how he could have gotten rich? He knew exactly where the streets were going to be. He knew exactly what piece of property was going to be worth more than others. Now there’s nothing wrong with a real estate developer who has a good sense and a keen sense for this. But if a man is a politician, he is on the inside, and he knows where

the road is going to be built and the bridge is going to be built, and he kind of maneuvers things—he can get rich. Nehemiah said, “I didn’t do that. I did not do that. I practiced integrity. I did not shave my conviction. Now God, I want you to honor me because I walked in honesty and integrity.” Now these are principles, friend. These are principles of financial prosperity; these are principles of financial freedom.

VI. The Principle of Sufficiency

And all of them add up to one last thing. I want to call it the principle of sufficiency. Look again if you will now in verse 18: “Now that which was prepared for me daily was one ox—can you imagine how many filet mignons in one ox?—and six choice sheep;”—rack of lamb and mutton—“also fowls were prepared for me and once in ten days store all sorts of wine.” He’s just saying, “You know, God took care of my pretty good.” Did you know that the bible says that God has pleasure in the prosperity of his servants? Nehemiah was saying, “Look: I had oxen; I had sheep. I was able to do what God wanted me to do.” Do you know what financial prosperity is? Let me tell you what *financial prosperity is: nothing more and nothing less than having what you need to do what God wants you to do*. That’s all. Just having what you need to do what God wants you to do. And God wanted Nehemiah to do this, and he had what he needed.

Some need more than others because they’re in a different spot. Nehemiah was in a spot where he had these rulers and these nobles and these other people, and he was trying to make an impression on those friends round about him with his generosity, and so God enabled him to do that. And God was not chinchy.

Do you know that the Bible says? “Honor the Lord with thy substance and with the firstfruits of all thy increase and so shall thy barns be filled with plenty and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.” The Bible says, “Bring ye all the tithe into the storehouse and prove me now herewith saith the Lord of hosts if I shall not open you the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing there shall not be room enough to receive it.”

There is the principle of sufficiency. God is sufficient. And here was a man, Nehemiah, in a time of depression, in a time of drought, in a time where people had high taxes, where people were mortgaging their houses and their land, and he said, “God gave me all that I needed to get the job done, and whatever God orders, God will pay for.” You’ve just got to know the will of God; be in the will of God and let God supply your needs.

Now you think of these principles. Think of that principle of priority—is God first? Think of that principle of industry—have you been diligent? Think of that principle of generosity—have you had an open hand or a clinched fist? Think of that principle of integrity—have you lived with integrity? Think of that principle of reliability—have you been trusting in God or in uncertain riches? Have you been saying, “Lord, now I’ve been

obeying you, now Lord I'm counting on you?" Think of that principle of sufficiency—are you believing and trusting God, according to these other principles, to take care of you?

God wants His people to be out of bondage. I'm not saying, friend, that you're going to have diamonds dripping from your fingers and a big Cadillac automobile. If God gives you that, I rejoice with you. I'd rejoice if He gave it to me. It doesn't make any difference. But I tell you, if it takes those things to make you happy, there's something wrong with you. I'm going to tell you, dear friend, that God wants you to have your needs met, and God knows what your needs are, and God knows where you will be blessed, and with what you can be trusted and what your needs are, and everything that you need, God will supply—if you'll meet Him—according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Do you believe that? I do.

Conclusion

Now listen. Do you know what some of you are going to have to do? Some of you are going to have to put God first and the test, the beginning test, is you're going to be bringing the tithe every Sunday to God's house. You say, "There you go. You're just wanting money out of me." I'm wanting you to prosper and I'm wanting God's work to prosper. You say, "I can't afford to tithe." You can't afford not to tithe. And after you've tithed, that's just the floor. You're just getting ready to give then. You pay the tithe; then you begin to give. You can rob God in tithes and offerings.

Won't it be wonderful when God's people are out of bondage? I mean when we just have that open hand and "there is that scattereth and yet increaseth"? "Give and it will be given unto you, good measure, pressed down, shaken together, overflowing shall men give unto your bosom." God opens the windows of heaven; God says, "Look how much my people love me. They've been faithful in those material things, now I'm going to honor them in the spiritual." God wants you free!

Guard Your Thought Life

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: April 1, 1984

Main Scripture Text: Proverbs 4:23–27

“Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.”

PROVERBS 4:23

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Conclusion

Introduction

I want you to take your Bibles, please, and open to Proverbs chapter 4—the Book of Proverbs chapter 4. Now, if you have been here for a while, you know that we’ve begun a series in the Book of Proverbs under the general heading of “God’s Way to Health, Wealth, and Wisdom.” Now, we want you to make certain that it’s God’s health, God’s wealth, and God’s wisdom that you receive and not a counterfeit. You’re going to find out that the Book of Proverbs deals with some very, very practical matters. As a matter of fact, when a man knows God and is really right with God, he’s going to find that he lives a very practical life, because a man who’s right with God is perfectly natural and deeply spiritual all at the same time. He is intensely practical and yet supernaturally spiritual. That’s the way God intends for us to live. And, the Book of Proverbs so beautifully takes the practical and interweaves the spiritual and makes the life the

beautiful thing that God wants it to be.

Now, today, I want to talk to you about guarding your thought life. And, read with me here in Proverbs chapter 4 and verse 23: *“Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life. Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee. Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil”* (Proverbs 4:23–27).

Now, we’re talking today about guarding the thought life. Actually, you notice in verse 23 it says, *“Keep [your] heart with all diligence”* (Proverbs 4:23). This word *heart* is used more than 800 times in the Old Testament, but more than 200 times it deals with the thought life; not merely the intelligence, but the emotion, the thought life, the well springs of life, the thing that motivates us, and moves us, and molds us, and makes us, the Bible calls that the *heart*. I’m calling it today “the thought life.” In the New Testament, it would be roughly equivalent to the mind: *“Keep [your mind]”*—your thought life, your heart—*“with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life”* (Proverbs 4:23). Now, we need to pay very much attention, therefore, to our hearts. We need to guard our heart. And, our little outline this morning is going to be very simple. I want you to think, first of all, about the majesty of the thought life. Then, I want you to think about the mastery of the thought life, and then I would like for you to think about the ministry of the thought life.

I. The Majesty of the Thought Life

Now, first of all, why is the thought life so very important? Why did Solomon tell his son, *“Keep [your] heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life”* (Proverbs 4:23)? It is because of the majesty of the thought life. That is, it is the thought life that controls the rest of your life. Listen to it again: *“Keep [your] heart with all diligence; for out of it”*—flowing out of it—*“are the issues of life”* (Proverbs 4:23). You tell me what you think, I’ll tell you who you are and the life you live. It is the thought life that controls you, and therefore, I’ve called it the majesty of the thought life. The thought life is on the throne.

Now, I’m not trying to be materialistic when I tell you what you think is what you are. The Bible says that clearly and plainly—does it not?—in Proverbs chapter 23 and verse 7: *“As [a man] thinketh in his heart,”*—you know the rest of it—*“so is he”* (Proverbs 23:7). That’s what Solomon meant. *“Keep [your] heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life”* (Proverbs 4:23). What does that mean? Well, it is your thought life that controls your attitudes. You see, your attitudes come out of your thought life: positive, negative, good, or bad. But, first of all, your attitudes are the sum total of your thoughts. But now, watch it. Your attitudes lead to your actions. You see, all good psychologists—good psychology—will tell you that the thought is the father of the deed. Before you can

do a thing, you have to think it. So, the heart leads to the attitude, and the attitude leads to the action, and the action leads to the achievement. Now, what are you going to achieve in life? Your achievements are going to be the sum total of your thoughts, because your thoughts are going to lead to those attitudes, and those attitudes are going to lead to those actions, and those actions are going to lead to those achievements. I believe it was Thackeray who said something like this: “If you sow a thought,”—you’ll do what?—“you’ll reap a deed.” Okay, “And, if you sow a deed,”—what?—“you’ll reap a habit. And, if you sow a habit,”—what?—“you reap a character. And, if you sow a character, you reap a destiny,” you see. And, it all begins how? With the thought life. *“Keep [your] heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life”* (Proverbs 4:23). *“As [a man] thinketh in his heart, so is he”* (Proverbs 23:7).

So, people, I’m not talking to you about something that’s incidental; I’m talking to you about something that’s so fundamental that one day God destroyed an entire civilization for what reason? They had heart trouble—they had heart trouble. God destroyed them for that. Genesis chapter 6 and verse 5: *“And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination”—listen to it—“of the thoughts of his heart was...evil continually [before God]”* (Genesis 6:5). God said, “The thoughts of their hearts are so evil; I’m going to have to eradicate them; I’m going to have to destroy them.” And, God sent the flood in the time of Noah. Why? Because of the thoughts of men’s hearts. Are you listening today? *The heart of the human problem is the problem of the human heart.* *“As it was in the days of [Noah], so shall it be...in the days of the coming of the Son of man”* (Luke 17:26). We’re still having the same problem they had back there: the thoughts of men’s hearts. And, God saw that because of the thought of their hearts, they had certain attitudes; because they had certain attitudes, they had certain action; because they had certain actions, they had certain achievements. And, their achievements were so vile and so disgusting that God had to destroy them.

Conversely, when God gets ready to change a man, when God gets ready to use a man—mold a man, make a man, motivate a man—how does God do it? He does it by changing how that man thinks. What does Romans chapter 12, verse 2 say? *“Be not conformed to this world: but be...transformed”—how?—“by the renewing of your mind”* (Romans 12:2). How does God transform us? God changes the thought process. Now, I’m talking to you about the majesty of the heart. I’m not leaving God out. When God is in the heart, then the man thinks right, lives right, does right. When God is absent, the man thinks wrong, does wrong, lives wrong. And so, there’s this control center. And, a very fierce battle is being waged for the control of your mind. Dr. Tim LaHaye, who is going to speak to us tonight, has written an excellent book you need to read called *The Battle for Your Mind*. And, no wonder the devil battles for the mind. No wonder the Lord Jesus Christ wants us to present our bodies to Him, including our minds, that He might

transform us. There's the majesty of the thought life.

II. The Mastery of the Thought Life

But, I want you to think a little bit about the mastery of the thought life, because look in chapter 4, verse 23, again. What Solomon said to his son was this: "Son, guard your thought life—guard your thought life. Keep your thought life. Protect your thought life. Be careful of your thought life." *"Keep your heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life"* (Proverbs 4:23). How important it is that we learn to keep our hearts because of the battle that is being waged for your mind, for the thought life.

Now, how am I going to guard my thought life? Well, again, I want to be very practical right here from the Book of Proverbs. And, first of all, I'm going to say this: you have to be careful what comes into your mind, because you have to think pure thoughts. Now, a text without a context is a pretext, and in this particular passage Solomon is talking about the sexual affairs of a young man, and what Solomon is doing is warning his son about having impure, immoral thoughts in his heart and in his life. Now, this is the end of chapter 4. Do you remember the message last week on chapter 5, when I preached on "The Playboy's Payday," and I talked about the heartbreak of immorality and all of these things that happen that are elucidated and enunciated there in chapter 5? Well, this verse right before that is a part of that whole train of thought, where Solomon is saying, "Young man, son, keep your heart; guard your heart. Don't let these impurities get into your heart and in your mind."

Look in chapter 6, if you will, for just a moment, and verse 25. You get that same idea, where he says concerning the harlot, the fallen woman, *"Lust not after her beauty in thine heart"* (Proverbs 6:25). And then, he says, in verse 27, *"Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned?"* (Proverbs 6:27–28). You know what Solomon is talking about? He's talking about what we would call today *pornography*, and he's saying to his son, "Now, son, if you would have a pure heart, guard your heart from these things." I want to tell you something, ladies and gentlemen: pornography is that idea, that system of thought, that sex can be divorced from love, that sex can be divorced from commitment, that sex can be divorced for morality—from morality—or that sex can be divorced from responsibility, that you can take sex alone and somehow use sex, enjoy sex, participate in sex, apart from love, apart from morality, apart from responsibility, and apart from the other things that God has joined with it, and you can be successful. Indeed, you cannot. Pornography teaches the idea that you can.

And, do you know what's happening here in America? And, Dr. LaHaye reminded us of it again yesterday. It's as though a sewer pipe had broken on our nation. Did you know that last year Americans bought some six billion dollars worth of pornography?

Now, I didn't say, "Six million dollars." I said, "Six billion dollars." Ladies and gentlemen, that is more than is spent in the legitimate film and record industry put together—six billion dollars. Can you imagine the harm that six billion dollars in pornography could do to this nation—and is, indeed, doing to this nation? And, it ought to break our heart, and we're getting immune to it. What was horrible yesterday is acceptable today, and has, and is, becoming a steppingstone for something worse tomorrow. "Well," you say, "pastor, it's not all that bad." Well, friend, I want to tell you the harm of pornography. I want to talk to you, and I want to tell you why the Bible says so clearly here in the Book of Proverbs, "*Keep [your] heart with all diligence*" (Proverbs 4:23)—why Solomon warned his son and said, "*[Son,] can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can [he walk] upon hot coals, and [it not affect him]?*" (Proverbs 6:27–28).

Now, there are people who tell you what you see doesn't affect you. If that's true, you tell me why someone will spend almost one half a million dollars for less than a minute advertisement on the Super Bowl, if they don't believe what a man sees will affect him and what a man sees will change him? Of course it will! You let that come in your mind, you let that come in your heart: it's got to come out some way. You've got to deal with everything that comes into you. And, we're the sum total of those thoughts that come into us and those thoughts that go out of us, and that's the reason that we're warned against this poison of pornography.

A. Pornography Is a Psychological Poison

Listen. It is psychological poison. Now, Dr. Victor Klein, who was Professor of Psychology at the University of Utah, said that in private practice—over 15 years he had been dealing with people; many of them had been immersed and entangled in pornography—and, Dr Klein said, basically, that there are four steps that poison the psychology of a person.

1. Addiction

First of all, he gets addicted. I mean, he can't just look and walk away. Almost always it's a man, but pornography's like a powerful drug. It gets its hook into you, and the devil somehow gets a claw in your brain. And, the first thing a man does, he gets addicted. And, that's step number one.

2. Escalation

And then, step number two is this. After the addiction factor, Dr. Klein says, there is the escalation factor. That is, what thrilled him, what titillated him, what turned him on, has got to be a little rougher. It's got to be now a little dirtier. It's got to be a little more deviant. It's got to be a little more kinky. And so, there's the escalation factor.

3. Desensitization

And then, he said, after that, there is what he calls the desensitization factor, where he

becomes desensitized to it. And, no longer does he see these things as shocking, and no longer does he see them as brutal. No longer does he see them as wrong. He becomes desensitized. He begins to think, “This is normal; this is right.” And, he’s not repulsed by it, but somehow he becomes narcotized by what he sees.

4. Action

And then, Dr. Klein says, the last step... First of all, he becomes addicted. And then, it is escalated. Then he is desensitized. And then, finally, he begins to put it into practice; he begins to act it out. That is the fourth step, as there’s that psychological suicide that happens to a person when he begins to read this stuff.

Again, Solomon says, “Keep your heart—keep your heart. Guard your heart with all diligence.” “Well,” you say, “that’s not going to affect me. That’s a victimless crime.” I want to tell you there’s no such thing as a victimless crime. Well, you say, “Does pornography lead to degeneracy?” Pornography is degeneracy. We need to learn that.

B. Pornography Is a Social Sickness

But, not only, dear friend, is it psychological poison; it is a social sickness. I want to tell you something that ought to break your heart. A statistic I read last week said this: according to projections and the statisticians, one out of every four baby girls born this year will be sexually molested—one out of every four in the United States. One out of every four will be sexually molested by an adult male, sometimes a member of the same family. I’ll tell you something else. One out of every ten little boys born will be sexually molested by an adult male before they reach puberty. Don’t say it doesn’t affect you. I tell you, there’s a social sickness. A former Harvard University professor wrote a book in which he sees Americans as victims of a sex mania as malignant as cancer and as socially menacing as communism. It is a social sickness.

Do you know what so many of these magazines teach? And, I’m talking about magazines that include stuff like what some people call *kiddie pornography*. And, there are hundreds of magazines that specialize in pornography with children. I’m talking about little innocent children—sometimes even babies. And, all of these, or many of these, magazines teach something like this: that women and children secretly desire sex, and that to seduce them, or even to rape them, is to do them a favor. And, these magazines suggest that when the victim resists by fighting and screaming, their screams are really just screams of pleasure. And, before long, these terrified victims are going to become willing and passionate lovers. And, there are billions of dollars of this kind of material being spewed out upon America.

Now, the egghead will tell you that we need pornography—“We need all these things; it’s a legitimate outlet”—and that a person will somehow be healed and helped if he can just express himself with pornography. If you believe that, I’ve got a bridge I’d

like to sell you up in Brooklyn. Let me tell you something, friend: it's not a legitimate outlet any more than alcohol is a legitimate outlet for the alcoholic. You don't cure an alcoholic by giving him alcohol. You don't cure a drug addict by giving him drugs. You don't cure a sex pervert by giving him pornography. If you believe that, you believe you put out a fire with gasoline. No, there is the social danger.

In America, 700,000 teenagers this year will conceive children out of wedlock. Many of them will be killed in an abortion—the babies. Some of them will come full term, and they will be born, but they'll be born malformed and diseased because of the untreated venereal disease of their mother in this so-called God-blessed America. A leading law official said this: "Not everyone who reads pornography is a sexual deviant, but," he said, "all sex deviants read it." Herbert Chase, former Detroit Police Inspector, said, "There has not been a sex murder in the history of our department in which the killer was not an avid reader of lewd magazines." They go together; they follow one another as night follows day.

C. Pornography Is a Domestic Disaster

Ladies and gentlemen, we are faced with a sad situation. Not only is this matter of pornography a psychological poison, not only is it a social sickness; I want to tell you it's a domestic disaster. Anybody who has counseled, as I've counseled through these years, and other people have counseled, can tell you the heartbreak, the tragedy, in the homes that have come into the homes through husbands—and wives, sometimes, and children who have read this—who have their whole outlook on love and marriage and sex so completely corrupted and twisted that a happy, tranquil, God-given love life is no longer possible unless God does a radical cleansing of the mind. And, listen. The devil—the devil's clever. The devil knows if he can change what you think, he can change how you behave. And, that's the reason he's channeling sex right into the living room.

This was cut out of *The Commercial Appeal*: "Playboy Channel Bringing Sex Unbridled onto Home Screens." This is right out of our newspaper just a few days ago: "And, the Playboy organization now is ready to bring rare sex—the kind of the films that are seen in adult movie houses—right into the living rooms of the homes of Memphis." I'm not going to read this entire article, but this man whose name is Mr. Brown Burnett has concluded by saying this: "But, the main significance of the rise of the Playboy Channel is the fact that one of the great taboos of the airwaves has been lifted. When you can watch sex on television in your home, and hear those outlawed words spoken without the slightest trace of embarrassment, for better or worse," he says, "a new day has dawned."

I want to tell you, ladies and gentlemen, a new day has not dawned; the sun has

almost set for America—the sun has almost set. It’s not a new day; it is the end of an age, and the end of an era, and the beginning of the judgment of God. My heart is broken, not because I’m envious of the Playboy empire, but because I love the homes, and the families, and the boys and girls, and the husbands and the wives who are involved. No wonder Solomon said, *“Keep [your] heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life”* (Proverbs 4:23).

D. Pornography Is Spiritual Suicide

But, I want to tell you, not only is it a domestic disaster; pornography is spiritual suicide—spiritual suicide. Remember over there in chapter 6 where Solomon said to his son, “Son, don’t lust after her beauty in your heart.” Why? Because Jesus said in the New Testament, *“Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart”* (Matthew 5:28). That’s what Jesus said. Now, don’t blame that on some backwoods preacher. Jesus said that. *“Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart”* (Matthew 5:28). And, the Word of God says, *“Thou shalt not commit adultery”* (Exodus 20:14). I want to tell you something, friend. One of these days the warm flames of lust will be turned to the fiery flames of Hell. You say, “Brother Rogers, are you trying to frighten me?” Yes, yes—absolutely, totally. When God gives law, He’s not giving advice. It is law—it is law. And, the answer to the whole pornography thing is Jesus Christ. “When a man looks on a woman to lust after her, he hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Matthew 5:28).

Now, listen to what James says: *“Lust [when it] hath conceived...bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth”—what?—“death”* (James 1:15). Lust, sin, death—LSD; lust, sin, death. Now, the devil knows that if he can get you to thinking this way—to get you to lusting—he can get you to sinning. And, if he can get you to sinning, he has you. It is a form of spiritual suicide. And, that’s the reason that Solomon said so long ago, “My son, keep your heart with all diligence”—why?—“for out of it are the issues of life” (Proverbs 4:23). God wants you to have life and not death. *“The wages of sin is death”* (Romans 6:23). Christ said, “I’ve come that you might have life, and that you might have it abundantly” (John 10:10).

Now, look. I’m talking to you about the mastery of the thought life, and I’m saying you’ve got to think pure thoughts. But, how are you going to think pure thoughts? By trying not to think impure thoughts? No. Listen. The Bible says you’re not to be *“overcome [with] evil, but”—what?—“overcome evil with good”* (Romans 12:21). Now, you’ve been in verse 23. Go back to verse 20—chapter 4 and verse 20—Proverbs 4. Listen to what he says here: *“My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings.”* Now, watch this—verse 21: *“Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them*

in the midst of thine heart. For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh” (Proverbs 4:20–22). Do you see it? Look, if you will, again. He says, “*Keep them in the midst of thine heart*”—my words, the Word of God.

Now, how are you going to not think bad thoughts? By thinking God’s thoughts. You see, not only do you need to think pure thoughts; you need to think positive thoughts. The way to keep from thinking negatively is to think positively. You see, listen. When you take the Word of God and get the Word of God down deep in your heart, meditation is just thinking God’s thoughts after Him; it is loading up on the Word of God. This is why it is absolutely, totally imperative that you have a quiet time every morning. Do you? Do you get up in time to get alone with the Word of God and get God’s Word down in your heart exactly as He says? “*Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart. For they are life*” (Proverbs 4:21–22)—they are life; they are life. You need to get up and fellowship with Jesus, and saturate your soul with the Word of God, and bathe yourself in the presence of the dear Holy Spirit of God. And, that’s the way to life. Paul says, in the New Testament, “Whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise”—do what?—“think on these things” (Philippians 4:8).

Let me tell you something wonderful. Let me tell you something exciting. Let me tell you something even profound. Now, if I’m going to say something profound, I think I need to warn you. All right now, look. It may not sound profound to you, but it’s profound. I don’t say many profound things, so we want to make the most we can out of this. All right? You ready? Listen. God made you where you can’t think two things at one time. And, if you’re thinking what’s right, you cannot be thinking what’s wrong. Isn’t that wonderful? So, how do you keep from thinking what’s wrong? Just think what’s right.

Now, when He says, “Guard your heart,” He says, “Just load up on My Word. Get My Word in here. Keep it in the midst of your heart.” “*Thy word have I hid in mine heart,*”—what?—“*that I might not sin against thee*” (Psalm 119:11). “*Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word*” (Psalm 119:9). So, store up on the Word of God. You see, you’ve got to think pure thoughts. How are you going to think pure thoughts? By thinking positive thoughts, and those positive thoughts also are very powerful thoughts, because the Bible says, “*The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than a twoedged sword*” (Hebrews 4:12). I’m not just talking about thinking positive thoughts like thinking about flowers and bees and birds and trees, and those kind of things. I am talking about the mighty Word of God. Get it in your heart. It’s power to cleanse. It’s power to keep you. Now, you’re going to have to do it.

III. The Ministry of the Thought Life

I've talked to you about the majesty of the thought life. I've talked to you about controlling your life—or the mastery of the thought life. Let me now talk to you for just a few moments about the ministry of the thought life. Why does God want your thought life? Because from your thought life and through your thought life He wants to minister to you. Now, I want to tell you three things your thought life will do for you when you get it right. Are you ready? Look right here again, if you will, in Proverbs chapter 4 and verse 23: *“Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life. Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee. Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil”* (Proverbs 4:23–27). Now, let me tell you what indeed a proper thought life will do. Number one: It will govern your speech. Number two: It will guard your sight. Number three: It will guide your steps.

A. A Proper Thought Life Will Govern Your Speech

Now, look at it. See if what I have said is not true. Look in verse 24: *“Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee”* (Proverbs 4:24). You see, when you keep your thought life, it governs your speech. Why is that? Well, it's just a psychological truth. If you want to know what a man is full of, just listen to him, right? Because what did Jesus say in the Gospel of Matthew? *“Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth [speaks]”* (Matthew 12:34). Right. I mean, you listen to a person—listen to conversation... I tell you, sometimes when I go to a barbershop and people don't know I'm a preacher, it's an amazing thing—it is an amazing thing. Have you ever eavesdropped on a man saying nothing? Boy, a lot of them just say nothing, and a lot of them just belch up filth. Do you know why a man has profane words? Profane heart. Do you know why a man has dirty words? Dirty mouth, dirty heart. Jesus said, *“Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh”* (Matthew 12:34). As they say in the country, “What's down in the well comes up in the bucket.” Isn't that right? Sure.

So, what is the ministry of the heart? What is the ministry of the thought life? What is the ministry of the thought life? The ministry of the thought life is this, ladies and gentlemen—pure and simple: it will govern your speech. And, if we could change the speech in America, we could pretty well change our land.

B. A Proper Thought Life Will Guard Your Sight

But, not only will it do that. It will guard your sight. Look, if you will again now, in verse 25: *“Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee”* (Proverbs 4:25). Have you ever had to just keep looking straight and not look to the right or left? Do you know what I'm talking about? Walk past a newsstand, walk past

something else, or just walk past somebody coming down the street. You know, people now go outdoors in things they ought not to even come down stairs in. And, you know, I'm talking about one of these strapless evening gowns—I mean, gownless evening straps. And, what do you have to say to your eyes? “Eyes, just look straight ahead.” Isn't that right? Just look right on.

Now, what I said—listen; pay attention—I said, “What you see governs how you think.” But, let's turn it right around: How you think governs what you see. Why do some people go to look at this, and other people don't? Why do some people read pornography, and other people don't? Why do some people look on lewd scenes, and other people don't? Because, you see, there's the ministry of the thought life. Not only will it govern your speech; it will guard your sight. And, you can make up your mind that you're not going to look at certain things. You're not just a helpless victim. Do you know what Job said? Job said, “*I made a covenant with [my] eyes [not to look] upon a maid*” (Job 31:1). That is, he made a decision. Now, men, listen. And, ladies, listen. You need to get alone with God in a quiet place and read your Bible and study your Bible, and at that time make a solemn decision before God that by God's grace and by God's help you'll not look at this stuff. Don't wait until you're in the middle of it. Don't wait till the temptation comes. Beforehand, make a covenant with your eyes, because, you see, not only does what you see determines what you think, but what you think determines what you see. It will—it will—guard your sight.

C. A Proper Thought Life Will Guide Your Steps

I wish I had more time, but I've run out of time. One last thing, dear friend: It will guide your steps. Look again. He says, “*Ponder the path of thy feet,*”—that is, “your thought life”; think about it—“*and let all thy ways*”—and all your ways will—“*be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil*” (Proverbs 4:26–27).

What does that mean? It means, friend, when your mind is clear and right with God, when you think the thoughts of Christ after Him, when you have the mind of Christ, when you're being transformed by the Word of God, and the power of God, and the Spirit of God, in your thought life, in your heart, then you're going to be doing the will of God. God has a plan for you—a wonderful plan. God wants you to have health, wealth, and wisdom—God's health, God's wealth, God's wisdom. God wants you to have a fruitful life. God wants you to have fulfillment. God wants you to have sexual fulfillment. God wants you to have a happy family. God wants you to get your prayers answered. God wants you to have the progressive realization of His will for your life. God wants you to know success in the fullest, highest meaning of the word. But, how are you going to do it? Your thought life. “*As [a man] thinketh in his heart, so is he*” (Proverbs 23:7). “*Out of [the heart] are the issues of life*” (Proverbs 4:23). And, God will guide your steps.

Conclusion

So many people say, “I want to know the will of God.” Friend, the will of God is not a roadmap; it is a relationship—knowing Him, knowing Him, knowing Him—and thinking His thoughts after Him.

The Playboy's Payday

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: March 25, 1984

Main Scripture Text: Proverbs 5

“He shall die without instruction; and in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray.”

PROVERBS 5:23

Outline

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Conclusion

Introduction

We are in a series from the Book of Proverbs entitled “God’s Way to Health, Wealth, and Wisdom.” I want you to open your Bibles, please, to Proverbs chapter 5. If you did not bring a Bible with you, you look in the pew rack in front of you—there’s a Bible for you to use. Turn to Proverbs chapter 5—it should be on page 622—and we’re going to read together the entire chapter. Let me tell you so you’ll know what we’re reading. The fifth chapter of the Book of Proverbs deals with sexual immorality. And the title of the message today is “The Playboy’s Payday.”

We begin reading in verse 1: *“My son, attend unto my wisdom, and bow thine ear to my understanding: that thou mayest regard discretion, and that thy lips may keep knowledge. For the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil: but her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps take hold on hell. Lest thou shouldest ponder the path*

of life, her ways are moveable, that thou canst not know them. Hear me now therefore, O ye children, and depart not from the words of my mouth. Remove thy way far from her, and come not nigh the door of her house: lest thou give thine honour unto others, and thy years unto the cruel: lest strangers be filled with thy wealth; and thy labours be in the house of a stranger; and thou mourn at the last, when thy flesh and thy body are consumed, and say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof; and have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me! I was almost in all evil in the midst of the congregation and assembly. Drink waters out of thine own cistern, and running waters out of thine own well. Let thy fountains be dispersed abroad, and rivers of waters in the streets. Let them be only thine own, and not strangers' with thee. Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth. Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished always with her love. And why wilt thou, my son, be ravished with a strange woman, and embrace the bosom of a stranger? For the ways of man are before the eyes of the LORD, and he pondereth all his goings. His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins. He shall die without instruction; and in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray.”
(Proverbs 5:1-23)

Now I want to tell you, dear friend, that love and marriage and romance are something very, very wonderful. I started my romantic endeavors as a youngster. I fell in love with a little girl in school, and my childhood sweetheart is now the love of my life. Joyce and I grew up together as childhood sweethearts and, you know, it's just different when you get started that way. I remember our first kiss as the chills went up and down my spine because her Popsicle was melting. It's just to have that relationship that God wants us to have.

I know today, when I'm talking about romance and love and marriage and all of those things, that everybody's interested. At least, you ought to be interested. It's just a universal subject, no matter who you are, or where you live; and you really don't outgrow it. The girls get interested a little bit before the boys. You know, girls mature just a little bit before boys, and up until 12 the girls are a little ahead of the boys. And the girls start thinking about the boys before the boys start thinking about the girls. But from 12 to 14, the boys are catching up with the girls. And from 14 on, they're *neck and neck*.

It's a very wonderful thing, and we need to find out what God has to say, because, you see—look—don't get the idea that God is a *cosmic killjoy*. Don't get the idea that God is against love and romance and marriage. He is not. And *when God says, “Flee fornication.”* (1 Corinthians 6:18), *and when God says, “Thou shalt not commit adultery.”* (Exodus 20:14), *God is not trying to keep sex from us. He's trying to keep sex for us.* It

is a wonderful gift of God. Keep that in mind, as we look into this fifth chapter of the Book of Proverbs in this message that we're entitling "The Playboy's Payday."

I. The Discretion We Should Follow

The very first thing I want you to notice is the discretion that we should follow. Look, if you will, again, in verses 1 and 2: *"My son, attend unto my wisdom, and bow thine ear to my understanding: that thou mayest regard discretion, and that thy lips may keep knowledge."* (Proverbs 5:1-2)

Now where is a young man going to get discretion? Where are we going to learn knowledge? How are we going to learn what is right and what is wrong in our sexual relationships? Do you think we're going to learn it from Hollywood? Do you think we're going to learn it from television? Do you think we're going to learn from Hugh Hefner, Margaret Mead, Johnny Carson? Shall they be our teachers? Are they going to tell us? Is that where we're going to get discretion?

Do you know what Hugh Hefner is quoted as saying? I quote: "If Christ were here today and had to choose between being on the staff of Playboy Magazine or being on the staff of one of the joy-killing, pleasure-denying churches, He would, of course, join us." That's what Hugh Hefner said, that Christ had rather be on the staff of Playboy Magazine than on the staff of Bellevue Baptist Church, 'cause I'm sure he classifies us as one of those pleasure-denying, joy-killing churches.

Friend, I want to tell you something; you're looking at a man today full of joy, full of joy. *"Joy unspeakable and full of glory"* (1 Peter 1:8) is the joy that the Lord Jesus gives to us.

Where are we going to get romance? From the smut merchants, the dirt peddlers? Are we going to get the truth from the God of Glory who made men, who made women, who made them in the beginning male and female, and has watched over, and superintended, and seen every marriage relationship and every sexual encounter from history until this present time? Personally, friend, I choose the Word of God. I choose the Bible. This is the place. This is the discretion that we should follow.

II. The Deception We Should Avoid

But now, secondly, I want you to notice the deception that we should avoid, because, not only is God here to give discretion, but the devil, correspondingly, is here to deceive us. Now how does he deceive? Well, look, if you will, in verse 3, and following: *"For the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb..."*—now, when the Bible uses the word *strange woman* here, it's talking about a loose woman, an immoral woman—*"For the lips of [a harlot,] a strange woman [an immoral person] drop as an honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil: but her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged*

sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps take hold on hell. Lest thou shouldst ponder the path of life, her ways are moveable”—that is, there’s no fixed standard of right and wrong—*“that thou canst not know them.”* (Proverbs 5:3-6)

Notice how God describes this strange woman here in verse 3. The Bible says that the *“lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb.”* (Proverbs 5:3) Do you know what I call her? *Ole’ Honey-lips*. Now this woman, at first, she really seems very enticing to the young man. And by the way, Solomon is speaking to his son. He’s giving him some good fatherly advice. He says, “Son, look out for *Ole’ Honey-lips*, because not only are her kisses sweet, but she is a real talker; her mouth and her lips are smoother than oil.” There, he’s talking about her words, the things that she says. But Solomon is saying, “Now you look beyond that. Look before you leap.”

When I was working my way through school, among other things that I did, I worked as an elevator mechanic; at least I assisted an elevator mechanic. And we worked on elevators for Otis Elevator. And the man that I was working with was crippled. He limped. I asked him one day, I said, “What happened to your legs?” He said, “You would hardly believe it if I told you. But,” he said, “I was working on an elevator several stories from the lobby. And,” he said, “I sat on the floor and lifted the elevator so I could look beneath the elevator. Then,” he said, “I remembered I left some tools in the pit. So,” he said, “I grabbed the bottom of that elevator and swung under and let go. I’d forgotten that I’d run the elevator up a number of floors.” He went straight to the bottom. “Well,” you say, “Brother Rogers, that’s foolish.” That’s right. You’re supposed to look before you leap.

And that’s what Solomon is saying. “Now,” he said, “don’t you let this strange woman, this *Honey-lips*, don’t you let her take you.” She has three major weapons. And I want you to leave chapter 5 here for just a moment, and look, if you will, in chapter 6, verse 23, and see what she has in her arsenal to catch the young man. Now he again reminds them that there is discretion in the Word of God, in verses 23–24: *“For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life.”* He’s saying, you better hang to the Word of God. Why? Because you’re in danger. Here’s the danger: *“To keep thee from the evil woman, from the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman.”* (Proverbs 6:23-24) Now remember, her mouth is smoother than oil. She knows how to flatter. Flattery is one of her chief weapons. Somebody has said, “Flattery is like perfume—it’s all right to sniff it, but you’re not supposed to swallow it.” And she knows how to say, “Oh, you’re so handsome. You’re so strong.” Or, “You’re so wise. You’re so kind. I need you. I just think that you’re a wonderful man.” A little flattery makes big fools of little men, and they don’t understand that. They’re just suckers for flattery. *“Her mouth is smoother than oil.”* (Proverbs 5:3)

And then, the other weapon that she has is her physical beauty. Look, if you will, in

verse 25: *“Lust not after her beauty in thine heart.”* Now she may be a candidate for a centerfold somewhere, and you say, “Hey, boy, that is for me. That is for me.” Do you know what the Bible says in Proverbs chapter 31, in verse 30? That, *“Beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised.”* (Proverbs 31:30)

Now there’s nothing wrong with a woman being beautiful, and, if you have physical attraction and beauty, that is a gift from God. But I want to remind you that if that’s what you’re depending on, lady, to catch a man with, well, what you catch him with is what you’re going to have to keep him with. Did you know that? What you catch him with is what you’re going to have to keep him with. And if he loves you because of your beauty, what are you going to do when your beauty is no longer? You know what we say about beauty: “Beauty is only skin deep, but ugly goes all the way to the bone.” Beauty fades, but ugly holds its own. Now what does that mean? It means that beauty is as a passing thing. Beauty is vain!

Did you know that a woman who fears the Lord gets more and more beautiful every day? Isn’t that wonderful, that you can marry someone who is getting more and more beautiful? That’s the reason that the Apostle Peter was talking about *“the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.”* (1 Peter 3:4) That which is incorruptible, that which is not going to fade—it’s not going to decay.

But here’s a fellow, he’s just taken by this woman’s beauty. Now again, girls, I’m not saying that you ought not to be beautiful. I think you ought to be beautiful. *Sometimes people ask me, “Pastor, do you think it’s a sin if a woman wears makeup?” I think it’s a sin if some women don’t wear makeup!* You’re not going to win a husband by looking like something left over from a rummage sale. Now I’m not saying that you ought not to be attractive and beautiful and all of that, but I am saying, if this is what you’re depending on to catch a man, then what you catch him with is what you’re going to have to keep him with. And there’s a new crop of beauties coming on every year, while you are going over the hill. And I’m going to tell you something else, sir—if you marry a woman only for her physical attraction, you’re going to make a grievous, grievous mistake.

Now the third way she gets you is not only with her words when she flatters you, and not only her physical beauty—these are the reasons the average person falls in love—but the third reason is she knows how to flirt. Flirtation. Look, if you will, in verse 25 again: *“Lust not after her beauty”*—this is chapter 6, verse 25—*“Lust not after her beauty in thine heart; neither let her take thee with her eyelids.”* (Proverbs 6:25) Did you know a woman can take a man with her eyelids? She bats those big eyelashes at him. That’s flirtation. That’s the winking. That’s the *come hither* look. That’s what they say happens in these single bars. They’ll sit there, you know, and after a while, she’ll look over at him. She doesn’t have to say anything; just look at him. He looks at her, and the

poor sucker is gone. She has taken him with her eyelids. She knows how to flirt with him, and most of these are looking for someone that is going to...—they don't really want him, they want what he has. And while she's stroking his hair, she's really after his scalp.

Solomon says, "Beware! Beware! Beware of the deception! The devil is a deceiver!" And so he says, "Watch for these kinds of girls, fellows." "Well," you say, "now wait a minute, Preacher. I mean, you're telling the guys to watch out for the girls. My goodness, it's really the other way around. It's these guys today that are—that's all they can think about. Every one of them, they're just trying to make a conquest; and it's the girls who need to be warned about the guys." Well, that's true, too. Solomon happens to be talking to his son; that's why he's talking to his son about the girls.

But I just want to say a word to some of you girls, also, about some of these guys. You know what a man will do? He'll come to a girl, and date a girl, and take her out, and wine her and dine her, and then he'll begin to say to her, "I love you. I really love you." He'll tell her that several times. He'll just pour the sugar in her ear, and then, he'll say to her, "Do you love me?" And if she says, "Yes," then he'll say, "Prove it." And what he means by that is he wants her to show her love, to prove her love, by sexual immorality. If there's one thing that doesn't prove love, it's that. Do you know what proves love? Do you know what really proves love? That you can appreciate and enjoy a person, and that person's character, without having to sully their purity by *doing it*. This guy says to this gal, "Oh, I just can't wait! I just can't wait! I just can't wait!" The Bible says Jacob waited for Rachel seven years, because of the love that he had for her, and it seemed as a few days. (Genesis 29:20) You see, lust can't wait; love can wait. Lust wants to get; love wants to give. And when that guy says, "I love you! I love you! I love you!" what he really means is, "I love me! I love me! I love me!" Oh, he loves you, but not with Bible love.

A man goes out here in an orange grove. He gets one of those big succulent oranges. He takes his pin knife and cuts a plug out of it, puts it up to his mouth, and squeezes all of the juice out of it. Then he throws it on the ground like a piece of garbage, wipes his mouth, and says, "Man, I just love oranges." Young lady, that's the way he loves you! And when you're left like a piece of garbage, he says, "Boy, that was wonderful! Aren't oranges good!" But what he really means is, "I love me."

III. The Distance We Should Keep

There is the discretion that we should follow. There is the deception that we should avoid. I want you to keep your eyes wide open. Now the third thing I want you to notice is what I'm going to call the distance that we should keep.

Go back to chapter 5 and look, if you will, in verses 7 and 8: "*Hear me now*

therefore, O ye children, and depart not from the words of my mouth. Remove thy way far from her, and come not nigh the door of her house." (Proverbs 5:7-8) Are you listening to me? This sin of immorality is not a sin we're told to fight in the Bible, it is a sin that we're told to flee. The Bible says, "*Flee fornication.*" (1 Corinthians 6:18) The Bible says, "*Flee also youthful lusts.*" (2 Timothy 2:22)

You just get out of that compromising situation. If there is a person that works in the office where you work and that person is flirting with you, and you feel that lust and that attraction, if you find something happening that's ugly and impure in your heart, it would be better for you to quit than to stay in that office. Just resign. You say, "But my job!" Your purity! If you're walking down the street, just go all the way around the block just to miss it. That's exactly what he's saying here. Listen! Listen! "*Remove thy way far from her, and come not nigh the door of her house.*" Just get away! Don't see how close you can come to the edge without falling over. See how far that you can stay away. Flee fornication! Flee fornication!

I know what you young men feel—I felt it. When I was in college, well, you know, they say that what a man thinks about, he becomes. I almost turned into a girl. Man, it's real! But I'll tell you what—I had a motto on my desk, and this is what it said. I put it right on my desk where I studied: "He who would not fall down, ought not to walk in slippery places." Amen. "He who would not fall down, ought not to walk in slippery places." The distance that we should keep! You don't put all this garbage, and this filth, and this immorality, and this nudity in your mind! Don't go to those movies! Don't read those magazines! Don't watch that program! Don't do it! Don't do it! "*Can a man take a fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned?*" (Proverbs 6:27) You're not smarter than God. You're not going to outsmart God. And you put it in your mind—it's going to come out in your life. "For out of the heart are the issues of life." (Proverbs 4:23) And we're going to talk about that, and I'm going to be bringing a message on the poison of pornography, before we get out of this series in the Book of Proverbs, because the Proverbs have a lot to say about that. God willing, I will do that. But notice here the distance that we should keep.

IV. The Damage We May Suffer

Now I want us to go on, and notice, if we don't, the damage we may suffer. Begin here in verse 9 now and continue to read. He says you don't come near her house, "*Lest thou give thine honour unto others, and thy years unto the cruel: lest strangers be filled with thy wealth; and thy labours be in the house of a stranger.*" (Proverbs 5:9-10)

A. The Dissipation of Your Wealth

Now I want to tell you something: It costs to be a playboy. It is costly! Sin is costly! What

is the damage you may suffer? First of all, the dissipation of your wealth. That's what verses 9 and 10 are talking about. You give your *"honour unto others, and thy years unto the cruel: lest strangers be filled with thy wealth; and thy labours be in the house of a stranger."* (Proverbs 5:9-10) You see, sin will keep you from being prosperous. Sin will keep you from having what God wants you to have.

I'm thinking of a man, a man that I dearly love, a man that had one of the best businesses in this city, a man who was imminently successful, at the top of his profession. I knew that man; I knew his family. He lived in one of the most beautiful homes, absolutely without contradiction, in our city. I saw that man, as what some would call a harmless flirtation, as this girl began to bat those false eyelashes at him, and swivel her hips at him, and tell him how wonderful he was. This man had a loving wife, fantastic kids—he had it all! He literally had it all! But she got her hooks in him. He didn't have enough sense to say, "No." And I watched as that thread of flirtation became a cord, and that cord became a cable, and that cable became a chain, and this man literally blew it. I mean, he lost it. And I want to tell you now, his little kids are calling somebody else Daddy. His wife is now the wife of another man. Somebody else is running his business, and somebody else is living in that beautiful home. Dissipation. Dissipation.

B. **Disease**

Sin is a costly thing; but not only dissipation, disease. Look, if you will, in verse 11: *"And thou mourn at the last, when thy flesh and thy body are consumed."* (Proverbs 5:11) What's God talking about here in verse 11? He's talking about disease! He's talking about venereal disease! The vile diseases that come through immorality are God's curse and God's way of saying that every kick has a kickback. You're not going to outsmart God. *"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."* (Galatians 6:7)

You say, "But Brother Rogers, we've got modern medicine!" Don't you fool yourself! A report that I read said that venereal disease is ten times greater than just a few years ago, and there are new strains of venereal diseases that are resisting treatment. One of the most pitiful things that I've seen are these people on television that have no immunity. They have a disease where they're vulnerable to another disease or any disease. They call it AIDS. And we see these people with the sentence of death upon them. And their bodies are being literally consumed! That's part of "The Playboy's Payday." That's part of the so-called *sexual revolution* today that has "set us free."

A young man was walking down the streets of Lubbock, Texas, going out for a date, going to have a big time, clicking his heels down the sidewalk. A big strapping young man, broad shoulders, big grin, square jaw, handsome, young, virile. A crippled man in

a wheelchair, an old man, called him over, and said, “Son, I want to ask you a question. Are you good at mathematics?” He said, “Well, yes, I’m pretty good.” He said, “I have an equation for you. Fifteen minutes of pleasure with a Spanish girl down near the Mexican border and a lifetime being a cripple in a wheelchair—are they equal?” That young man said, “No, sir. They’re not equal.” The older man said, “Then be sure your sin will find you out.” It was an older man trying to warn a younger man.

Here is Solomon who is trying to warn his son. Listen to it again: “*And thou mourn at the last, when thy flesh and thy body are consumed.*” (Proverbs 5:11)

C. **Disappointment**

What is “The Playboy’s Payday”? It’s, first of all, dissipation; then, it’s disease; and then next, it’s disappointment. Look, if you will, in verses 12–13: “*And say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof; and have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me!*” (Proverbs 5:12-13) What these verses are saying is this: “Why wouldn’t I listen? Why didn’t I listen to God’s Word? Why wouldn’t I listen to the Holy Spirit? Why wouldn’t I listen to my mother? Why wouldn’t I listen to my daddy? Why wouldn’t I listen to my pastor, who loves me? Why did I think that I was so smart?” Sin offers much, but it pays little. The devil doesn’t love you. God loves you. You’re not going to outsmart God, and one of these days you’re going to come to a time of great disappointment.

Now you may think your pastor’s so square he was born in a pen; but I want to tell you something. I’m telling you, the word of God here today: you’re going to blow it, and when you come to the end of it, you’re going to miss the best of life.

Do you know what Hugh Hefner said on another occasion? He was reminiscing. Here is this guy who has all of these girls around him, all of this booze, all of these casinos, and presumably can have any sensual pleasure he wants. He said, “You know, in the next ten years I would rather meet a girl and fall in love, and have her fall in love with me than to make another one hundred million dollars.” But I fear the man doesn’t know what love is. I feel that he’s missed it. What he’s saying is, “I’ve got it all, but I don’t have satisfaction! There’s something that’s worth more than a hundred million dollars to me, and I don’t have it!”

Marilyn Monroe, the sex goddess who took her own life, said, “I hate sex.” Everybody says, “Oh, look at the pleasure that she’s having.”

Sweden’s a liberated country; they have open pornography, open prostitution, free love in Sweden. It’s all accepted. That’s supposed to be the most liberated country in the Western world. The Swedes! Do you know what nation has the highest divorce rate of any nation? Sweden. Sweden.

“God is not mocked.” I’m telling you there is a disappointment in sin. *The cup of sin is*

sweet, *but the dregs are bitter indeed.*

They did an in-depth study at Stanford University—these are not a bunch of preachers—and their conclusion of the in-depth study was this: that the more promiscuous people were before marriage, the less chance for happiness after marriage. The *try-it-before-you-marry* idea may sound cute, but it's not in the Word of God, dear friend. This idea of living together to see if you're compatible, the more promiscuous people were before marriage, the less chance of opportunity for satisfaction after marriage. Young people, many of them, right now, are on the beaches of Fort Lauderdale, many of them have gone down there attempting to make it with some girl, to make it with some boy, to jump in bed with somebody. They think that's the way. And our young people are being told that so much that they think there's absolutely nothing wrong with it!

A head psychologist in one of the major universities in America said—and this man is the man who ought to know, he's the head psychologist: "More than 50 percent of the students on this campus have psychological problems because of their immoral relationships."

What am I saying? I'm saying that first of all, when a man is unfaithful, or when a man is immoral, there is dissipation, there is disease, and there is disappointment. And by the way, because of this disappointment, we have so many perverts. You know, when a man tries everything else, and that doesn't give him satisfaction, he's never going to find satisfaction apart from the Word of God. And when he tries this so-called *free love*, when he tries the *sexual revolution*, when he's in and out of bed with everything that walks by, and that doesn't bring him satisfaction, he thinks maybe it's somewhere else. And if that doesn't work, somewhere else. And if it is not heterosexual activity, it is homosexual activity. And if that doesn't satisfy, some of them have gone to bestiality and cohabitating with animals, and some with dead people, and everything else, thinking that, "It is here! It is here!" And it is not there! It's in the Word of God. That's why we have so much perversion today, because people are ever searching and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth that is in the Word of God. Sin disappoints! It does not satisfy! You'll never show me a satisfied sinner. Satisfaction is found in the Lord Jesus Christ.

D. **Disgrace**

There's disappointment, and after that disappointment comes disgrace. Look, if you will, in verse 14: "*I was almost in all evil in the midst of the congregation and assembly.*" (Proverbs 5:14) The Living Bible says, "and now I must face public disgrace." Public disgrace. You say, "Well, that doesn't make any difference to me." There used to be a time when people were disgraced. I was reading over here last week where some

church put a woman out of the church and publicly censored that woman because she was living in immorality. She was not disgraced. She turned around and sued the church for defamation of character. Did you read that in the paper? Sin *that used to* slink *down the back* alleys struts *down the main* street *now*.

Disgrace! One of these days at the Judgment, dear friend, that which is done in secret will be shouted from the rooftop. Your mama will know. Your wife will know. Your children will know. Your pastor will know. That's part of "The Playboy's Payday." Disgrace.

E. **Dominion**

But go on. There's dominion. Here's the sadder part. Skip on down to verse 22: "*His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins.*" (Proverbs 5:22) The dominion that sin has. The rule that sin has. The Bible says, concerning a born-again child of God, that sin shall no longer "*have dominion over you.*" (Romans 6:14) But how terrible it is when a man is chained with the same chains that he has forged!

It is said that the tyrant of Syracuse called the blacksmith in before the throne. And this man, who was a despot indeed, said to the blacksmith, "I want to see you make a chain." And so the blacksmith got his bellows, and he got his forge, and he got his hammer, and he got his anvil; and then, got his molten metal, and there, he began to forge a chain. When he finished forging the chain, he held it up to the tyrant of Syracuse, and said, "There, Sire, is an example of my work. That chain is so strong, so powerful, that you could put a team of horses on either end and they'd not be able to part it asunder." And then, with a cruel sneer, the tyrant of Syracuse said, "Guards, seize the blacksmith! Chain him in that chain and cast him in the dungeon!" There's another as cruel as the tyrant of Syracuse, and he's the devil. But the devil can only chain us—are you listening?—with the chains that we have forged.

I want to tell you about another young man. This young man, one of the finest young men I've ever met, came from one of the finest families I've ever known, married to an indescribably lovely girl. But somehow there was a person that he worked with that he became enamored with, and one thing went to another, to another, until they were living in adultery and sin. I persuaded him to come and talk with me. We sat in the study; I opened God's Word, and I read it to him.

And I said, "Son, do you believe the Bible's the Word of God?" "Yes, sir." "Do you believe God loves you?" "Yes, sir." "Do you believe that God's laws are for your welfare and for your good?" "Yes, sir." "Do you believe that God will forgive you if you repent?" "Yes, sir." "Son, are you willing to repudiate this thing? Let's repent and put it under the blood of Jesus, and let's get on our knees and ask God to take it, and to cleanse, and to

give you a new start. Son, are you willing to do that?" "Yes, Pastor, I am." And I said, "Oh, thank you, Jesus." We got on our knees, and I wept and prayed, and he wept and prayed, and I said, "Now that you've gotten God to forgive you, are you willing to go to your wife and ask her to forgive you, and put that home back together, and let your children have a Christian daddy, someone they can look up to?" "Yes, sir, I am. Thank you, Pastor, for helping me."

He walked out with a big smile on his face. I said, "Thank you, Jesus. Another victory." But in three or four weeks, that young man was back with that other woman, back in sin, back in disgrace, and back in heartbreak. The home is broken. I'm afraid irrevocably broken. I could cry. I could cry. I believe that this young man, sincere as he was, failed to understand the strength of the sin!

Listen to it again—verse 22: "*His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins.*" (Proverbs 5:22) Dominion! These people talk about *free love*. They're not free! They're slaves to lust. Jesus can make that young man free, and I'm not saying that what I told him did not work. Dear friend, I can show you case after case of people who've gone the same route, and have gotten victory and deliverance, and the home has been put back together; and many of them I know and you know, and I thank God for that. But I'm saying, dear friend, that it takes a supernatural working of God to break the shackles of sin that are there and alive.

There is dominion! Dominion! Dominion! Dominion! But the Bible says—praise God: "*Sin shall not have dominion over you.*" (Romans 6:14)

F. **Death**

The last thing is death. Look, if you will, in verse 23: "*He shall die without instruction; and in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray.*" (Proverbs 5:23) To die without instruction, to die without knowledge, is to die in sin. It is to die and go to Hell! Now I want to tell you something that's not being said very much. We have a lot of rootin', tootin', shootin' church members who are living double lives, whose names are on the church roll, and they're living in open, flagrant immorality. And somehow they have the idea that God's going to overlook it, and they're going to Heaven. But the Bible says, "*Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.*" (Galatians 6:7) And the Bible says, "*Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind...shall inherit the kingdom of God.*" (1 Corinthians 6:9–10)

If you're living this kind of a lifestyle, the Bible says you're lost. You're going to Hell. Don't get the idea—listen, friend—*God did not come to save you from Hell. Jesus didn't die to save you from Hell. He died to save you from sin. And if He can't save you from sin, He can't save you from Hell.*

People have the idea today that it's just a little aberration, that it's all right to live in immorality, and that God's going to overlook it. The Bible says, "Don't be deceived. Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate shall not inherit the Kingdom of God!" You say, "Well, Pastor, does that mean if I've done any of these things, I can't be saved?" No. For Paul goes on to say in 1 Corinthians chapter 6: "And such were some of you: but you're washed, you're justified, you're sanctified." (1 Corinthians 6:11) Hallelujah! Amen!

Oh, listen. There's no sin that He can't forgive, not a blot, not a blemish, not a blur, not a stain. The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, makes the vilest sinner clean. And *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* (1 John 1:9) You may be saved right now and living in sin, because God is getting ready to chastise you. But I'm saying, dear friend, that God will surely chastise you, as surely as my name is Adrian Rogers. And if you're living in immorality, I can say, without fear of contradiction, you're either headed for the woodshed, or you're headed for Hell, just as sure as I'm standing here. But if you go on in that kind of a continuing relationship, it is a sign, proof positive, you do not know the God of Grace, the God of Glory. *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature."* (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Death! Death! Death! That's "The Playboy's Payday." And this is a message that needs to be heard across America today. I mean, across America! Young people today are getting information from every place except the Word of God.

V. The Design We Should Follow

I must close this message, but finally, the design that we should follow.

A. A Lasting Marriage

Look, if you will, in verses 15–17: *"Drink waters out of thine own cistern, and running waters out of thine own well. Let thy fountains be dispersed abroad, and rivers of waters in the streets. Let them be only thine own, and not strangers' with thee."* (Proverbs 5:15–17) What's he talking about? He's saying, "Get a wife, marry that wife, be faithful to her, have a lasting marriage, have a monogamous marriage. God's plan is one woman for one man, until death do them part."

B. A Loving Mate

But not only is it a lasting marriage, there's a loving mate. Look in verses 18–19: *"Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth. Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished always with her love."* (Proverbs 5:18–19) What's he saying? He's saying God wants you to be fulfilled. God wants you to have sexual fulfillment. God wants you to have real

joy. This is why my heart is broken. I'm preaching a message today with a broken heart, because I'm afraid some of you young people are going to miss this. I'm afraid some of you people in the choir are going to miss this. I'm afraid some of you have already missed it. You see, you've missed God's best!

When God says, "Thou shalt not," He's saying, "Don't hurt yourself." When God says, "Thou shalt," He's saying, "Help yourself to happiness." God here is talking about satisfaction. God here is talking about joy. I wouldn't trade my Christian home for anything in this world! The joy that the Lord Jesus has given us—I thank God that I came to the marriage altar pure. I thank God I married a pure girl. I thank God for the joy and the happiness. And you'll forgive me for this, but kids, you eat your cake now, you'll have a crummy tomorrow. This is God's plan. This is the design that we should follow.

Conclusion

Now the message is over, but let me just tell you one or two or three things. Number one, if you're not saved, you get saved. Listen to me now. Don't put things off. Just listen. If you're not saved, you get saved. You're not going to make it without Jesus in this sex-saturated society. If you're not saved, you get saved! You get saved! You get saved!

If you are saved, you get Spirit-filled; because you can be saved and still go down. I've seen it happen, when people take Christ off the throne and start walking in the flesh. You get in the Word of God and get your information from God's Word.

Those of you who are not married, let that sex drive that you have lead you to seek a wife, lead you to seek a husband. You say, "Well, how am I going to find the right person?" I'll tell you how to find the right person. You be the right person. And when you are the right person, God can guide you to that right person, and God will guide that right person to you. Quit looking for Mr. Perfect and Miss Perfect, and you start being the right person; and God will bring that person to you.

If you have sin, if you have missed God's best, confess it. Repent of it. You say, "I've been married and divorced and remarried." Take what you have and give it to Jesus. You can't unscramble eggs. Give it to Him, put it beneath the blood, start now, and build a Christian home. He does forgive. He's a God of Grace. I want to tell you, God has a wonderful plan for your life. Don't miss it. Don't miss it.

Let's pray. Father, I want to thank You today for the wisdom of Your Word, and I pray, God, that You'll speak to our society, to many who will hear this message by tape, and Lord, to those who are in this room. But Lord God, give victory in Jesus, in whose name we pray. Amen.

The Peril of Pride

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: August 12, 1984

Main Scripture Text: Proverbs 6:16

“These six things doth the Lord hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood,”

PROVERBS 6:16–17

Outline

Introduction

- I. Pride Provokes Deity
- II. Pride Proves Depravity
- III. Pride Promotes Dissension
- IV. Pride Promotes Dishonor
- V. Price Precedes Destruction

Conclusion

Introduction

Now, today I want you to take your Bibles and turn to the Book of Proverbs. We’ve been preaching through Proverbs here for quite a while, and it looks like we’ll be here for another 500 years, because there is so much in the Book of Proverbs. And, today I want us to look in Proverbs chapter 6, and for our beginning verse, verse 16—Proverbs chapter 6 and verse 16. And, if you don’t have a Bible with you, they are in the pew rack before you. You probably will find a Bible, and would you turn to it, the Book Proverbs, just to the right of the Book of Psalms, fairly easy to find, almost in the middle of your Bible there. Just turn to it, please. All right, let’s begin reading in verse 16. *“These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: a proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, an heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, a false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren”* (Proverbs 6:16–19).

Now, today I want to speak to you on this subject: “The Peril of Pride.” By the way, I’d like to know whom I’m speaking to and how to direct the message. So, would you look up here? I want to ask you a question. How many of you have any difficulty with the problem of pride? Would you lift your hands please? All right, thank you. You’re the ones to whom I will be speaking, but not primarily. I’ll be speaking to the others who did not lift their hands, primarily.

We all, every one of us, every mother's child in this building, wrestles with pride. But, pride is a dangerous sin. I don't know of anything that is doing more to hold back revival, doing more to ruin and damn our nation, doing more to break up homes, doing more to blast lives, doing more to steal power from Christians, doing more to populate and fill that place called Hell, than the sin of pride. It is a damaging, destroying sin. But, it's such a deceptive sin. The people who are the proudest least admit that they are the proudest. And, many people think that they don't need to hear a sermon on pride. They say, "Well, my goodness, if there is one thing I don't need, it is a sermon on pride." As a matter of fact, they are quite proud of their humility. And, many of us have pride that is well hidden, but it is right there.

One man said to another man, as they were talking, "Well, at least there is one thing I don't have any difficulty with, and it's the sin of pride." And, the friend said, "Well, why should you have any difficulty with pride? You have nothing to be proud of." "Oh," he said, "Well, I have as much to be proud of as you do."

You see, all that pride is there incipient in all of us. What a deceitful sin it is! But, now we need to understand what pride is not, because we call many things today pride, and we use the word *pride* to describe things that are not really pride. For example, a good self-image is not pride. Self-esteem is not pride. As a matter of fact, you need that. You ought to have it, and I'm going to be speaking tonight on who we are in Christ. And, when you understand who you are in Christ, you are going to understand that God gives you a good self-image, and the grace of God exalts a man without inflating him, and debases a man without humiliating him. We are going to talk about that tonight. And so, pride is not having a good self-image.

Pride is not in receiving honors. These athletes were not necessarily proud, in the bad sense of the word, when they won a gold medal in the Olympics. They received that medal and had a sense of gratefulness and a sense of achievement. That's not the kind of pride that the Bible condemns, as we are going to see in a moment. As a matter of fact, the Bible speaks of giving honor to whom honor is due (Romans 13:7). And, when the Bible says that we are to honor someone, then certainly it is not a sin to receive honor. You're to honor your wife. The Bible teaches that we are to honor our wives (1 Peter 3:7). And so, when the man says to his wife, "Honey, I'm proud of you," if he means that in a sense that, "I'm giving you honor," that's fine. Or, the Bible says, for example, that a wife is to reverence her husband (Ephesians 5:33). It would be all right for her to say, "Honey, I'm proud of you," and give him a pat on the back. That's what most of us need. A woman is to a man what a wind is to a fire. She can fan it up or blow it out. And, we need you to encourage us, and God gave you to us.

So, it's all right to encourage people. And, sometimes we say, "I'm proud of you." And, sometimes that's what our children need, is a pat on the back and encouragement,

and to let them know that we are grateful for them.

I heard of one couple that had been married for about 60 years, and they were sitting around in front of a fire. And, he looked over at her, and he had sort of a romantic twinge. And so, she was hard of hearing because of the years, but he said, "I'm proud of you." She said, "Eh?" He said, "I'm proud of you." She said, "Eh?" He said, "I'm proud of you!" She said, "Yeah, and I'm tired to you too."

Well, it's all right, if you are proud of someone, to say that you are proud of them. When the Bible uses the term *pride*, it does not condemn doing a job well. You ought to do your work with pride. If you are sweeping a floor, you ought to sweep the corners. There is nothing wrong with, when you are dressing, to dress nicely. You are not humble, because you go around looking like an unmade bed. That's not a sign of humility. That's just sloppiness. We are to certainly take a certain amount of what the world calls *pride* in the way that we work, in the way that we dress, in the way that we do our job.

There is a good healthy self-respect that, not only does the Bible not condemn, the Bible literally encourages. And so, I want you to understand, when I'm talking about pride, I'm not talking about self-respect, I'm not talking about contentiousness, I'm not talking about giving or receiving honor when honor is due to be given, or honor is due to be received.

What is pride that the Bible so condemns? Number one: It is an attitude of independence from God. It is saying, "God, I don't need you. I can do it myself." This attitude, independence from God, is what the Bible calls pride. As that man wrote in that poem, "I am the captain of my soul; I am the master of my fate." I feel like saying, "Well, captain, your ship is about to sink." But, there are many who feel that they are self-sufficient without God. And, that self-sufficiency, that spirit of independence, apart from God is what the Bible calls pride.

And, that independence results in a sense of ingratitude, which is also one of the facets of pride. When a person has a base and an ungrateful spirit, then that individual is proud, because he does not acknowledge that God is who has given him all that he has. And, the Bible calls this attitude of independence, and this attitude of ungratefulness, pride. It causes us, therefore, to measure ourselves by one another and to esteem ourselves better than someone else. All of this is a matter of pride.

Now, let's just see if we can narrow the focus a little bit more and give you some tests for pride, some indications for pride. Let me ask you a question. Look up here. Does it irritate you when somebody corrects you for your faults? Nod your head. Now, pride says, "Don't nod your head now. Don't let anybody know that it irritates you when somebody corrects you for your mistakes." Do you find yourself accepting praise sometimes for things over which you have no control? That is, for natural abilities and

natural gifts, and things that God has given you, and things that God has bestowed upon you, and you receive that praise as unto yourself, rather than acknowledging the God who gave you that ability and passing that praise on to God. If you do, then you are proud.

For example, are you an individual who, when he does make a mistake, always has an alibi? Always has an excuse? Always justifies that mistake and excuses that mistake? It is just simply a form of pride. When somebody wrongs you, and somebody does something you don't like, do you ever say, "Well, I can get along without that individual; I don't need him"? Does that sense of self-sufficiency that you have, not needing, not wanting the other brother—do you recognize that as pride?

Do you find it difficult to seek counsel, to ask somebody else for advice? Are you the type of individual who other people say you don't even like to drive into a service station and ask directions? That's true. I just want to figure it out myself. And, I have to admit it, if it were anybody else, it would be a form of pride.

Do you have an ungrateful spirit, not accepting graciously what God has given to you, or perhaps grumbling for what God has not given to you, as though something is owed to you? That's pride.

Is your life a life that is marked by a sense of competition, and you measure success by victory over other people? You see, pride is not just simply wanting more for yourself; it is wanting more than somebody else has, this sense of competition, which shows that we think that somehow we really deserve more or are better than someone else.

Now, all of these things are indications of what I am talking about: that spirit of independence from God, that spirit of a lack of gratefulness, that spirit of competition that causes us to think of ourselves as somehow better than somebody else. It is a spirit that God hates. And, I want to talk to you today about "The Peril of Pride," and I want us to look here in the Book of Proverbs, and I want us to find five things in the Book of Proverbs that pride does. Then, I want us to see how we can deal with this matter of pride.

I. Pride Provokes Deity

The very first thing that pride does is pride provokes deity. Pride angers God. Look, if you will, in Proverbs chapter 6 and in verse 16 again: "*These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: a proud look,*"—dear friend, is the very first thing—"a proud look." According to this, you can sin by the very way you look. Some people can strut sitting down. A proud look: God hates it.

Then, I want you to see, if you will turn to Proverbs chapter 16 and verse 5 with me. And, by the way, we are going to go back and forth in the Book of Proverbs today—Proverbs chapter 16 and verse 5: "*Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to*

the LORD” (Proverbs 16:5). Did you see that? *“Everyone that is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD.”* That’s something. God hates it. It is abominable to God. Well, why? Why does God have this great antipathy, this hatred, this abomination of pride? It is because of what pride does. Now, pay attention. Did you know that if there had been no pride, there would have been no devil. It was pride that made the devil the devil. The devil, to begin with, was the most glorious being that God had ever created. The Bible says that, “he was full of wisdom and beauty; he sealed up the sum” (Ezekiel 28:12). God had never made anyone more exquisitely beautiful, more wise, more powerful than Lucifer, the son of the morning.

His name, Lucifer, means, “light bearer.” And, the Bible says, in the Book of Ezekiel, that he was perfect in all of the ways, until iniquity was found in him (Ezekiel 28:15). And, that iniquity was pride. And, the Bible makes it very clear that that iniquity was pride, because the Bible says, in 1 Timothy, concerning a new preacher or someone who would like to be a preacher, the Bible says, “Don’t let him be a novice,” that is, a newcomer, or someone without experience, someone who is not mature. Because, the Bible says, that if you do, “he may be lifted up with pride and fall into the condemnation of the devil” (1 Timothy 3:6). That is, the same thing may happen to him that happened to the devil. It was pride that made the devil the devil. It was pride that corrupted the most glorious creature that God ever created: the devil.

Not only was it pride that made the devil the devil, but it was pride that ruined the race. What was the bait on the hook that the devil used when he seduced Eve? It was this: “You will be like God” (Genesis 3:5). Now, she would not have done this just for a bite of a piece of fruit. It was more than the tantalizing taste of that particular fruit. Behind that was this tremendous pull, this tremendous pressure. He appealed to her and put pride in her heart. “You can be like God”—“You can be like God.” And, it was pride, therefore, that ruined the race, and because of that, it was pride that brought sin into the world.

And, every rape, every murder, every bit of pillage, every bit of dishonesty, every bit of cruelty, every bit of perversion, all suffering, all sorrow, all sin, you can say this: “Pride did that.” No pride: no devil. No devil: no fall. No fall: no sin. All rooted in pride—all rooted in pride. And, this is the reason the Bible says, *“These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him,”* and number one on the list is *“a proud look”* (Proverbs 6:16–17): because all of the other six come out of the first one; they all come out of the first one. Pride leads the parade. It is the basic sin. It is the sin that leads to all others sins. It is the sin of independence against God. It is wrapped up in not believing God. But, why do we not believe God? Because we think we know a better way—which is indeed pride.

And so, the very first thing I want you to see is that pride provokes deity. You

provoke God to anger when there is pride in your heart. It is not just that God will not help you; God literally becomes your adversary. The Bible says, “God resists the proud” (1 Peter 5:5). God stands and brings the whole universe against the proud man. He has God for an adversary. It provokes deity.

II. Pride Proves Depravity

Now, the second thing I want to say about pride is, it proves depravity—it proves depravity. Now, sometimes people don’t think they are sinners, because they don’t cuss, and they don’t chew, and they don’t go with the girls who do. And, they say, “Well, I’m all right. I don’t do this. I don’t steal, and I don’t kill, and I don’t lie, and I don’t murder.” But, they have a sin that is worse than all of that, and that is the pride that is in their heart.

Now, look, if you will, in Proverbs chapter 16 and verse 5: *“Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD”* (Proverbs 16:5). I mean, that’s just where it can be: in the heart. It never has to reach the hands or the feet. Just that pride in the heart is an abomination unto the Lord.

Look, if you will, in chapter 21 and in verse 4. Do you have it? Proverbs chapter 21 and verse 4: *“An high look, and a proud heart, and the plowing of the wicked, is sin.”* (Proverbs 21:4). That’s an amazing verse. *“A high look, and a proud heart, and the plowing of the wicked, is sin.”* Now, what do those have to do with one another? Well, you take a farmer who does not acknowledge God because he thinks he is self-sufficient, he doesn’t need God, and so he goes out and plows his field. Well, certainly he is not robbing a bank, he is not committing adultery, he is not practicing sodomy, he is not beating up on his neighbor, he is just plowing a field, but the Bible says that “the plowing of the wicked is sin.” Why? Because he has a proud heart, and because he has a proud heart, everything that he touches he contaminates. You see, the man, the farmer, that does not acknowledge that the soil has come from God, the farmer that does not acknowledge that the rain, the sun, comes from God, the farmer that does not acknowledge that it is God that causes that seed to grow and that he is absolutely utterly dependent upon God, is a proud man. And so, even when he plows his field, he sins.

You see, there are so many people: their greatest need is to see their need. They don’t realize that when God looks at a man, God doesn’t look as other men look. “Man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7). And, it is that pride in the heart that proves depravity. And, how did that pride get into their heart?

I was reading some months ago something very interesting. If you have an apple, and you look at that apple, and that apple has a wormhole in it, you might think, “Uh oh, I’d better be careful. There is a worm in that apple.” No, there is no worm in that apple.

That hole is not there so the worm could get in. That hole is there so the worm could get out. The worm did not bore into that apple; the worm bored his way out of that apple. The worm was already in the apple. You say, “Now, wait a minute, pastor. How did the worm get in the apple?” It was born in the apple. It was hatched in the apple. “Well, how did that happen?” Because the egg was laid in the blossom, the apple blossom. The apple blossom became an apple, and that worm was on the inside, and it ate its way out. And, the pride that is in your heart is there because it was born in your heart. And, you see, it’s what’s in your heart. When the worm comes to the surface, the worm was already there in your heart. And, you see, Jesus said, in Mark the seventh chapter, beginning about verse 18, that it’s not what goes into a man that defiles him—it’s not the worm that bores into him; it’s what comes out of a man that defiles him.” And then, Jesus said, “For out of the heart proceeds pride” (Mark 7:18–23).

We are all born as children of Adam and Eve with a predisposition to sin. We are all born egotists, which is just another word for pride and sin. We are born self-centered.

You can give a little baby a sack full of candy, more candy than that child can eat, and then you can say, “Now, that I’ve given you that candy, can I have a piece?” “No, it’s mine.” Isn’t that right? I mean, that’s the selfishness of a little child. When you were a little child, there in the nursery, something like this may have happened to you. You were surrounded with 15 toys, and you were playing with one of them, and not caring at all about the others, and then somebody came to visit your mother and put another baby on the floor, and that other baby went over there and picked up one of those toys that your weren’t playing with. You left your one toy, went over there and took the other toy, bopped him on the head, and took that one away from him, because you did not want him to have that toy. You wanted them all for yourself. Isn’t that right?

You see, pride is born in the heart of a man. It’s just like that worm in the heart of that apple, and it just comes to the surface, and it proves our depravity. And, there’s not a mother’s child, there’s not a person, who is not born egocentric. It is not something we learn; it is something we inherit. You don’t have to teach a child to be selfish. Not a person has ever taught a child to be selfish. You have to teach a child not to be selfish. Isn’t that true? Anybody who has ever raised children, you have to teach that child not to be selfish. By nature, we are selfish, egocentric. By nature, we all come into this world wanting to be our own little god, sitting upon the throne of our own little lives, worshiping at the shrine of our own ego.

III. Pride Promotes Dissension

Now, pride provokes deity. Pride proves depravity. The third thing I want to say about pride is, pride promotes dissension. Did you know there has never been a war, never been an argument, never been a fight, never been a scuffle, never been a disagreement

that turned into an argument, that somehow was not rooted in pride, that pride was not a part of it? Pride promotes dissension. Let me show you something. Turn to Proverbs chapter 13 and verse 10. Boy, here's a good one to mark: "*Only by pride cometh contention*" (Proverbs 13:10). Did you see that? "*Only by pride cometh contention.*" There has never been a war that pride was not the major factor. There has never been a church split but what pride was the major factor. There has never been a divorce but what pride was the major factor. There has never been an argument but what pride was the major factor.

You say, "Are you certain?" Well, the Bible says, "Only by pride comes contention." But, you say, "Well, no. We had genuine problems that weren't caused by pride." I'm not saying you didn't have problems. I'm saying it was pride that kept you from solving those problems. There are no problems too big to solve; only people too small to solve them. The reason that we have arguments as husband and wife is that we do not attack the problem; we attack one another. And, it is ego against ego. "Only by pride comes contention." Those problems can be solved.

What happens in a marriage is that a boy and girl decide to get married. We'll call the girl Mary and the boy James. But, Mary has not given her heart to Christ, and remember, I said she was born egocentric. She was born wanting to be a queen who sits upon the throne of her life. And, James, he's egocentric. He's self-centered, he's selfish, he's full of pride, and he's born wanting to be king in his own little kingdom. So, we have Queen Mary and King James. Now, Queen Mary and King James want to get married. Now, what happens is they move into a house trailer, or they move into an apartment, or they move into a palatial mansion, for that matter, but you've got two kingdoms under one roof. And, remember what Jesus said: "A house divided,"—what?—"it cannot stand" (Matthew 12:25; Mark 3:25; Luke 11:17).

Before long, there will be a war between those two kingdoms. It may be a cold war; they are not speaking. It may be a hot war, throwing a frying pan. But, after a while, a tragedy takes place that is called divorce—tragic indeed. Behind it all is pride. Now, suppose they had done this. Suppose one day Mary became convicted of her sin, aware of her pride and her selfishness—not that she was a terrible, horrible person; not that she was an adulteress; not that she was a thief—she just realizes that rather than being God-centered, she was self-centered. Rather than seeking the glory of God, she had been seeking the glory of self, she had been living for self, and she repents of that, and she dethrones self and enthrones Christ. She says, "Jesus, I recognize that You are Lord. Jesus, I recognize that You have every right to rule over my life. I yield my life. I yield my heart. I enthrone You, Lord Jesus." And, suppose James over here says, "I repent of my sin, Lord Jesus. I receive You. I enthrone You. I dethrone self." You see, when self is on the throne, Christ is on the cross. When Christ is on the throne, self is

on the cross. And so, “I dethrone self; I enthrone Christ.”

Mary does that. James does that. Then, Christ is on the throne of both lives, and the Jesus in Mary is not going to fight the Jesus in James. And, the Jesus in James is not going to fight the Jesus in Mary. Because you don't have two kingdoms, you have one Kingdom, one King who rules over all. And, therefore, when a problem comes up, it is not that Mary and James are not going to have any differences.

Boy, I'll guarantee you Joyce and I have a lot of differences. And, this is America. She has a right to be wrong. But, we have a lot of differences. I'd hate to be married to somebody I didn't differ with in some areas. How dull that would be! If you always agree, one of you is not thinking.

It doesn't mean that you cannot have differences, but it means, dear friend, that for those differences to be worked out pride has to be dealt with, and that you don't attack the other person. You finally come to the place where you can attack the problem. The Bible says, “Only by pride comes contention.” *The devil had rather start a church fuss than sell a bottle of whiskey any day.* Did you know that? Or open a porno shop, or anything else. And, if churches would just stay humble before the Lord and members of those church, and seek God's face, and be willing to subjugate ourselves, and submit ourselves unto the lordship of Christ, you will never have contention. You might have problems, but not contention—not contention.

IV. Pride Promotes Dishonor

All right now, listen. What have I said? I have said that pride provokes deity. It is an abomination to God, because of what it does. I have said that pride proves depravity. Any time a person has pride in his heart, it is there because it was born in him. It was incipient in him. And, Jesus said, “It is what comes out of his heart that defiles him.” I said, thirdly, that pride produces dissension. If we are not right with God, it is no wonder that we cannot be right with one another. Now, fourthly, pride promotes dishonor—pride promotes dishonor. Let me tell you something that has irony in it. Do you know what the proud man wants? The proud man wants the acclaim of other people. The reason that he wants it is because he is proud. He wants honor.

And, did you know there is nothing wrong with having honor, because the Bible says we are to give honor to whom honor is due. And God says, “*Them that honour me, I will honour*” (1 Samuel 2:30). But the sad thing, the terrible thing, is that the proud man who wants it so much is the man who ultimately loses it.

Let me show you what I'm talking about. Turn to Proverbs chapter 11 and verse 2. Look at it: “*When pride cometh, then cometh shame*” (Proverbs 11:2). As night follows day, shame follows pride. Or, let me show you another verse. Look, if you will, in Proverbs chapter 15 and verse 33: “*The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom;*

and before honour is humility” (Proverbs 15:33). That verse tells us how to have honor, so we know it’s not wrong to be honored. It’s not wrong to have honor. The Bible says, “Give honor to whom honor is due” (Romans 13:7). But before honor is humility. Before shame is pride. Pride produces dishonor. Look in Proverbs chapter 18 and verse 12. Look at it: *“Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, and before honour is humility”* (Proverbs 18:12). God just keeps saying it, doesn’t He? Look in chapter 29, verse 23—the same thing. Look at it: *“A man’s pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit”* (Proverbs 29:23).

Over and over the Bible tells us that pride promotes dishonor. And, I say, do you know why people are proud and they live in such a prideful way? They are wanting honor—they are wanting honor. And, that’s the very thing they don’t get. Have you ever been around a conceited person? You know, a person that reeks with conceit? Somebody has said that conceit is a disease that makes everybody sick, except the one who has it. But, actually, really, he’s the sickest of all. And, this proud person, this conceited person, who thinks, by all of his actions and his prideful ways, that he is going to somehow gain the admiration of people, loses the very thing that he wants. Pride doesn’t bring honor. It brings shame. It promotes dishonor.

Think of that policeman out there in Los Angeles when the Olympians were packing up and going home. The one, you remember, that hid the bomb on the bus and then later pretended to find it, so he could be a what? A hero. Everybody else was winning medals out there. Why, he wanted to be a hero. He sat there in front of the television and watched those flags raised and those medals hung around people’s necks. And, he said, “I need to be somebody important. I need to be a hero.” Do you think there is anybody in America today who has more shame than that man? Can you imagine that neighborhood where he lives? Can you imagine even having to cut your grass? “That’s the guy”—“That’s the guy.”

Can you imagine that man if he goes back to work, if he ever gets back to work, out of jail, or whatever they are going to do to him? Can you imagine? Why, he’ll probably want to move to another city. Probably would like to change his name. He hopes that the name Jim Pierson is not mentioned in this sermon. You see, look. The very thing that he sought he got. Why? Because there is a fundamental rule in life, that the way up is down. Jesus said, *“Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted”* (Matthew 23:12). There is just simply a principle in life.

Now, let me show you something. You are in the Book of Proverbs. Let me give you a good example of this. Turn, if you want, to Isaiah the fourteenth chapter—Isaiah chapter 14. Just turn right a little bit, and you’ll come to it. Now, let me begin reading here with you in verse 12. And, in Isaiah chapter 14, verse 12, God asked a rhetorical question. Here is the question. How did the devil become the devil? Are you ready for

it? Look up: *“How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer,”*—that is, “What happened to you, Lucifer”—*“son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!”* I mean, what has happened to you? What has made you what you are? Well, He answers the rhetorical question in verses 13 and 14: *“For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High”* (Isaiah 14:12–14). That is, “I’m too beautiful, I’m too wise, I’m too cunning, I’m too strong, I’m too mighty, to be anything less than God. I’m going to be like God. I’m going to be like the most High.” That is, he exalted himself.

Now, what was he seeking? He was seeking praise. He was seeking admiration. He was seeking adulation. He was seeking honor. He was seeking fame. But, continue to read. Look. Verse 15—put a circle around the word *yet*: *“Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.”* He said, “I’m going to go as high as You could go.” God says, “You are going as low as one can go.” *“They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee...”*—the word *narrowly* means, they are going to look “carefully” upon you; they are going to “scrutinize” you; they are going to observe you “carefully.” *“They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, and consider thee, saying, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms; that made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof; that opened not the house of his prisoners?”* (Isaiah 14:15-17).

That is, one day, in the ages to come, the devil is going to be put on exhibit. And, all of the created hosts are going to come, and all of the people of the saints of the ages. And, God is going to save. And, down in the pit, squirming like a worm in hot ashes, in humiliation, in shame, in ignominious defeat, will be the devil. And, when you look at the devil that everybody has quaked before, the devil that caused so much destruction, the devil in all of his arrogance, the devil in his rebellion, when you see that devil, when you see ultimately all that is going to happen to him, you are going to say, “You mean, that’s him? That’s the devil? Is this the one that made the nations to tremble? That thing down there? That lowest of the low? That is him?” Yes, that is him.

You see, listen. Pride brings shame. How humiliating when they narrowly look upon him! But, on the other hand, Satan said, “I will ascend.” There was one whose name was Jesus, who said, “I will descend.” And, the Bible says, *“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above*

every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:5–11).

You better make up your mind which lifestyle you are going to follow. You can take the prideful way of the devil, if you want to. But, I’m telling you, that way is down. You can take the way of Jesus Christ, the way of true humility, and the way of true submission, and I’m telling you, that way is up. Pride produces dishonor. And, you can strut now, if you want. *Most of the people in America are egomaniacs strutting their way into Hell, thinking they are too good to be damned.* Pride will bring you low. It always has. It always will.

V. Price Precedes Destruction

That brings me to the last point, very quickly: Pride precedes destruction—pride precedes destruction. Turn back again to the Book of Proverbs, if you would, with me, and let’s look very quickly at some verses. I want you to look at Proverbs chapter 15 and verse 25. All right, verse 25: *“The LORD will destroy the house of the proud”* (Proverbs 15:25). Do you see that? Look, if you will, in Proverbs 16, verse 18: *“Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall”* (Proverbs 16:18). Look in Proverbs chapter 18 and verse 12: *“Before destruction the heart of man is haughty”* (Proverbs 18:12).

What are all these verses telling us? They are telling us that pride precedes destruction. It is not just that a man is going to be humiliated; he is ultimately going to be destroyed. Why? I’ve already told you. God hates pride. God resists the proud. God sets Himself in battle array against the proud. Pride produces national ruin. Our nation will come to naught, unless we repent. And, it is the repentance of humiliation that He is looking for. For He says, *“If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray...then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land”* (2 Chronicles 7:14). Pride will produce domestic ruin. Homes become battlegrounds because of pride. Pride produces financial ruin. Do you know why many people are in financial bondage? Because of pride. They are buying things they don’t need with money they don’t have to impress people they don’t like. The reason we get in trouble is because our neighbors keep buying things we can’t afford. Isn’t that right? And, we are trying to keep up. It is wanting more than somebody else.

Pride produces emotional ruin. Do you know what pride will do? It will ruin you emotionally, because it will make you a slave to the opinions of other people. You’ve got to have the right alligator on your shirt. You’ve got to have the right emblem sewed on the hip pocket of your jeans, you see. That’s a form of slavery that will never be satisfied. It will ruin you emotionally. But, pride brings eternal ruin. I mean, that soul is

going to be destroyed in Hell because of pride.

Jesus told of two men who went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee, the other a publican. The Pharisee was a self-righteous person. But, his religion was only a cosmetic that covered a hard, hateful, prideful heart. He prayed, and he said, “Father, I thank You that I’m not as other men are. I tithe. I fast. I fast twice a week. I pay tithes of all that I possess. I’m not a thief. I’m not an extortionist, even as that man over there.” He pointed at that poor publican over there, that tax collector down on the floor. And, he strutted in the face of God. That other man, that man who was a deep sinner beat himself upon the chest. The Bible says, “He smote himself upon the chest. He bowed his head. He would not even so much as lift his eyes to Heaven. And, he prayed, and he said, “*God be merciful to me a sinner.*” Literally, the Greek says, “God, be merciful to me, *the sinner*”—“*the sinner.*” He recognized that he was the sinner of sinners. And, Jesus said, “I tell you”—“I tell you”—“that this man, the one who said, ‘*God be merciful to me a sinner,*’ went home justified rather than the other” (Luke 18:10–14). Two men went home from church that day. One went home dignified; another man went home justified.

Conclusion

Now, the devil is going to say to you, “Keep your dignity. Don’t admit your need of the Lord.” But, I want to tell you, dear friend, that until you admit your need of the Lord you will never be saved. “Well,” you say, “I’m not all that bad.” I’m telling you that pride is a matter of the heart. This man said, “Lord, I thank You that I’m not as other men are.” He was comparing himself with other men. He should have had his eyes upon the Lord. When Job saw the Lord, he said, “*I abhor myself*” (Job 42:6). When Isaiah saw the Lord, he said, “*Woe is me!*” (Isaiah 6:5). When Peter saw the Lord, he said, “Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man” (Luke 5:8). When Daniel saw the Lord, he said, “My comeliness is turned to corruption” (Daniel 10:8).

*When I survey the wondrous cross,
On which the prince of glory died;
My richest gain I count but loss,
and pour contempt on all my pride.*

—ISAAC WATTS

Stop comparing yourself with other people, and compare yourself with the Lord Jesus. And, I want to tell you today, *there is none so bad he cannot be saved; there is none so good he need not be saved.* Do you know what happens when a preacher stands in a service like this and gives an invitation? The devil says, “Don’t you go down there and make a fool of yourself. Don’t you admit that you have a need of God. Don’t confess your sinnership. Stonewall it.” And so, that sinner walks out of church bound in

the chains of pride forged on the anvil of a hard heart. There are some of you in this building who have been members of Bellevue for a long time, but you are lost as you can be. And, you will probably stay lost and go to Hell, and I'll tell you why: because you do not want to admit that you have been a lost church member. You say, "What would people think?"—"What would people think?" You are so concerned with what people think. And, it is pride that precedes destruction. A haughty spirit goes before a fall. Rather than admit your need before the Lord, rather than humble yourself before the Lord, you'd rather have spiritual destruction.

You say, "Well, I'm not all that bad." Friend, if you were to take the four billion people—four billion-plus people—upon the face of the earth, and add to them all of the people that have died since Adam, and then compound that by all of the people who will yet come into being before time comes to an end, and if you were to put all of them in one place and then extract from every one of those individual the very best attribute from each one of those individuals, and take all of those attributes and put them in one man, that one man would still have to kneel and pray, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner." Did you know that? Listen. Listen. *The worst form of badness is human goodness when that human goodness becomes a substitute for the new birth.* The reason that some people are destroyed, and destroyed forever, is because of pride. Listen. I've given enough invitations. I've watched people. I've seen that pride will sit down in the seat beside a person and say, "Don't you go down there and make a fool of yourself. Don't you admit your need. Do not confess that you need the Lord." But, I'm telling you, dear friend, the Bible says, "God resists the proud, but he gives grace to the humble" (1 Peter 5:5). What we need today is God's grace. Pride precedes destruction—pride precedes destruction. It is pride, not unbelief, that keeps many from coming to the gospel. It is not that they do not believe the gospel. There are many sitting in this building, but pride will keep them, not only today, but the next Sunday and for all eternity, from Jesus Christ. "He that exalteth himself shall be abased, but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke 14:11; Luke 18:14). Would you come and say to the Lord, "Lord, in my hand no price I bring; simply to thy cross I cling"? Would you say, "Lord, I lay my spiritual and intellectual pride in the dust, and I just yield myself unto you"?

Why God Hates Pride

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: October 28, 1990

Main Scripture Text: Proverbs 6:16

“Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord...”

PROVERBS 16:5

Outline

Introduction

I. Pride Causes Dissension

II. Pride Brings Destruction

Conclusion

Introduction

Why God hates pride. All right. Proverbs chapter 6 and verse 16, turn to it. “These six things doeth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him. These six things doeth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him.” And then look at the first one on the list – a proud look! Now it doesn’t even say a proud heart; just a proud look.

You know, some folks just look proud. Some folks can strut sitting down, can’t they? God says God hates any, anything that even looks haughty, that looks proud. God just doesn’t disavow it; He hates it. And not only does He hate it; it is an abomination unto Him. Well, if God feels that way about pride, I think it’s time that we understood what pride is and why God feels that way.

Now by way of review, remember that I told you that pride is not having self-esteem. The Bible teaches us to have self-esteem. We’re to love others as we love ourselves. And if we don’t love ourselves, we can’t love other people. Pride is not doing a job well. You ought to do a job well. And if you sweep a room, you ought to sweep the corners. No, that’s not what the Bible condemns. What the Bible condemns is a spirit of independence from God. That’s what pride is, a spirit of independence from God and, therefore a spirit of ungratefulness to God and, therefore, along with that, the feeling that somehow, someway we are better than other people because we may have gifts and abilities, opportunities and proclivities that they may not have. But what do we have that we’ve not received? “For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things.” Now pride is not thinking lowly of yourself. It is not thinking of yourself. It is so being in love

with Jesus that you're in love with others because you know who you are in the Lord Jesus. Now Proverbs chapter 16 and verse 5. Would you look at it. "Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the *LORD*" Now why is this? Well, you have to understand, dear friend, where pride came from. Pride first found its lodging in the heart of Satan. One day, Satan, who was the most glorious creature that God ever created, said within himself something like this: "I am too majestic, I am too glorious, I am too wise, I am too powerful to be anything different than the Almighty." He said, "I will exalt my throne above the stars of God. I will sit also in the congregation on the sides of the north. I will be like the Most High." And it was pride, the Bible tells us, that made him feel that way. As a matter of fact, don't turn to this Scripture, but in 1 Timothy chapter 3, verse 6, God says that a young preacher is not to be a novice, lest being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil. And that verse tells us it was the pride that made the devil the devil. Now God so hates this pride because it has found lodging in human hearts. Notice verse 5: "Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the *LORD*...." And that's exactly where pride lodges today. Turn to, to Mark chapter 7, and you may turn to this one, and I want you just to, to mark it. Mark chapter 7 and look in verse 21. Jesus said, "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy (now listen to the next one), pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and defile the man."

You see, pride is an inside job. You were born with pride in your heart. When you were a child, you were filled with pride. You say, "Little children don't have pride." Oh, don't you kid yourselves. When you were a little baby, you were sitting there in the nursery. You had about 25 toys on the floor. You were playing with one of them. The neighbor came over and to visit your mother and brought little Throckmorton and set little Throckmorton down there on the floor. And there you are and there's Throckmorton. And Throckmorton picked up a toy and started to play with it. Do you know what you did? You left the toy that you were playing with, went over there and bopped Throckmorton on the head, and took away the toy from him because you did not want him to have it. You were prideful in nature and selfish in nature when you were a little child and before you could talk. It's an incredible thing that pride is in the human heart. And God hates this sin of pride because of what it does. Now I want to just check up and see if you do really have a problem with pride. Do you become irritated when you're corrected for mistakes? Do you? Oh. Do you accept praise for things over which you have no control, like your appearance or your intelligence or your talents? Well, I ask you, what do you have that you've not received? Do you find it hard for you to admit mistakes when you make them? When somebody irritates you, do you just say, "Well, I can get along without them?" Just cut them off. Do you find it difficult to seek counsel?

You're having problems in your marriage, but you're too proud to talk to anyone about it. Do you find in your heart an ungrateful spirit? Do you find yourself in competition with other people? You're happy with what you have until you see someone else who has a house nicer than you have or furniture nicer than you have or an automobile nicer than you have or took a better vacation than you took. And suddenly you're unhappy because they have more. All of these things come out of the human heart, and they're so unlike the Savior. Now let me tell you about this pride that God hates.

I. Pride Causes Dissension

There's nothing that causes disfellowship in a church more than pride. There's nothing that promotes dissension in the home more than pride. Turn with me to Proverbs chapter 13 and look, if you will, in verse 10. The Bible says here in verse 10, "Only (underscore the word only), only by pride cometh contention..." Do you know what contention is? That's squabbling. That's fussing. Now listen to me. If Proverbs is correct, and I'm certain it is, that the only way that anyone has ever had an argument has been because of pride. No nation has ever gone to war, or at least no, no one has ever begun a war, except by pride. There's never been a divorce except by pride. Never been a church split except by pride. "Only by pride cometh contention..." I don't mean necessarily that both parties in a war are guilty. I don't necessarily mean that everybody in a church split is guilty of pride. I don't mean that when a marriage can't get along that both partners are guilty of pride. But pride entered into it somewhere. In one party's heart somehow, somewhere there was pride, for the Bible says, "Only by pride cometh dissension..." Now is there any dissension in your home? You say, "None." Well, I'm very happy to hear that. I wonder if we could get your children to come up here and give a testimony tonight and, ah, and tell us whether or not that is true. "Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised is wisdom." And the best advice I can tell you tonight is to treat pride like pride will treat you. You know, it's so hard.

Now sometimes Joyce and I will have dissension. We'll have a discussion. She'll take one side and I'll take the other. And sometimes the air will get thick. (Clap hands). And I say, "Well, Joyce, you're wrong." And she'll say, "Adrian, I'm not wrong. You're wrong. But I can't prove it because you can out-argue me, but I know you're wrong." I say, "No, I'm not wrong. You're wrong." So I just walk out and I'll go to the study to prepare a sermon. And I'll sit there and the page just blurs. I say, "Well, I won't read the Bible. I'll read a magazine." And I'll read that and God says, "Adrian, I want to talk to you." "Yes, Lord." "Adrian, you were wrong." I say, "No, Lord, I wasn't wrong. She was wrong." He says, "No, Adrian, you were wrong. And besides that, it is your rotten pride that makes you try to prove you're right." "Well, yes, Lord, what should I do?" "Go to Joyce and tell her you were wrong." Now, folks, that is H-A-R-D, hard. It's easier to say

we were both wrong, or I was misunderstood, or we didn't understand one another. But just simply to go and say, 'I was wrong,' there's something about that, dear friend, that's very hard but very wonderful, because when you do that, you know what happens next? She says, "Well, that's okay. I forgive you." And my arms go around her, and her arms go around me, and, and we kiss and hug and laugh. That's so much better. That's so much better.

Why is it so hard to admit when we're wrong? I'll tell you why. Pride. "Only by pride cometh contention..." And, you know, the strange thing about pride is – do you know why people are, are full of pride? Because we want to be big shots. I mean, we want people to look up to us. We want to rule to roost. We want honor. But the incredible thing is, the irony of the thing is the very thing that we want is the thing that we lose through pride. Look in Proverbs chapter 11 and verse 2: "When pride cometh, then cometh shame..." Here we are wanting to be hot shots through pride, and what do we get? Shame. The same thing is taught in Proverbs 15, verse 33. Look at that. Proverbs 15 and verse 33: "The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom; and before honor is humility." Who doesn't want to be honored? I do. Well, how am I going to be honored? The only way I can be honored is through humility. Jesus said, "He who would be chief among you, let him be your servant." Look in Proverbs chapter 18 and verse 12: "Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, and before honor is humility." Look in Proverbs chapter 29 and verse 23: "A man's pride shall bring him low..." You know, Jesus taught us that. The way up is down. The way down is up. That's a paradox. "Whosoever exalts himself shall be abased; whoever will abase himself, the same shall be exalted." You remember I told you it was pride that made the devil the devil? Turn to Isaiah 14. I want to show you something really wonderful. Isaiah chapter 14 here. And, ah, here's, here's what's going to happen to the devil, and it just, it just, oh, it just, it just thrills me to think about it. Isaiah 14. Now here's this hot shot called Satan. And I want you to see, ah, what he has done in, in, ah, verse 12: "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!..." Now Lucifer means "bright one." He was Lucifer, the son of the morning before he became Satan, the father of the night. "...how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also on the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High." Now notice, "I will, I will, I will." He was saying to God, "Not Thy will, but mine be done." "I will, I will, I will ascend. I will ascend." What did Jesus say? Jesus said, "Not My will, Thine be done." That's humility. Satan said, "I will ascend." Jesus said, "I will (what?) descend." Jesus left heaven and came to earth. Satan tries to ascend into heaven, but Jesus made Himself of no reputation. All right. Now watch what happens here. Satan says, "I will ascend." But notice in verse 15: "Yet

thou shalt be brought down to hell...” Now notice. From heaven to earth to hell. “Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.” The deepest part of hell, the pit. “They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee...” What does that mean? They’re going to squint. I mean, they’re, they’re going to look, squint their eyes, and consider thee. They’re going to stroke the chin. There’s coming a time when Satan is going to be put on display. And there is, like a worm in hot ashes, there he is in the lowest part of hell, and people are going to look at him. They’re going to consider him, and this is what they’re going to say. It’s, it’s just such an amazing thing. When they see him there, this is what they are going to say, “...Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake nations; that made the world a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof; and that opened not the house of all his prisoners?” You mean that’s him, that thing, that ignominious, pitiful creature in hell, in the lowest part of hell? That is Satan, the one who romped through the earth and made havoc of the universe; the one who said, “I will exalt my throne above the stars of God.” That’s him? Ha! The very thing he sought was the thing he lost, yet Jesus, “Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; humbled himself and made himself of no reputation, took upon him the form of a servant. Being found in fashion as a servant, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” You remember the rest of it? “Wherefore also, God hath highly exalted him and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow. Things in heaven, things in earth, and things under the earth.” That’s old Lucifer himself – things under the earth. “...and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is, is Lord to the glory of God the Father.”

II. Pride Brings Destruction

Now, friend, let me tell you something. Pride will get you nowhere. Before honor, there is humility. And learn a lesson from Satan. And, by the way, the next time Satan reminds you of your past, you remind him of his future; friend, where he is headed because of this thing called pride. You see, the Bible says that pride brings destruction. Proverbs chapter 15 and verse 25. Look at that verse. Proverbs chapter 15 and verse 25. The Bible says, “The LORD will destroy the house of the proud...” Look in Proverbs chapter 16 and verse 18: “Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.” Look in Proverbs chapter 18 and verse 12: “Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, and before honor is humility.” The seeds of destruction are in pride. Did you know that when you get proud, you’re a sitting duck for the devil? When you humble yourself, God’s grace moves into your life. And do you know what grace is? Grace is the desire and the ability to do the will of God. You can’t do the will of God unless you desire to do it. And you won’t desire to do it until God puts that desire in your heart. But

even if you desire it, you couldn't do it without the power of God. Grace is the, is the desire and the power to do the will of God. But when you are proud, the Bible says that you don't get that grace. Listen to 1 Peter 5, verse 5. The Bible says, "Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and He giveth grace to the humble." Now not only will God not help you; God becomes your adversary. God becomes your enemy. God is your resister when you're proud. You say, "I wonder why things don't work out for me. I wonder why it is that I have so much difficulty in life." Well, dear friend, God resists the proud. He gives grace to the humble - the desire and the ability to do the will of God. Therefore, the Bible says that we are to humble ourselves before the Lord.

Conclusion

Now our nation needs to humble itself. Our churches need to humble themselves. You need to humble yourself. I need to humble myself. Do you know why we take the Lord's Supper? The Lord's Supper is in remembrance; that is, the Lord's Supper is to make graphic to us in emblem and symbol and substance the death, burial, the suffering, the passion, the sacrifice of Jesus.

And dear friends, when you tonight see such love, such, grace, oh, how it ought to humble your heart.

*Blessed Redeemer
Precious Redeemer
Seems now I see Him on Calvary's Tree
Wounded and bleeding
For Sinner's pleading
Blind and unheeding
He was dying for me*
—AVIS M. CHRISTIANSEN

You know the one true cure for pride is to see the Lord. When Isaiah saw the Lord high and lifted up he said, "Woe is me for I am undone." When Job had a vision of the holiness of God, he said, "I Abhor myself." When Simon Peter had an insight into the deity and the majesty of the Lord, he said, "Depart from me Lord, for I am a sinful man!" When Daniel saw the Lord. He said, "My comeliness was turned into corruption." That is, "I no longer felt so handsome. I realized what I was." My prayer tonight is that we'll humble our hearts as we see the King in His beauty.

God's Miracle Medicine

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: July 8, 1994

Main Scripture Text: Proverbs 12:25; 15:13–15

*“A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance: but
by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken.”*

PROVERBS 15:13

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Misery of a Heavy Heart
 - A. It Burdens the Soul
 - B. It Breaks the Spirit
 - C. It Buries the Body
- II. The Mastery of a Happy Heart
 - A. The Seat of That Joy
 - B. The Source of That Joy
 - C. The Strength of That Joy
 - D. The Stability of That Joy
- III. The Ministry of a Healthy Heart
 - A. This Joy Should Be Sought
 - B. This Joy Should Be Seen
 - C. This Joy Should Be Shared

Conclusion

Introduction

I want you to take your Bibles now, this morning, and turn, if you will to the book of Proverbs, chapter 12. And let's look at verse 25, for the first of three passages that we're going to look at this morning, in the book of Proverbs, chapter 12, and verse 25.

“Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop: but a good word maketh it glad.”

And then turn, if you will, please, to Proverbs, chapter 15, verses 13 through 15: “A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance: but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken. (14) The heart of him that hath understanding seeketh knowledge: but the mouth of fools feedeth on foolishness. (15) all the days of the afflicted are evil: but he that is of a merry heart hath a continual feast.” And then, turn, please, to chapter 17 and verse 22. And here is the key verse, the one we're going to use primarily for our text: “A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones.”

I want to speak to you today on this subject, “God’s Miracle Medicine.” “God’s Miracle Medicine.” I spent late last night going through a very thick-spined volume in my library written by Doctor Schindler. Doctor Schindler is a medical doctor, and most of the book dealt with this sickness that many people have. And he calls the sickness by these initials — E.I.I. And I wonder if you have it today? And what E.I.I. is Emotionally Induced Illness. That is, people are sick physically, but their emotions have made them ill.

And doctor Schindler went on to say—and he’s a very renowned doctor, head of his department in a medical department—that fifty percent of the people who are treated by physicians are there because of E.I.I. Fifty percent! That is, you could go down to the hospital and say every other bed is there because of E.I.I.!

And Doctor Schindler, in order to back up what he said, did some investigation with some very well known and renowned clinics. And I remember reading last night in that book where he quoted what happened in Oschner Clinic, down in Oschner Clinic in New Orleans. Many of you have heard of the famous Oschner Clinic. They tested five hundred consecutive patients—patients who had come in there with gastro-intestinal problems. Five hundred in a row and after they examined them, they concluded, in the famous Oschner Clinic, seventy-four percent of those patients had E.I.I.—emotionally induced illness.

They did another study in the outpatient department of the Yale University Medical School – the Medical Department at Yale University, the Outpatient Department. And they concluded that seventy—six percent of those coming to that department had E.I.I.—Emotionally Induced Ailments, and illness. And this renowned doctor, who’d written this is large book that I only had time to skim last night, said that one of the problems is when a person comes to the doctor and he has E.I.I. and the doctor knows it, many times he’s afraid to tell the patient because the patient will get angry when you say that he has an emotionally induced illness and he’ll want another doctor! Hard for him to admit that he has E.I.I.

Huh, huh and then he went on to estimate, and this is just an estimate, but after all, it’s an educated guess of the percentages of those who have different illnesses, who are really suffering from E.I.I. For example, if you have a pain, a stiffness, in the back of the neck, he, he suggested and estimated that seventy—five percent of that is E.I.I. If you have a lump in the throat, and difficulty swallowing, he estimates that ninety percent of that is E.I.I. And, also, like pain in the stomach—fifty percent of that, at least, is E.I.I. Gas and bloating—he said ninety-nine and forty-four one hundredth percent of that is E.I.I. Dizziness—eighty percent! Headaches—eighty percent! Ah, here’s one, tiredness—ninety percent E.I.I.

Well, I want to give you a little G.M.M.—“God’s miracle medicine”! Find out what God has to say about this: that “a merry heart doeth good like a medicine.”

Ole Ponce de Leon, the Spaniard, came to Florida, many years ago, seeking the fountain of youth. We have a little city near where I went to school called Ponce de Leon, named in honor of the Spaniard. He never found the fountain of youth. He should have looked in the book of Proverbs. God had to say right there in Proverbs “a merry heart doeth good like a medicine.”

A Christian without joy, a joyless Christian, is a contradiction in terms. Someone has well said that “a religion that wears grave clothes ought to be buried.” I say, “Amen,” to that. Now, let’s talk a little bit about “God’s Miracle Medicine”—“a merry heart that doeth good like a medicine.”

I. The Misery of a Heavy Heart

First of all, I want you to think with me about the misery of a heavy heart — the misery of a heavy heart. Go back and look again, if you will, in Proverbs, chapter 12, in verse 25.

A. It Burdens the Soul

Did you know that the Bible speaks of what we call a “heavy heart”? Proverbs, chapter 12, and verse 25: “heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop: but a good word maketh it glad.” “Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it to stoop.” That means that misery burdens the soul. It bows down the heart. It makes it to stoop. We go around bent over emotionally! Heaviness in the heart of a man makes the heart to stoop. Not just the body, but the heart is bowed down with a load of care! And many of you, today, have a heart that is bowed down, a heart that is stooping, because you’re carrying a load of misery, and heartache, and grief. And it’s bowing you down. And you were never meant to carry that load.

Many of you remember the old story that has frequently been told about the man who had a heavy sack of grain on his shoulder, walking down the road on a hot day. And a man came along in a wagon, an old buckboard, pulled by a horse, and pulled over and said, “Hey, it’s too hot for you to be walking like that! Climb on up here in the wagon. I’ll give you a lift.”

And the man with the load of grain on his shoulder climbed up in the wagon and sat down. And after a while the fellow who had the reins in his hands looked over and said, “my goodness, sir, set that load down! Put that grain down and relax!” “Oh, no,” he said, “it’s enough to ask you to give me a ride, without your carrying this, too.” Well, we say that’s, that’s kind of ridiculous, isn’t it? Well, of course, it is.

But, my friend, listen. Some of you have gotten in the wagon with Jesus for salvation, but you’ve never set the load down, have you? You say, “Lord, I can trust You to save me, but I just can’t trust you to carry this load.” But the Bible says, “Cast your burden upon the Lord. He will sustain thee.” (Psalm 55:22). “Take your burdens to the Lord,” the old song says, “and leave them there.”

B. It Breaks the Spirit

What is the misery of a heavy heart? Well, number one: it burdens the soul. Number two: it breaks the spirit. Look in Proverbs, chapter 15, and look in verse 13: “a merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance, But by sorrow of the heart, the spirit is broken.” Have you ever seen a person with a broken spirit? Do you know what the spirit is? The spirit is that innermost part of a person. The spirit is the well-springs of life! That is the deepest part. Now, it’s one thing to burden a soul. It’s yet another thing to break the spirit. You can have a burdened soul and get over it. But, oh, when it breaks your spirit, you’re in trouble.

Have you ever seen a person with a broken spirit, when the light goes out of the eyes, when the spark dies, when the enthusiasm and the zest and the fight, it goes? And there’s nothing left but the shell of a person? The spirit is broken. I’ve seen them that way.

Douglas MacArthur, general Douglas MacArthur, is one of my heroes. Let me talk to you about what MacArthur had to say. He kept these words on his wall in his office. Listen. He said, “Youth is not a, a time of life. It is a state of mind. It is not a matter of red cheeks, red lips and supple knees. It is a temper of the will, a quality of the imagination, a vigor of the emotion. It is a freshness of the deep springs of life.”

And then he went on to say, “youth means a temperamental predominance of courage over timidity, of the appetite for adventure over a life of ease.” Then he said, “This often exists in a man of fifty more than in a boy of twenty. Nobody grows old by merely living a number of years. People grow old by deserting their ideals. Years may wrinkle the skin, but to give up enthusiasm wrinkles the soul. Worry, doubt, self-distrust, fear and despair, these are the long, long, long years that bow the head and turn the growing spirit back to dust.”

And then the great general said, “You are as young as your faith, as old as your doubt; as young as your self-confidence, as old as your fears; as young as your hope, as old as your despair.”

C. It Buries the Body

Now, what, what is the misery, what is the misery of a heavy heart? Why it, it, it burdens the soul. It breaks the spirit. It buries the body—eventually. Look, if you will, in chapter 17, and look again in verse 22, “a merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit dries the bones.” Now, have you seen it? “A heavy heart breaks the spirit,” and “a broken spirit dries the bones.” Do you see it? The soul affects the spirit, and the spirit affects the body. And the body, now, begins to wither, and the body begins to decay. And we get ill, because of what happens. And, eventually, this body will die, not because of the hardening of the arteries, but because of the hardening of the attitudes. And it dries the bones. The entire body is affected. People have E.I.I., Emotionally

Induced Illness – psychosomatic sickness!

Frederick II ruled over Sicily in the thirteenth century. It's back before the days of modern psychology. And he wondered what kind of language children would speak if those children were just left to themselves, and nobody taught them to speak any language. Being a despot, he, he decided he'd perform a, an experiment. So he took certain newborn babies, took them from their original parents, and put them in foster homes with this instruction—nobody was to speak one word to those babies. They were not to hear one sound!

He wanted to see what kind of language they would speak if nobody spoke to them. He never found out, because within a year every one of those babies died. Everyone! E.I.I.

After World War II in Germany, another experiment, not quite as harsh, but harsh indeed. And I don't recommend it at all. But they took a hundred children who were orphans. They put fifty of those children in one orphanage, fifty in another. In the one orphanage, they gave those children love and happiness and conviviality and joy and games. And in the other orphanage, nothing but sternness and discipline — no happiness, no laughter, no fun, no games, no joy.

They all had the same heat. They all had the same cooling. They all had the same housing. They all had the same clothes. They all had the same exercise. They all had the same food. But after a year, the children where the joy and the happiness were, were two inches on an average taller than the other children — and several pounds heavier. And the other group had far more disease and sickness. E.I.I. “a merry heart doeth good like a medicine.”

But what, what is the misery of a heavy heart? I want to tell you, dear friend, it burdens the soul. It breaks the spirit. It buries the body! Many people are going to die prematurely, because they do not understand “God's Miracle Medicine.

II. The Mastery of a Happy Heart

Now, secondly, I want you to notice not only what I call the misery of a heavy heart, but the mastery of a happy heart. Now, God has given us something to master that misery. God has given us something as medicine for the soul, the spirit, and the body. And it is good medicine. “A merry heart doeth good like a medicine.”

Now when the Bible speaks here, in Psalm 17 and verse 22 about a merry heart, he's not just talking about fun and games, although there's nothing wrong with fun and games. And that's a part of the spin-off. That's one of the by-products of a merry heart. And that's a very wonderful thing. He's not talking against humor or laughter, although he's talking about far more than humor or laughter. And I think that humor and laughter is one of the spin-offs of having a merry heart.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon was a great preacher. People say he was the greatest preacher who ever lived. But a lady criticized Spurgeon for bringing humor into some of his messages. She said, "You ought not to do that." You know, there's some people think that if we preach we ought to be somber all the time. Spurgeon said, "Oh, don't criticize me." He said, "If you knew how much I held back, you would praise me." Ha ha ha! Oh! Because Spurgeon that, that bubbling, effervescent joy that sometimes showed itself in humor, sometimes showed itself in laughter!

But when we're talking about a merry heart, what we're really talking about, and what the, the language actually means, is joy. Joy, not mere laughter, not mere joking, not mere fun and games, but deep abiding joy! This is the mastery, "the mastery of a happy heart" when that joy is there.

A. **The Seat of That Joy**

Now, notice certain things about that joy. Very first thing I want you to notice is the seat of that joy. Where's that joy found? "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine." That is, it comes out of the heart, "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," (Matthew 12:34b). And "as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he."

In Hebrew psychology, the heart is the core, the center of the individual. And that is, the source of the joy, and the seat of that joy, is in the heart. It doesn't depend upon things! It doesn't depend upon thrills! It comes from the heart! And, you see, *the devil generally starts from the outside and works in. But God starts from the inside, and he works out.*

B. **The Source of That Joy**

Now, I want you to notice not only the seat of that joy, but I want you to notice the source of that joy. Where do we get that joy? Well, in Proverbs, chapter 16, in verse 20, just one, just turn left one chapter and look in verse 20, the last part of that verse: "and whoso trusteth the Lord, happy is he." Amen. "Whoso trusteth the Lord, happy is he." You see, the source of that joy is the Lord himself. Jesus Christ, in John verse 11 says, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you and that your joy might be full."

Now, Jesus spoke of His joy. His joy! Did you ever think of Jesus as being a joyful person? You know, we sing about Jesus as being "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief," (Isaiah 53:3). But, don't ever paint a picture of Jesus as being a sanctimonious, pale, religious recluse! As a matter of fact, the Bible, describing the Lord Jesus, says, "thou hast anointed him with the oil of gladness above his fellows," (Psalm 45:7b). That means nobody had joy like the Lord Jesus. He had the oil of gladness more than any other person who ever lived. There is a joy, a full joy that was in the Lord Jesus. And that joy, the Lord Jesus said, I'm going to give to you. You see, the joy that

I have today, and the joy that you have, is not some cheap imitation of His joy. It's the real thing, friend. It is His joy, the joy, "my joy have I given unto you." Jesus said, "I want that joy to remain in you." The *Reader's Digest*, in an article sometime back, said that man needs three things in order to make him happy, in order to make him fulfilled. First of all: someone to love. Number two: something meaningful to do. Number three: something to hope for. That's pretty good. Jesus is all three. Someone to love: "we love Him because He first loved us," (I John 4:19). Something to do: "serve the Lord with gladness!" (Psalm 100:2). Something to hope for: "looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ!" (Titus 2:13). He, ladies and gentlemen, is the source of that joy! To have Christ in your heart is to have that joy!

C. **The Strength of That Joy**

Now, I want you to notice the strength of that joy. Because what does our text say? Proverbs 17, verse 22: "a merry heart doeth good like a medicine." Friend, it is strong medicine.

We used to talk about "Hadacol." Do you remember "Hadacol"? 'at, that, that medicine's supposed to be so strong, supposed to give you strength. A man said, "Before I took "Hadacol", I couldn't even spit over my chin." Said, "Now, after five bottles, I can spit all over my chin." That's "Hadacol". It gave you strength; That's strong medicine!

I want to tell you something friend, there's the strength of the joy of the Lord. Do you remember what Nehemiah told those people in his day? Nehemiah said, "The joy of the Lord is your strength"! (Nehemiah 10:10b). He's your strength! I tell you, it is strong medicine!

The *Executive Digest* said of laughter, even induced laughter, that it gives you strength. Is, it says that it affects every organ of the body. It releases tensions. It exercises the visceral, even when it is forced. But I'm not talking to you about forced laughter. I talking to you about the real thing—the joy of the Lord—that is strong medicine.

You've read the poetry of Elizabeth Barrett Browning. She was an invalid for many years. She could not even lift her head from her pillow until one day a man named Robert Browning came to see her. And in just one visit, he gave her so much joy and so much happiness that she lifted her head from the pillow, in just one visit! On the second visit, when Robert Browning came to see her, she set up in bed. On the third visit, they eloped. Oh, my friend, I'm talking to you about strong medicine!

By the way, Doctor Schindler said that getting your emotions correct affects a gland at the base of the brain called the pituitary gland. It's one of the endocrine glands that, that so affect all of the body. And it, indeed, secretes chemicals that touch the

wellsprings of life that it is indeed medicine! Medicine. By the way, Doctor Schindler never referred—I looked through the book from front to back—hoping he would say something about what Solomon said, hoping he would say something about the source of that joy. But as far as I could find, he didn't know anything about the Lord. He just knew the problem—I know the solution. Listen, friend, “the joy of the Lord is your strength.” “A merry heart doeth good like a medicine”! Thank God for the strength of that joy!

D. **The Stability of That Joy**

And then, the stability of that joy. Listen. Look, if you will, in Proverbs, chapter 15, and verse 15. Look at it: “but all the days of the afflicted are evil...” Talking about these people who are going around with a load of care. “all the days of the afflicted are evil...” That means, if you have a heavy heart, it doesn't matter if nothing good can happen to you. You just can't see anything that looks good. But then listen: “..but he that is of a merry heart hath a continual feast.” A continual feast! That's the stability of that joy!

Remember what Jesus said in John 15, verse 11: “these things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you.. .” that is, that it might be stable. You know, you see, listen. I've told you this before, that your joy is really not much better than the source of that joy. You see, if you get your joy from things, if you get your joy from friends, if you get your joy from possessions, if you get your joy from outward experiences, and if you get your joy from your health or your business, or any of these things, those things can change on you. They can leave you stranded. But, you see, Jesus, when He was facing the cross, was talking about His joy, wasn't He? I mean, that's when He was talking about it. Now, he said, “I'm going to give you My joy,” when He was facing the cross! You see, he had a self-contained joy! He had a stable joy! “He that is of a merry heart hath a continual feast!” There's that joy that stays there all of the time. If you get it in outward things and, by the way, when you're young you can find joy in things and thrills and theories. But I've told you before, every kick has a kickback.

You know, the devil has no happy old people. Did you know that? Lord Byron, another poet, he lived it up as a young man, and he was handsy, witty and charming. And he loved to wine and dine. He lived high, wide, and handsome. But still, as a young man, Lord Byron wrote, “my days are in the yellow leaf. The flowers and fruits of life are gone. The worm, the canker, and the grief are mine alone.” What was, what happened to Byron, Lord Byron? He sought his joy in the wrong place.

You see, there's the stability of this joy. “He that is of a merry heart hath a continual feast.” That's what the book of Proverbs tells us.

III. **The Ministry of a Healthy Heart**

Now there's one other thing I want you to notice about God's Medicine. We've talked

about the misery of a heavy heart. We've talked about the mastery of a happy heart. Let's talk about the ministry of a healthy heart. Why does God make us strong? Why does God give us strength? Why does God give us His joy? So we can serve the devil? Not at all! I mean, God gives us this strength that we might minister.

A. **This Joy Should Be Sought**

Now, let me tell you three things about the ministry of a healthy heart, you have this strong medicine in your heart. First of all, let me remind you that this joy is to be "sought." This joy is to be sought. It is not automatic. I mean, you can have medicine in the cabinet, but you must take it. And so it must be, day by day. You must receive the joy of the Lord. Look again in Proverbs, chapter 15, verse 13: "a merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance: but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken."

Now watch this: "(14) the heart of him that hath understanding seeketh knowledge..." You're to seek the Lord. Are you seeking the Lord? I mean, this morning, did you seek Him with all of your heart, and with all of your soul? Did you bathe yourself in His presence? You see, listen. You're to seek that presence. Jesus said we're to "abide in Him and He in us," (John 15:4). And then He says, "these things have I spoken unto you, that you might have joy..." (John 15:11). What things? "That we abide in the Lord Jesus."

A man wrote to his congressman. He said, "Where is all this happiness that the constitution of the United States guarantees us?" The congressman wrote back and said, "You better reread the constitution. It doesn't guarantee you any happiness. It guarantees you the pursuit of happiness."

Now, you're going to have to pursue it. And you're going to have to pursue it particularly in the spiritual realm. This joy is found in the Lord Jesus, but the Bible says, "a man that hath understanding seeketh knowledge."

B. **This Joy Should Be Seen**

But not only is this joy to be sought, this joy, beloved, is to be "seen." Look again in Proverbs, chapter 15, and verse 13: "a merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance." Now, if you've got the joy in your heart, it ought to show in your face! You know, the reason that some of you are so tired all the time? It takes seventy-two muscles to frown and fourteen to smile! Look at all that wasted energy. "a merry heart doeth good like a medicine!" I believe if, if you've got joy in your heart, it, it can't help but show in your face. That's what the Bible says. "A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance."

I like to read bumper stickers. By the way, have you got one of these little Bellevue logos for your automobile, up on the right? If you don't have one, get one. Now, if you're seeing those things around, we want you to have one there on your car. You say, "well, I didn't get one." Okay. Call us. Sometimes we make mistakes. We'll mail you one, give

you one. We'll have some in the bookstore, so you can pick them up. But everybody who is a member of Bellevue, I want you to have one of those on your windshield so we'll know who you are, when we see you, we can wave at you, when we're driving around town.

But I also notice bumper stickers. You can almost tell who's who by reading bumper stickers, most of the time that is. I was riding down the road a while back, and I saw on a bumper sticker, it said, "smile, God loves you." "Boy!" I said, "A Christian! How wonderful!" So I sped up, and came alongside, and looked in the window, window. And the woman driving that car looked like she's having a gall bladder attack! I have never seen such misery written on a face of a woman. Boy, I thought to myself, "man, she needs to take that bumper sticker off the bumper and put it on the dashboard! God loves you!"

I believe it ought to show on your face. I got a letter from a lady this past week, and she may be here this morning. I'd never met her. It was a real nice letter, but she really wrote to ask me to forgive her for a feeling she'd had toward me. And you know what she didn't like about me? You say, "I can't imagine." Ha, ha, ha, ha. She said, "I thought you were a hypocrite." She said, "I've been watching you for years on television," and said, "You're always so happy." She said, "I felt nobody could be that happy all the time. So I just felt that you were a hypocrite." And then she said, "finally, after several years, I came to visit Bellevue, and saw you, and listened"—she may be here this morning. I don't know who she is. I don't know what she looks like—"and visited with your people, and," she said, "I know it's real. I know it's real." That's the joy of the Lord! I'm not trying to say "look at me" because, friend, if there's anything good about me, I'll guarantee it's the Lord Jesus. And if there's any joy in me, it is the joy of the Lord Jesus that is real!

I tell you, dear friend, not only should we "seek that joy", we ought to "show that joy"! That joy is to be seen! And, by the way, the way to win the lost to Christ! One of the greatest testimonies we have is the joy of the Lord! A cold, dry faith, a joyless faith has no appeal!

I read some years ago about some prospectors for gold out west, who found a very rich load of gold, a very rich mine. And they said, "Hey, boy, we've got it made. But we don't want anybody else to find out about this before we stake it out, and stake our claim." But they went back into the town for provisions and for tools. They had sworn that they would not tell a soul what they'd seen and what they'd found. But when they left the town, a great number of people left after them, because it was written all over their faces. They could not hide it! They had found it!

C. This Joy Should Be Shared

I want that kind of faith, dear friend, that will be written all over my face that I have something wonderful down deep in my heart! This joy is to be "sought"! This joy is to be

“seen”! And this joy is to be “shared”!

Oh, friend, listen. This is miracle medicine. If you knew the cure for some disease, an’ nobody else had the cure, wouldn’t you share it? Wouldn’t you tell it? We ought to share it! I believe that the joy of the Lord not only is going to strengthen us, but I believe that God can help us to transfer that to other people. I believe that people ought to be coming to us, and they ought to be asking us, “What’s the reason of the hope that is within you?” You see, listen. Without joy, life is meaningless. I don’t care what you have. Without joy, life is meaningless! That joy is found only in Jesus. And we ought to share the secret, the source of our joy -- the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, Patrick Henry, that red-headed Virginian—the one who said, “give me liberty, or give me death”—wrote these words in his will. He said to those who were receiving his inheritance: “there is one thing more I wish I could give you. It is the religion of our Lord Jesus Christ. With it, if you have nothing else, you could be happy. Without it, though you have all things else, you would not be happy.” True joy is found in the Lord Jesus. And “a merry heart does good like a medicine.” I want to share it with you today. I want you to know the Lord Jesus Christ. And for that E.I.I., I want you to take a good dose of G.M.M., God’s miracle medicine “a merry heart doeth good like a medicine.”

Conclusion

Let’s bow our heads in prayer. Heads are bowed, eyes are closed. Let’s just examine our hearts this morning. Those of you who are Christians, have you been carrying burdens that you ought to be casting upon the Lord? Are you allowing your soul and your spirit and your body to be wasted and dissipated? Repent of that, Christian. Come to abide in the Lord Jesus. Cast your burden upon the Lord. Claim the promise of Jesus when He says that He’ll give you His joy. Abide in Him.

Now, those of you who are not saved, those of you who are not Christians at all, you can never even begin to know the joy of the Lord until you know the Lord of that joy, till you know Him personally, have Him in your heart. I believe in this building today, there’re a number of people, you may be a church member, but you are not absolutely certain that you’re saved. You never have really repented of your sins, and received Christ. I’m going to ask you to do that right now, right where you are, just to say, “Lord Jesus, help me today to trust in You, to confess you as my Lord and Savior. Help me, Lord Jesus, today, not to be ashamed of you. Help me, Lord Jesus.”

“Father, I pray that many in this building today will say an everlasting “yes” to Christ and that, indeed, they will be saved by trusting Christ. In whose name I pray, amen.”

True Riches

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: August 5, 1984

Main Scripture Text: Proverbs 13:7

“There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing: there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches.”

PROVERBS 13:7

Outline

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- C. A Man is Poor When the Goal of His Life is to Make Money
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Introduction

All right. I want you to take God’s Word, please, and turn, if you will, to Proverbs chapter 13. And, in just a moment, I’ll give you the verse—Proverbs chapter 13. We’ve been speaking through the Book of Proverbs under the general heading of “God’s Way to Health, Wealth, and Wisdom.” Today we are coming to that portion that you’ve been waiting for: God’s way to wealth. Find out how to be wealthy today. As a matter of fact, many of you may be more wealthy than you realize, and some of you may not be nearly as wealthy as you think that you are. Now, we’re going to be talking in days to come about how to acquire money, and how to spend money, and how to save money, and how to have financial freedom. But, before we do, I want to put everything in perspective, and I want to talk to you today about “True Riches.”

Look, if you will, in chapter 13 and verse 7: *“There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing: there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches”* (Proverbs 13:7). Now, some of you, as I’ve already said, may have great riches, and yet you don’t have a big bank account, and vice versa. I know, when I’m talking to you about money, I’m

talking to you about something very pertinent—something that every one of us is interested in, and we ought to be. Somebody said, “The most vital nerve in the body is that one that runs from the heart to the pocketbook.” And, sometimes we seem to be so sanctified; but yet, when it comes to money, we’re not really as sanctified as we act like we are.

*I once knew a Baptist; he had a pious look,
He had been totally immersed, except his pocketbook.
He placed a dollar in the plate and sang with might and main,
“When we asunder part, it gives us inward pain”*

—S. M. GREENE

And, I believe there’s some like that today—who really tend to love the Lord, at least outwardly; but inwardly, there’s another love—an inordinate love for the material things of this world. And so, we’re going to be talking to you about true riches. And, the measure of a man is what that man thinks about money. You tell me about money, and I’ll tell you something about your character; I’ll also tell you something about your faith. Stewardship is that area of life—not only where man makes money, but where God makes men. So, we’re going to be talking about this matter of real riches, true riches.

You see, there are different kinds of riches. Some riches are not riches at all. Jesus, in the 16th chapter of Luke, was talking about what He called “the unrighteous mammon” (Luke 16:11)—that is, the stocks, the bonds, the gold, the silver, the currency that we have. And, He called that “unrighteous mammon.” And, He said, “If you’ve not been faithful with that unrighteous mammon, who’s going to give to you the true riches?” (Luke 16:11). So, you see, there are true riches, and there are things that seem to be riches that are not riches at all. “[*There’s*] that maketh himself rich, [*and*] hath nothing: [*there’s*] that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches” (Proverbs 13:7).

Now, I want to be a little unorthodox today, and I want to talk to you about... Well, I want to use two points—not even three points, but just simply two points. And, that’s unorthodox. Then, I want to be a little unhomiletical. (Homiletic is the study of preaching.) I want the first point to be longer than the second point. So, if you don’t mind listening to a two-pointed, lopsided sermon, I want you to tune in today. And, we’re going to be talking about true riches.

I. The Poverty of the Godless Rich

And, first of all, I want you to see what I’m going to call “the poverty of the godless rich”—“the poverty of the godless rich.” “*There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing*” (Proverbs 13:7). That is a man who is in abject poverty and yet he has a big bank account.

Now, before I even talk about the poverty of the of the godless rich, I want to say

that the Bible does not condemn your having money. The Bible does not condemn wealth, nor does the Bible put a premium on poverty. The Bible does not equate poverty with piety. You can be poor and be lost. You may be rich and be saved. As a matter of fact, if you'll study the Bible, you'll find some of the great saints in the Bible are very rich.

For example, Abraham, the father of the faithful—the Bible says in Genesis chapter 13, verse 2: “[he] was very rich...in silver, and in gold” (Genesis 13:2). Or, David, the sweet singer of Israel, a man after God’s own heart (1 Samuel 13:14)—not a man after money, but a man after God’s own heart—when he died, the Bible said of him in 1 Chronicles chapter 29 and verse 28 that “he died in a good old age, full of days, riches, and honour” (1 Chronicles 29:28). David lived a long life, and he died in prosperity. And, he was a man after God’s own heart. We read in the Bible of a very rich man named Joseph of Arimathaea, who was a disciple of our Lord. By the way, it was in Joseph’s tomb that our Lord was laid—Joseph of Arimathaea. Barnabas, in the Bible, was a man who had a lot of this world’s goods, as did Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, where Jesus would often resort...

So, the Bible does not say that it is wrong to have wealth; and yet, there are times when a wealthy man may only be wealthy in material things, and he is impoverished in the sight of God. He is a wealthy pauper. This is the poverty we’ll we want to call “the godless rich.” Now, when is a man rich but not rich? When does a man have plenty in his purse and nothing in his person? What is the poverty of the godless rich? What does the Book of Proverbs mean when it says, “*There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing*” (Proverbs 13:7)?

Well, I spent quite a bit of time just searching the Book of Proverbs and looking at all of the verses that deal with wealth, and riches, and so forth. And, I think I’ve come up with some ways that a man may be very, very wealthy in the eyes of this world and yet be poverty-stricken.

A. **A Man Is Poor When He Seeks Satisfaction in His Money**

Number one: A man is poor, no matter how much he has, when he is seeking satisfaction in his money. When a man seeks satisfaction in his money, he is poor, indeed. Now, the Bible says in chapter 13 and verse 7 of Proverbs, he has nothing (Proverbs 13:7), because, you see, he finds out the first time that his money cannot satisfy the deepest longings of his heart.

Somebody asked J.D. Rockefeller, the founder of that great empire and that fortune, “Mr. Rockefeller, how much money is enough money?” You know what he said? “Just a little more”—“just a little more.” He had millions. You see, there are some people who have more than they can spend—they don’t need it anymore. They’re not making

money; they're keeping score now. It's sort of a game with them. They're always thinking that some way, for some reason, they need more, and they don't find the deepest longings of their heart met, because they're seeking satisfaction in the things of this world, and they do not satisfy.

One man who was of a very modest and moderate income talked with one of these business tycoons—one of these wheelers and dealers and who's always grubbing for money, always grasping for money, always trying to get more—and the man seemed quite wealthy. And, the man of moderate means said to him, "I want you to know that I am richer than you are." And, the seemingly wealthy man said, "And, how is that?" He said, "I'm richer than you are because I have all of the money I want, and you don't." Now, that's something to think about: "I have all of the money I want, and you don't."

Solomon learned that money was not going to satisfy the longing of his heart. Solomon wrote this proverb. But, I want you to turn to Ecclesiastes chapter 2. Just turn right in your Bible, and go to Ecclesiastes chapter 2; and see what ole' Solomon did. It's an amazement. Listen to what he said. He says in chapter 2, verses 4–10: *"I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards"—by the way, notice the repetition of the pronouns "I" and "me"—"I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits: I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees: I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me: I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me. And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour: and this was my portion of all my labour"* (Ecclesiastes 2:4–10).

Well, you'd think, "Here's a man that, if money could make him happy, he'd be happy." I mean, whatever he wanted... He was like that rich Texan who had three swimming pools—one with hot water, one with cold water, and one with no water for people who couldn't swim. This man had everything! And, you'd think, "Well, now, here's Solomon; this is bound to make him happy." But, I want you to notice what Solomon said in verse 11: *"Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun"* (Ecclesiastes 2:11). That is, "I spent my life getting these things, doing these things, feeling that that would meet the innermost need of my heart, and it was emptiness; it was vanity. There was no profit in it—none whatsoever," he said.

He found out that this round world could not satisfy the longings of his three-pointed heart. He found out that money could buy wives, but it couldn't buy love. He found out that he could have plenty in his person or in his purse and nothing in his person. He found out that his money could not quiet the cries of a guilty conscience. He found out that his money could not heal the bloody wounds of a wasted life. And, you see, this man is even more sad, many times, more than the poor man, because the poor man thinks, "At least if I can get money one day, I'll be happy." The rich man doesn't have that hope. He doesn't even have the hope of getting rich and then being happy. He's found out that there's nothing there if that's what he's depending upon for the source of his happiness. Now again, I want to remind you that the Bible does not condemn the wealthy. But, how sad it is when a man seeks satisfaction in that which cannot satisfy! And then, later on, this same Solomon said, "*He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver*" (Ecclesiastes 5:10). How true that is!

And so, by the way, girls, let me tell you something—those of you who are getting ready to get married, you're casting your eyes around, you're doing a little hunting for the right guy: it's far better to marry a man who's worth a million but doesn't have a cent than to marry a man that has a million and isn't worth a cent—it's far better to marry a man who's worth a million but doesn't have a cent than to marry a man that has a million and who's not worth a cent.

A man's life consists not in the abundance of the things that he possesses. And, here was a man who had it all, but at this point in his life he had nothing. "*[There's] that maketh himself rich, [and] yet hath nothing*" (Proverbs 13:7). Do you know what nothing is? It's the same thing he said over here—"just vanity, emptiness, the air." It means nothing.

"Now," you say, "I just don't believe that." Well, okay. That's your privilege. I know that the devil has told you—and your own carnal mind has told you—that if you can get enough of that green stuff, you are going to be happy. It is a lie out of Hell—a lie out of Hell! And, you believe me today: the man is impoverished who depends on his money to bring him satisfaction.

B. A Man Is Poor When His Money Increases His Trouble

I'll tell you another way when the rich are poor: the poverty of the godless rich is when his money increases his trouble. Now, not only does it not bring him satisfaction, but, to the contrary, it literally increases his trouble. Go back to the Book of Proverbs and look in chapter 15, if you will with me, and verse 6—Proverbs 15 and verse 6: "*In the house of the righteous is much treasure: but in the revenues of the wicked is*"—what? I can't hear you—"trouble"—"trouble"—"*in the revenues of the wicked [there's] trouble*" (Proverbs 15:6).

Now, who wants trouble? Look, if you will, in verse 16 of this same chapter—chapter 15, verse 16: *“Better is little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble therewith”* (Proverbs 15:16). I mean, when your money, when your business, when your possessions increase your trouble, then you’re not wealthy.

Look in verse 17—one of my favorite verses: *“Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith”* (Proverbs 15:17). Do you know what that means? It’s better to be sitting down to a vegetable plate and have joy and peace than to have a big house with a freezer full of filet mignons and no happiness and no joy. It’s true—just as true as I’m standing here. It is better to eat herbs in a house where love is. And, a man becomes a slave to his money and a slave to his possessions. And, no matter how wealthy he is, he is a pauper when those things bring him trouble—and they frequently do.

You see, the world is primarily composed of two categories of persons: the takers and the givers. Now, let me tell you the difference between the two: the takers eat better; the givers sleep better—they sleep better. You see, there’s this peace—this peace—that the Lord gives, which is really, real wealth. And, so many of these things that we think that we need, really, rather than being a blessing, they are a burden.

A man was sitting on a train, and he looked over at a woman. And, she was wearing a gorgeous diamond—I mean, a rock. And, he looked at that, and he said, “Pardon me, ma’am. I don’t mean to be nosey or impertinent, but that is a scintillating jewel that you have. Can you tell me about it?” “Oh,” she said, “that is the Clockman diamond.” He said, “What?” “The Clockman diamond.” He said, “Is it famous like the Hope diamond?” “Well,” she said, “it’s not as big as the Hope diamond, but it is just a clear and just as pure as the Hope diamond.” And, she said, “Like the Hope diamond, it brings a curse to the person who wears it.” “Well,” he said, “that’s interesting. What is the curse of the Clockman diamond?” She said, “Mr. Clockman.”

There are a lot of things that we possess that have with them a curse upon them; and rather than being a blessing, they are a burden—no matter how beautiful, no matter how valuable. The Bible speaks of the trouble that comes, and a person, no matter how wealthy he is—he has nothing. His wealth brings him trouble rather than happiness, and peace, and joy, as it is supposed to.

C. **A Man Is Poor When the Goal of His Life is to Make Money**

Now, I’ll tell you a third way in which I believe that the very wealthy are sometimes impoverished: when the aim of their life—the goal of their life—is in the making of money, then they are impoverished. Let me give you some scripture. Look here in Proverbs chapter 23 and verse 4. Do you have it? *“Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom”* (Proverbs 23:4). You know what your wisdom will tell you to do?

“Get it, buddy.” I mean, Madison Avenue—this whole world is built on that, isn’t it? “Get it.” The Bible says, *“Labour not to be rich”* (Proverbs 23:4). Don’t make that the goal of your life. That’s the wisdom of this world; it is not the wisdom of God.

Look in chapter 28 and verse 20: *“A faithful man shall abound with blessings”*—hey, isn’t that a wonderful thing—to abound with blessings?—*“but he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent”* (Proverbs 28:20). Do you know what that means? If it is your desire to be rich, you’re going to start cutting corners. You’re going to be doing some things that you ought not to do. And, rather than abounding in blessings, you’re going to have sin in your life. The Bible makes it very clear and very plain that this is going to warp your life. Look in verse 22: *“He that hasteth to be rich hath an evil eye, and considereth not that poverty shall come upon him”* (Proverbs 28:22). What poverty is going to come upon him? It is this poverty of being the godless rich. That’s the poverty of having nothing and yet having everything. He has an evil eye. That means that your life is just going to be colored by all that you do. You’re going to get lost; you’re going to get immersed in all of this.

I may have told you about that man that was so much in love with gold that when he finally got wealthy enough, he had his bedroom redecorated and he painted the walls yellow. He put in a golden carpet; he had parchment-colored spreads and drapes and even got him some gold-colored pajamas, some yellow pajamas. He just loved gold. Then, he got sick—came down with yellow jaundice. The wife called the doctor. She stayed downstairs, and the doctor went upstairs to see him. Doctor stayed for a long time and then finally came back down. She said, “Doctor, how is he?” The doctor said, “I don’t know. I couldn’t find him.” Lost—immersed—in a world of materialism.

Listen—listen—to what the verse says again: *“He that hasteth to be rich hath an evil eye”* (Proverbs 28:22). That is, it’s going to warp your life; it’s going to control your character. You’re going to be pressed into a mold that you ought not to be in.

Sometimes people tell young people something at graduations and other times that seems like such good advice; it’s not good advice at all. Here’s the advice that they’re given: “Make all the money you can, just so you make it honestly.” Does that sound like good advice? Well, it is not good advice. Nobody has a right to be making all the money they can. Why? Because if you’re making all the money you can, you’re going to be making money when you ought to be doing something else. You’re going to be making money when you ought to be praying. You’re going to be making money when you ought to be studying the Bible. You’re going to be making money when you ought to be worshipping. You’re going to be making money when you ought to be spending time with your children. You’re going to be making money when you ought to be taking care of your body. Nobody ought to set out to make all the money that he can. The Bible says, to the contrary, Matthew chapter 6, verse 33: *“But seek ye first the kingdom of*

God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33). But, when a man starts out to make all the money he can, when money becomes the consuming drive of his life, he becomes impoverished, and it warps his life.

Now, we're primarily in Proverbs, but I want you to turn to 1 Timothy chapter 6, and look with me in verse 6—1 Timothy chapter 6, and look with me in verse 6. And, this is worth turning to, because it ought to be marked, underscored, in everyone's Bible: "*But godliness with contentment is great gain*"—do you know what that means? If you're right with God and happy with yourself, then you are wealthy—"Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out"—I'm going to say more about that in a moment, so remember that verse—"And having food and raiment let us be therewith content" (1 Timothy 6:6–8). Did you know you didn't even have to have a house? You can't go around naked—least, you ought not to—and you've got to eat. That's all it really takes. Jesus said, "*Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head*" (Matthew 8:20)—and yet, he survived and got along just fine and was filled with joy. Listen, having food and clothes, be content. "*Godliness with contentment is great gain*" (1 Timothy 6:6).

But now, notice in verse 9: "*But they that will be rich*"—now, what that literally means is this, "Those who have made up their mind they're going to be rich," "those who are determined to be rich." It doesn't mean those who might get rich—those who've made it the goal of their life to be rich—"fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil"—not money; money is neither good nor bad. It's either master or servant, however we make it. But—"the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (1 Timothy 6:9–10). Now, who wants many sorrows?

You see what happens is this—I'm back in Proverbs now—when a man says, "I will haste to get rich. I make this my goal rather than seeking God. I am seeking the things of this world," it warps his life; it twists his life; it distorts his values. What about beauty queens who pose nude? What about that—is there a verse that deals with this? I thought about it, and there is one in the Book of Proverbs. Would you like it? Proverbs chapter 11 and verse 22—yea, I thought you'd turn to it; look at it: "*As a jewel of gold in a swine's snout, so is a fair woman which is without discretion*"—"As a jewel of gold in a swine's snout, so is a fair woman...without discretion" (Proverbs 11:22). It's amazing what the love of money and the things of this world will do to someone, no matter how fair and how beautiful they may be. You see, your discretion disappears, and a person, no matter how much they have in the bank, is impoverished if the goal of their life is to be rich, to be famous.

D. **A Man is Poor When He Has No Treasure in Heaven**

Now, I'll tell you again when a rich man is really a poor man—I want you to think again of the poverty of the godless rich—when he has no treasure in Heaven. Look, if you will, in Proverbs chapter 23 and verse 5: *“Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not?”*—what does he mean? You're looking at it, and it's gone. Now you see it; now you don't—*“for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven”* (Proverbs 23:5). What does that mean? It means “how quickly these earthly riches are gone!”

Somebody said, “Money talks; it says, ‘Goodbye.’” It takes wings like an eagle, and it is gone. You cannot keep it. Look, if you will, in chapter 27 and verse 24: *“For riches are not for ever: and doth the crown endure to every generation?”* (Proverbs 27:24). Just as one kingdom does not always succeed another kingdom, you cannot continue to hold your riches. You see, that's the reason the Lord Jesus said, *“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal”* (Matthew 6:19–20). You see, if you don't have treasure in Heaven, you're not rich, because what you call “riches” you're going to leave. Do you remember what Paul told Timothy? It is certain *“we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain [that we're going to] carry nothing out”* (1 Timothy 6:7). Right? You'll never see a hearse with a U-Haul behind it. You didn't bring anything into this world, and you're not going to bring anything out.

Alexander the Great, who conquered the known world at the age of 33—I mean, he had the world, wept because there were no more worlds to conquer—he gave these instructions: he said, “When I die, no matter how gilded my casket, I want you to put a hole on either side for my arms. And, I want my arms extended—my dead, cold hands—so that when they parade my casket through the streets, everyone will see that my hands are empty. I couldn't take it with me.” And, neither shall you. *“[It is certain that] we brought nothing into this world”* (1 Timothy 6:7). Oh, my dear friend, that which you'll carry is that which you've given away.

If you want to know how rich you are, you add up everything that you have that money cannot buy and death cannot take away. Then, you know how rich you are. Let me tell the difference between true riches and false riches: true riches—the things that you have that are true values—when you share them, they increase; false riches, when you divide them, they diminish. You see, anything that is of real value, anything that is of lasting value, anything that is a treasure in Heaven—the more I give of it, the more I have of it. But, false riches you hold on to. That's why a man who contends upon false riches is so miserable: he spends the first half of his life getting everything that he can from everybody else; he spends the last half of his life trying to keep everyone else from

getting it back. And, he's unhappy in both halves of his life. Real riches—you're not trying to keep everyone else from getting it. You see, if I think you're trying to take what I have from me, it's going to make me miserable. But, if I have something that I want you to have, it's going to make me happy. And, real riches are the kind of riches that I can share; and the more I give to you, the more I have for me. Isn't that wonderful?

You see, so, a man is impoverished if he is not rich toward God. Jesus said in Luke chapter 16: *"If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?"* (Luke 16:9). And so, a man is impoverished if he does not have riches in Heaven, if he has not made deposits in that safe deposit box in the Glory.

E. A Man is Poor if He Does Not Have Jesus Christ in His Heart

Now, all of this can be summed up: and I would say that a rich man is a poor man if he does not have Jesus Christ in his heart. And, I think there's a Proverb that really deals with that. I want you to look in Proverbs chapter 11 and verse 4, if you would please—Proverbs chapter 11 and verse 4: *"Riches profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivereth from death"* (Proverbs 11:4). Who is our righteousness? Christ is our righteousness. "Righteousness delivereth in the day of death, but riches profit not in the day of wrath" (Proverbs 11:4). What does that mean? It means, sir, that no matter how much money you have in the vault you're going to die. There's a life to live; there's a death to die, and there's a judgment to face. And, *"riches [will not] profit in the day of wrath"* (Proverbs 11:4). What does that mean? It means that you'll not bribe that Judge. You'll not buy God off. You'll not buy your way into Heaven. When you die a Christ-less death and stand before the Judgment Seat of Almighty God—the great white throne of judgment, rather—when you stand there, your money is not going to profit you one little bit.

You remember the story that Jesus told in the 16th chapter of Luke about that man, that rich man? They call him Dives; that was his name according to some. The Bible says that he was dressed in royal robes. He fared sumptuously every day. There was a beggar that laid at his gate whose name was Lazarus...ate the crumbs from the rich man's table. The dogs came and licked that beggar's sores. But then, the Bible says in Luke verse 22—the last part of that verse: *"[and] the rich man...died, and was buried"* (Luke 16:22).

Now, if we've been living in this day and age, I'll say that would have been some funeral. Outside the church or funeral home, there would be Cadillacs, and Lincoln Continentals, Mercedes Benz, Jaguars. The people would have come in there, all decked out, and they would have said, "What a great man he was! I mean, look at how much he achieved. Look what he did. Look what he unmasked, look what he did for our

community. Look at his wealth”—and on and on and on. They would have honored him, and the Bible says, *“The rich man also died, and was buried”*—but Jesus said—*“And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments”* (Luke 16:22–23). And, I want to tell you, that man was in Hell before the undertaker knew he was dead. Click—in Hell. And, his riches didn’t do him one bit of good. *“Riches profit not in the day of wrath”* (Proverbs 11:4). I’m telling you, mister, you listen to me: if you don’t know Jesus Christ, I don’t care how rich you are, I don’t care how handsome you are, I don’t care how strong you are, how intelligent, how witty you are, how charming you are—you are a pauper, indeed, if you do not know the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, this is what I want to call “the poverty of the godless rich.”

II. The Prosperity of the Godly Poor

Now, let’s just turn that around—and very quickly. Remember, it’s a lop-sided sermon. This point is short, but I want you to think of the prosperity of the godly poor—the prosperity of the godly poor. What does our text say? Our text says, *“There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing: there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches”* (Proverbs 13:7).

Now, while we’re in the neighborhood, I want to pay my respects to a heresy that’s around. There are people today—and many of them are on the commercial stations, and televisions, and also the religious channel—and they’re preaching a message of prosperity. Now, what they’re saying is this—that God wants you rich; and that it’s not God’s will that any of His children ever be poor; and that all you have to do is get right with God, have enough faith, and it is *de facto* you’re going to be very rich; that somehow the Spirit-filled life is the key to Fort Knox. And, you’re being told this. These joy-boys tell you that you’ve got to just name it and claim it. And, they say, “The way to get it is to give.” And so, if you want to get, you give to them. Hmm? “Just send me your money, and if you will send us your money to show your faith, God’s going to bless you.” And, they say, “See, it’s working for me.” Yeah, it really is—it is working for him! But, I want him to go down to Bangladesh or to the slimy streets of India and preach that to some poor vagrant in the mud.

Let me tell you something, dear friend: on the one hand, the Bible does not equate poverty with piety, but, on the other hand, some very godly people are very poor people. And, the Bible says, *“God [hath] chosen the poor of this world rich in faith”* (James 2:5). And, the Bible does not say that just because we love God that we’re going to have rubies, and diamonds, and Cadillacs, and furs, and big houses. Again, I remind you, the Bible does not condemn wealth rightly used and rightly held, but you better get these things in perspective.

If just simply being right with God and loving God would make you rich, Peter and

John would have been millionaires. But, they stood there at the gate to that temple and said to that lame man, *“Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk”* (Acts 3:6). Brother, I tell you, I’d rather have what Peter and John had than to have Ft. Knox—to have the power of God upon my life. And, *“there’s that that hath nothing, yet is rich toward God”* (Proverbs 13:7). We better watch some of these prosperity cults and these prophets of profit. Find out what the Word of God has to say.

Now, I’m going to come right back again and tell you that the Book of Proverbs has some very practical advice about financial freedom, and how to get money, and how to manage money, and how to hold money, and how to spend money, and how to use money. And, wealth is not evil, but don’t you ever equate wealth with godliness any more than you would equate poverty with piety.

Do you remember what Paul told Timothy? He said, *“There will come some who will suppose that gain is godliness.”* He said, *“From those people just turn away—just turn away”* (1 Timothy 6:5). You read it there in 1 Timothy chapter 6, just verse 5: *“From those people just turn away”* (1 Timothy 6:5). He says, *“Godliness with contentment is great gain”* (1 Timothy 6:6). Just to know God and to be happy—that’s where real wealth is. Why are the poor who are rich in faith—why are they so rich? What are the true riches?

A. True Riches are Spiritual Riches

Well, first of all, their riches are spiritual riches. Now, don’t put that down. Don’t laugh at that. Don’t you be so carnal that you say, *“Ah, pie in the sky.”* Oh no, my friend. I’m talking to you about peace, love, joy, forgiveness, being right God, having a hope in living, a purpose in living, a hope in dying. That is wealth. I’m talking about having the things that money cannot buy—these are spiritual riches, and they are riches, indeed.

B. True Riches are Secure Riches

Not only are they spiritual riches, friend—they are secure riches. Look, if you will, in Proverbs 13, where our text was, and look in verse 11: *“Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished: but he that gathereth by labour shall increase”* (Proverbs 13:11). Look, if you will, in verse 22: *“A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children’s children: and the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just”* (Proverbs 13:22). Do you know what that means? It means that if you’re a good man, you have riches that cannot be taken away. You leave an inheritance to your children’s children. Now, you think that means you’re going to leave them a bank account? I don’t think that’s what that means. A man that has true riches can leave those true riches. The Bible says, *“The generation of the upright shall be blessed”* (Psalm 112:2). You see, we have riches that are secure riches. The Bible says that we have an inheritance laid up for us in Heaven that is uncorruptible

and undefiled and fade not away. It is reserved in Heaven for us. There is a godly legacy. That's the reason why our riches are so secure: they're spiritual riches; they're secure riches.

C. True Riches are Satisfying Riches

One last thing—they're satisfying riches. Now, remember that Solomon tried to find satisfaction, and he couldn't find it. Neither will you—neither will you—until you find it in the Lord.

One of the stories that I love is the story—the true story—of a missionary who was getting ready to go overseas, and it was back before the days of many of the amenities that we have even for the missionaries today. She had packed her trunk and all of her little earthly belongings that she needed on the mission field, and she was going up the gangplank of that ocean liner. I mean that she didn't fly on a 747; she's going over on an ocean liner. And, her friends were there saying tearful goodbyes. And, just before she went up the gangplank, a friend reached in his pocket and pulled out an envelope and handed it to her—a sealed envelope—and said, "If on the mission field you ever come to a time when everything runs out and there's nowhere else to turn, open this envelope." The missionary thanked him, and took the envelope, and put it with her belongings. And, I know what most of us would have done—we'd have opened it right away to see what's in that envelope, but she didn't do that. She put it in her belongings.

And then, after spending 30 years, she came back to give her testimony. And, she held up that envelope, still sealed. And, to that day the missionary had no idea what was in that envelope. And, she said with glistening tears of thanksgiving, "Ladies and gentlemen, for 30 years on the mission field, through hard times and good times and bad times and other times, I have never come to the place where there was nowhere else to turn." Amen! That's what I'm talking about. Friend, those are riches—riches in Jesus.

*Friends all around me are trying to find
What the heart yearns for, by sin undermined;
I have the secret, I know where 'tis found:
Only true pleasures in Jesus abound.
Jesus is all this poor world needs today.
Blindly they strive, for sin darkens their way.
O to draw back the grim curtains of night,
One glimpse of Jesus and all will be bright!*

—HARRY D. LOES

Now, let me give you a verse of Scripture. Paul said, "[You] know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he [were] rich, yet...he became poor, that...through his

poverty [you] might be rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9). Do you know what that means? He died for you, that you might be rich—rich, indeed. And, the Bible says, *“The same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him”* (Romans 10:12). If you’ll call upon Him today, you, my friend, will have true riches—true riches, true riches.

Conclusion

Let’s bow in prayer. Now, in this building, I want you to examine your heart. Just how rich are you? Just how rich are you? Don’t you go around envying the millionaires if you have Jesus. You’re a child of the King, a royal blue-blood.

But, those of you who don’t know the Lord Jesus, I’m going to give you a verse. Jesus said, *“Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked”* (Revelation 3:17). Do you know Jesus? Whether you’re rich or poor, if you’ll call upon Jesus, He’ll save you, and He’ll make you truly rich. Would you pray this kind of a prayer: “Dear God, I need to be saved”—just pray it—“Dear God, I need to be saved, and I want to be saved. Jesus, You died to save me, and You promised to save me if I would only trust You. I do trust You, Jesus”—tell Him that—“I do trust You, Jesus”—just tell Him out of your heart—“I do trust You, Lord Jesus”?

Now, Lord Jesus, I want to pray today for these who are asking Christ into their heart. Now, while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, would you pray, “Lord Jesus, help me never to be ashamed of You. Give me the courage today to confess You before men”? Pray that: “Give me the courage today to confess You. Help me not to be ashamed of You, Lord Jesus. In Your name I pray. Amen.”

The Backslider

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: July 15, 1984

Main Scripture Text: Proverbs 14:14

*“The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways:
and a good man shall be satisfied from himself.”*

PROVERBS 14:14

Outline

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Introduction

I want you to take your Bibles now and turn to the Book of Proverbs, chapter 14, and verse 14—Proverbs 14, verse 14. I love to hear the pages turn; that’s like music. Here’s a remarkable Proverb—short, concise, but power-packed: *“The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways: and a good man shall be satisfied from himself”* (Proverbs 14:14). I want to speak to you today on “The Backslider”—“The Backslider.” And, I pray God that the message today will speak to your heart, to warn you, to make you wise, and maybe to restore you.

Now, what is a backslider anyway? What is a backslider? A backslider is not an unsaved person. No, an unsaved person can be a backslider. When the Bible uses the term “backslider,” it’s not talking about the lost; it is talking about the saved. You have to go somewhere in order to slide back. That is, you must have known the Lord before you can backslide away from the Lord. A lost person is just lost, but he’s not a backslider, because he’s never known the Lord to slide back from the Lord. The backslider is not a

lost person; he is a saved person out of fellowship with God.

Now, you're saying, "Well, Pastor, I hope some of those ole' backsliders that you're talking to this morning may hear the message." I may be speaking to you. If there was ever a time when you loved the Lord Jesus Christ more than you love Him at this moment—if there was every time when He meant more to you, when prayer was sweeter to you, when worship was more real to you, when your service was more effective for the Lord Jesus Christ—if there was ever a time like that, when it was more than it is now, you are backsliding. So, pay attention. We're talking about the backslider. "*The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways*" (Proverbs 14:14). I had to search my heart with tears upon my knees as I said, "Lord, do I love You with a full heart? Is there un-confessed, un-repented-of sin in my own life? Would I be so foolish to stand in this pulpit and talk about backsliding and be one—a backslider?" "The Backslider"—that is the title of our message.

Now, this is just one verse, so we're going to try to find an illustration. So, I thought, "In the Bible, where shall I find an illustration that will illustrate, and capitulate, and amplify what we're talking about when we mean a 'backslider'?" And, my heart went to 2 Samuel chapter 11, and I want you to turn to 2 Samuel chapter 11 right now. And, keep your Bibles open, because the rest of our message and the base of our message is going to be found in 2 Samuel chapter 11 and chapter 12. We're going to be talking about an episode in the life of David, when David became a backslider—2 Samuel chapters 11 and 12.

Now, I don't suppose, in my estimation, there's a man that I have more admiration and more love for in the Bible than ole' David. I love David. There's something about David. He's a friend of mine, though I've never met him. I met him in the Word of God, and I love David. He was a wonderful man. The Bible calls David "a man after God's own heart" (1 Samuel 13:14). One of my sons is named David because of this David in the Bible, because of the admiration that I have for David. What a great man was David! I read in the Bible where David killed a lion, and then he killed a bear, and then he overcame Goliath. And, he was a man whose life was marked by courage and foolishness for the Lord.

Not only was David a courageous man, but I think, "What a talented man David was!" He was an administrator. He was an organizer. He was a musician. He was a poet. He was a man who knew God. He was one of the most multitalented individuals that God ever placed up on the face of this earth. This man named David was Israel's greatest king, and he has become a prototype—an illustration—of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, as used in the Bible. And yet, what a humble man was David! After he'd been anointed king and knew that he was going to, he went right back out to attending sheep. There are very few men in the Bible who had more genuine humility than this man

David. And, by the way, humility is one of the great marks of a great man. And, he was a humble man, and what a noble man was David! I mean, when his enemy (who was King Saul), who sought for David's life, was at that time in David's hand, and David could have done anything he wanted with King Saul, David refused to lay his hand upon God's anointed. He said, "God will take care of him." I tell you, you're not going to find more nobility in a man than you found in David.

But, listen—David became a backslider. You know, I think if I'd been writing the life of David, I would have been tempted to leave this chapter out. I would have said, "I don't want that to mar the story. David is such a wonderful man. I just somehow don't want to put that in there." That's one of the great truths of the inspiration of the Bible, dear friend: it writes it all.

By the way, God keeps a record, too. I heard of a newspaper who said, "If you don't want it printed, don't let it happen." Well, dear friend, listen—it happened, and it was printed; and it was recorded. And, when the Bible paints a photograph or a portrait, it paints it warts and all. There's a picture, or a painting, of Alexander the Great. Do you remember the man who conquered the world by the time he was 33 and wept because there were no more walls to conquer—Alexander the Great? And, in this portrait, Alexander has his head down like this, as though he's meditating. But, those who know, know that Alexander had a scar right up here on his forehead. And, he's trying to cover that scar, and that's the reason he's painted as he is. But, when the Bible paints, the hand is removed. And, we're going to see this horrible episode in the life of David.

Now, I say that to say this—listen to me: David was a wise man, a good man, a humble man, a noble man, a courageous man, and David went down. Therefore, that ought to be a lesson to Jim Whitmire. That ought to be a lesson to Adrian Rogers. That ought to be a lesson to every one of us in this building today. You are no better, no wiser than David; you don't love God any more than David did. You don't have any more talents, and resources, and ability than David did. And, I want to tell you, David went down. And, what a warning this ought to be to all of those of us who, indeed, be backsliders. As Solomon warned—who himself became a backslider: "*The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways*" (Proverbs 14:14).

Now, we're going to look in this chapter—this is the chapter: chapter 11—2 Samuel chapter 11—that tells of David's excursion into sin, where David committed adultery with Bathsheba, and then, in order to cover that sin, he committed the sin of murder. You say, "David?" Yes, David. It grieves me to say it. I mean, if I did not know the Bible, when I saw what David did here, I would say, "David had never been saved." But yet, I know that David was saved; and yet, David got into horrible, terrible sin. Let that be a warning to every one of us.

I. The Cause of David's Backsliding

I want us to think, first of all, about the cause of David's backsliding—the cause of David's backsliding. What caused David to backslide? Well, let's begin reading here in 2 Samuel chapter 11 and verse 1: *“And it came to pass, after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth to battle, that David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the children of Ammon, and besieged Rabbah. But David tarried still at Jerusalem”* (2 Samuel 11:1). Just underscore the word *but*. It doesn't say, *“And David tarried”*—*“But David tarried.”* That is, he's talking here in contradiction to what the others did.

Now, who would have ever thought that David, the mighty warrior, would have sent somebody else to fight his battles for him? Here was David now, who had been mighty for God, fearless for God, courageous for God, but now he is tarrying at Jerusalem rather than going to fight the battle for the Lord. And, it was the battle of the Lord, because the enemies of this world were the enemies of God. And, David was the king, and David was the commander-in-chief. And, it was the time when kings went forth to war.

A. The Sin of Casualness

The first step, therefore, in David's declination—what I want to call “the sin of casualness.” David, now, has become casual in the things of God. Are you paying attention to me? David, now, has been blessed so much, God has been so good to David, David has had victory after victory, that no longer does he have to go fight—he can just send Joab; he can just sit back now, and coast, and take it easy. Now, David has put off the armor, but the Bible warns us, as good soldiers we are to *“endure hardness, as [good soldiers] of [the Lord] Jesus Christ”* (2 Timothy 2:3). And, in war, and if you get casual about it... Some of you have served the Lord so long—you've had victory after victory—you don't think you really have to be uptight about being upright; and so, you just get kind of casual, and you don't endure hardness any more.

Look, if you will, in verse 2: *“And it came to pass in an eveningtide”*—just underscore that, *“in an eveningtide”*—*“that David arose from off his bed”* (2 Samuel 11:2). Did you see that? It's at evening, and David is getting out of bed—he's getting out of bed. That's the time when you're supposed to go to bed; he's getting out of bed. Do you know what David has been doing? He has been lounging around all day long. He's been careless. He's been idle.

Now, some slogans are mere clichés, and clichés are meaningless slogans sometimes. But, there's one that we've heard and we need to put to heart. What? An idle mind is the devil's workshop. You beware of the sin of idleness; you beware of the sin of casualness, because here's a man who, somehow, he's supposed to be in the

battle, and he's in the bed; he's lounging around. God doesn't want you to be idle. He doesn't want me to be idle. Some of you say, "Boy, I can hardly wait 'till I retire." Friend, let me tell you something: you'll never retire from serving the Lord. Did you know that? And, those of you who are retired only have more time to serve the Lord; it's not a time for you to sit around and get lazy. Oh, yes—I want you to go fishing. Oh, yes—you can putter around the house. Oh, yes—you can do certain things, but you must never take your eyes off the Lord. You must never get lazy; you must never get idle spiritually. And, as you get older, you ought to get sweeter and bolder toward the Lord Jesus Christ and become more and more of a warrior king for your Savior.

B. **The Sin of Carelessness**

Now, listen—first, the sin of casualness, and that turned to the sin of carelessness. Look again in verse 2, if you will: *"And it came to pass in an eveningtide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon"* (2 Samuel 11:2). "Now," you say, "why was he careless?" Well, because he looked upon her. "Well," you say, "he couldn't help that." Not the first time—not the first time. The word that is used here, "to look upon," means that he gazed upon her—he feasted his eyes upon her; he got careless; he let down his guard. Now, you know, the Book of Proverbs that we're studying about says that we're to *"keep [his] heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life"* (Proverbs 4:23). And, we're to keep our guard before our eyes. Isaiah chapter 33, verse 15: *"He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes"—*now, listen to this—*"that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil; He shall dwell on high"* (Isaiah 33:15–16).

There are times, dear friend, when you have to stop up your ears; there are times when you shut your eyes. You cannot feast upon garbage and it not affect you. You cannot look on a woman and lust after her, and it not affect you. But, here was David, who let his guard down, and he went from being casual to being careless. I feel sorry for David at this time, because David is not aware of what is about to happen to him. He still thinks he's right with God. He's still like some of you—just coasting, and careless, watching things, saying things, going to places, and associating with people that you have no business associating with. And yet, you become very careless.

C. **The Sin of Compulsiveness**

Now, watch—here's a man, first, casual; now, careless; now, thirdly, it's a sin of compulsiveness. See what happens here in verse 3? And, they, *"and the woman"—*verse 2—*"was very beautiful to look upon. And David sent and enquired after the woman. And one said, Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah*

the Hittite?” (2 Samuel 11:2–3). Now, here’s what happened—look at it: David did not plan this thing. I mean, he’d not schemed this thing at all. I mean, just compulsively, he said, “Who is that woman? Who is that? Boy, she’s beautiful! Find out who she is.” And, the next thing you know he’s committing adultery with her. A week before that happened, he would have denied it could have ever happened. I dare say, an hour before it happened, he would have denied that it ever could have happened. But, compulsively, it happened. I want you to see the devil is moving David just an inch at a time. He’s becoming a backslider. First, careless; then, casual; then, compulsive—he just simply sins.

Now, listen—there are three individuals sitting in a pew, in a seat, where you are right now: the person you are at this moment, the person you could be for God and for good, and the person you could be for evil. Now, many of us do not realize the propensity for evil that’s in our hearts. Many of you do not realize the depths, the depravity, to which you could go as a child of God. You say, “Not me, Preacher.” Are you better than David? I tell you, David is one of the greatest men that ever lived, but David got casual about his walk with the Lord. He just assumed that God was going to keep on giving him victory. He let down on the things of God and became idle, and indolent, and lazy. And, first of all, he was casual. And then, he was careless. And then, he was compulsive. He did something in a moment that he regretted forever after.

D. The Sin of Callousness

But, not only the sin of compulsiveness—now it turns to the sin of callousness. Now, he gets very callous about his sin, and he now takes Uriah the Hittite—and I wish that I had time this morning to develop the story—but Bathsheba becomes pregnant; she’s with child. David knows that he’s got to cover up the sin—at least, he feels that he’s got to cover up the sin. So, he has the idea, “Well, I’ll just make people believe that the baby is just born out of a marriage. After all, Bathsheba is married to Uriah, and I’ll bring Uriah in and let Uriah spend the night with Bathsheba. And, nobody will know that the baby that is to be born is the child that [David] had fathered.”

Only, it didn’t work out that way. Uriah was so loyal to David, loved David so much, that rather than going home and spending the night with his wife when he was invited to do so by David—brought from off the battlefield—he slept outside David’s door to protect David. When David saw what happened, according to this chapter—and you can read it when you get home—David knew that Uriah must be put to death because Uriah would know the child was not his own. And so, David called Joab, his commander-in-chief, and told Joab to put Uriah out in the false run of the battle, and then, when the battle got hot and thick, to withdraw from Uriah and leave him out there stranded and forsaken. And, he would be killed in the heat of the battle, and everybody would think

that it was an accident of war. But, it was an act of murder, and that's exactly what happened. And, it's hard for me to believe that David could have done such a thing. Uriah was David's friend; he was under David's command and, therefore, under David's protection.

But, David now begins to scheme. Are you watching? When David committed adultery, that was a warm-blooded sin; but now, this is a cold-blooded sin. Do you see the difference? The first sin was a sin of compulsiveness; this is a sin of callousness. Now, David is scheming; now, David is getting lower. And, Uriah the Hittite, who was ready to die for David's armor, dies by David's hand. I can't believe that David could have done such a thing as this; yet David did. I want to tell you, David is a horrible backslider. If I did not know the Bible, if I did not know the truth of God's Word, I would say that David was not a saved man. But, he did these things, and, indeed, he was a saved man. (The cause of David's backsliding.)

II. The Cost of David's Backsliding

Now, secondly—watch—I want you to see the cost of David's backsliding. The Bible says, *"The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways"* (Proverbs 14:14). Now, David tries to cover up his sin, as we've said, by having Uriah stained. But, do you remember when we preached in Proverbs chapter 28 and verse 13? The Bible says, *"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy"* (Proverbs 28:13). Oh, would to God that David, as soon as he committed that sin with Bathsheba, had said, "O my God, what have I done? God, forgive me. God, have mercy. God, I'll bring a sacrifice and make restitution. God, O God, have mercy." God would have had mercy. God would have forgiven him. God would have cleansed him. Oh, it still would have been a terrible sin, but the Bible says, *"Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him"* (Matthew 5:25). That means, if you've done wrong, quickly confess it as soon as you know—confess it. Don't let that sin build up in your heart. But, do you know what David did? David spent a year without confessing that sin. David tried to cover that sin for a year.

Just put your mark there in 2 Samuel chapter 11, and turn to Psalm 32. Let me show you what it was like for David. Psalm 32—this is what happened to David that year that he was a backslider, and it's what's happening to some of you right now. Let's look at it: David says, *"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered"*—David finally got it right. He had to get it right before he could write this psalm—*"Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile"*—that is, no deceit, no cover up. "Oh," he says, "it's so great to be clean." And then, he gives his testimony, what that year was like. He said—*"When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long"* (Psalm 32:1–3). Are you paying

attention to me? He said, *“My bones waxed old”* (Psalm 32:3). Do you know what happened to David? David was prematurely aged by his sin.

I preached last week on the soul’s fountain of youth. I preached last week on God’s miracle medicine—a merry heart. I want to tell you what happened to David: now, he is prematurely aging. Just as a merry heart is medicine for the soul; sin in the life is poison for the soul. And, here’s what happened to David: he says, *“My bones waxed old”*—he says—*“through my roaring all the day long”* (Psalm 32:3). The word *roaring* actually means my “moaning” and my “groaning.” On the inside, David was absolutely miserable. Pay attention now. Are you listening? Some of you are living in adultery—you say, “Well, I must be saved; David is saved.” Some of you have open sin in your life, and you say, “Well, if David could get to Heaven, maybe I could.” Well, I want to tell you, there’d better be the same thing true about you that was true about David if you’re going to Heaven: David’s heart was broken, and even though he tried to cover up his sin, on the inside it was tearing his guts out. He knew what he had done, and there was this groaning, this roaring.

Listen to me: when God saves you, God doesn’t fix you up where you can’t sin any more. But, listen—He fixes you up so you can’t sin and enjoy it any more. You understand what I’m talking about? And, outwardly, David had this thing colored, but he said, “Inwardly, there’s this groaning, this roaring.” There was that inward groaning; there was God’s heavy hand. Look in verse 4: he said, *“For...thy hand”—all day long and all night—“thy hand was heavy upon me”* (Psalm 32:4). That is, God had David in His grip. David is under deep conviction. If you can just smile and laugh about your backsliding, you’re not saved—you’re not saved.

David goes on to say, *“My moisture is turned into the drought of summer”* (Psalm 32:4). Do you know what he meant by that? Have you ever gotten dry, spiritually? I tell you what—backsliding can get you dry spiritually. Do you remember how it used to be when you love the Lord? Do you remember how your heart was full of the Lord Jesus, and you’d get into song in the car, and just roll the windows up so nobody could hear you, and just praise the Lord and say, “Jesus, I love You”—sing songs, and make up songs, and go around the house praising the Lord, and you enjoyed worship services and praise services; but now, you’re as dry as dust because of that backsliding that’s in your heart and in your life That’s what happened to David. David said, “My moisture is dried up; it’s like a drought in the summertime” (Psalm 32:4).

Sometimes you do a talk to a person—you’re out soul winning; maybe you’ve had this experience—and you knock on the door, and an old man will come out there with a beer belly and a cigarette. And, you say, “Well, I want to tell you about...” “Well,” he says, “I used to go to that church down there. I don’t go any more. I’m a member there. My name’s on that roll down there.” He says, “You know, I guess I’m an old backslider.”

He's not an old backslider; he's going straight to Hell. No ole' backslider just says, "Ha ha ha"—laughs about it, jokes about it. David wasn't laughing about it; David wasn't joking about it. I want to tell you something, mister: if you are right with God, if you're a child of God, if you've been saved—you've been born again—you can't live this way and get away with it.

God didn't let David do it. David was a man after God's own heart, and David gave his testimony. For a year he tried to outsmart God. And, I want to tell you, he aged prematurely. I want to tell you, inwardly, he was groaning. I want to tell you, dear friend, God's hand was heavy upon him. He became dry as dust spiritually, and he knew that he was out of fellowship with God. And, the most miserable man in the world is not an unsaved man; he's a saved man out of fellowship with God—out of fellowship with God. The cost of David's backsliding—what a terrible thing it was! I want to tell you, dear friend, the cost of sin is high and the pleasures of sin are brief for the child of God.

III. The Crisis in David's Backsliding

Now, the third thing I want you to see—I want you to see here the crisis in David's backsliding. God precipitated a crisis in David's life, and He will in yours if you're a child of God. Four things have happened to David—very quickly I can mention them. They'll happen to you.

A. Conviction

The very first thing is conviction. God brought conviction to David. The Holy Spirit of God talked to David. That's what David meant when he said, "Night and day Your hand was heavy upon me" (Psalm 32:4). Has God ever put His hand on you when you've done something? Do you know what I'm talking about? Man, I know what I'm talking about. I mean, God laid His hand on me. David said, "Your hand was on me" (Psalm 32:4). God will not let His child go into sin, but God puts His hand upon the shoulder of that child—and what we call "conviction"—"conviction." And, that conviction will come from the Holy Spirit of God. Now, at that moment, if we're wise, the minute God convicts us, if we're wise, at that moment we'll confess it and get it right. You know, the Bible says in 1 Corinthians chapter 11: "if we'll judge ourselves, we'll not be judged" (1 Corinthians 11:31).

Okay, I've raised four children; some of them are mulish—I'll not tell you which ones. But, in order to get their attention, you have to take off your belt (used to when they were little). Others—just a word, they'd burst into tears, say, "Daddy, I'm sorry." Now, which ones do you think got the most whippings? The one with the tender heart didn't need whippings. You see, when parents are chastising a child, they're not trying to get even. At least, that's the theory—you're not trying to get even; what you're trying to do is

to correct the child. You want the child corrected. That's all that is necessary for the child to be corrected. That's the reason the Bible says, "If we will judge ourselves, we'll not be judged" (1 Corinthians 11:31). If we have enough sense to say, "God, I was wrong; forgive me," God will say, "Okay." Conviction—but David didn't do that. God put His hand upon David, and David didn't do it.

B. Chastisement

So, next comes chastisement—chastisement. God began to chastise David. That's what Psalm 32 is about—the chastisement of David. And, God knows how to chastise you. The Bible says in Hebrews chapter 12 and verse 6: "*For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth*" (Hebrews 12:6). And, if you are living in sin and God doesn't chastise you, don't tell me you're saved. The Bible says, "*If ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons*" (Hebrews 12:8). You say, "That's rough language." Not in the sense that it's used in the Bible. It means God says, "If you were My child and lived that way, I would chastise you. If you don't have chastisement, don't say you're My child. I never sided you; I never followed you. Had I followed you, I would have corrected you." "For whom the Father loves He chastens" (Hebrews 12:6). And, this chastisement, being in the heart and life of David... Are you watching?

C. Confrontation

First, conviction; secondly, chastisement. But then, David—he still persisted for a year. Now remember, I'm talking about the crisis of David's backsliding. The third thing that happens is a confrontation—a confrontation, or a challenge. God challenged David—and I wish I had time to go into this story here—but God sent David's pastor to challenge him. David's pastor was a man named Nathan. Many of you know the story, or the parable, about the man who killed the land. I don't have time to even get into that story, but there was a challenge. And, I want you to look at the way that his pastor challenged him—chapter 12 and verse 7—look at it: "*And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man. Thus saith the LORD God of Israel*" (2 Samuel 12:7). Now, here David was challenged directly by a man of God.

Now, God is about to take David's life. God is about to call David prematurely to Heaven. But, God, before He calls David prematurely to Heaven, is going to give him one last chance, and God sends a challenge. Before God takes you to Heaven prematurely, God will send you a challenge. He'll send somebody to speak to you. It may be the challenge may come from your wife, your husband. The challenge may come from your pastor. The challenge may come from a friend. The challenge may come from a book. The challenge may come from an accident, a circumstance, or sickness. This message may be God's challenge to somebody in this building today—to

say, “You’ve gone as far as you’re going to go.” There’s a challenge, and, dear friend, if you pass on that challenge, you’re going to die—you’re going to die. A backslider cannot go on backsliding in perpetuity. First, a conviction; then, a chastisement and a challenge.

Now, look in chapter 12 and verse 13—look at it: *“And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die”*—*“thou shalt not die”* (2 Samuel 12:13). But, I want to tell you, had David not turned at that moment, he would have died.

If you remember, in the Bible, reading about Balaam the prophet... Balaam the prophet was on his way out of the will of God. And, he was riding a donkey, and the donkey saw the angel of the Lord. It so frightened the donkey that it bruised Balaam’s foot against the wall. Do you remember that story? And then, finally, the donkey got weak-kneed and fell down, and Balaam was so angry at the donkey that he stood up, and took a rod, and began to beat the donkey. And, God gave the donkey supernatural power of speech, and the donkey said to Balaam, “Why are you beating me? Haven’t I been your faithful beast?” And, at that moment, the prophet’s eyes were opened, and the prophet saw what the dumb beast—the brute beast—could see, which was the angel of God standing in the way with a drawn sword. And, the angel of Jehovah said to that wayward prophet, “Had you come any further I surely would have slain you” (Numbers 22:21–33). I wanted to tell you something, friend: there’s only so far that a child of God can go before he meets death. Moses crossed the deadline, and Moses died on Mt. Nebo. And, the Bible says, *“His eye was not dim, [neither was] his [strength] abated”* (Deuteronomy 34:7). That is, he died prematurely. I expect to meet Moses in Heaven.

Let me give you a verse of Scripture—1 John chapter 5 and verse 16: *“If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it”* (1 John 5:16). *“[There’s] a sin unto death”* (1 John 5:16). A backslider can only go so long before God takes him home.

A mother may take a baby, a little boy, to a birthday party in the neighborhood, and that boy there in the birthday party—he begins to tear open the presents that are not his; he begins to kick the ole’ girls on the shins; he begins to use bad language; and she keeps speaking to him, and correcting him, and she spanks him. But, he just a little spoiled brat. What’s the mother going to do after a while? She’s going to say, “Okay, Johnny, let’s go home—let’s go home.” He’s still her child; he just leaves the party early. “You’re not going to embarrass me that way. I’m not going to let you stay around here and embarrass me that way. Let’s go home.”

That’s what God’s going to say to some of you: “Let’s go home. Party is over. Come

on home. You'll answer for this at the Judgment Seat of Christ." The Bible says, "*There is a sin unto death*" (1 John 5:16). And, had David not come to that place when David confessed his sin, he would have died, according to what Samuel told him.

Now, listen, friend—you say that you're a child of God, you say that you're saved, you say that you're born again, and you live in sin and dabble in sin, and you're a backslider, and God doesn't lay the rod on your back, and God does not chastise you, and God doesn't challenge you—you're not saved at all. You're going to die and go to Hell anyway. I'm talking about a saved man, a man of God. "*The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways*" (Proverbs 14:14).

"Now, say, Brother Rogers, you're making it pretty stout this morning." Yeah, I want to—I want to. I believe the churches are filled with baptized pagans, never been born again, living in sin, thinking they're going to Heaven, never been saved. "*The backslider...[will] be filled with his own ways*" (Proverbs 14:14). I tell you, dear friend, "whom the Father loves He chastens and scourges, every son whom He receives" (Hebrews 12:6). I could give you illustration after illustration after illustration of backsliders who have been called home early because they met God's challenge and went past it.

A preacher down in Florida—I'll not call his name—one of the most gifted preachers I've ever heard in my life... My wife heard him preach in a conference, I was in another meeting. She ran out of that meeting to get me and said, "I want you to come over here and hear that man preach." He's a great preacher—one of the most gifted men. He fell into sin almost identically to the way that David did—the same kind of sins. We preachers used to get together and talk about that man. We'd prayed over him, wept over him. But, he went on obstinately. Preachers would say, "Oh, it's going to happen—it's going to happen. That man cannot do that." He was standing by his automobile on the road when a car came along, and hit him, and took off his head. Friend, let me tell you something: you cannot play that way with God. I could tell you story after story had we time of those that I know that have stepped from this life into the next because God challenged them and they took the challenge and did not repent.

IV. The Conquest of David's Backsliding

Now, let me just go one other step further. I want to talk to you about the conquest of David's backsliding. I want you to look, if you will with me please, in Psalm 89. David wrote the sweet Psalms in the Bible. David wrote this. David knew something about God being a covenant-keeping God. Look, if you will, in Psalm 89. This will bless your heart, so turn to it. David is talking about the way that God deals with those who love Him. Verse 30—he's talking about David's descendants, and it says, "*If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; If they break my statutes, and keep not*

my commandments; Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes”—that is, “If you are My children, I’m going to chastise you when you sin.” We’ve already talked about that. But, look in verse 33, and put a big circle around the word *nevertheless*—“*Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David*” (Psalm 89:30–35).

Now, this is talking about a covenant that God made with David and his descendants, that they might inherit the land. I want to tell you that God has made a greater covenant with His children when we put our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And, if we disobey the Lord, if we turn from His law, if we get backsliding, God will lay His rod upon us. The backslider will go to Heaven—as a matter of fact, he may go to Heaven quicker than somebody else who’s going to Heaven. But oh, if we turn from our sin, “[He’s] faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

I wish I had more time to talk about it, but let me just give you an illustration; and I’ll be finished. Years ago, the Crown Prince of India gave to Queen Victoria the most precious thing he had. He was a child prince. And, he gave to the Queen of England the Kohinoor Diamond. The Kohinoor Diamond is perhaps the most famous diamond of all history. Do you know how big it was when the prince gave it to the queen? One hundred and eighty-six carats—an almost flawless diamond. Can you imagine a diamond about as big as your fist? This diamond was given to the queen; it was put with the Crown Jewels in the Tower of London.

Later on, when that young prince became a man, that Indian prince—he went to London. He went to the Tower of London, and he said, “Would you please place that diamond in my hand?” They placed it in his hand. Then, he said to the queen, “Here, I want to give it back to you one more time.” He said, “When I gave it to you the first time,” he said, “I did not fully understand all that I was doing. I gave it to you with the heart and mind of a child. But now, with the heart and mind of a man, I want to give it back to you one more time with a deeper, fuller meaning than I had the first time.” I think many of us gave our hearts to the Lord Jesus as a child. We meant business, and our heart belongs to Him. But, I wonder if there are not some of us who would like to say, “Lord Jesus, maybe I have gotten casual about this. Maybe I have taken for granted what I did as a child, or as a young person, or as an immature person. But now, today, Lord Jesus, with all of my heart, knowing what I am, I take the most precious thing I have—my life, my soul, my all—my Lord, I present it to You anew and afresh like I have never, ever done it before. Here is my life; take and seal it.”

Conclusion

Friend, that is what I have done—said, “Lord Jesus, anew and afresh I give it to You—all of it.” I wonder if you would not like to do that to the Lord. I wonder if you would like not to be like David and commit the sin of casualness that becomes the sin of carelessness that became the sin of compulsiveness that became the sin of callousness. Would you just like to say, “Anew and afresh, Lord, here’s my life like I have never, ever given it to You before, although it is Yours. I give it, Lord Jesus, to You.”

God's Grace in the Workplace

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: June 10, 1984

Main Scripture Text: Proverbs 14:23

"In all labour there is profit: but the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury."

PROVERBS 14:23

Outline

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Introduction

We're preaching through the Book of Proverbs. A human proverb is a short sentence based on long experience, but these are short sentences based on something better than long experience. They're based on the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, as given to Solomon. Now today I have a message that I just pray God the Holy Spirit will burn into your heart because, if you understand the message today, I can promise you that it will literally transform your life. I've never preached on this subject—that is, a whole message on this subject. I have alluded to it. But I believe it is a foundational truth, and I'm really amazed that I've not brought a whole message on this particular subject before.

Proverbs chapter 14 and verse 23, and just the first part of that verse: *"In all labour there is profit"* (Proverbs 14:23)—*"In all labour there is profit."* I want to talk to you today about "God's Grace in the Workplace"—"God's Grace in the Workplace." And again, I want to tell you, if you understand what I have to say today, it's going to transform your work. It's going to change it from boredom to blessing. It's going to change it from monotony to meaning. It's going to change it from drudgery to dignity. It's going to change it from the same old grind, to glory, if you understand what I have to say.

You see, so many people are sick and tired of what they do. I mean, they endure

their work; they don't enjoy their work. They think their job is meaningless. They think that some people have happy jobs, some people have exciting work, some people have thrilling things to do, but not them. They draw their breath and draw their salary. They wake up in the morning and take a bath, shave, go down, drink a cup of coffee, eat a piece of toast, scald their throat because they're running a little late, drink their coffee too fast, then they run out and fight the traffic and get to work. It's the same old thing, day after day. Then they come home at night, take a couple of aspirin, sit down and watch the evening news, discuss things with the wife, maybe putter around in the yard a little bit, then go to bed. The next day, the same old thing—nothing exciting, nothing meaningful, nothing thrilling; it just seems to be so humdrum, so meaningless.

Now they love God, and they serve God, but they have the idea that the only time they can serve God is when they're not working. They want to get off work so they can serve God, so they give their prime time to the employer and then they give the leftovers to God. They give the weekends to God. They're serving God sort of halftime. It's not even really halftime, because they give most of their prime hours, and the best hours, to the boss. They're trying to serve two masters and, of course, Jesus said, "*No man can serve two masters*" (Matthew 6:24). And I believe there are some of you who are sitting here listening to me today, perhaps most of you, who are guilty of doing what I call *split-level living*.

Now I want you to get something in your heart today, and oh, I pray God that He'll help me to get it into your heart today—and it is this: You may be a very ordinary person. You may think there's nothing exciting about you. But you see, God loves ordinary people. He made most of that kind. Isn't that right? I mean, He must like them, since He made so many of them, right? God makes ordinary people. They're the handiwork of God.

Look in 1 Corinthians chapter 1, verse 26, "*For ye see your calling, brethren... not many mighty, not many noble, are called*" (1 Corinthians 1:26). You see? God uses ordinary people. But here's the secret: *God takes* ordinary people *and He gives them* extraordinary power. God infuses us with His Holy Spirit, so we're no longer ordinary, because, when we get saved, we become extraordinary. But now, wait a minute. God takes ordinary people, God gives ordinary people extraordinary power, and then God puts those ordinary people—are you watching this?—in ordinary places. Now you'd better learn this: When God takes an ordinary person and gives him extraordinary power, then puts that ordinary person in an ordinary place with extraordinary power, He does extraordinary things through an ordinary person.

Now if you'll learn this and get this into your heart, it's going to transform your life. You see, we neatly divide life up into the secular and the sacred. There are so many people who say to me something like this: "You know, Pastor, what I would really like to

do, I mean, if I could do what I would really like to do? Well, I'd just like to get out of this job and serve God. Boy, I'd just like to serve God full-time." Have you ever thought that? Boy, if I could just quit what I'm doing. Boy, it'd be so wonderful to be like you. It'd be so wonderful to be like Brother Phil. It'd be so wonderful, if I could just get out of what I'm doing and serve God full-time. Now O God, help me to teach you today that, if you are a Christian living in the Spirit, you are serving God full-time. *I don't care where you work—it is an honorable occupation. You are serving God full-time. Your work is to be the temple of your devotion, and it is to be the platform of your witness.*

You see, we divide life up into the secular and the sacred, but not the Bible, not the New Testament. In the Old Testament, they did, but not in the New Testament. In the Old Testament, they had priests and then the rest of the people. But in the New Testament, we're all priests. In the Old Testament, there was a temple that people went to; but Jesus said, "It's neither in this place, nor in that place, but everywhere... we worship God in Spirit and in truth" (John 4:21–24). In the Old Testament, they divided foods up into the clean and the unclean. But in the New Testament, "Thus he spake, making all meats clean" (Mark 7:19). In the Old Testament, certain days were set aside. But in the New Testament, every day is a holy day, and every day is a sacred place, and every job has dignity, if it is an honorable work. Every Christian is a priest, and every Christian is a minister, and every Christian is doing full-time Christian service.

Now you may not believe that right now, but I believe you will when I get finished with the message, not because I think I'm so sharp, but because of what God's Word has to say. *"In all labour there is profit."* You may not be in an exciting job. I mean, your job may be in a factory screwing lids on tubes of toothpaste all day long. Maybe that's what you do all day long. Or, you may be working in an office as a clerk. Or, you may be pumping gasoline; you may be digging ditches; you may be building houses; you may be doing one of a myriad of a number of things. But I want to tell you, dear friend, if you learn what I have to tell you today from the Word of God, it is going to turn that drudgery into delight; it's going to turn that monotony into magnificence. And you're going to find out that you are where God has placed you, and you're there for a specific purpose.

Three things I want you to see. Number one: I want you to see the sacredness of everyday work. Secondly, I want you to see the sphere of everyday work. And thirdly, I want you see the service of everyday work.

I. The Sacredness of Everyday Work

What is the sacredness of everyday work? Don't get the idea that to serve God you have to be a minister, or a missionary, or on the staff of some Christian organization. Every job, if it is done in the power of the Holy Spirit, is a sacred job. Every one! Now listen. Let me give you a verse of Scripture—Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 5. Just jot

these down, and we won't go back and forth through the Scripture, unless I ask you to turn to it—but just jot them down. Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 5. I'm talking now about the sacredness of everyday work: *"In all labour,"* Proverbs tells us, *"there is profit."* Listen to it: *"Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh"*—employees, be obedient to your boss: that's what he's saying, even though he is not a Christian. He is your master according to the flesh, not according to the Spirit—*"with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ"* (Ephesians 6:5). You mean, I'm to work for my boss as though he were Jesus? That's right. That two-legged devil? That's right. You are to work for him as though he were Jesus Christ. Because God owns the company that he thinks he owns. This is my Father's world, and you are to serve the Lord Jesus.

Now what I want to show you—I want to use an example for the message today—a man named Daniel. Be finding the Book of Daniel, and just keep one bookmark in the Book of Proverbs. Daniel is going to be the chief illustration of this passage of Scripture in the Book of Proverbs chapter 14 and verse 23: *"In all labour there is profit."*

You will remember that Daniel was taken as a captive from Israel and he was carried to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar. And there in Babylon he had a secular job. Daniel's job was that he was a governmental bureaucrat. They trained him and they pressed him into the service of the government. As a governmental bureaucrat, he really served the Lord Jesus. Don't get the idea that Daniel was a pastor or that Daniel was a priest. He was not. Daniel was what we would call today a businessman, in ordinary work.

But I want you to notice what the king said when Daniel was in the lions' den. You remember Daniel refused to do certain things when he was in Babylon, and they threw him in the lions' den as a sort of a punishment, and the lions got lockjaw. Daniel just relaxed and pulled up an old fluffy lion for a pillow, and got out his Old Testament, and began to *read between the lions*. He was just having a wonderful time there, doing his devotions. And the king looked in—Daniel chapter 6 and verse 20: *"And when he came to the den,"*—that is, the king—*"he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel: and the king spake and said to Daniel,"*—now listen. Here's what the King said to Daniel. Remember that Daniel was not a preacher, not a priest, in the classic sense of the word—*"O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?"* (Daniel 6:20). Now notice what the king said. He said, "Daniel, you're a servant of the living God. Has that God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?" And of course, God had been able to deliver him.

Now what am I trying to say? Here was a man who had a secular job, and yet even his enemies, and the unsaved people of this world, had to admit that his secular job was really a sacred job, that he was really serving God. You may be a housewife. Well, not a

housewife—I don't like that word *housewife*. You're not married to a house. You may be a homemaker, and you might think, "Oh well, what's this got to do with serving the Lord?" Friend, there's no higher occupation than serving the Lord by being a homemaker. One woman has over her kitchen sink these words: "Divine services held here three times a day," as she does those dishes.

The sacredness of what we call secular work, the sacredness of everyday work: If you do it in the name of Jesus, as to Jesus, in the power of the Holy Spirit, you will receive the same reward for doing that job that I receive for doing this job. You may not believe it. You may not think it is so. You may think that your job is not an important job at all—"Nobody cares about me; nobody knows about me." Friend, God knows about you, even if you don't get to lead in silent prayer in the children's department. God knows about you, and God has His eye upon you. And the Bible says those of you who are in secular work are serving the Lord Christ. Every Christian, therefore, is in full-time Christian work—Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 5. Never forget it.

II. The Sphere of Everyday Work

Now the second thing I want you to learn: not only the sacredness of everyday work, but the sphere of everyday work. Where are you called to do this everyday work? You say, "Well, if I'm going to do it, I sure would like to be in a Christian company. I sure would like to be surrounded by Christians. Boy, you just don't know; you just don't know the people that I work with, Brother Rogers. I just don't believe God wants me in this place. Boy, I mean, it must be nice for you to be around all those people in the church, you know? They're always smiling, always preaching, and always praising God. The only time I hear God's name mentioned where I work is when people are cursing. And Preacher, you just cannot believe the obscene stories. And you just cannot know the awful cartoons and things that are passed around. You just can't believe the flirtation, and the way people dress, and the way they talk, and the greed, and the dog-eat-dog, and the ambition, and the throat cutting, and all of the materialism and the gossip that goes on. Oh, Preacher, if God would only get me out of this place so I could serve Him!"

Friend, God put you in that place so you could serve Him. You may not believe that, but I want to tell you, God put Daniel in Babylon. "Preacher, you're talking about being called to your work. God called you to the ministry. God called Brother Bob Sorrell out of the business world into the ministry. God called Brother Phil Weatherwax into the ministry. Oh, if God would just call me! But God didn't call me. I'm just where I am as a victim of circumstances. To be very honest with you, Preacher, I took this job just because it was the only one I could get. I just had to have it, and I don't know what I would do right now, if I quit this job. I don't know where I'd go, so I have to stay here. But I don't have a sense of calling. I don't have a sense of meaning. It's just something I

have to do because I've got to live; I've got to eat. But I wish to God that I had a sense that God placed me where I am."

Well, friend, God may have placed you where you are, and you'd not know anything about it, and you didn't have any sense of call at all. Let me ask you a question: Was Daniel a servant of God? Indeed, he was. Did he serve God? Indeed, he did. Was he where God wanted him? Indeed, He was. How did he get there? By circumstances beyond his control, at least what he thought were beyond his control. He was picked up by King Nebuchadnezzar, and he was brought as an exile to the land of Babylon, that place of wickedness. But let me tell you something: How did he really get there? How did he really get there? I want you to put this verse down so you can read it when you get home: Jeremiah 29 and verse 4 (Jeremiah 29:4). Dear friend, we are called as Christians to confront this world with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We do something around this church that's a little artificial. I'm in favor of it because it's necessary. You know what it is? We get everybody down here on a certain night, and give them cards, and tell them to go out and witness. I tell you, dear friend, there's a better way. There's a better way, and that is every day you're to witness for the Lord Jesus Christ on your job. We call this lifestyle evangelism, and you're going to be hearing a whole lot more about this thing of lifestyle evangelism. It's not that you go take some names and go out and see somebody you don't know, but that you work side by side, day by day, with those that you do know. You let your light shine there in that dark place where God has placed you.

Listen to this scripture—Matthew chapter 5, verse 14: "*Ye are the light of the world...*"—"Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house" (Matthew 5:14). For a light to be valuable, it must be visible. Therefore, God doesn't want you under a basket called a church house. God wants that light where it can be seen. I want to tell you that your job—are you listening to me?—your job is the lampstand that God has ordained where you let your light shine. And if God has placed you there, that is the place where God wants you. That is the sphere of your ministry, and it is a fulltime ministry.

So many times we just say, "O God, I want to get out of Babylon. God, I want to get out of Babylon. Lord, I just want to do something for you. I want to get away from this worldly influence." Well, friend, God's plan for you is not to flee from the world. God's plan for you is to confront the world, and to overcome the world, and to witness to the world. Listen to these scriptures—John 17, verse 15—Jesus said, "*I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil*" (John 17:15). God's plan is not that you be taken out of that worldly environment, but that you would live a good Christian life in it.

1 Corinthians chapter 5 verses 9 and 10—listen to these verses—Paul said, “I wrote you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually Immoral people, yet I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters; since then you would need to go out of the world.” (1 Corinthians 5:9–10). Paul said, “If you try to live a life where you’re not going to come in contact with anybody who’s dishonest, or anybody who’s a pervert, or anybody who’s full of sexual innuendoes, or full of dishonesty; if you’re trying to live without touching the lives of those people,” Paul says, “the only way for you to live is to be somewhere with Prince Mongo in Zambodia,” or wherever it is he lives. You couldn’t live here. You couldn’t live here. You’d have to get out of this world. Now what I’m trying to say is this—folks, listen: This world—this world—is where we live, and this world is where God has placed you.

Romans chapter 12, verse 21 says, “*Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good*” (Romans 12:21). We’re not to flee from the world; we’re to confront the world. 1 John chapter 5, verses 4 and 5: “*For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith*” (1 John 5:4). God has placed you in Babylon. God put Daniel in Babylon; God put you in Babylon. God has placed you there, and the work that you do there—as Daniel served the Lord God, you’re to serve the Lord God.

“*In all labour there is profit.*” Now that doesn’t mean that you can do everything in Babylon. That doesn’t mean, when you’re in Babylon, do as the Babylonians do. Jesus said, “*I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil*” (John 17:15). There were certain things in Babylon that Daniel refused to do, and he got thrown in the lions’ den; he got some persecution. There are some things that you cannot do. That’s what’s going to make you distinctively different, and that’s what’s going to make you so effective when you are in Babylon. *You have been saved out of the world, and then sent back into the world, to witness to the world. And that’s the only business in the world you have in the world, till you’re taken out of the world.*

I want to give you some verses—Philippians 2, verse 15—listen to it: “*That ye may be blameless and harmless,*”—that’s what Daniel was—“*the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world*” (Philippians 2:15). Where is the light to shine? Where? In the middle of a crooked and perverse generation. It is not God’s will to get you out of that ungodly place where you work. You shine as lights in the world, in the middle of a crooked and perverse generation.

If you were going to put a lighthouse, where would you put a lighthouse? In downtown Manhattan? No. You’d put a lighthouse out on some rocky, craggy, barren

coast, so that lighthouse can help some ship that's about to go under. And that's why God has put you where He's put you. Listen to it again—Philippians 2 and verse 15: “That ye may become blameless and harmless, children of God; without fault, in the middle of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.”

When Daniel was in that fiery furnace, it was at that time that he went through the fiery furnace, and refused to do what they did in Babylon, in the middle of that crooked and perverse generation, that Nebuchadnezzar realized that God was God. And listen to what he said, in Daniel chapter 3, verses 28 and 29: *“Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God.”* Now listen to what this pagan king said: *“Therefore I make a decree, That every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill: because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort”* (Daniel 3:28–29).

That's a pagan king speaking. How would that king have ever known the power of God had it not been for a Daniel, who took his secular job and used his secular job as a lampstand, to let his light shine in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation?

Ladies and gentlemen, Jesus has called us to go into all the world (Mark 16:15). And there's the world of finance, and there's the world of business, and there's the world of sports. In all of these worlds, we are to go in and let our lights shine for the Lord Jesus Christ. Let me give you another verse—1 Peter chapter 2, verses 11 and 12: *“Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;”—*that is, we're to live clean, right, pure. But notice in verse 12, *“having your conversation honest among the Gentiles...”*—now, who are the Gentiles? That means the unsaved. That means the humanists, the sophisticates—*“having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation”* (1 Peter 2:11–12).

When they see you, you are to let your light shine. If people would begin to take what I'm preaching today, if they would see that what they do is service to the Lord Jesus, I don't care what it is, and if they would see that God has placed them there in Babylon—that is, the sphere of their witness—and if they would begin to let their light shine, people would believe what I preach on Sunday, when people start living like that on Monday.

Let me give you four rules for witnessing to those with whom you work. You say,

“Okay, Preacher—Monday morning, look out, here I come!” All right now, let me give you four rules.

A. **Don’t’ Brag!**

Number one: don’t brag! Don’t brag! The Bible says, *let* your light shine (Matthew 5:16). Don’t *make* it shine. It’s to glow, not glare. They’re to see the light, not the candle. What I mean is, if you go in there with a super load of self-righteousness, bragging about yourself, and bragging about your church, and bragging about your righteousness, and bragging about your doctrines, you’re going to make them want to vomit. They’re going to be sick of it. There’s nothing worse than self-righteousness. Don’t brag.

B. **Don’t Nag!**

Second thing: don’t nag! If you’re always thumping a Bible, handing out a tract, always getting on to somebody when he gambles, or somebody when he smokes, or somebody when he curses, or somebody when he passes out a raw cartoon; if you’re nagging those people, you may think that you’re doing a good job. But I want to tell you, mister, you’re not going to win them to Jesus Christ. You’re not going to win an unsaved man that way. That is not his problem. You’d be just like that man, if you didn’t know the Lord Jesus Christ. His sin is not his problem. He needs Jesus Christ, and those are the only things he gets his kicks out of, he gets his bangs out of. He doesn’t have the joy that you have. And you’re not going to nag him to the Lord Jesus Christ.

As a matter of fact, listen to Colossians 4, verses 5 and 6: “*Walk in wisdom toward them that are without...*”—oh, if we could only teach our people this!—“*Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man*” (Colossians 4:5–6). Oh, if you could only say, “God, salt my speech! Lord, season my speech with grace! I don’t want to nag these people!”

C. **Don’t Lag!**

Don’t brag! Don’t nag! And thirdly, don’t lag! Do your part of the job. If you’re a lazy Christian, if you’re not getting there on time, if you’re not doing your work that you ought to do, you’re a disgrace to grace. It’s a sin for a Christian to do less than his best. Listen again to Ephesians chapter 6, verses 5 and 6: “*Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers;*”—that is, don’t see if the boss is looking before you work hard—“*but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart*” (Ephesians 6:5–6). You are to work at that job, I don’t care how dull, how boring, it may seem. It’s not dull; it’s not boring, if you’re doing it for Jesus. And don’t you lag. Don’t be a laggard.

The Bible says, in Colossians chapter 3, verse 23: “*And whatsoever ye do, do it*

heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men” (Colossians 3:23). Boy, that’ll put a dignity in it! Whatever it is—you’re running a machine; you’re greasing automobiles; you’re typing letters; you’re carrying mail; you’re painting houses; you’re digging ditches; you’re cutting yards—“Jesus, I’m doing it for you. And I’ll do it with my might.” Boy, I’ll tell you, that’ll put a spring in your step. That’ll put a zest in it. And you’ll say, “I’m as much serving God this morning, as Adrian Rogers was when he was standing in that pulpit. I’m serving God as much as Jim Whitmire was when he was leading that choir. I am serving God as much as any missionary on the face of this earth. And whatever my hand finds to do, I will do it with my might” (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

D. Don’t Sag!

Don’t brag! Don’t nag! Don’t lag! And don’t sag! Don’t let down! Don’t let down! Don’t lapse back into the ways of this world. Don’t begin to complain. Don’t get unhappy. Stay happy! Stay full of joy! The only way to stay full of joy is to stay full of Jesus. And that means you’re going to have to have a quiet time before you ever go to work, and get loaded up with the grace of God, and bathe yourself in the presence of Jesus.

When everybody else is griping, and complaining, and bellyaching, and morose, you can be there with the light of the Lord God upon your face. *I want to tell you something about those people that you work with. Most of them are not all that interested in going to Heaven or Hell, they want to know how to hack it on Monday.* And when they see you come in the office without a hangover, and with the joy of the Lord Jesus on your face, they’re going to say, after a while, “Hey, buddy, what makes you function?”

You know what the Bible says, in 1 Peter chapter 3, verse 15? *“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you”* (1 Peter 3:15) You’re not going to have to take him by the buttonholes, and say, “Buddy, are you ready to meet God?” He’s going to come to you, and he’s going to say, “Hey, what makes you tick? What is the secret of the life that you live? Where are you getting that joy?” Because, the joy of Jesus is real, you’ve sanctified the Lord God in your heart, you’re going to be able to share the Lord Jesus with him.

Friend, that’s the sphere of everyday work. Right there in Babylon—God put Daniel in Babylon. He didn’t have any special call from God. It was circumstances that put him there, but God was overruling. And that became his temple of devotion. And that became his platform for witness. Daniel touched a whole nation for God, just by being God’s man where God placed him.

III. The Service of Everyday Work

Now the third thing I want to say, and I’ll be finished. I’ve talked to you about the sacredness of everyday work. I’ve talked to you about the sphere of everyday work in

Babylon. Now let me talk to you about the service of everyday work. You say, “Well, brother Rogers, I can see that the job that I do is a platform. I can witness for the Lord Jesus. Somehow it gets meaning.” But you might feel, “I’m not even around anybody where I witness. I spend all day plowing. I spend all day painting houses. I spend all day scraping something down. I work in a kitchen. There’s no way, really, that I can witness where I am. Is it meaningful still?” Absolutely. Absolutely.

Let me give you some Scripture here. Again, Proverbs chapter 14, verse 23: *“In all labour there is profit.”* Does it have eternal significance? You know what Daniel’s job was? A secular job, an ordinary job—he was a government bureaucrat, according to Daniel chapter 8, verse 27. I’m sure that Daniel, as he was handling taxation, as he was handling administration, as he was handling public relations, as he was handling law enforcement, as he was handling building projects and meetings and diplomacy, he said, “What does this have to do with serving God?” But yet, he served God continually.

Let me ask you a question: Who was the first farmer? Think about it. Many of you will say, “Adam was the first farmer.” But you’re wrong. Let me tell you who the first farmer was. You can find it out, if you want to turn to Genesis chapter 2, verse 8. *“The LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden”—“the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden”—*the first farmer was God. Now that tells me that farming is an honorable occupation, if God was a farmer. God planted the first garden, and then He turned it over to Adam. In Genesis chapter 2, verse 15, *“And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed”* (Genesis 2:15).

Don’t get the idea that work is the punishment for sin. Listen. God gave Adam work to do before he ever sinned—He made him caretaker of this world. Why a garden? Because people have to eat. The home of Jesus was the cottage of a working man, and Jesus, whether He was mending plows or mending souls, was doing the work of God—because people also have to have houses to live in, and furniture to sit on, and food to eat, and clothes to wear, and the ability to communicate. And when we’re doing those things, friend, we are participating with God, and cooperating with God, as much as Adam was when He was taking care of the Garden of Eden, a garden that God has planted.

This is my Father’s world. Don’t get the idea that the material world is wrong, or out of whack with God. God made these things, friend, and God knows they have to operate—we could not have humanity; we could not have life. Listen. All of these things are as to the Lord. Listen again to Ephesians chapter 6, verses 7 and 8: *“With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men.”*—he was talking to people in secular jobs, and he was saying that, when you’re doing that secular job, it’s service to the Lord—*“knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive*

of the Lord, whether he be bond or free” (Ephesians 6:7–8).

Now that means, if you are a slave, you have absolutely no choice. Somebody is making you do it. Still, do it with a smile on your face and a song in your heart. And Jesus will reward you. Isn't that beautiful? Boy, I tell you that puts dignity in your job. I don't care what it is. When you go to work tomorrow, I want you to go to work tomorrow with a song in your heart, and a smile on your face, and a spring in your step. And if you're putting those caps on tubes of toothpaste, say, "This one is for you, Jesus. Hallelujah! Praise God! Another one for God! There they go!" Nobody else knows about it; God knows about it. You know about it. Isn't that wonderful?

You see, dear friend, everyday is a holy day, and every place is a sacred place. Again, Colossians 3, verse 23: *“And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ” (Colossians 3:23).* And don't you get so heavenly minded you're no earthly good. God has you right here to do a job.

One last verse and I'll be finished. You know, there were some people who, when they were taken out of Israel and when they were put in Babylon, just sat down. They said, "This is a decadent society. It's an ungodly world. I'm not going to work in it. I'm not going to do anything. I'm not going to participate in that old world." Now I want you to see what Jeremiah told them in Jeremiah 29 verses 4 and following: *“Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, unto all that are carried away captives, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem unto Babylon;”—that is, God said, “I put you there”—“Build ye houses, and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them; take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; that ye may be increased there,”—that is, in Babylon—“and not diminished.”* That is, God wants His people to prosper. God wants His people to be good businesspeople. Listen—verse 7: *“And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives” (Jeremiah 29:4–7).*

Now listen. We look for “a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Hebrews 11:10), but while we're here, we're to seek the good of Memphis. Did you know that? Seek the good of the city. I've caused you to be carried away captive, “and pray the Lord for it, and in its peace, you will have peace” (Jeremiah 29:7). We're to do good to Memphis while we're here. It is to be a better place because the people of Bellevue Baptist Church are here working in the streets, and lanes, and farms, and offices. We are to live here. This is where God has put us. Every day is a sacred day. Every day is a holy day. You are a priest of God, a minister of God, and in full-time Christian service. And brother, if that didn't ring your bell, your clapper's broken. That'll excite you. Man, that'll make a difference, when you go out tomorrow. *“In all labour*

there is profit.”

Conclusion

Let's bow in prayer. Father, I thank you for your Word, Lord, for the truth of it. Lord, I just pray that You'll help people who've been discouraged and bored with their jobs, frustrated, who've felt forgotten and insignificant, Lord God, that no matter what they do tomorrow, whether it be surgery or ditch-digging, whether it be preaching or fixing an automobile, God, that they'll do it as unto You, in the power that You give. And Lord, that that job will be the temple of their devotion, and the lampstand of their witness. God, just make it true, and give our people, Lord, that kind of a lifestyle. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Freedom Is Not Free

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: June 30, 1984

Main Scripture Text: Proverbs 14:34

“Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.”

PROVERBS 14:34

Outline

Introduction

I. The Exaltation of a Nation

II. The Deterioration of a Nation

III. The Rejuvenation of a Nation

Conclusion

Introduction

And, today our proverb is very fitting for the subject at hand, because we are speaking today on this subject: “Freedom Is Not Free”—“Freedom is Not Free.” Look in Proverbs chapter 14 and verse 34—Proverbs 14 and verse 34: *“Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people”* (Proverbs 14:34). Do you see it? Put a star by it in your Bible: *“Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people”* (Proverbs 14:34).

I join Emily in saying, “I’m so glad I’m an American”—I really am. I’m an old-fashioned, red-blooded, flag waving, parade marching American. Thank God to be an American. I don’t say that with a sense of inordinate pride. I do not try to place my citizenship in this nation above my relationship to God or anything like that. But, I want to tell you, dear friend, the reason that I’m so proud to be an American: the reason that I’m so glad to be an American is that I believe the American Dream was placed into the bosom of our Founding Fathers by God Himself—I believe that. I believe that this is a Heaven-rescued, God-blessed land.

When the Pilgrims came and sailed to these shores, they came over here to seek religious liberty and freedom. They came because of their Christian faith. Those Mayflowers, in their little cabin, huddled together, wrote out a document that we call *The Mayflower Compact*, and do you know the way it began? There are the opening words: “In the name of God. Amen.” Now, that’s a pretty good way to open. We generally say “amen” at the end. “In the name of God. Amen.” And then, they told what their purpose

was and they—and I’m quoting—their stated purpose was—and I quote: “For the glory of God and the advancement of the Christian faith.” That’s why they came to these shores.

A South American president was talking with Roger Babson and talking about the great difference between North America and South America, and why South America as we know it has seemed to have been so blessed, and why South America never has become developed, as it could be, because of all the rich natural resources that are there in South America. And, this South American president said to Roger Babson—he said, “The difference is this: the people who came to our shores, came here because they were seeking gold. The people who came to your shores came because they were seeking God.” And, that’s what they were seeking. As they came, they were seeking God. And so, our American government that we’re going to show you in just a moment—our Constitution—was born in the heat of a revival, and our government was rooted in a belief in Almighty God.

I like what the Declaration of Independence said; it says, “We hold these truths to be self evident...that all men are endowed by their Creator, with certain unalienable rights.” I like that. I’ll tell you why I like it—several reasons. Number one: They said, “We’re not going to argue about this. It’s not up for vote. It’s not up debate. This is self evident.” What is self-evident? “That all men are endowed by their?”—what’s the next word?—“Creator.” I want to ask you something: Did they believe in evolution? “All men are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights.” Now, what did they believe? They believed there was a God in the Glory who made man and that God gave man rights. Now, let me tell you something, friend: the government doesn’t give any body any rights; the government has no rights to give. God gives the rights. The government is here to protect those rights. They are God-given rights.

And so, our very nature—the very nature of this land—is rooted in a belief in Almighty God. And, we wrote that Constitution, which I believe is the greatest document outside the Bible ever written. And, in that Constitution is a Bill of Rights. And, in that Bill of Rights, it says that, “Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion or the free exercise thereof.” I like that; that’s good. This was never meant to be the separation of God from government; it was meant to be the separation of Church and State. That is, the Church is not to control the State, and the State is not to control the Church. They are, each one, to operate in their own sphere. But, it does not mean that Christians and godly people are not to influence their government. I’m going to show you again that our government was born in the heat of a revival meeting, and it is reflected all the way through the Constitution.

The Constitution never meant that little children could not pray in school. An American ought to be free to pray anywhere, anytime. All it meant was that nobody

should be forbidden to pray and nobody should be coerced to pray. That's what Americans stand for. I wouldn't make you pray if I could, because your prayer wouldn't be worth anything. But, you must never keep me from praying or make any law that will keep me from praying. That's what the Bill of Rights says; that's what it means. And, we can just simply see that the great leaders of our nation—the ones who helped found this nation—were men of faith; they were men of prayer.

When the General George Washington was, of course, the father of our country and the first president of our country, in the Continental Congress, somebody wanted to know which one was General George Washington. He was sitting up in the gallery. And, a friend said, "Well, if you want to see which one Washington is, when Congress goes to prayer, he'll be the tall man who gets on his knees." He was the one who went aside in the snows at Valley Forge, and got down on his knees, and prayed, and asked God to bless his little ragtag army. And, God did bless those revolutionaries, and out of that came America as we know it.

Abraham Lincoln also was a man of faith. Abraham Lincoln, the President-elect, stood up, and he said these words: he said, "I now leave, not knowing when, or whether, ever, I may return, with a task before me greater than that which rested upon Washington." And then, he said, "Without the assistance of that Divine Being, who ever attended him, I cannot succeed. With that assistance I cannot fail." What did he mean? He said, "The God that helped George Washington is the God that must help Abraham Lincoln." Thomas Jefferson said, "The God that gave us life gave us liberty at the same time." And so, you see our spiritual heritage in the songs that we've sung this morning. Somebody said, "Why do you sing patriotic songs at a church service?" Well, if you'll listen, these are not patriotic songs; these are hymns of praise to our Lord. And, if you'll think about it, it is faith in God that is in these songs.

Listen, for example, to "The Star-Spangled Banner":

*Blest with vict'ry and peace, may the Heav'n-rescued land
Praise the Power that hath made and preserved us a nation!
Then conquer we must, when our cause it is just,
And this be our motto: "In God is our trust"*

—FRANCIS SCOTT KEY

In God is our trust. And then, we sing "America," that wonderful hymn:

*Our fathers' God to Thee,
Author of liberty,
To Thee we sing.
Long may our land be bright
With freedom's holy light,
Protect us by Thy might*

Great God our King

—SAMUEL FRANCIS SMITH

Now, there are those who would like to tell us that we who are Christians and we who believe in the Judeo-Christian ethic ought not to have any influence in the way our country is run—and we ought not to speak about it; we ought to be quiet about it. I think it is time we told these people to go to Heaven. Mister, I want to tell you, America is a wonderful country because of her Christian heritage. And, I say it and mean it: “Thank God for America.” And, I pray it and mean it: “God bless America.”

Now, look at our text again—Proverbs chapter 14 and verse 34: “*Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people*” (Proverbs 14:34). There are three things I’d like for you to see in this passage: first of all, I’d like for you to see the exaltation of a nation; secondly, I want you to see the deterioration of a nation; and thirdly, the rejuvenation of a nation.

I. The Exaltation of a Nation

Okay, look—the exaltation of a nation. “*Righteousness exalteth a nation*” (Proverbs 14:34). Now, did you know that this nation is a great nation because of the way that it was born? Our nation, the United States of America, was born in the very fires of a revival: 1740 ’till 1770, the flames of revival swept across the plains, the mountains, the prairies. We call that in Church history “the Great Awakening”—not only in the Church history, but the secular historians are forced to admit that there was a Great Awakening under Jonathan Edwards and the others who preached there, George Whitfield, and other great revivalists. They preached, and God gave America a mighty spiritual awakening. And, it was out of this awakening that people gained character, and out of this character the Constitution came.

Now, here’s a truth I want you to learn—are you listening?—the government that we have is a reflection of the character of our people. That is a universal truth—that people get the kind of government they deserve. That’s what Alexander Hamilton had to say: he said, “People get the kind of government they deserve.” And so, the government that a people have is the reflection of the character of those people. You see, God ordained three institutions: the home, the Church, and the government. And, all three—the home, the Church, and the government—are but a reflection of the character of those people.

Now, here’s a truth I want you to learn: if the government reflects the character of the people, then you are going to find that the greater the character of the people, the more freedom—the more liberty. The less the character of the people, the less freedom and the less liberty. Another word for character is *responsibility*, because *character is responsibility assumed*.

Now, let me illustrate what I’m talking about. A little baby has not yet developed his

character; and because a little baby has not yet developed his character, a little baby has not yet assumed responsibility. A baby has no responsibility. He doesn't have anything to worry about. He doesn't worry about the national debt—one day he will. He doesn't worry about the national debt. He doesn't worry about what time we are going to eat, what color the wallpaper is. He never selects the menu. He doesn't decide what color clothes he is going to wear. He doesn't decide where he is going to sleep or where he is going to go. Somebody else decides that all for him, because he has absolutely no liberties. But, he has... At the same time, he assumes no responsibilities. He doesn't have any character to assume responsibility. But, as that child grows in intelligence and grows in strength, then the child can grow in character. And, as the child grows in character, then the child begins to assume responsibilities. And, the more responsibilities the child assumes, the greater freedoms and privileges are given to the child. Isn't that true?

Now, one day, dad will hand him the car keys and say, "Son you've earned it. There's the car. Go on out," because dad feels that the son has grown to the particular place where he can accept responsibility—he has enough character. And, the greater the character, the greater the responsibility; the less the character, the less the responsibility—the less the liberty.

For example, here's a man—let's say that he has a lot of liberties. Then, he loses his character and fails to act responsibly. He becomes a criminal. What happens to him? He is put into jail. Now, what happens to his liberties? His liberties are gone because his character is dissipated. You see? Now, he doesn't have any more responsibilities. He can't unlock the door. You see, his freedom has diminished with his loss of character. And, as character and responsibility grow and increase, then freedom and liberty increase. As character and responsibility diminish, freedom and liberty diminish. It is a locked in law, as night follows day. These hath God married, and no man shall part. *"Righteousness exalteth a nation"* (Proverbs 14:34).

Now, the Constitution of the United States of America was written by people who had character for people who had character. And, the republic that we hold, which, by the way, is a government by law with the consent of the governed—the government that we have, a wonderful government, will only work if the people have character. Now, if the people of the United States of America do not have character, the Constitution will not work. And, ultimately our nation must fail without character. You see, it is character that is the missing ingredient in our...what is happening today.

Our Founding Fathers did not believe in big government. They believed that the least government was the best government. They wanted only enough government to do certain things. But, they did not want a government that was going to control every affair of man's life. They believed that people, in order to keep this kind of government,

had to have character. Now, let me tell you again what liberty is: it is responsibility assumed. Liberty is just plain hard work. And, the price of liberty is eternal vigilance. *“Righteousness exalteth a nation”* (Proverbs 14:34). If America loses, she cannot stand. If America keeps her character, she cannot fall. This is the exaltation of a nation.

Now, if you look back and see the results of our spiritual heritage, see what God did. I mean, the greatest nation in the history of the world came out of that revival meeting. Out of that document that was written by people of character for people of character.

For example, we had the Industrial Revolution. I want to ask you a question: What made us the wealthiest nation on the face of the earth? Did we have more natural resources than any other people? Other countries have great, vast, natural resources. That’s not what it is. Were Americans stronger than other people? No, we all have about the same physiological background. “Oh,” you say, “Americans are more intelligent than other people.” The IQ is about the same around the world; that’s not the reason. Other people have brawny bodies. Other people have bright minds. Other people have natural resources. I want to tell you, with this birth of freedom—and with, dear friend, the character that God gave these people—was a great Industrial Revolution.

And, what about our military strength that we have? What about the safety that our citizens enjoy? Was that because we were stronger? Well, we were stronger, but why were we stronger? Because, dear friend, we had character, and with that character there is strength. And, what about the culture and the prestige that Americans at one time used to enjoy, where people seemed to almost envy an American and look up to an American? They don’t do it any more, but they used to.

There was a French philosopher. His name was de Tocqueville. De Tocqueville came, in the 19th Century, to America. He wanted to see what made this nation so great. He was a very brilliant man, and he went all over—up and down the shores, and across the land, in the fields and the prairies, seeking for the secret of America’s greatness. And, this is what he said: “I sought for the greatness and genius of America in her commodious harbors and her ample rivers, and it was not there. I sought for the greatness and genius of America in her fertile fields and boundless forests, and it was not there. I sought for the greatness and genius of America in her rich mines and her vast world commerce, and it was not there.” And then, he concludes by saying this, and oh may God the Holy Spirit etch these words into your consciousness and cause them to reverberate within your souls. Here’s what de Tocqueville said: he said, “America is great because America is good.” And, he said, “And, if America ever ceases to be good, America will cease to be great.” Do you know what he was saying? He was saying what Solomon said so long ago: *“Righteousness exalteth a nation”*—*“Righteousness exalteth a nation”* (Proverbs 14:34). I want to tell you again, dear friend, that our nation was put into the bosom of the Founding Fathers by God Himself. It was born in the heat of a

revival meeting, and this is what made our nation great.

Now, listen the very first thing I want to say is there is a national exaltation when people obey the Lord—national exaltation. *“Righteousness exalteth a nation”*—*“Righteousness exalteth a nation”* (Proverbs 14:34).

II. The Deterioration of a Nation

But, secondly, I want you to see what I’m going to call the “humiliation of a nation”—not only the exaltation of a nation, but the humiliation of a nation. If righteousness exalts a nation, surely the converse is also true—that a lack of righteousness is going to destroy a nation. The Bible says, *“Sin is a reproach to any people”* (Proverbs 14:34). One translation that I’ve studied said that “sin is a ruin to any people.” It is sin that will destroy. I’m not afraid of what the Communists are going to do to us; I’m afraid of what we are doing to us. I’m afraid... Of course, I don’t mean to belittle Communism at all. As a matter of fact, this Wednesday night, if you’ll come, I’m going to talk about Communism on the 4th of July, and what it is, and what it does. And, by the way, I’d like for you to bring your teenagers, because they are not hearing enough about this in school. I want you to bring teenagers here, because we are going to be talking about Communism. But, I tell you, dear friend, a greater threat than Communism is what we ourselves are doing through sin.

And, I want to tell you, dear friend, that the greatest threat that America has is God—God. You say, “He’s our only hope.” He is, but He is also our biggest threat. And, I’m not afraid nearly so much of what the Communists are going to do to us as I am of what God Himself is going to do to us through them or through somebody else if we don’t get right with Him. For the Bible says, *“Sin is a reproach”*—that is, “the ruin”—*“[of] any people”* (Proverbs 14:34). We are talking about the disintegration of a nation. I talked about our culture, our prestige; I talked about our military strength. I talked about our Industrial Revolution.

World War I came. We prayed to God, and sought God; and God heard us, and God helped us.

*Then conquer we must, when our cause it is just
And this be our motto: “In God is our trust”*

God helped us, but we were poor winners. We were drunk with power. There came, after that, the flapper age and the Roaring Twenties, and we roared into sin. We forgot God. The Great Depression came—1929. The bottom fell out, and the great American Dream looked like it was shattered. And then, people made a tragic mistake: about that time, they began to look to the government to get them out of trouble; they began to equate security with dependency upon the government.

Now, remember our equation? The greater the character, the greater the freedom.

The loss of character also equates to the loss of freedom. And, big government began to grow, and this government started to provide for everybody. And say, folks, the people liked it. Everybody liked what the government had to give. But, they failed to understand that—and they failed to remember that—the government can't give anybody anything that it doesn't first take from them. And yet, the government took its part out before it began to give back. And then, as the government began to take care of the people, it began, more and more, to control the people.

A man had some wild pigs on his property, and he tried to trap them; but he never could trap them. They were so fast and so wily. A man said, "I can trap those pigs for you—no difficulty at all. It will just take a little time." He said, "How are you going to do it." "Oh," he said, "never mind. Just give me permission. I'll trap them for you." So, he went out in clearing, and he put food that pigs like on the ground. And, after a while, there was some snorting, and the pigs showed up—not a human being in sight. They ate the food and then went off. The next day it was there again—the next day. Soon it was the feeding place. They knew where to come; the food was there. Then, one day, he went out and put up a fencepost. They looked it over and then ate. And then, after a while, there was another fencepost—and then another, and then another, and then a rail here and rail there, and then another rail. And, after a while, there was a corral with a narrow opening. And, the pigs were going in and out of that narrow opening to eat that food. And, at the right moment, the gate came down. And, the pigs were on the inside, and the man just smiled. He said, "It's very simple. Anything that depends upon me for its food I can control"—"Anything that depends upon me for its food I can control." And, those people, dear friend, who are in the government business, they know that. And so, what happens is this—that once a government begins to take care of us, then that government begins to regulate us. And, when that government begins to regulate us, then that government can oppress us. And, ultimately, we have a totalitarian government.

Now, I want to tell you something, dear friend, and you listen to me: there is a principle as true as life itself—that government will take every inch of ground that you give it, and it will grow it direct proportion to the weakness of the character of the people—government will grow in direct proportion to the weakness of the character of the people. And, liberty will last only as long as character and responsibility lasts.

"Righteousness [exalts] a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people" (Proverbs 14:34).

We have come to the place today where people today no longer want to accept their responsibility. I'm not talking about those who cannot work. I'm not talking about those who are sick. I'm not talking about those who are infirmed. We have come to the place in America where almost half of the people work to support the other half. Did you know that? Did you know, dear friend, that it takes us...we would have to spend 1,000 dollars

a minute for 500 years to make up what we spent for this past year in taking care of these who do not work? I'm not talking about people who cannot work; I'm talking about those who do not work. And, basically it is because America has lost her character. Remember that liberty is just plain hard work. Many of us, if we want to know what's wrong with America, we need to go look in the mirror. "Oh, but," you say, "it's still a great nation." Yes, it is still a great nation, but I'll tell you why it is a great nation: we are living in the residual blessings that are ours; we are living in the blessings of a Constitution, the shadow of which is now creeping over the horizon.

They have a saying about family fortunes: "the first generation generates. The second generation speculates. The third generation dissipates." We are living in the age of that third generation. And, when we dissipate the blessings that have been bought with blood and kept with honor, there will be nothing left. I'm telling you, dear friend, that what is happening in America is the disappearance of the middle class. It is the middle class that keeps any nation on its feet in liberty. But, you see, we are going to become, if we are not careful, like many Third World countries. In those Third World countries, you have the very, very rich and the very, very poor. The very, very rich are those who work for the government and control the government. The very, very poor are the rest of the people. You say, "That won't happen in America." Well, I want to tell you something, friend: in 1930, one out of every 205 people worked for the government; today, one out of five people work for the government. Did you know that there is one dependent and one government bureaucrat today for every three producing people? What has happened is this—that we have lost our character as a nation. And, rather than depending upon God and rather than depending upon self ingenuity and responsibility, we have come to think that Uncle Sam is going to take care of us.

Well, what's that going to do us tax-wise? Well, we've just come to July the 1st. I want to tell you, you have worked from January 1 all the way up through June to pay your taxes. If you are an average citizen, you just, today, started working for yourself—tomorrow, really—the first workday that you'll have, and it's all going out to big government. You say, "Brother Rogers, I thought you were for the government." Friend, I am for the government. I believe in government. I believe the "powers that be" are ordained of God. But, let me tell you what kind of a government we need and what kind of government our Founding Fathers gave us: they gave us a government to protect life and property, not to sustain it.

Now, there is a difference. You see, it was written in our Constitution that the government is to "provide for the common defense and promote the general welfare." Now, not provide for the common defense and provide the general welfare—"provide for the common defense and promote the general welfare." Isn't that wise? Because, you see, I can't get an army; you can't get an army up. We can't organize vigilantes and

police force. That would be mayhem. And so, we have government to provide for the general defense, but that government is here to promote the general welfare—that is, to give us a land where we can work, and earn, and prosper. And, long as we did not look to the government to provide those things but to promote those things, then America was a great nation—and it grew.

Let me tell you something, and listen to me well: America is not a cow to be milked; it's a watchdog to be fed. That's what our government is supposed to be. Read the 13th chapter of the Book of Romans. And so, we have the disintegration of a nation. We've lost our character.

Let me tell you what's happened to us in America. In divorce, five out of nine marriages end in divorce—five out of nine marriages. That is, 56% of the marriages end in divorce. No nation has even survived a divorce rate greater than 40%; ours is at 56%.

Look at the abortion business. You can call it any name you want. It is the taking of innocent lives. It is the shedding of innocent blood. It is killing babies, and we kill more babies in America than the Holocaust under Hitler and the Cambodian Purge put together.

Look at the pornography business in America—the smut business. It is over a four billion-dollar-a-year business. I said *four billion* dollars. Do you know how much a billion dollars is? Can you think about four billion dollars worth of poison and filth in the minds of America's youth—and adults for that matter? You tell me that won't affect... Why, this Book of Proverbs says, "*For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he*"—"so is he" (Proverbs 23:7). It is as though a broken sewer pipe is being spewed out on America: one-half million hardcore heroin addicts in America, alcoholism. The beer people have taken over everything. They are going to sponsor everything before it's over, and it's going to be no longer hot dogs, apple pie, and Chevrolet. It's going to be, you know, foul stuff, and something else—sponsoring everything. And, we sing "God Bless America"! It's a wonder He doesn't blot us off the face of the earth. "*Sin is a reproach to any people*" (Proverbs 14:34). And, I tell you, when we lose our character, we lose our freedom. Liberty and responsibility are inseparably linked. "*Righteousness exalteth a nation: [and] sin is a reproach to any people*" (Proverbs 14:34).

III. The Rejuvenation of a Nation

Now, the third and final thing I want to say—not only the exaltation of a nation: "*Righteousness exalteth a nation*" (Proverbs 14:34); not only the disintegration of a nation: "*sin is a reproach to any people*" (Proverbs 14:34); but the rejuvenation of a nation. You say, "Brother Rogers, are you a pessimist or an optimist?" I'm a realist—I'm a realist. And, let me tell you, the greatest reality is God. And, I refuse to say it is too late for America.

You study the history of revival, and you are going to find out that God has sent revival in dark days. And, what God has done before God can do again. And, I'm praying for revival. I'm looking for revival. I'm expecting revival. And, beloved, I believe I'm seeing the foregleams of revival. There is the revival of righteousness like I've never seen before in my ministry. I'm seeing people pray with hearts and believing God. I'm seeing a coming together of forces that I've never seen. And, I believe we may be on the verge of the greatest spiritual awakening that we've ever known—greater than the spiritual awakening that I've talked to you about under Whitfield, and Wesley, and those others. And, O God, I can hardly wait for it! I believe, dear friend, there can be rejuvenation of a nation, because it is still true that righteousness exalts a nation.

And so, all we need to do is to get righteous, and God will forgive our sins. As God forgives sins for an individual, God forgives sins for a nation. And, there can be a new birth of freedom. And, we do not need a majority; it is not great numbers that we need. Lenin began his revolution in 1917 with a few thousand. Castro took over Cuba with a band of 80 cutthroats. Why, on the positive side, Jesus began with 12 disciples. And, the Bible says, *“One man of you shall chase a thousand: for the LORD your God, he it is that fighteth for you, as he hath promised you”* (Joshua 23:10)—one man chasing a thousand. One praying Christian is worth more than a thousand of those who do not believe in God.

How we need to turn to Him in repentance, and faith, and trust Him, and look to Him! We are the salt of the earth (Matthew 5:13). But, Jesus said—and, by the way, we are not the sugar; we are not the pepper. We are the salt—but Jesus said, *“Salt that loses its saltiness is good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men”* (Matthew 5:13).

Are you listening? If we lose our freedom, Christians are going to be trampled under like never before. There are forces in America today who absolutely detest what's going on in this congregation this morning. They would do anything that they could do to put a muzzle on this speaker. Did you know that? They do not like what you are hearing. They do not like what you say. And, they would like for it to be put out of the schools. They would like for it to be put off the air. They would like to have it put out of the public places all together. And, dear friend, I want to tell you that unless we have a revival, unless we get back our saltiness, we are going to be cast out and trodden under foot of men.

But, there can be a revival. And, the answer, dear friend, is not Washington. It is not in the Pentagon. It is not Nashville. It is not in city hall. The answer to America's problems is in this room. You say, “That's rhetoric.” That is gospel truth, dear friend. Our nation was born in a revival. What we have is a Constitution written by people of character for people of character, and that character comes out of a response to God.

And, when we get right with God, God is going to hear us. And, 2 Chronicles 7:14 will be just as true as I'm standing here: *"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."*

And, we don't need to just be waving flags and say, "My country right or wrong." We need to get in our prayer closets, and get on our face before God, and cry out to God for mercy, and say it, and sing it and mean it: "God bless America." We need to believe God for revival. We need to say, "Lord, start a revival, and let it begin with me." Only when Americans have character can they hold this republic—only when there is revival. *"Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people"* (Proverbs 14:34).

Conclusion

Now, let me tell you something, friend: you better get informed; you better know what the issues are, and you better tell these politicians, "We're not voting for your party. We're not voting for your person. We're not voting for your policies. We are voting principles that come out of the Word of God. And, we are going to vote, and we're going to be registered to vote." You'll never convince me that God ordained government and then told His people to stay out of it. If He did, who does that leave to run it? And, I want to tell you, "whatever makes a man"—Daniel Webster said—"whatever makes a man a good Christian makes him a good citizen at the same time."

The curse of this age is the bad citizenship of good people. And, I want us to become morally indignant. I want us to become spiritually sensitive. I want us to become intellectually informed. And, I want us to believe what God says in the Book of Proverbs. God said it. Somebody would accuse God of meddling with Church and State. It is God that said, *"Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people"* (Proverbs 14:34). God bless America.

Let's pray. Father in Heaven, I'm praying from the depths of my heart today, Lord, with my brothers and sisters in Christ, that You would send us a spiritual awakening as we obey You and assume our responsibilities.

The Only Hope for America

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: July 2, 1995

Main Scripture Text: Proverbs 14:34

“Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.

PROVERBS 14:34

Outline

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I. The Righteousness That Is the Exaltation of a Nation

II. The Reproach That Is the Humiliation of a Nation

III. The Revival That Is the Restoration of a Nation

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Introduction

Praise the Lord! I hope your anchor holds today. And if you're anchored in Christ, it will hold, because He is indeed that solid rock. Proverbs chapter 14 and verse 34 is our verse for this morning. It's a wonderful verse, and it so well helps us as we face the future here in these beloved United States of America. The title of the message today is, "The Only Hope for America." And the only hope for America is found in that verse. Proverbs chapter 14 and verse 34: *“Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people”* (Proverbs 14:34).

America is number one, but unfortunately America is number one in sexual perversion, number one in abortion, number one in crime, number one in the destruction of family values, and number one in the enforcement of humanistic political correctness. And I'm thinking about not only myself, but I'm thinking about my children. I'm thinking about my children's children. If the Lord tarries, I ask, what kind of a nation are they going to inherit?

Now I heard someone say the most important thing is the economy. And most Americans evidently believe that. As a matter of fact, it's been sloganized: "It's the economy, stupid." Well, is it the economy? Is that the most important issue? I've thought about that, and friend, I had rather leave my children and my grandchildren the legacy of a godly nation than great wealth to be squandered in a godless society. And I don't believe it is the economy. I believe it is what God says that it is. It is righteousness that is our great need: *“Righteousness exalteth a nation.”*

We have to ask ourselves this question, and it's a sobering question: Do you feel safer in the world, and do you feel safer in America, after the implosion of Soviet communism? I mean, after the iron curtain fell and disintegrated, do you feel safer? Do you feel better off? The problem is this: We got rid of the demon of communism, generally speaking. Of course, there are some communists in the world today, but generally speaking, the demon of communism doesn't confront us like it did. But we didn't have a spiritual revival. And now we are facing seven other more deadly demons than before, after the house has been cleansed of communism.

Alexander Hamilton said this: "People get the kind of government they deserve." And if we want to know what's right or wrong with America, we probably need to go look in the mirror. You see, something has happened in America since our founding days, since 1776.

I came across this story the other day. According to the story, the British railroads were looking for a way to test the windshields on their locomotives, because sometimes, traveling at those great speeds, they would hit birds flying through the air. And they found out that British Airways had developed a cannon that would shoot dead chickens at the windshields of their airplanes, to see if their windshields were constructed well and they would withhold this impact. And so they thought, "Well, maybe we can borrow this device from the airline and try it out on our locomotives." And so they said, "Yes, you can borrow our cannon." And they bought it. And they're getting ready to test the windshield on this locomotive, so they sent someone out to buy some ammunition, a dead chicken. And so he bought the ammunition for this cannon, and they loaded the cannon. They aimed the cannon, and fired it at the windshield of the locomotive. The chicken went through the windshield, through the conductor's chair, and made a big dent in the back wall of the locomotive. They were very upset, and they called British Airways and they demanded an explanation. And according to the story, British Airways said, "No problem. But the next time you do this, make certain it's not a frozen chicken."

Now the point of this silly story—if we can find a point, and I believe we can—is that cannon, if there is such a cannon in reality, was not designed to fire frozen chickens. We're trying to make our constitution and our government do something today it was not designed to do.

Now I want you to pay attention. We're trying to make our government today do something that the Constitution did not design it to do. Now we need to understand where we've come from. What has made America the greatest nation on the face of this earth? On July 4th, 1776, there was signed in the city of Philadelphia the Declaration of Independence. And it marked the birthday of this nation—this nation, which under God, was destined for world leadership. But what Americans have forgotten on this day when we talk about our independence was, the same document that declared our

independence from Great Britain, at the same time—and, please, teach your boys and girls this—that same document declared, with no stutter, no stammer, no equivocation, our great dependence upon Almighty God. The same document: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are...endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights.”

And then, this Declaration of Independence closes with these solemn words—it was a declaration of independence from Great Britain, but listen to the close; listen for the dependence upon Almighty God—listen to it: “With a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor.” “With a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence”—what is a “firm reliance”? It is dependence. We the American people said, “We place our dependence upon Almighty God, when we assert our independence from Great Britain.”

And so at that time, when they signed this declaration, the cannons fired, and the fireworks filled the sky, and the bells chimed, and in Independence Hall, there in the steeple of the Old State House, the Liberty Bell rang. And on that Liberty Bell, you could read the verse from Leviticus 25 and verse 10: “*Proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto...the inhabitants thereof*” (Leviticus 25:10). And in this Declaration of Independence, we said that Sovereign God is man’s Creator—you can’t even teach creationism in school today; that the Creator gave us those unalienable rights—the government doesn’t give them to us, the government should not take them from us; and, that government is only ordained to protect those rights—read Romans chapter 13, if you want to see what our Founding Fathers believed about government.

Now with that in mind—and, I’m talking to you today about America’s only hope—there are three things that come out of this verse, but, I pray God the Holy Spirit will write upon your consciousness, emblazon upon your soul, and cause to reverberate through your thoughts this Fourth of July weekend.

I. The Righteousness That Is the Exaltation of a Nation

Number one: the righteousness that is the exaltation of a nation—the righteousness that is the exaltation of a nation. Look at the verse again: “*Righteousness exalteth a nation*” (Proverbs 14:34). Learn this, and learn it well, please: Righteousness and liberty are inextricably interwoven. You cannot have true liberty without true righteousness. What God hath married, no man can put asunder.

Now what is righteousness? Righteousness is living responsibly under God. You see, righteousness is my assuming my God-given responsibilities as a citizen of the kingdom of God and as a citizen of this great country. Now I want you to understand that righteousness—and I’m going to call righteousness, and link righteousness with responsibility—I want you to see how they are inseparably wed together.

For example, a little baby—a little baby—has no responsibilities. He doesn't have to worry about paying the light bills. He doesn't have to worry about going to the grocery store. The little baby doesn't even have to worry about changing his or her clothes; even dirty diapers are changed for the little baby. You see, the little baby has no responsibilities. But the little baby also has no liberties. He doesn't decide where he's going to sleep. He doesn't say, "I'd rather have strained beets than pabulum." He doesn't decide what kind of diapers he or she is going to wear. He's carried around. He has no liberties at all, because he's not lived responsibly.

But as the child grows, and is able to assume more and more responsibilities, the child is given more and more liberties. After a while, when the child is responsible enough, maybe he's allowed to walk home from school. Then comes the day when he or she is 16, and they say, "Dad, can I borrow the car?" Now Dad has a real decision to make at that time: Is my son, is my daughter, a responsible individual? Have they shown by the way that they live that they can take this piece of machinery out there on the highway and drive it? Have they shown enough responsibility that they can be given this liberty? That's a big decision— isn't it, parents? I've been there a number of times, and I've got a granddaughter just approaching that situation right now. She's saying, "Papa, I'm getting my license." I said, "Oh no, not you, Renae." And yet, she is very responsible. Well, I was a responsible kid, when I was in school. Everything that happened, they said, "Adrian's responsible for that." Responsibility and liberty are inextricably interwoven.

Now when a man becomes a criminal, and no longer lives responsibly, what happens to him? We put him in jail. And when he fails in his responsibilities, his liberties are taken away. And now he's in jail. There are no more responsibilities—he doesn't have to turn out the lights. But he has no more liberties—he can't unlock the door.

What I'm trying to show to you is this, folks: that liberty and responsibility are inextricably interwoven. You see, what is true for individuals is true for a nation, because a nation is comprised and composed of individuals. We, as Americans—listen carefully—will have more liberty or less liberty in direct proportion to our character. When we lose responsibility, when we lose character, when we lose righteousness, as night follows day, we will lose liberty. Whenever there is a loss of character, and righteousness and responsibility assumed—which is what character is; whenever there is a loss over here, over here on the other side there is always a growth of government. People who cannot live responsibility from within will be governed from without.

Now what made America such a great nation is this: that America was born in a revival. Don't forget that. From 1740 to 1770 there was a great revival that swept across America. We called it the Great Awakening. And Jonathan Edwards was preaching and George Whitefield was preaching, and numerous other preachers, and there was a

flame of righteousness. And out of that revival, schools were built. And in those schools, principles were taught, and character became very strong. And as a result of that, a nation was born. Out of that, a declaration of independence from Great Britain and dependence upon Almighty God was put into our bosoms by our Founding Fathers. Now our Founding Fathers knew that the more character you have, the more responsibility you will assume, and the less government you will need. To our Founding Fathers, therefore, the best government was the least government.

Now we have in America today given to us, a constitutional republic—a constitutional government, a republic—that is, a government based in law, a constitution. But those who serve in our government serve only as a representative body. They represent us, the people. And they serve only with the consent of the governed. It is a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. But now listen to me very carefully. This kind of government can only work where there's character. This kind of government cannot work apart from character. If there is no righteousness, then this kind of government that we believe is rooted in Judeo-Christian ethic, this government, we believe, will not work.

Now you say, "Well, Adrian, you're a Baptist preacher. What do you know about it?" Well, let me tell you what James Madison, the fourth president of the United States, and the architect—the architect—of the federal constitution—let me tell you what James Madison had to say about it—and I'm quoting—listen to it: "We have staked the whole future of American civilization not upon the power of government, far from it. We have staked the future...upon the capacity of [each and all of us] to govern ourselves...and to sustain ourselves according to the Ten Commandments [of God]." That's the architect of the Constitution. That's the fourth president of the United States. We've set our whole future based upon people who have character, and the basis of that character is the Ten Commandments of God, which Ten Commandments have been hauled down from the classrooms of America's schools, and called unconstitutional—that is, the posting of these Ten Commandments.

Liberty is responsibility assumed. Got it? Liberty is responsibility assumed. Righteousness exalteth a nation. *Doing your thing* is not responsibility. That is not liberty, that is license; and, the ultimate result is a dependent mentality. Real liberty always comes from within. *Real* liberty *is taking the* policeman *from the* street corner *and putting him in your* heart. The less God rules in your heart and my heart, the more control we're going to have to have from without. What is the difference between freedom and slavery? The difference is: Where are the laws? In slavery, the laws are on the outside; in freedom, the laws are in *here*. "*Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any [nation].*"

Now when we had this constitution, when it was born in the white-hot fires of revival,

America was born. She announced her dependence “with a firm reliance upon the protection of Divine Providence,” and something wonderful happened when this nation was born. There was an industrial revolution, and America began to produce great wealth. Was that because our soil is richer, it rains more on America, or good old Yankee ingenuity? Are Americans brighter? Do we have a higher I. Q.? Do we have bigger biceps? No. There were certain principles of liberty that began to work in America, and we had this industrial revolution, and wealth was produced, and we got strength—military strength. We could sing it and say it: “Protect us by Thy might, Great God our King.”

It wasn't like where we are today. The scream of the great American Eagle, today, has become the twitter of a sparrow. Now we're saying we want to put women on the front line, if we have a war. Did you know in the Bible, when God spoke about His judgment upon a nation, do you know what He said about them? He said, “I'll make their soldiers like women” (Jeremiah 48:41; 49:22). That was God's judgment. God said, “I'll make their soldiers like women.” That is, I'll take away their strength. Women were not made for combat. A bunch of old, wimpy, sissy men fail to stand up and be the men that they ought to be.

Our nation became a strong nation. Our nation became a wealthy nation, and our nation had culture, and our nation had prestige, and Americans were admired all over the world. Today, we're scorned and hated—tried to buy our way through nations around this world. I'm telling you, folks, that liberty and character are interwoven. Liberty is responsibility and character assumed. *“Righteousness exalteth a nation.”* So there is the righteousness that is the exaltation of a nation. Got that?

II. The Reproach That Is the Humiliation of a Nation

Now here is the second point: There is the reproach that is the humiliation of a nation—the reproach that is the humiliation of a nation. *“Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people”* (Proverbs 14:34). Now the great American dream has begun to dissolve because of sin. We came through the Civil War. We came through World War I, with God's help. We were poor winners. We didn't know how to give God thanks for what he's done. The Flapper Age came; the Roaring 20's came—America out of control, self-indulgent. Then, in 1929, the Depression came, the stock market crashed.

What happened in America hasn't just happened recently. What happened in America happened a long time ago. We wanted self-government without self-control. Can't be done. And at the time, out of the Great Depression, rather than going back and saying what was wrong, and fixing it rightly, we tried to fix it the wrong way. And so we began, then, to give more and more power to the government. We began to relinquish

more responsibility to the government. Remember, as character disintegrates, there is a loss of liberty, and government becomes more and more powerful. Now you watch it. Where there is the erosion of character, sexual permissiveness, and perversion, and the disposal of unwanted, unborn children, and the breakup of the family, and the obsession with material things, and this craving for pleasure, sex, and drugs, at that time, government will get bigger, and bigger, and bigger.

Now you see, what government does—and it's a very, very tricky thing. Government, first of all, begins to provide for people. And the people fail to realize the government can't give anybody anything that it first doesn't take away. The government doesn't have anything to give, in and of itself; it only can give what it takes away. But we've been told the government will provide for us. But as the government provides, *ipso facto*, as night follows day, it assumes more and more authority, and the government that begins to provide begins to regulate.

There was a man who had some wild pigs, I'm told, on his property, and he couldn't catch them. A man said, "I'll tell you how to catch those wild pigs." And he went out and put some food on the ground, and went away. And the pigs came out of the woods and ate the food. He did that for a while, and then he put a fencepost in the ground, and the food *over there*. The pigs saw it, but it was only a post—they ate. And then, he put another post, but they continued to eat. Then, another; and then, after a while, he built a little corral. The pigs coming through—there's no wire there, so they eat. And then, he begins to put up the wire. And after a while, the entire thing is fenced in, except for the gate. Pigs are coming in through the gate and eating, and going back out, and finally, you know what happens: the gate is closed, and the pigs are caught. The man said, "Well, I didn't think you could catch them; but, you did." He said, "Of course. Anything that will depend upon me for its food, I can control—anything that will depend upon me for its subsistence, I can control."

You see, when we come to the place where we depend upon the government, *ipso facto*, it must follow that whatever feeds us will control us. And so as there's this growth of government, "*sin is a reproach to any people.*" The government begins to give what it, first of all, takes away. And after the government provides, and then controls, then it is free to oppress. And then, you have a totalitarian government. And we have less and less freedom, less and less liberty, because the weak character of the people has permitted it. Liberty will last only as long as character and responsibility last. Let me tell you one of the stupidest things upon the face of this earth: for people to say it makes no difference what the character of our leaders are, so long as they can do the job; they can't do the job without character. I mean, it's all rooted together. It is righteousness that exalteth a nation. But as we lose our character, we will lose our liberty. Now that's the reproach that happens to a people. Remember what Alexander Hamilton said? People

get the kind of government they deserve.

Well, you say, “But Pastor Rogers, we still have a lot of blessings here in America.” Yes, we do. But the blessings we enjoy are the residual blessings that our fathers have left us, and our forefathers have left us. But we’re living in the shadows of an age. And our liberties are fast receding over the horizon. And it is time that we awakened in America.

Now what will happen, if we don’t awaken? What will happen? What is the reproach that will come to us? Well, there will be the loss of liberty. And with the loss of liberty, I’ll tell you what will happen: There will be the disappearance of the middle class. It always happens, when liberty is gone. You only have two classes then: the very rich, and the very poor. And those who are very rich, for the most part, are in the government, or associated with the government. The very poor are those who are not in the government who have to work to keep the government going.

Now in 1930, 1 out of every 205 worked for the government. Today, it is more like 1 out of 5. From 1 out of 205 to 1 out of 5—why? As character disintegrates, government grows. And you see, today, there is one governmental worker or bureaucrat, and one dependent, for every three workers. What has happened? Loss of character—a growth of government. And you work from the beginning of the year till just about this time just to pay your taxes. I mean, since the beginning of the year, you’ve been working, if you’re an average American; from January 1, we had New Year’s Day, up till about this time, you’ve been working just to pay your taxes.

Now I’m not against paying taxes; we ought to pay taxes. But folks, it’s getting bigger, and bigger, and bigger. Why? Because our character is getting less, and less, and less. Our constitution was written by a people of character for a people of character. There is the righteousness that is the exaltation of a nation. There is the reproach that is the humiliation of a nation.

Learn this about government—our fathers knew it; they knew it well: Government is not here to meet your needs. That’s not the purpose of government. Read Romans 13. The government is here to protect us from tyranny and to punish evildoers (Romans 13:3–4). That’s the reason that our forefathers said this: that our government is here to provide for the common defense, and promote the general welfare—not to provide for the general welfare; provide for the common defense. You and I cannot raise an army. We’re to provide for the common defense. We’re to promote the general welfare. Give us a land where freeborn Americans can go out and do what the Bible says—work. For if a man will not work, neither shall he eat (2 Thessalonians 3:10). *When we begin to see the government as a cow to be milked rather than a watchdog to be fed, we’re in trouble.* The government is here, as our forefathers understood, to provide for the general defense, and promote the general welfare.

Now when the government takes over, the government says, “Whatever we subsidize we’ve got to control,” and that would include education. And so we send our children off to an educational system that’s outlawed God. And then, now, in the place of the Ten Commandments, we have Values Clarification. In place of good old-fashioned Americanism, we have the glories of the welfare state. Instead of a person standing up with patriotism for his nation, our kids are taught the glories of a one-world government and a new world order. Hitler said, in 1920, “Give me the minds of the children, and in one generation, I will give you the Fascist super state.” Just give me the minds of children. That’s why he started his youth corps. Stalin, in the early 1900’s, did the same thing. That is the humiliation, the reproach, of a nation.

Now what has happened in America is this: that the Bible is out, and humanism, with its X-rated textbooks, is in. Here’s what the humanist educator is saying about your children—and, by the way, if you think that I’m just making this up, what I am giving you right now is taken from an address given at a childhood education seminar by a professor of educational psychiatry at Harvard University. Here’s what he said: “Every child in America entering school at the age of five is mentally ill because he comes to school with certain allegiances toward our Founding Fathers, toward our elected officials, toward his parents, toward a belief in a supernatural being, and toward the sovereignty of this nation as a separate entity. It is up to you teachers to make all these sick children well—by creating the international child of the future.” He’s sick—your child is sick, if he loves his parents, if he loves the Founding Fathers, if he believes in God, if he says, “America first.” He’s sick. And the educators have got to re-educate him.

Let me read you from *The Humanist* magazine, January/February 1983, page 26—quote: “The battle for humankind’s future must be waged and won in the public school classroom by teachers who correctly perceive their role as the proselytizers of a new faith.” That is, we’re going to make the classrooms the Sunday School for humanism. “The classroom must and will become the arena of conflict between the old and the new—the rotting corpse of Christianity...and the faith of humanism.” “We have the classrooms to do it, and these people are going to subsidize us, and God-fearing Americans are going to pay our salary, to break into the plastic mentality of our children, and rob them of the values of their parents.

III. The Revival That Is the Restoration of a Nation

There’s the righteousness that is the exaltation of a nation. There is the reproach that is the humiliation of a nation: “*Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.*” Here’s the third thing, and I can only touch on this: There is revival that is the restoration of a nation—there is revival that is the restoration of a nation. We need to take America back. God is our only hope. America needs a new birth of freedom. And

that will come, when we have the character that our Founding Fathers had. We don't have to be a majority—we're light and salt. Salt penetrates. Salt purifies. Salt heals. Salt preserves. We're to be the salt, not the sugar. We're to be the salt, not the pepper. We are the salt. But Jesus said, "If the salt loses its savor, it's good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under the feet of men" (Matthew 5:13).

Do you know what's happening to the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ today? She's being walked on—walked on, "trodden under the feet of men." Why? Because we have become salt without savor. You hear today so much about the separation of church and state—the separation of church and state—which phrase is not even found in the Constitution, by the way. What our Founding Fathers did believe is there should be no state church paid for with tax money. And I'm for that 100%. But not in their wildest dreams did they ever think about the separation of God and government—no. We say "one nation under God"; "God bless America"; "We are endowed by our Creator with certain unalienable Rights." And we must remember that, friend. Oh my, help us, God! Help us to get back!

To say, "Don't mix politics and religion," is like saying put the fish in one barrel and the salt in another. Surely our character ought to permeate our society. We don't just go out and demand liberty. That's like a 12-year-old demanding the keys to the car. It's time we assume our responsibility. It's time that we as believers begin to train our own children, to care for our own people—the widows and the orphans. Remember that the Constitution was written by people with character for people of character. And we get the kind of government we deserve. *"The powers that be are ordained of God"* (Romans 13:1). Proverbs 29, verse 2: *"When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn"* (Proverbs 29:2).

Conclusion

I'm going shortly to Romania. I'm going to be preaching there in the largest Evangelical church in all Europe. That church is in a land that was under the iron boot of a vile and wicked man. His name was Ceausescu. He and his wife ruled as a tyrant. This man passed by the church that I'll be preaching in when it was a much smaller church, and he asked one of his henchmen: "What is that over there?" He saw that little building. They said, "Sire, that's a Baptist church." He said, "A what?" "That's a Baptist church." He said, "Destroy that nest of insects." They said, "Yes, sire." But then, they came back, and said, "Sire, we've had a second thought. If we destroy them, the word will get out to the West and all over the world—they'll say that you're taking away freedom." Then, he said, "Well, I don't want to see it. Hide it!" So they said, "Yes, sire." So they built apartments all around it, and brought the people right to the church. And the church began to grow and blossom, as they preached the Lord Jesus Christ.

Ceausescu was a madman. In Bucharest he wanted a palace, and so he took a piece of land and said, “Clear that. Destroy the businesses; destroy the churches; destroy the homes; destroy the synagogues. Just clear that land. I want to build a palace.” And so they began to build a palace for Ceausescu. His own suite had 1,000 rooms, 14,000 chandeliers. He spent billions and billions and billions and billions and billions of dollars, upward of 10 billion dollars, not even to count the slave labor. He had 24,000 workers working day and night—governmental workers, crews coming in to build for him a palace. Out in front of that palace was a promenade six miles long, decorated with splashing fountains. I’ve seen it. I’ve walked through the palace. It’s an incredible thing. He was a megalomaniac who hated God and the things of God.

There was a little pastor in Bucharest—Laszlo Tokes was his name. The communists were coming for him, because he had dared to ask for new songbooks—“Could we just buy some new songbooks?” He was out of control, they thought. We’ve got to get rid of Laszlo—he won’t knuckle under. So they sent the Securitate to take him away. But he knew they were coming. He told his people, “I want you to be here. I want you to see when they come and take me away.” A little church—the church is not as big as our choir loft; wouldn’t seat as many as our choir has. I’ve been in the little church building.

They came for Laszlo, but his people were around that building. There was an apartment there in the apartment building where the church was. And Securitate didn’t want to take him away while the people could see, so they thought the people would go away. But the next day there were more people there, and they begin to pass up food through the windows, and logs for him to burn on the fireplace. And before long, there were not only hundreds, but several thousands. And then, there came a show of force. They began to line up the water cannons, the police dogs, the others.

And then, someone shouted this: “There is a God! There is a God!” And the people made up their mind they would take it no more, and with bare hands they turned on that armored water cannon, and turned it over. Then, the bullets began to fly. Men who had lived under tyranny so long just said, “I will die for liberty,” and unbuttoned their shirts, and said, “Shoot me!” And shoot they did. But the revolution was on.

Ceausescu knew that he must do something. He gathered a great crowd there, and went out on the balcony to make a speech. But someone shouted, “Murderer!” And the crowd rose up. He and his wife went to the roof, took off in a helicopter, got in an armored vehicle, and began to flee. But he was so paranoid that he only let his armored vehicles have 10 liters of petrol, because he was afraid they might try to escape. And so the great dictator ran out of gas. And in humiliation, he got out—listen to this—and tried to catch a taxi. They overtook him. They lined him up, and on Christmas Day in 1979, he was placed before a firing squad. And his body was riddled with bullets.

I'm going to be preaching in a few days in the church that he called "a nest of insects." It is the largest Evangelical church in all Europe, east and west. I want to tell you something folks: Liberty comes when God's people say, "Enough is enough. There is a God." And I hope you believe that. It is righteousness that exalteth a nation. It is sin that is a reproach to any people. And it is revival that is the restoration of a nation. Father God, seal the message to our hearts. And God bless America. You are our only hope. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

The Only Hope for America

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: July 2, 1995

Main Scripture Text: Proverbs 14:34

“Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.”

PROVERBS 14:34

Outline

Introduction

I. Righteousness is the Exaltation of a Nation

II. Reproach is the Humiliation of a Nation

III. Revival is the Restoration of a Nation

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Introduction

Take God's Word, please, and be finding the Book of Proverbs chapter 14, and we're going to read a verse that I believe is one of the most pertinent verses that we could read on this weekend. I'm speaking today on this subject: "The Only Hope For America." And the only hope—and I want to underscore that with all of the uncton and function and emotion and intellect and dynamism of my soul—the only hope is found in this verse: *“Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people”* (Proverbs 14:34). This is not merely what God has said; this is what God is saying to any people. It is universal: *“Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.”*

Sadly, I must confess that America is number one in divorce, in crime, in drugs, pornography, and perversion—the castaway of little children as unwanted, even while they are in their mother's womb—number one in violence. And I wonder—I sincerely wonder: What kind of a country am I leaving to my children and to my grandchildren? I believe in God. By God's grace, I'm going to make it into Heaven. But I wonder about our children. I wonder about the values that our leaders hold today. We're told, for example, that the great problem is economics: "It's the economy, stupid."

But is that the problem? I've thought about it. *I'd much rather leave to my children and my grandchildren a godly heritage sown by a godly nation than to leave to them great wealth to be squandered by a godless society.* The great need in America today is righteousness. I have to ask myself another question. Are we really safer? Are we really

better off after the implosion of Soviet communism? After we've seen the Iron Curtain come crumbling down, do you have a better feeling of safety? Do you have a better feeling about America? I dare say you don't—and I'll tell you why. Because, after we got rid of the demon of Soviet communism, we failed to have spiritual revival. And now seven other more deadly demons have come to take up habitation in America today. America will be destroyed, not because of some enemy without, but because of debauchery within.

Alexander Hamilton said, "We get the kind of government we deserve." Now something very wonderful happened on July the 4th, 1776, in Philadelphia. A declaration was made, and shortly after that a constitution was formed.

I read recently about an episode that happened in Britain. They said that the British railways wanted to test the windshields on their very fast moving trains, because they were afraid that birds flying into those windshields might crack them. They found out that British Airways had the same problem, and had invented a device. They had a cannon that would shoot a dead chicken at the windshield of the airplanes to see if indeed the windshield was constructed with enough resilience to withstand such a blow. So the railroad asked the airline, "can we borrow that instrument; can we borrow that cannon?" They said, "Certainly you may."

So they had one of their fine locomotives lined up there, they sent someone out to buy some ammunition—a dead chicken. So they bought the ammunition, came back, loaded the cannon, aimed it, pulled the trigger, and fired it. It went through the windshield, through the engineer's chair, hit the back wall, and made a dent in it. So they asked the British Airways, they said, "Something is wrong here, what happened?" They said, "Nothing is wrong. But next time don't use a frozen chicken."

Now what they were doing, if indeed that story has any credibility to it at all—it sounds like a made-up story—but, if indeed it has any credibility, they were using the cannon to do something it was not designed to do.

Now what has happened is this: that we have a Constitution, the very wonderful instrument, I believe, that certainly, it's not inspired like the Word of God, but, because of the inspired Word of God, we have the Constitution; because the Constitution reflects, in many ways, the values of God's Word. But today, we're shooting frozen chickens. I mean, today, we're doing something that our Founding Fathers did not intend for us to do.

Now on July the 4th, 1776, there was signed, in the city of Philadelphia, a document we call the Declaration of Independence. Now it was independence from Great Britain, but what many people fail to understand is that this same document was a document of dependence upon Almighty God. Now the politicians today, many of them seem to have forgotten that. But it was clearly and plainly a declaration of dependence. I want you to

listen to the closing paragraph. It says this: “We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are...endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights.” It begins that way; but, it closes this way: “With a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence...”—now, what is reliance? That’s dependence—“With a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence”—what is divine providence? That’s God—“we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor.”

All of that in the context of depending upon Almighty God. It was then that the cannons fired. It was then that the fireworks went off. It was then, in the old statehouse, now called Independence Hall, that the Liberty Bell began to ring out freedom. And on that bell are inscribed these words from Leviticus 25, verse 10: “*Proclaim liberty throughout all the land*” (Leviticus 25:10). And in that document, they said that God created us. It isn’t what we can teach in schools today. In that document, they said that God gives us our rights—not the government. These are inalienable rights, like life, and liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. These have come from the Almighty, and not from government.

I. Righteousness Is the Exaltation of a Nation

Now there are three things I want you to see today, as we look in our text in Proverbs chapter 14 and verse 34: “*Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people*” (Proverbs 14:34). And the very first thing I want you to see is that righteousness which is the exaltation of a nation. The exaltation of a nation: “*Righteousness exalteth a nation.*”

Learn this: that righteousness and liberty are inextricably interwoven. You cannot separate righteousness and liberty. You see, what God hath married, let no man put asunder. The reason that we are in danger of losing our liberties is we are losing our righteousness.

Now what is *righteousness*? *Righteousness* is responsibility assumed. And the more responsibility that you assume, the more liberty you have.

For example, a little baby doesn’t assume any responsibilities. He doesn’t have to go out and earn a living; he doesn’t have to mow the grass; he doesn’t have to do the laundry; and he doesn’t have to do the grocery shopping. The little baby assumes no responsibilities. He’s fed and bathed and carried from this place to that place. He doesn’t make choices about anything. He doesn’t have any liberties either, because he assumes no responsibilities.

But that child continues to grow, and after a while, he can learn how to clean up his own room; after a while, to carry out the trash; after a while, to do the dishes; after a while, to cut the grass; after a while, to come and go on time; and, parents watch their child assume more and more responsibilities. And as that happens, the child is given

more and more liberties. After a while, he can walk to school by himself or herself. Then comes that day: “Daddy, can I use the car?” “Well, you’ve been—you’ve shown yourself to be—a responsible child.” And you give to this teenager the keys to that automobile, which, in today’s age, is the symbol of almost total liberty. “I’ve got the car now. Mama’s not driving me anymore. I can go where I want and wish, within the rules that my mom and dad have set down for me, because I have shown myself to be a responsible person.”

Now learn this about government—and, this is taught in the Word of God: The more responsibility we assume—that’s righteousness—the more liberty we’re given. The less responsibility we are willing to assume, the less liberty we will have. We have more or less liberty; therefore, according to our character, or, according to our righteousness, when we abuse responsibility, we lose liberty; and, when there is demise in character, there’s always a growth in government. Did that sink in? When there is demise in character, there’s always a growth in government. You cannot be irresponsible as an individual or as a society and, at the same time, expect to remain free.

Now our government, our Constitution, began with a dependence upon Almighty God. And the Constitution was written by people of character, for people of character, and it will work for no other people. If we lose our character in the United States, our Constitution will not work. We’ll be shooting frozen chickens. It wasn’t made for that kind of society.

You see, this nation was born in the white heat of revival. From 1740 to 1770, Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield were preaching, and America was aflame with revival. And other preachers were preaching up and down the seaboard of America. And as a result, churches were built, institutions were formed, and character was placed in the heart and mind of the bosom of our Founding Fathers. Study the writings of our Founding Fathers, and you will see that they were tintured, and dyed, and embodied with a great belief in God—in the Judeo-Christian ethic. And out of that—out of the fires of that revival; out of that character—came the Constitution of the United States.

And our Founding Fathers, they believed in self-reliance; they believed in responsible lives; they believed in righteousness; and, therefore, they believed that the best government was the smallest government. The smaller government was the better—they believed it would be. And so our Founding Fathers formed a republic—“We pledge allegiance...to the republic for which it stands”—which is a government of law, with representative leadership. And these representatives represent us. But they govern only with the consent of the governed. And it will not work—listen, folks—it will not work, apart from character. *“Righteousness exalteth a nation.”*

You say, “Well, what do you know about it? You’re a Baptist preacher. What do you

know about civics? What do you know about government?” Well, let me tell you what someone who did know said about it. His name was James Madison. He was the architect of the federal Constitution, the fourth President of the United States of America. Let me give you a direct quote from James Madison. We have a Madison Avenue here in Memphis, Tennessee. Let me give you a quote from James Madison. He said, “We have staked the whole future of American civilization not on the power of government, far from it. We have staked the future...upon the capacity of each and all of us to govern ourselves...to sustain ourselves according to the Ten Commandments of God.” That’s what Madison said; he said we staked everything on this.

What he is saying is this: It’s not that government is going to do it. We must govern ourselves; there must be this inward character. And what was the basis of that character? Not morality by majority, but the Ten Commandments of God. That’s why I’ve just preached a series on the Ten Commandments of God—which Ten Commandments our leadership in this nation has said must come down from the classrooms in America, because, if they were to see those Ten Commandments, they might begin to venerate them and obey them. So the Ten Commandments are out, and X-rated, humanistic literature is in. But Madison said we have staked the whole future upon the ability of each and all of us to govern ourselves according to the Ten Commandments of God. What Madison, the architect of the Constitution, was saying: It will not work—it will not work—unless you use it the way it was intended to be used. Don’t fire frozen chickens; that’s not the way we built this cannon. We built it; it was made for people of character, by people of character. And it will work no other way.

What is liberty? Liberty is responsibility assumed. Liberty is responsibility assumed. License is not assuming responsibility; it is doing your thing. Now we think that we can have license and have freedom, but we cannot. Liberty is responsibility assumed. And real liberty, therefore, always comes from within. You have to take the policeman off the street corner and put him in our heart. The less God rules in your heart the more control your going to have from without.

Now let’s go back to the little baby that we were talking about. He has no responsibilities, but he has no liberty. As he grows more and more, he gets more and more responsible; he’s given more and more liberty. But let’s say he gets to be an adult, and, as an adult, he ceases to act responsible, and becomes a criminal. Then, what happens? He’s put in jail. He has no character; therefore, his liberties are taken away. Now he has no responsibilities. He doesn’t have to turn out the lights. He has no liberties. He can’t unlock the door. Because, when he ceases to act responsibly, then his liberty diminishes. It follows as night follows day.

The difference between slavery and freedom is this: where are the laws? In slavery, the laws are from the outside—and we’ll make you do this; in liberty, the law is in the

heart. It is righteousness that exalteth a nation.

Now when our Founding Fathers understood this—“with a firm reliance upon divine providence, we’ll build this nation; and we’ve built a Constitution,” as Madison says, “that will not work apart from each of us governing ourselves according to the Ten Commandments of God”—when we believed this; when we came as a nation out of the womb of a revival, what happened? Well, friend, we had an industrial revolution, and great wealth was produced. Why is that? Because Americans are bigger, better, brighter, smarter? No, we’re human—*homo sapiens*—like other people on the face of the earth. Why is it? Are there more minerals in our soil? Does it rain more on America? No, other nations are beautiful to travel to and see. What makes America different? God has blessed America. God has blessed America. That’s what makes America different. We have been the recipients of the beneficent blessings of Almighty God. And God gave us wealth, and God gave us military strength. “Protect us by thy might, great God our King.”

But today, the scream of the American eagle has become the twitter of a frightened sparrow. Our military is in a shambles, I’m told. No, we have the technology, but do we have the will? Do we have the manpower? We have let people tell us, today, we need to put women in the front lines in combat. And the people say, “Yes, we’ve got to do that; it’s the only reasonable thing to do.” Did you know—in the Bible, when God spoke of His judgment upon a nation, do you know what God said? God said, “I will make their soldiers like women” (Jeremiah 48:41; 49:22). That was God’s judgment. God said, “I will judge them; I’ll make their soldiers like women.” Women are not made for combat in the front lines. Did you know that? But what’s happened? We had a time when we as Americans were respected around the world, and we were people of culture, and people of respect. Today, we’re laughed at, even by those nations where we have pumped money trying to buy respect. They cannot be bought with the Yankee dollar. Let this fasten itself upon your mind. Righteousness is the exaltation of a nation. “*Righteousness exalteth a nation.*” Righteousness is the exaltation of a nation.

II. Reproach Is the Humiliation of a Nation

Now here’s the second thing I want you to learn: Reproach is the humiliation of a nation. Reproach is the humiliation of a nation. God says, “*Sin is a reproach to any people*” (Proverbs 14:34). America today is living in reproach. Now the American dream has begun to dissolve. What happened is this: We came through an agonizing Civil War. We got ourselves back together and turned to God. And then, we had World War I, and God gave us victory in World War I. But rather than giving God the praise, we began to live. We wanted liberty without responsibility. The flapper rage came. The Roaring Twenties came. The Great Depression came. We had failed to understand that earlier blessings

had come from Almighty God. And when the Great Depression came, it came as a result of our debauchery, as a result of our loss of character. Then, we began to turn to the government—to ask the government to help us out—and great social programs began to come in America—government programs. And everybody said, “This is wonderful! Look what the government is going to give us!” But the government can’t give us anything that it doesn’t take from us. And so what the government began to do was to begin to grow, and redistribute the wealth, and take theirs off the top.

You know the government always assumes more and more authority when the people lose more and more character. And as character goes down, control goes up, and government begins to grow. And the government began to provide for people. But when the government provides, the government must, as night follows day, control.

I’ve told you before about a man who had some wild pigs that were rooting up his farm. And he tried to capture them, and he couldn’t. And a man said, “I can capture those pigs for you.” And he went out and he put some food on the ground and withdrew. And the pigs came out of the woods and ate the food. He did that several days, and then he put a fencepost up. And the pigs came and ate the food. That fencepost didn’t bother them. And then, he put another, and another, and another. The pigs didn’t like it, necessarily; but, no harm done, they were getting fat and sleek being fed by someone else. No longer did they root in the woods for their own acorns. Somebody would feed them. And then, after a while, a corral was built, and the wire was strung, and only a narrow gate. And the pigs learned to go in and out that gate to get their food. And then, the bar was dropped, the trap set—the pigs captured. And the man said, “That’s simple. Anything that depends upon me for its food, I can control.”

Now when the government gets people to depend upon them, the government says, “I will be a subsidy.” It follows, as night follows day, when we lose character, at the same time we lose freedom. And we have watched, in America, as one fencepost after another has been set around us, and we’re still eating out of the government trough. And yet, the government is only giving to us what it has first taken from us. And now folks, we’ve turned into a welfare state.

Now not only does the government, then, begin to provide, and the government begins to control; but, if you’re not careful, the government can begin to oppress. You see, government grows as strong as the weak-character people will allow it to grow. And that’s what has happened in America today. Remember what Alexander Hamilton said? “People get the kind of government they deserve.”

Now you say, “But Pastor Rogers, we still have a lot of freedoms in America.” That’s true. But we’re living in the shadow of a constitutional government that was founded by our fathers and forefathers. And that shadow is quickly receding over the horizon. Now if we don’t do something, if we don’t have a spiritual awakening in America, if there’s not

a return to the first principles, which is really a return to the God that made us a nation, if we don't return—here's what's going to happen: There will be a disappearance of the middle class. And you'll have two classes in America: the very rich, and the very poor. Travel around, go to third world countries, and you'll know what I'm talking about. You'll have the very rich and the very poor. The very rich will be, by-and-large, those who are in government, or those who have governmental connections. And the rest will make up the masses that keep it all going.

In 1930, there was one governmental worker for every 205 people. Today, the ratio is more like 1 out of 5. What has happened—as character diminishes, government grows. Today, there is one dependent and one bureaucrat for every three working people. As this continues, the middle class goes. There are the very rich and the very poor.

What is the purpose of government? Read Romans 13. Government is here for protection—to punish evildoers, and to defend the land: “*He beareth not the sword in vain*” (Romans 13:4). But when you get the idea that the government is not here to protect but to provide, then you're in difficulties. Our Founding Fathers knew this. Our Founding Fathers said that government is to provide for the common defense, and promote the general welfare. Not provide the general welfare—provide the common defense. You and I can't raise an army. We shouldn't become vigilantes. We're here to protect one another. That's what the purpose is—to provide the common defense; to promote the general welfare.

The Bible says, “If a man will not work, neither should he eat” (2 Thessalonians 3:10). We're not talking about people that cannot work, or people who are temporarily out of work—they ought to be helped, indeed they should. But when we have a welfare type of state, a form of socialism, then we have gotten away from the teachings, I believe, of the Word of God.

One person has wisely said, “We are in deep trouble, when we look upon our government as a cow to be milked rather than a watchdog to be fed.” Our government is here to protect us. Now once the government begins to provide, then the government begins to control, and they say, “If you're getting government subsidy, your going to do as we do.” Then, the government wants to begin to oppress.

Sometimes, the government wants the minds of its adherents—to keep the rank and file to do what Big Daddy government wants it to do. And so now, the government has to control the minds. And how do you start with the minds? Well, you start with the children. So what do you do? You get a National Education Association, and a Department of Education, and you begin to take little children; you take the Ten Commandments out, and your values clarification in—and say, “Remember, there are no fixed rules of right and wrong; we can't say there's a fixed rule of right and wrong—that's mixing religion and

politics.” And so we take that down, we put values clarification in, and then, we begin to talk about the glories of the welfare state. And then, we begin to talk about a one-world government, and a new world order. And the little children grow up in a nation that our Founding Fathers did not know.

Adolf Hitler said, in 1920, “Give me the minds of the children, and in one generation I will give you the fascist super state.” And he did it. Stalin, in Soviet Russia, did the same thing. You see, out of our education system there, with compulsory education, the Bible is out; prayer is out; Ten Commandments out; creation out; humanism—and its X-rated textbooks—is in.

Here’s an excerpt from an address given at a childhood educational seminar by a professor of educational psychiatry at Harvard University. Listen to this: “Every child in America entering school at the age of five is mentally ill because he comes to school with certain allegiances toward our Founding Fathers, toward our elected officials, toward his parents, toward a belief in a supernatural being, and toward the sovereignty of this nation as a separate entity.” Little children are sick, because they believe in America first; because they believe in God; because they have an allegiance to their parents—that’s sick. And then, this professor from Harvard went on to say, “It’s up to you as teachers to make all these sick children well—by creating the international child of the future.” Now the humanist organization’s very small, but very active, and very powerful, in the United States.

Here is an excerpt from an article taken from a magazine called *The Humanist*, January/February issue, 1983, on page 26: “The battle for humankind’s future must be waged and won in the public school classroom by teachers who correctly perceive their role as the proselytizers of a new faith.” Let me read that over again: “The battle for humankind’s future must be waged and won in the public school classroom by teachers who correctly perceive their role as the proselytizers of a new faith...The classroom must and will become an arena of conflict between the old and the new—the rotting corpse of Christianity...and the new faith of humanism.”

They say, “We’ve got our Sunday School classes five days a week; and, what we’re going to do is, we’re going to bring in a new society.” The government provides; the government controls; the government oppresses. Why? Because of a lack of character on the part of people. *“Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.”* Now the truth of the matter is that God holds us as individuals—as parents—responsible to teach our children. We need to teach our children our heritage; we need to teach them our history. And as we talked in this series on The Ten Commandments, it is to go from God, to grandfather, to father, to children; to be passed down that way.

III. Revival Is the Restoration of a Nation

Now here is the third and final thing: Righteousness is the exaltation of a nation; Reproach is the humiliation of a nation. Revival is the restoration of a nation. Now the Bible says, *“Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD”* (Psalm 33:12). The Bible says, *“When the righteous rule, the people rejoice”* (Proverbs 29:2). America needs a new birth of freedom, but America will never have a new birth of freedom until America has a revival of righteousness. And therefore, *the key to America is not in the statehouse, or the White House, or in the Pentagon, but in the church house, and in your home.*

I hope you believe that. I hope you believe that is not mere rhetoric. You see, ladies and gentlemen, we are the salt and the light. Jesus said, *“Ye are the salt of the earth”* (Matthew 5:13). What does salt do? Salt cleanses; salt purifies; salt preserves; salt penetrates. We don’t have to be a majority. We’re salt.

People say, *“We believe in the separation of church and state.”* Well, number one, that phrase is not found anywhere in the Constitution. The first amendment teaches that there should be no state-church, no national denomination—and, all others would say *amen*. We don’t want our tax money subsidizing religion; we don’t want the national church to be a Baptist church, or any other kind of church. As freeborn Americans we believe in freedom to worship God as we desire, without it being subsidized by the government. We believe that. But our Founding Fathers, never for a skinny minute believed in the separation of God and government. If you think they did, you’d better go back and do some historical study.

Friend, we believed, in the birth of this nation, that there must be righteousness. You don’t put the fish in one barrel and the salt in the other. We’re the salt of the earth—not the pepper, not the sugar—the salt. And Jesus said, and He’s talking to this generation as well as to His, *“If the salt loses its savor, it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and to be trodden under the feet of men”* (Matthew 5:13).

Do you know why the church is being trampled today? Do you know why we are the butt of so many jokes, and stand-up comedians laugh and talk about us, and they make jokes about us? Because we’re salt without savor. They don’t respect us. We’re cast out and trampled under the feet of men. I think it’s time to let the salt work. I think it’s time to let the light shine. I’m not talking about arrogance. I’m talking righteousness.

“Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people.” Righteousness is the exaltation of a nation. Revival is the restoration of a nation. And it can happen; it can happen in the darkest of days.

Conclusion

In Romania, there was a megalomaniac, a communist dictator—Nicolae Ceausescu.

Ceausescu was a tyrant; he was an antichrist. Going to the city of Oradea, he saw a little building there. He had gone to inspect one of his factories. He asked one of his leaders, "What is that building over there?" They said, "Sire, that's a Baptist church." He said, "A what?" "It's a Baptist church." Ceausescu said, "Destroy that nest of insects." They started to destroy that church and persecute the people, but then they came back and said, "Sire, these people are known in this community. If we destroy this church, word may get to the West. We may lose some of our benefits from the West." Ceausescu said, "Then hide it; I don't want to see it." And so they said, "How can we hide a church? Well, we'll build apartment buildings all around it." So they built apartment buildings all around it, and it brought the people right to the church. And the church began to grow magnificently.

Ceausescu was brutal. He began to repress pastors. There was a pastor in Timisoara. His name was Laszlo Tokes, or Tokes the Pastor. He was a Hungarian pastor there in Timisoara. And he dared to ask, "Can we just have some hymnals, please?" "We don't have any hymnals." They saw that as his being too uppity, demanding things of the government. They said, "Tokes is a problem; let's move him out. We'll send the security cop there to take Tokes out of the way." Laszlo got word of the idea, the notion they were coming for him. He told his people—his little church would seat maybe 150 people. Brother Bob, you and I visited that little church—little small church there in an apartment building. It would seat maybe 150 people. He told his people, "They're coming for me. I want you to be here, when they come." His people surrounded the little church and began to pray for the pastor because the security was coming for the pastor.

When the people came for Laszlo Tokes, they said, "Well, ha ha, we'll wait till the people go away." But the next day, rather than hundreds, there were thousands. The word had spread, and they were around that little church, just praying. They began to pass food up through the window, and logs for the fireplace, because the apartment was right there in the building near the church. The crowds grew, and Ceausescu said, "Well, it's getting out of hand. Now I'll send my men with their guns, and I'll send the water cannon. I'll disperse the crowd, and take this renegade preacher." And when they came, they came with their guns, and they began to move on that crowd with the water cannon.

Somebody in that crowd, who had it up to here with totalitarianism, said, "There is a God," and shouted it at the top of his voice. And other people around began to take up the chant: "There is a God! There is a God! There is a God!" They turned on that water cannon which can't be destroyed, and with their bare hands they destroyed that water cannon. With this, the police began to shoot, and the military men to shoot, these individuals there in Timisoara. And they began to shoot. And men who had had enough

began to unbutton their coat, unbutton their shirt, and stand in front of a man with a rifle, and say, "Shoot me!" And they shot them in cold blood. They began to shoot little children from the rooftop. They were shooting into the crowd. But the people began to shout all the more: "There is a God! There is a God! There is a God!"

Ceausescu knew he was in trouble. He called for a great crowd there in Timisoara, got out on a platform, up on a balcony, to make an oration, a speech, to tell them how wonderful He was. And out in the crowd, somebody shouted, "Murderer! You're a murderer!" And others began to shout. And he knew his day was done. Ceausescu fled back to his apartment, up on the roof, got in a helicopter, and took off. He had it land by an armored vehicle, got in the vehicle to take him to safety; but, he had told all of his people, "You can't have more than 10 liters of fuel in any military vehicle." He was afraid they would try to escape, themselves. And so here he is trying to escape, and he runs out of gas.

And this great vaunted dictator, who was building for himself a 10 billion dollar palace—I've been in the palace, a thousand rooms in his own personal suite—since 1984, he had been building his palace; 24,000 slave laborers working around the clock. It is now 1989; five years they had been building this palace. It's still about two-thirds built. He has a bunker underground, but it's not quite finished. He runs out of gas. He has to get out and catch a taxi. Humiliated, they take him; they arrest him, on Christmas Day. This madman is put up against the wall, and a firing squad of 10 put 160 bullets in Nicolae Ceausescu.

In a few days, I'm going to be preaching in that church, where he said, "Destroy that nest of insects." That church is now the largest evangelical church in all of Europe. They have a beautiful 3,000-seat auditorium. Souls are coming to Christ. And the Sunday that I'll be preaching there, we're going to baptize more than 200 precious souls in that one service. Why? Because the people said, "There is a God."

There is a God that rules in the affairs of men; and, live or die, we're going to stand up for what we believe. And it's time for every red blooded American to say, "There is a God!" And "*Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people*"—the righteousness that is the exaltation of a nation; the reproach that is the humiliation of a nation; the revival that is the restoration of a nation. I want to leave to my grandkids a godly nation. Isn't that what you want? God grant it. God grant it. "God bless America, land that we love." Let's bow our heads in prayer.

Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. All heads are bowed and eyes are closed. May I ask you a personal question? Are you saved? Sooner or later, America and all nations will join the graveyard of the nations. But there's a Kingdom that endures forever, and that's the Kingdom of God. Do you know Jesus Christ as your personal Savior? If you were to die right now, are you absolutely certain that you'd go straight to

Heaven? If you would like to receive Jesus, I want to help you to do that right now. Would you pray a prayer like this in your heart? “Dear God, I’m a sinner, and my sins deserve judgment. But Lord, I want to be saved. I need to be forgiven. Lord Jesus, I want you to be my Lord and my Savior. Come into my heart. Forgive my sin. Cleanse me; save me, Lord Jesus.” Would you pray that prayer? “Cleanse me, and save me, Lord Jesus.” Pray it, and mean it. “Save me, Lord Jesus.” If you prayed that prayer, then pray this: “Thank You for saving me. I receive it by faith. I don’t ask for feeling; I don’t look for a sign. I stand on Your Word. You’re now my Lord and my Savior. And begin now to make me the person You want me to be. And Lord Jesus, because You died for me, I will live for You. In Your Holy name I pray. Amen.”

What Does the Word of God Say About Government?

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: November 9, 2003

Main Scripture Text: Proverbs 14:34

“Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.”
PROVERBS 14:34

Outline

Introduction

- I. God Gave the Government to Resist Evil
- II. God Gave the Government to Encourage Good
- III. What Are We to Do?
 - A. We Are to Pray for Our Government
 - B. We Are to Pay Taxes
 - C. We Are to Be Patriotic
 - D. We Need to Speak to Our Government When It Does Wrong

Conclusion

Introduction

Find in your Bible, please, the Book of Proverbs, and I want us to look for just a starting place in Proverbs chapter 14 and verse 34. It's a good memory verse. I think many of you know it, if you are a student of the Bible, and especially the Book of Proverbs. But, here's what it says: *“Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people”* (Proverbs 14:34). Now, sometimes people have the idea that the only holy nation—the only nation that God expects righteousness out of—is the Jewish people. But, here God says, “Any people, if they will be righteous, that nation can be exalted. Any people, if they become sinful, that nation will get reproach” (Proverbs 14:34).

I received an invitation here weeks and weeks ago to preach in Washington D.C. at the National Cathedral in the 228th anniversary—at the 228th anniversary—of the United States Marine Corps. They have an annual birthday celebration. I learned that the United States Marine Corps, founded November 10th, 1775, is actually older than the United States itself. I learned that it was Marines that helped George Washington to cross the Delaware to fight the Hessian army in New Jersey. I studied all of the history of the Marines. I'm sure there's much that I do not know, but I stand in even greater

respect and admiration for the United States Marines.

I received this invitation to speak at the National Cathedral from General Hagee, who is the Commandant of all of the Marines. I thought I was reading someone else's mail, but my name was on it. And, they wanted me to speak in the National Cathedral. Now, I don't know whether you've ever been to the National Cathedral or not; it is a magnificent building. It is Episcopalian in tradition. It is, I've heard, the third largest cathedral in the United States. It is absolutely magnificent so far as architecture is concerned. But, don't tell any body I said so—but kind of clammy and cold. But, it's there, and it's there in all of its beauty, and all of its stained glass, and all of its grand organ and all of that. And, I was invited to come. I want to tell you, if you put Episcopalian liturgy and Marine precision together... It takes a person like myself to look and watch very carefully, because I'm not given to a lot of regiment; I'm not given to a lot of ritual. And, I am, as you know after having had me as your pastor for many years, I am—I try to be—respectful, but I'm not exactly bound by tradition. And so, I had to watch my p's and q's that I be not like the Beverly Hillbillies.

But, God got us through. When it came time for me to preach, there was a lady with a robe and a staff in her hand of some kind that led me to the pulpit. And, I went to the pulpit, and there were these stairs that I ascended up to the pulpit and there to preach down to the people. To say the least, from the time we processed in to the time we left, it was quite an event. I was introduced by the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Hagee himself, who is a manly man and heads up the United States Marines. And then, the Secretary of the Navy, Mr. England, was there, who made comments and read scripture. And, many of the Marine brass and other dignitaries were there.

I preached to the people. First of all, I thanked God for the Marines and what the Marines do. And, I told the Marines that I was grateful that they are there to protect us, that we might live as we live. And, I'm going to tell you some more about government here in just a moment. But, I said, "Where are we going to get the answer to this matter of the military and national defense?" I said, "We're not going to get the answer from the doves who don't believe in war—the pacifists. They are like lambs defending the lion's right to eat it. We're not going to get the answer from the doves." I said, "We're not going to get the answer from the hawks. (The hawks are those who somehow prefer war.) A man who prefers war is insane. War is horrible and hellish. We're not going to get the answer from the doves. We're not going to get the answer from the hawk. We're not going to get the answer from the owls. (The owls are those who sit in classrooms and behind mahogany desks and in libraries and philosophize about war.) They don't have the answer. And," I said, "we're not going to get the answer from the sparrows. (The sparrows are those who are afraid of war.) They would like to turn the scream of the great American eagle into the twitter of a frightened sparrow."

“But,” I said, “if you look at the Marine emblem, on top of that Marine emblem is an eagle, and he is the crested eagle—not the bald eagle, but the crested eagle, found in all parts of the world. And, the hemisphere of the earth is there, and this eagle is sitting on top, showing that the Marines are ready anywhere to protect us. And, for that, I’m grateful.” And, I told a story that I read when Colin Powell was being interviewed by some news people. There was a man there from the Iraqi press—this was before the hostility began—and this man asked Colin Powell—he said, “We’ve done a survey, and we’ve found out that only 13% of American youth can even find Iraq on a map. What do you think of that?” Colin Powell said, “Well, I don’t know whether that is true or not, but let’s say that perhaps it is. I can tell you one thing: unfortunate for you, all 13% are Marines.”

The Marines are there to protect us. But, I told them—I said, “Having said that—and I believe in national defense, and I thank God for these eagles who fight for us—that there is an answer. There’s a problem, rather, that demands another answer, because there are those who are willing and sworn in their fanaticism to bring America down and to decimate us, to obliterate our faith and our religion. And, they are militant about it—so much that they are willing to lay down their lives for what they believe, willing to die for their cause. Now, they have a perverted idea. They believe a lie. They have a twisted logic, but they believe it. They believe it with a fanatically belief.” And, I reminded the Marines, and I reminded those who were there, that we’re wrestling against—not flesh and blood, but against principalities, and powers, and spiritual wickedness. And, I told them that these ideas are very strong, and no bomb or bullet will kill an idea. The only thing that will destroy an idea is a better idea, and the only thing that will kill a lie is the truth. That’s the reason we as Americans, and Christians, and those who know the truth must know the truth, love the truth, tell the truth, live the truth, and preach the truth.

And, I talked to them about the prayer of a patriot. And, I will not give you the message, but it was an exposition of Psalm 80. Joyce was there—those of you who may be visitors, Joyce is my wife—and was there with her trusty video cam, and she took a few pictures. And, I’ve asked our people upstairs to show us just about three or four minutes of home movies, and then I’ll talk a little bit more. So, here are some of the things that happened. Give you just a little taste of what happened there in the National Cathedral.

And, let me say, before that comes up, I also was invited by the White House to attend, this past Wednesday, the signing of the bill that bans partial birth abortion by the President of the United States. And, I’ll tell you more about that in just a moment. So, let’s watch this video, and then I’ll come right back.

Well, here we are in the Washington National Cathedral. It’s a beautiful fall day, and there is...

Now, as I'm... And, I thought about what the Marines have done—to live with courage, and consistency, and honor, and commitment—that we might be here today. I thought, “Yes, but we have a problem that the Marines cannot handle. They're in battle that Marines cannot win by their military competency, by their dedication, and by their honor. We are in a spiritual battle in America.” And, may I tell you that America is sick—sick unto death. And, unless there is a new birth for America, some generation may study the rise and fall of the American Empire. We need a new birth for our nation.

Hello, Bill Hendry and Semper Fidelis.

Okay, this is a wonderful occasion, isn't it? This is Henry Hyde in the silver hair, Shirley Dobson, and Vonette Bright, Orrin Hatch, Richard Land, this very excited audience—people who have been on the pro-life side are excited about today. There is May Sue Falwell. All of you joined us as the Partial Birth Abortion Ban Act of 2003 becomes the law of the land. A terrible form of violence has been directed against children who are inches from birth while the law looked the other way. The day at last the American people and our government have confronted the violence and come to the defense of the innocent child.

All right. Now, that'll give you a taste of what happened, and I can tell you it was a joyful and electrifying moment. May I also say that already that bill has been challenged by judges, and it will go most likely to the Supreme Court? And, we need to continue to pray.

When I was a boy in Florida, we lived at the seaside. And, I love the water, as you know. And, one of the things that always intrigued me as a boy was the changing of the tide, 'cause my brother and I, as we'd go out fishing or whatever, would always be cognizant of the tides, because we would come and go by the tides. And, the tides were important to us. What I believe we may have seen—and I pray God it is true—that at the lowest point, when the tide is as low as it can get, we may have seen the tide begin to turn. Grant it, God, just a little, as the tide goes back the other way, back to decency in America, back to standing up for the unborn. Thank God for this moment.

We need, as I told the Marines, we need to look up. Only God can help us. We need to confess up and turn from our wicked ways. We need to speak up, and we need to stand up for what is right. After that meeting there at the Ronald Reagan building where the President spoke, I was invited with a handful of people (about seven) to go to the Oval Office. We were taken by motorcade immediately after that speech and spent some quality time with the President. And, it was my joy to be there with him and to share some advice, primarily spiritual advice, where I encouraged the President to let the joy of the Lord be his strength, because he has an enormous burden.

He told us—and, of course, what we said we were told basically off the record, so I don't want to make a mistake of talking too much in public about private meetings. But, I

certainly feel that this is in the purview of what could be said. The President said—“I want you to know I am at peace with myself. I want you to know that I do not get up every morning and read the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*. I want you to know I do not watch ABC, NBC, or CBS news.” He said, “I know what I want to do. I go to bed, wake up in the morning, and begin to do it.” And, I like that. Friend, that is leadership. And, he said, “Laura and I are doing well. Our marriage is as good as it has ever been.” And, when asked what we could pray for, he wanted us to pray for him for wisdom, for guidance, and to pray for his family, especially his girls, that God would watch over and protect them.

Before we left that meeting, he said, “And, I’ve got to kick you guys out,” because we stayed there for about 35 minutes. He said, “Before you leave, I’m going to ask Adrian to lead us in prayer.” As a matter of fact, when I came in, I said, “I don’t know whether it’s proper to hug a President, but I put a bear hug on him and told him I loved him.” And, I do. And, he said, “We’re going to ask Adrian to lead us in prayer.” We stood up. He said, “Let’s hold hands.” He said, “Don’t you hold hands in Memphis when you pray?” I said, “Well, it all depends on who we’re holding hands with.” But, we held hands and prayed, and I assured him of the prayer of the people called Bellevue. So, I want to call you to prayer for our President.

And, that was our visit to Washington. Joyce and I visited the office of Senator Frist and Senator Alexander. We visited the Chaplain of the Senate, whose name is Barry Black, who has visited here in Bellevue a number of times. He is a black man who is a very fine preacher—Admiral Black. And then, we also had dinner with Admiral Burt, who heads up the chaplaincy for the U.S. Marine Corps and Navy. Admiral Burt is his name—Bob Burt, who, incidentally (and I did not know this) has attended Bellevue for two solid years when he was stationed here. And now, he is the head chaplain of all of the Navy and the Marine Corps. And, they love Bellevue—this man and his wife. For two years they attended here, unbeknownst to us. So, God is blessing us. And, we don’t know who is in our midst, but thank God for the opportunity. I know that when I’m there, there’s no reason that I should be there. There’s no reason I should be behind this pulpit, except for the call of God, except for Jesus and the gospel that we preach. And, I know that I am only there as a representative of you and of this dear church and the Lord that we serve. I’m grateful for that.

I met another friend there that I’ve known for a long time—the Attorney General of the United States, John Ashcroft. Some of you know John, who is a dedicated beloved Christian. He called me the day after we were there, and my secretary said, “Pastor, the Attorney General wants to speak to you.” I wondered, what have I done now? But, he just called to say, “I want to tell you I think you’re special. And,” he said, “after the meeting with the President,” he said, “I met with the President.” And, he said, “The only

name he mentioned was yours, and he said some very complimentary things about you.” And, of course, I loved to hear that, and I’m grateful that the Attorney General would think enough to call and say that. And so, we need to continue to pray: pray for our President; pray for our nation, because we are in a crisis.

Now, let me take the little bit of time that I have left and talk to you about government, talk to you about the military, talk to you about the presidency and all of this.

You know, when it comes to the political scene and government, there are some people who have dropped out altogether. They have the idea that if you get involved in government, that somehow that is the social gospel. And so, people have just dropped out, and they’ve just hunkered down and try to hold on ’till Jesus gets here. And, they see the political scene as being dirty and worldly. And, some have been intimidated by the great debate between Church and State. We can’t drop out. It’s impossible to think that God would have ordained government and told His people to stay out. Who else does that leave to run things?

So, there are those, on the one hand, who have dropped out. There are others who, with misguided zeal, have turned their churches into precincts and have tried to bring in the Kingdom of God by political machinations. That cannot be done, either. We can’t use our government to wage holy war against the heathen as such. We have to defend ourselves.

But, where do we get the answers? Just like I talked about, where do we get the military answers? We’re not going to get the answers today from the politician who may have his personal ax to grind. We’re not going to get the answers from the ungodly and the humanists who don’t believe the Word of God. We’re not going to get the answer from finger-bumping philosophers who don’t know the Word of God. The only place we’re going to get the answers, I believe, is from the Word of God.

Now, what does the Word of God have to say about government? The Word of God teaches us that God has ordained human government—God has ordained that. If you’ll read Romans chapter 13, you will read that the powers that be are ordained of God and that God sets up human government (Romans 13:1). “Well,” you say, “if God sets up human government, what about wicked governments? Did God set them up?” It may surprise you to learn—yes, He did. That does not mean they are God’s will. In the greater sense, God would much rather have righteousness. But, people get the kind of government, by and large, that they deserve.

Let me give you a few scriptures here, and you might want to jot these down. First of all, Daniel chapter 2, verse 21—here’s what the prophet Daniel said, speaking of God: “*And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings*” (Daniel 2:21). God is the One who removes kings; God is the One who sets up kings.

Let me tell you, for example, there was a king named Nebuchadnezzar. By the way, Saddam Hussein has taken Nebuchadnezzar, that ancient king, as his idol—wants to be the second Nebuchadnezzar. Well, what does the Book of Daniel say about Nebuchadnezzar? Daniel was speaking to Nebuchadnezzar, and Daniel said in Daniel 2, verses 37 and 38: *“Thou, O king, art a king of kings”*—that is, he ruled over a world empire—*“for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power...strength, and glory”* (Daniel 2:37). The God of Heaven gave Nebuchadnezzar his kingdom.

What about Pharaoh, who put all the little babies to death? A wicked Pharaoh. Did God have anything to do with his rulership? Romans chapter 9, verse 17: *“For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth”* (Romans 9:17). God raised Pharaoh up to bring Pharaoh down.

And, the hidden hand of God is in history, and God is behind human government, whether that human government is good or bad, whether you understand it or not. When Jesus Christ stood before Pilate, Pilate stuck out his chest and said to Jesus, “Don’t you understand that I have the power to release You or to crucify You?” (John 19:10). Pilate was an egotist, stuffed with pride and with overweening authority. And, here’s what Jesus said to him in John chapter 19, verse 11: *“Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above”* (John 19:11)—“you didn’t have any power to do this except God allowed it.” Now friend, that may be strange to you, but don’t you think that God is out of control. Yes, some of these men were evil. And, a wise man said that “we deserve the kind of leadership in government that we get.” However, human government is ordained of God.

And, human government is given to us for two basic reasons.

I. God Gave the Government to Resist Evil

Romans chapter 13, verses 3 and 4 tell us that human government is given to us to restrain evil (Romans 13:3–4). Human government is there as the instrument of God. We often hear people say, “You can’t legislate morality.” Well, that is true. You can’t legislate morality. There’s no law that can make you moral; there’s no law that can make you love me. We cannot legislate morality. That’s why we have to have laws to legislate against immorality. Now, catch the point very carefully: there is no law that can make you love me, so we must have law to keep you from killing me. You see, that’s the purpose of government. Government is here not to make us good—only God can make us good—government is here to restrain evil. That’s why we have a police force. Who would want to live in the city of Memphis—or any major city, for that matter—without a police force?

Sometimes, in restraining evil, the government must take a life. Does the

government have the right to take life? Read Romans 13. The Bible says that the magistrate, the power appointed of God, is to bear the sword. And, *“he is...a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil”* (Romans 13:4). Sometimes these people who parade against capital punishment and war hold up banners, and on that banner they quote a part of the Bible—Exodus chapter 20, verse 13—that says, *“Thou shalt not kill”* (Exodus 20:13). These people are pathetic in their ignorance, because they think that that verse negates capital punishment. It does not. They think that verse negates self-defense or just war. It does not. That verse teaches that you and I do not have a right to take personal vengeance, and what it literally says, rightly interpreted, is, *“Thou shalt not murder”* (Exodus 20:13). It is against murder.

Now, any body who can read the Bible can pick up the Bible in Exodus chapter 20 and verse 13 and read, *“Thou shalt not kill”* (Exodus 20:13). But, all they have to do is go, fast-forward to two chapters—Exodus 22, verses 2 and 3—and it says, *“If a thief be found breaking up, and be smitten that he die, there shall no blood be shed for him”* (Exodus 22:2). If somebody is breaking into your house and you don’t know what he’s up to, in self-defense he is shot, your blood is not shed for him. All murder is killing, but all killing is not murder. Romans 13, verse 4 speaks of the magistrate as bearing the sword (Romans 13:4). The Bible clearly teaches capital punishment. Genesis 9, verse 6: *“Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man”* (Genesis 9:6).

Now, these people quote Exodus 20, verse 13: *“Thou shalt not kill”* (Exodus 20:13). Why don’t they go one chapter further to Exodus 21, verse 12: *“He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall [surely] be...put to death”* (Exodus 21:12)? Isn’t that amazing? People only pick and choose a few verses but don’t look into the whole Bible. Some people say, *“Well, capital punishment is cruel.”* Are you wiser and more loving than God Himself? *Coddling the criminal is cruelty to the community.* Some people think that God is too good to punish evil. The truth is just the opposite: God is too good not to punish evil.

Sometimes we have to go to war. Are we not supposed to love our enemies? Of course we’re to love our enemies. You read in Romans chapter 12—the Bible says we’re to do good to those who persecute us (Romans 12:14). And, if our enemy does thus-and-such, we are to pour cold water on his head as it were—that is, to pacify him as much as possible. *“Live peaceably with all men”* (Romans 12:18). We are not to take vengeance. But, there is a difference in our personal vengeance and the government, going to war, or a police force to protect innocent people. God gave the government, first of all, to resist evil.

II. God Gave the Government to Encourage Good

And, God gave the government to encourage good. Now, the government cannot make us good, but the government can encourage good. For the Bible says, “If we do good”—there in Romans chapter 13, verse 3—“then concerning the government we are to have praise of the same” (Romans 13:3). So, that’s the reason the framers of our Constitution wrote in our Constitution that we are to provide for the common defense—that is, to resist evil and to promote the welfare, the general welfare—not to provide the welfare, but to promote it; to give us a place where we can go out, and work, and live, and preach, and teach.

Now, what are the responsibilities of government? And, what are the responsibilities of churches like Bellevue Baptist Church? Rightly understood, we believe in the separation of Church and State—rightly understood. We do not want a government church. I do not want the government messing in religion. They don’t know what they’re doing. They have no business, and the government needs to butt out of religion. “The separation of Church and State,” however, as a phrase, is not found in the Constitution of the United States. The Constitution simply says in the First Amendment that “Congress will make no law respecting the establishment of religion nor prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” That is, we’re not going to set up a State Church, whether it be a Baptist church, Episcopalian church, a Catholic church, or anything else. But, our Founding Fathers did not believe for a moment in the separation of God and government. The whole thing is based on belief in God. As you know, the Declaration of Independence, the most precious document in our national archives, says, “We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights.” They say, “We don’t even quibble about that—that it all comes from God.”

Joyce and I visited the Jefferson Memorial, and I looked up there at the Jefferson Memorial and saw the inscription concerning God written all the way around Jefferson. Jefferson was not what you would call a “Bible-thumping evangelical Christian,” but he had enough sense to know that there is a God. And, up there, chiseled in stone, is, “The God who gave us life gave us liberty at the same time.” And, he said, again, in another place, “I have sworn by the altar of God to stand against all tyranny over the human mind.” It began with Jefferson, the principle author of the Constitution—that we believe in God.

I think about these pathetic people who have tried to remove the Ten Commandments down there in Montgomery, Alabama, under Justice Roy Moore, because they say, “The Ten Commandments don’t belong in that courthouse.” Ladies and gentlemen, I said, “Joyce, let’s go to the Supreme Court building. I just want to go one more time.” We went to the Supreme Court building. I said, “I want to see it one

more time.” I looked up—over that great frieze, that façade, there, where those nine Justices sit, right overhead in the center is Moses holding the Ten Commandments—in the Supreme Court building of the United States of America. Joyce and I went to the rotunda of the Capitol. And, there, looking at the magnificent pictures all the way around there, there is a picture of those Mayflower Pilgrims coming over there with an open Bible on their knees, giving this land to Almighty God.

Friend, I’m telling you, the ACLU would have a fit today if we were to begin to do in Washington what is already there. If you want to remove the references to God Almighty from Washington, you would have to take a jackhammer and chisel and go to work and stay there for years to remove all of the references that are there to Almighty God. And yet, we cannot post these Ten Commandments in the courthouse, when the very Supreme Court who would not hear the case has them hanging right over their heads. There’s something mighty strange about that to me.

And, we believe—we believe—in the separation of Church and State. We do not want a State-mandated Church, but we do believe in...not in the separation. We do not believe in a separation of God and government. Our Founding Fathers did not, and those who have gone before us did not. That’s the reason you can take money out of your pocket and read, “In God We Trust.” That’s the reason that Congress opens with prayer. That’s the reason I was able to visit the chaplain of the Senate when I was in Washington. That’s the reason we that we still salute old glory: “One nation, under God.” Abraham Lincoln said, “I believe it is the duty of nations as well as men to own their dependence on the overruling power of God.” That’s what he said. Now, people don’t like the idea of God in government because it cramps their style. They want to live in sin, and the idea of God cramps their style.

III. What Are We to Do?

Well, what are we to do? And, I’ve got to wrap this up. But, what do we do as a church? What is my responsibility as a pastor so far as government is concerned?

A. We Are to Pray for Our Government

First of all, we are to pray for our government. Our President said, “Please pray for me.” He said, “I know people are praying for me.” He said, “Sometimes people ask me, ‘How do you know that people are praying for you?’” He said, “If you have to ask, I can’t explain it to you. But,” he said, “I know that people are praying for me.” We are to pray for our government. First Timothy chapter 2, verses 1 to 3: *“I exhort therefore...first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable [and right] in the sight of God*

our Saviour” (1 Timothy 2:1–3).

We need to pray for leaders even if they are wrong. I prayed for Bill Clinton. Now, I didn't pray that God would bless him in his wrong. But, we are to pray for them. The Bible says in Proverbs 21, verse 1: *“The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as...rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will”* (Proverbs 21:1). Sometimes God will change a ruler. Sometimes God will remove a ruler. Sometimes God will override a ruler.

Again, wicked leaders are God's reward for a wicked people. America gets the kind of leadership it deserves. The Bible speaks of God's people in the Old Testament, and it says this of them, “He gave them the desire of their hearts but sent leanness to their soul” (Psalm 106:15). Now, they said, “We want thus-and-such.” God says, “If that's what you want, I'm going to give it to you, but you'll not have My blessing.”

B. We Are to Pay Taxes

Not only do we need to pray for our government—friend, we need to pay taxes. Sorry about that. The Bible teaches that we are to pay taxes. Very clearly and very plainly, Jesus said, *“[We are to] render...[a] tribute to whom tribute is due”* (Romans 13:7). The word *tribute* basically would be counterpart of “income tax” today. And, Jesus paid taxes. And, of course, we're against ever-increasing taxes, and if the President is right, his tax relief that he's given has caused the economy to get a jumpstart. I believe he just may be right. I'm certainly not an economist. But, I tell you one thing that God teaches—that it is our responsibility to pay taxes. And, I'm glad to live in America, even if we sometimes are overtaxed, if people are. This is about the only nation in the world people are fighting still to get into, and I'm grateful for that.

C. We Are to Be Patriotic

And, I'm going to tell you what else we need to do: we need to be patriotic. Today it's getting a little old-fashioned in some corners to be patriotic. But, I'm still a red-blooded, flag-waving American. And, I still get a lump in my throat when Old Glory goes by. And, Joyce and I were in the nation's Capitol and looked at our monuments. I looked at our documents. I looked at our history, and I just felt warmth in my heart.

Now, I know that these one-worlders say, “You can't put America first.” Of course you put America first. And, if you're a German, you put Germany first. If you're Chinese, you put China first. Listen, I am a Rogers. I love your family, but I love my family more. You think that's wrong? No. The Bible says, *“If any provide not for his own, [especially] those of his own house, he hath denied the faith...[he's] worse than an infidel”* (1 Timothy 5:8). This is my country, and I love it. And, we're to love America. There's nothing wrong with patriotism. The Bible says, “We are to honor the king. Give honor to whom honor is due” (1 Peter 2:17).

And, when our government does right, we are to let them know. By the way, I try to let our people know when they do good—write them notes and send them letters. And, Joyce and I pray, as we did this morning—every Sunday morning we pray for the national leadership of our nation. We call by name the President, and the Vice President, and the Secretary of State. And, we pray for Condoleezza Rice, and we pray for Colin Powell. And, we pray for John Ashcroft, and we pray for these people—Don Evans, the Secretary of Treasury. Right on down we pray for them by name. And, we pray for our congressmen, and we pray for our senators. And, we pray for Mayor Herrington, and we pray for Mayor Wharton. And, we pray for the leadership in this place. And, we pray, Sunday morning, for preachers across America and in our city, and we do that regularly and faithfully. There's nothing wrong with patriotism. There is nothing wrong with loving one's land.

D. We Need to Speak to Our Government When It Does Wrong

I tell you what else we need to do: we need to speak to the government when the government does wrong. And, don't think that because we are loyal Americans that somehow we've been disenfranchised. There are people who want us to go under the rock and hide. We need to come out from under the rock, stand on the rock, and say the Word of God. Man, if we don't speak, who's going to speak—if Americans don't stand up?

I study the Bible, and I know some people don't like it when I may sometimes say something that sounds, in their estimation, "political." Well, everything that we think about is in some way political. Murder is political. Capital punishment is political. Abortion is political. Homosexuality is political. Adultery is political. Thievery is political. What can you talk about that's not somehow moral that it does not have political implication?

Nathan warned King David. Elijah preached to Ahab. Daniel preached to Nebuchadnezzar. Moses was God's prophet to Pharaoh. John the Baptist preached to Herod. And, as long as they are killing babies, Adrian is going to speak up. As long as we have militant homosexuals trying to normalize homosexuality I'm going to speak up. When public schools are issuing condoms to teenage girls and boys, I'm going to speak up. When a freeborn American is told he cannot pray vocally, I will speak up. They say, "Oh, well, you can have silent prayer." I say, "You can do that in a Russian concentration camp. No, we have freedom of speech like everybody else."

Hand me that newspaper over there. I read this in *Washington*...front page of the *Washington Times*: "Mother appeals ruling on gays. Judge restricts views at home. A Christian mother is appealing a judge's decision that prohibits her from teaching her daughter that homosexuality is wrong." A judge says to a mother, "You cannot open the

Bible and teach your daughter that homosexuality is wrong.” Friend, as long as that’s going on, the man named Adrian is going to speak up.

We can’t drop out. Jesus said, “We’re to render unto Caesar that which is Caesar’s and unto God that which is God’s” (Matthew 22:21; Mark 12:17; Luke 20:25). Our Caesar is a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. And, if you don’t participate, in my estimation, you’re disobeying the Lord. Proverbs 29, verse 2 says, “*When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked [bears] rule, the people mourn*” (Proverbs 29:2). The tragedy in America is the bad citizenship of good people. And, until the coming election, we’re going to do all we can do to get every member of Bellevue Baptist Church registered to vote. And, if you don’t vote, I hope a wart grows on your nose. I’m telling you, we cannot be silent; we cannot sit around. One vote can make the difference. I’m only one, but I am one. I can’t do everything, but I can do something. And, what I can do and ought to do—that, by the grace of God, I will do.

Read today’s paper about a man who got upset about this film, this docu-drama, that twisted and warped the life of Ronald Reagan. You talk about being a bully—picking on a man, an elderly man, dying of Alzheimer’s! And, to make such a film to be shown on CBS—it’s unspeakably vile as far as I’m concerned. One man heard the *Drudge Report*. One man said, “That’s wrong.” He went and took, I guess, somewhere around ten dollars—nine dollars and something, if I remember the article—and got a Web page, and said, “We want some emails if you’re opposed to this.” When my wife saw that, she jumped up, and went to the computer right away, and sent an email to 25 of her friends, and said, “Send this out.” You read the article today: it says that CBS was stunned. They were in awe of the emails that came in. I tell you, whatever reason they give, I can tell you the bottom line: the reason they withdrew that docu-drama was the opinion—the overwhelming opinion—of many Americas who said it is rotten dirty and they knew it, because God’s people just rose up. May God give us an army of the indignant, an army of people who will be wise!

Now, don’t you just sally forth into battle. Sometimes when things happen, I’m afraid of what our people are going to write to the letters to the editor. Sometimes we’re represented not by the best. That’s the best way I can put it. Use your mind. “*Let your speech be...seasoned with salt*” (Colossians 4:6). But, stand up, and speak up, and come out from under the rock, and stand on the rock, and speak up for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Well, there are many other things that I could say. But, one last word and then we’re certainly finished. There comes a time when you make—you must have, you may have—to disobey your government. The apostles were told not to preach any more in the name of Jesus, but they did anyway. The midwives in Pharaoh’s time were told to

kill the little boy babies, but they spared some of the little boy babies. Daniel was commanded by the government not to pray, but he prayed. There are times when we have to stand up against human authority. The only authority the government has is that which is granted ultimately by Almighty God. And, we ought to obey God rather than man. We do not render unto God the things that are Caesar's, and we do not render under Caesar the things that are God's. But, we certainly don't render unto Caesar the things that are God. We stand up against evil. Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, not the things that are God's.

Conclusion

Well, thank you for praying for your pastor when I went to Washington. These, in a way, are kind of rambling thoughts, but I am believing God for a national revival. You know, sometimes—sometimes—we think that it's just too late, and we just hunker down. That's what the devil wants us to do. It's always too soon to quit. God has sent revival in the darkest days before, and there's not one shred of Scripture that says we cannot have revival in dark days. You think it's bad now? Friend, in the 18th Century, there was a great revival in England... I'm starting on another sermon. Listen, it is not too late for America. And, I don't want you to say, "My country—right or wrong." I want you to get right—I want to get right. One by one, let's get right—get right with God—and say—say it, sing it, pray it, and mean it: "God bless America."

Let's bow together in prayer. Father God, thank You for letting us be here tonight. And Lord, I thank You for the privilege that You have given to me to speak in these places. And Lord, I know—I sincerely know, Lord—that not because of any inherent goodness, or wit, or wisdom of my own, but Lord, because of Your call, because of Your grace, and because of Your anointing... And Lord, I'm only one in a small voice. But Lord, a lot of small voices together can do something. And Lord, You've said that, "One could chase a thousand; two shall chase ten thousand" (Deuteronomy 32:30). Help us to believe that. Lord, bless this, our dear church. For we pray in the strong name of Jesus. Amen.

Now folks, there's something more important than America, and it's the Kingdom of God. And, I'm not interested in making America a better place to go to Hell from. You need to be saved. If you're not saved, I want you to give your heart to Jesus Christ tonight. If I had a thousand lives to live, I'd give Him every one of them—I really would. I came to Jesus Christ as a teen. If I had understood it sooner, I would have come sooner. I believe I could have been led to Jesus when I was six years old if somebody had done it. And, I would have come to Jesus and been just as saved. I don't care how young you are or how old you are—you can be saved if you can understand what I'm saying tonight. God loves you, and He wants to save you.

I don't care how good you are or how bad you are. *There's no one so good they don't need to be saved and no one so bad they can't be saved.* You say, "What if I'm not one of the elect?" The Bible says, "Whosoever will may come." (Revelation 22:17) If you will, you are a part of the elect. You just come to Jesus, and I promise you on the authority of the Word of God He will save you instantaneously. He will be with you continually. He'll keep you eternally. You are saved by trusting Jesus. The Bible says, "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ*" (Acts 16:31). That doesn't mean mere intellectual belief; it doesn't mean just accepting some facts about Him. That word *believe* means "trust." You can believe an airplane can fly—you don't trust it until you get on it. Commit your life to Jesus. Trust Him. Believe on Him. Trust Him, and a transformation will take place. He will save you. He will satisfy you. He will secure you, if you trust Him.

We're going to sing an invitational hymn. This choir is going to lead us. The ministers of our church are going to be standing here at the front to receive those of you who come forward. And if, tonight, you want to give your heart to Jesus, just slip out of that seat where you are, and make your way down here, and just say to the minister, "I need Jesus," or, "I want to be saved," or, "I'm trusting Jesus." It doesn't matter really how you say it. We'll take the Word of God and guide you in that decision, have a prayer with you tonight, and guide you in a simple prayer, and you can receive Christ as your personal Savior and Lord. And, He'll save you. You can go home tonight a child of God. You're not going to sprout wings and get a halo. You'll be a baby Christian. You'll have to learn a lot. But, Jesus will save you—just like this married couple up there, baptized tonight, got married and saved together. Isn't that wonderful? Jesus will save you—He'll save you; He will.

Others of you need a church home. We invite you to become a part of the Bellevue family of friends. If you are saved and know it and believe as we believe, we invite you to come. You don't have to be perfect. There's not a perfect member in this church. We ask that you be sincere, that you want to grow in Jesus. Let's stand together. You step out and come.

When the String Snaps

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: April 4, 1991

Main Scripture Text: Proverbs 15:13–22

*“A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance:
but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken.”*

PROVERBS 15:13

Outline

Introduction

- A. Stress is Damaging to Our Homes
- B. Stress is Damaging to Our Health
- C. Stress is Dangerous to Our Happiness
- I. Learn to Laugh
- II. Cultivate Contentment
- III. Alleviate Anger
- IV. Walk in Wisdom

Conclusion

Introduction

Turn to Proverbs chapter 15. We're in a series of messages entitled "The Music of Marriage," and you will remember, in the very first message, we talked about "Dad: the Leader of the Band" and how the father sets the tune in the home. He is the leader of the band. And then, last week, we talked together about "Harmony in the Home." Husbands and wives are to sing the same song, but they sing different parts; that's what makes it harmonious—and, not mere melody, but wonderful harmony, when we play the part that God has equipped us to play. So, husbands and wives are singing the same song and different parts, but hopefully they are singing the right rhythm so they sing it together.

But now, today, I want to talk to you on this subject: "When the String Snaps." I'm really talking about tension in the home. Now, look, if you will, beginning in verse 13: *“A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance: but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken. The heart of him that hath understanding seeketh knowledge: but the mouth of fools feedeth on foolishness. All the days of the afflicted are evil: but he that is of a merry heart hath a continual feast. Better is little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble therewith. Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox”—*that is, “filet mignon”—*“and hatred therewith. A wrathful man stirreth up strife: but*

he that is slow to anger appeaseth strife. The way of the slothful man is as an hedge of thorns: but the way of the righteous is made plain. A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish man despiseth his mother. Folly is joy to him that is destitute of wisdom: but a man of understanding walketh uprightly. Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established” (Proverbs 15:13–22).

Now, I’m going to stop reading there, but I want you to notice some words, if you don’t mind marking your Bible. Verse 13: “sorrow” (Proverbs 15:13). Verse 15: “afflicted” (Proverbs 15:15). Verse 16: “trouble” (Proverbs 15:16). Verse 17: “hatred” (Proverbs 15:17). Verse 18: “strife” (Proverbs 15:18). Verse 22: “disappointed” (Proverbs 15:22). Now, all of these are almost synonyms for strife—just strife, tension, or stress, I suppose. All of these are times when the fiddle string gets too tight. You know, I’ve become quite a musician preparing these messages, and I found out—well, I already knew, really—that when the violin string is not tight enough, then the music is flat and dull. But, if the string is too tight, then the music is shrill and high-pitched. But, if the string is even more tight, the string will snap.

A. Stress is Damaging to Our Homes

Now, I think one of the major obstacles to the music of marriage is tension in the home. It is stress and strife. Stress is related to raising your voice, to raising your pulse, and raising your children. I mean, if you’ve got—if you’ve got—children, dear friend, you have stress just built-in. And, look at these words again: “sorrow,” “affliction,” “trouble,” “hatred,” and “strife.” All of these are stress words, and being in today’s home, dear friend, I want to tell you, the string can get mighty tight, and sometimes it can snap.

Did you know that domestic violence is a major problem in America? An act of domestic violence—I’m talking about horrible violence in the home—happens every 15 seconds in America—15 seconds. About half of all married couples, according to the research that I did, have times where they have absolute violence in the home. And, dear friend, in one-fourth of all marriages, violence is a common occurrence. And, 20% of all murders in America are inside the family—20%. Thirteen percent of those are committed by spouses. We used to say, when we come home, “It’s a jungle out there.” Friend, it may be a jungle in here.

B. Stress is Damaging to Our Health

But, not only is it damaging to our homes, but also to our health. You know, stress is a terrible thing. Stress will do the same thing to you that sand will do to machinery.

I read something interesting the other day. These boys who land these fighter jets on the decks of aircraft carriers—would you think that’s stressful? Well, friend, I’ll guarantee you that’s stressful. It would be to me—to land one of these jets on the deck of an aircraft carrier. They did surveys on these boys and they found out that although

the boys had essentially all the same diets, the pilots who land those aircraft on the on the decks of that ship have a much higher cholesterol level. Isn't that something?

You see, that's stress. Now, not all stress is bad. I mean, it takes certain tension to make the violin play at all. You've got to have some stress. But, I'm telling you, dear friend, that too much stress is dangerous to the home; it's dangerous to the health.

C. **Stress is Dangerous to Our Happiness**

And, obviously, then, it's dangerous to our happiness.

So, I want to give you four things, now, just to relieve stress in your home—just to put the music of marriage back there when the string gets so tight, when the upright gets so uptight that the string snaps. Now, if you're so stressed up that you don't know what to do—that is, you're all stressed up and nowhere to go. Huh. I want you to pay attention, because we are going to go to the Word of God, and this passage that I just read to you from the Book of Proverbs that deals with stress has four very wonderful, wonderful, wonderful admonitions for your home, my home, your heart, and my heart.

I. **Learn to Laugh**

Number one—and you'll be surprised at this: learn to laugh—just learn to laugh. Look, if you will, in verse 13: *“A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance”* (Proverbs 15:13). Have you ever seen people that claim to be saved, but they look like they have a gallbladder attack? I mean, if they have a merry heart, the Bible says it's going to show up on the face. *“A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance: but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken”* (Proverbs 15:13). Now, when it says, *“The spirit is broken”* (Proverbs 15:13), what he means is “the string snaps.” The spirit—that's the wellspring of life; that is the true inner man. And, when that spirit is broken, the zest, the enthusiasm, the spark, the thrill, the fight is gone out of life.

Now, you'd better, dear friend, learn that having a merry heart is wonderful medicine. A merry heart is the sign of happiness. Now, happiness and joy are not the same thing, but they are related; they are first cousins. Joy is that constant presence of God—no matter what happens. But, a merry heart is the ability to capture and enjoy those wonderful times of life, even let it turn to laughter. Windom said, “Laughter is the mind sneezing.” I like that.

Did you know that there are three things that animals don't do that human beings do? Well, many more things—I mean, they don't make war and a lot of other things—but three things that animals can't do. Animals don't blush. Man is the only animal that can blush, if you call him an animal, and he's the only one that needs to. Second thing animals don't do—they don't cry. Animals don't weep; no animal weeps. You might think your dog is weeping. That's just matter in his eyes—that's all that is. Dogs don't cry. The

third thing animals don't do is they don't laugh—they don't laugh. They don't blush; they don't weep, and they don't laugh. That tells me that man, made in the image of God, reflects the character of God. And, God is a God of joy, and laughter is a gift from God. Now, there's nothing wrong with laughter. As a matter of fact, laughter comes innately. You don't have to teach children to laugh; you have to teach children when not to laugh. And, if you really have the joy of the Lord in your heart, it's going to show up on your face. Look at it again: "*A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance*" (Proverbs 15:13).

What's another word for a cheerful countenance? It's a smile. Let me read something about a smile; this was written by an anonymous author, but I think it is incredible: "It costs nothing, but creates much good. It enriches those who receive it without impoverishing those who give it away. It happens in a flash, but the memory of it can last forever. No one is so rich that he can get along without it; no one is too poor to feel rich when receiving it. It creates happiness in the home, fosters goodwill in business, and is the countersign of friends. It is rest to the weary, daylight to the discouraged, sunshine to the sad, and nature's best anecdote for trouble, yet it cannot be bought, begged, borrowed, or stolen, for it is something of no earthly good to anyone until it is given away willingly." I love that.

Hey, listen, folks—when you dress up in the morning, don't forget to put on a smile, and don't be ashamed of your sense of humor. Listen, your sense of humor is a gift from God, and it has been documented—I mean, psychologically documented—that laughter along with a well-rounded sense of humor is one of the surest signs of intelligence. So, now, everybody's going to go around smiling. Listen, I'm not talking about unwholesome laughter. I'm not talking about cheap, coarse, degrading humor; the Bible warns against that. The Bible says in Ephesians chapter 5, verse 4: "*Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks*" (Ephesians 5:4). Crude jokes, sexual innuendos, and all of these things—they have no place.

But, good wholesome laughter is a gift from God. And, Abraham Lincoln said, one time, "God must have meant for us to laugh, or else He would not have made so many mules, and parrots, and monkeys, and human beings." God wants us to laugh. God gave Sarah a little child, and God taught Sarah to name that child "Laughter." We call his name "Isaac." But, the name *Isaac* means "Laughter." Genesis 21, verse 6: "*And Sarah said, God hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me*" (Genesis 21:6)—laughing at what God did when He gave that home a little boy that brought such joy that they called his name "Laughter."

Here's a verse on laughter. I want you to put down—Luke chapter 6 and verse 21. Jesus is looking at people who are downtrodden and sorrowful, and He says, "*Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled. Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall*

laugh” (Luke 6:21). That’s what Jesus said: “*ye shall laugh*” (Luke 6:21). Yes, there’s a time to weep. We don’t have to go around like sanctified buffoons and morons with no serious thoughts. There’s a time to weep, but, my dear friend, you had better put some laughter in your home, especially when times get tough. Laughter is God’s way just to break the tension when the string gets too tight. God, here, speaks of a merry heart. Again, He says, “*A merry heart [does] good like a medicine*” (Proverbs 17:22).

I thought to myself, “Well, I’ll illustrate this—about some laughter in our home,” and I said, “Where would I start?” And, dear friend, there’s nowhere to start. I mean, it’s everywhere, all of the time, and I thank God for that. I was thinking of the kind of a home I was raised in. When I was a kid, I was raised in a home where constantly we were laughing, and home was the most fun place to be that I knew of. I remember down there in Florida, one time, we had one of those great hurricanes that came through West Palm Beach, Florida. I mean, it was a time when my dad was out with the rest of the men. They were nailing up shutters, and boarding up the houses, and trying to keep everything we had from blowing away. All of the power lines had been blown down. There was no electricity; we were in the dark. My dad came in; his hair was blown, and he was soaked to the bone. He came into the kitchen, and I was a little fellow, just watching my dad and wondering really how serious the situation was. You know, kids key in on their parents. And, my dad came in, and his shoulders were drooped a little; he was so tired. He was a young man then; I was just a very little boy.

He said to my mamma, “I’d give five dollars for a cup of coffee.” Well, the electricity was off and everything, but mamma just opened the tap, and put some water in, and turned on the stove. The gas wasn’t off; he’d forgotten that. I mean, she turned on the stove—we had a gas stove—and she made him a cup of coffee. And, I watched my dad reach in his pocket and pull out five dollars and give it to my mamma. And, they both just laughed. I mean, right in the middle of the storm. I just watched them sit down; my dad gave mamma five dollars, and sat down, and drank that cup of coffee. There was something about that: it just made a hurricane not seem important at all—just that that act of humor, just that goodwill. Here they are just laughing in the face of the storm. It wasn’t to say that they didn’t think the storm was important. It wasn’t to say that there may be some danger, but it was just something to a little boy’s heart to say, “You know, God’s in control, and mom and dad can just laugh in the face of the storm.” And, dear friend, if, in your home, you have tension, may God help you to learn what He says here: “*A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance: but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken*” (Proverbs 15:13). You see, a good laugh is just sunshine in the home.

Three things you ought to give to your children: life, love, and laughter. And, I can give you three simple rules for raising kids: be fair, be firm, and be fun. That just about sums it up: be fair, be firm, be fun. That will take the tension out of this awful, awful

world that we live in today.

II. Cultivate Contentment

Number two: not only learn to laugh, but, number two, cultivate contentment—cultivate contentment. Look, if you will now, beginning in verse 16: the Bible says, *“Better is little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble therewith. Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith”* (Proverbs 15:16–17). What is this talking about? Well, our Lord is just telling us that so many of us are uptight, because our value system is wrong. We always think we have to have more and more and more, and we think that the house, the gourmet food, the toys, the travel—these things are going to bring happiness. But, many times the striving for these things is what brings tension into the home.

Now, let me give you two scenes here that are pictured in the Bible and see if I can update them a little bit. First of all, here’s a small apartment, and the husband comes home from work. The mamma has been fixing the meal; and so, they sit down around the kitchen table. Now, there’s no linen tablecloth on there. There are plastic placemats, and the dishes don’t necessarily match. As a matter of fact, some of them are chipped. There’s no silver; it’s stainless steel, and some of the forks are bent just a little bit. There are paper napkins, there, on the table. The furniture is chipped a little bit. And, the children come and sit around the table. And, the mamma has been cooking, and they are having a vegetable plate (just what I had last night) and what the Bible calls here *“a dinner of herbs”* (Proverbs 15:17).

My wife and my son and daughter-in-law who are visiting—we sat down, and we had a dinner of herbs last night. And, we joked and laughed and just had a wonderful, wonderful time. Now, we happened to be at a restaurant rather than at our home, but let’s go back to that little apartment. And, there’s that little apartment, and here’s this little couple sitting there. And, the dad reaches out, and they take hands together; and he thanks God for their home. He thanks God for their love, and he blesses the Lord and says, “Amen.” And then, he talks about Susie’s grades at school and says, “Susie, you did real good.” And, they talk about ole’ Fido the dog a little bit, and talk about what dad did. And, somebody cracks a joke, and they all laugh. And, they just all are having a wonderful, wonderful time praising the Lord and enjoying one another—just a little apartment.

Now, here’s another scene the Bible gives us. Here’s a great big mansion—big, big columns out in front, expensive automobiles parked out in front. Inside is plush carpet. You almost turn your ankle walking on it. And, you go in there, and there’s a polished entryway, and those hand-rubbed wooden walls, and great beautiful paintings there that are hanging up. And, there’s a big, long table. And, on the table, first of all, is, you know,

the hors d'oeuvres, and then there's the appetizer and there's all of the china, and the crystal, and the silverware all laid out there. And, over here is a woman with a face like hatchets—cold. And, over here is a man sitting over here, and he's haggard from his work. And, here are surly children sitting around the table; they don't stop to ask the blessing. And, in comes the smoking roast, and in comes the asparagus; and in comes the iced tea with the mint in it and so forth. And, all of these delicately prepared things come in. And, after a while, the servant comes in and brings an exotic dessert and after-dinner coffee. But, their cutting remarks and sarcasm... And, maybe if there are guests there, there's a politeness that's a measured politeness.

Which home would you rather be in? Friend, I would ten times times ten more rather be in that little apartment. I mean that with all of my heart. That big home without love can be a curse. After that meal, they say, "Where's the Pepto-Bismol? Where are the Tums?" Listen, my dear friend, I'm not saying that you can't be rich and have love. Some of the sweetest homes I know of have all of those things and love included. And, if you've got it, I'm so grateful for you. And, it's a gift of God, and enjoy it. "*God...[gives] us richly all things to enjoy*" (1 Timothy 6:17). I'm not against you having nice things, but I'm just saying, dear friend, you'd better get your values straightened. You'd better find out what really matters. Listen, "*Better is little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble therewith*" (Proverbs 15:16). Better is a vegetable plate where love is than filet mignon. That's what this verse is saying here in verse 16 (Proverbs 15:16). Get your value system straightened out. You beware of the tyranny of things.

Listen to 1 Timothy chapter 6, verse 6: "*But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich*"—that doesn't say they that are rich, but those who have set their mind on being rich, those who will to be rich. Have you ever done that? Mister, you are in great danger. They whose determination is to be rich—"*fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil*" (1 Timothy 6:6–10). He doesn't say money is the root of all evil; it is the love of money which is the root of all evil (1 Timothy 6:10).

Every now and then, some graduation commencement speaker will tell boys and girls, "Now, just make all the money you can, just so you make it honestly." Boy, that's the worst advice I've ever heard. If you're trying to make all the money you can, then you're going to be making money when you ought to be doing something else. You're going to be making money when you ought to be praying, or going to church, or being with the children—maybe in the park trying to teach your boy how to fly a kite. Listen, nobody should have a goal to make all the money he can. Sure he has to provide for his family, but when you, dear friend, determine that you're going to be rich, at that moment

you put yourself in a very vulnerable position. Listen, cultivate contentment. *“For the love of money is the root of all evil”—that literally means “all kinds of evil”—“which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows”* (1 Timothy 6:10).

Oh, look back at chapter 15, if you will, in Proverbs, and look in verse 6: *“In the house of the righteous is much treasure: but in the revenues of the wicked is trouble”* (Proverbs 15:6). Look, if you will in chapter 15, verse 27: *“He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house; but he that hateth gifts shall live”* (Proverbs 15:27). You girls who are not yet married, let your pastor give you some advice: it’s far better to marry a man whose worth a million that doesn’t have a cent than to marry a man who has a million and is not worth a cent. You find out what the character of that man is, if he loves God. Listen, *“godliness with contentment is great gain”* (1 Timothy 6:6). And, I want to remind you again what Epicurus the philosopher said, “To whom little is not enough nothing is enough.” Do you have food and clothing? Be content. That doesn’t mean that you can’t try for more, and it doesn’t mean that God doesn’t want you to prosper. The Bible says, *“Let them shout for joy, and be glad, that favour my righteous cause: yea, let them say continually, Let the LORD be magnified, which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant”* (Psalm 35:27). But, you learn to be content with whatever you have and praise God. And, if you don’t, I can tell you, before long, the string is going to snap. And, that big house won’t mean anything to you—not a thing.

III. Alleviate Anger

All right. Number three—number three—first of all, learn to laugh; number two, cultivate contentment—number three: Alleviate anger—alleviate anger. Look, if you will, here, in verse 18: *“A wrathful man stirreth up strife: but he that is slow to anger appeaseth strife”* (Proverbs 15:18). Do you see that? Underscore it: *“He that is slow to anger appeaseth strife”* (Proverbs 15:18). And, another word for *strife* is “stress.” And, learn, dear friend, just to alleviate anger.

Now, all anger is not bad. Jesus was angry, but He was angry at the right things. The Bible says in Ephesians chapter 4 and verse 26: *“Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath”* (Ephesians 4:26). But oh, my dear friend, the Bible says here to be slow to anger. Proverbs 14, verse 17 says, *“He that is soon angry dealeth foolishly: and a man of wicked devices is hated”* (Proverbs 14:17). Proverbs 18, verse 13 says, *“He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him”* (Proverbs 18:13). Proverbs 29, verse 20 says, *“Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words? there is more hope of a fool than of him”* (Proverbs 29:20). Be slow to anger.

And listen, the way to control your anger is to control your words. Look again, if you

will, in chapter 15, verse 1: *“A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger”* (Proverbs 15:1). Do you know the thing I have to watch? I have to watch what I say, because what I say—one word just builds the next word, and that builds the next word, and it gets worse and worse. Learn to control your speech. The Bible says to be slow to anger. You say, “Well, I can’t control it. Pastor, I just can’t control it.” You’re a liar. You can control it.

I was telling the businessmen last Thursday, you know, you get in a home and husbands and wives are just snarling, and fighting, and snapping down one another’s throat, and their voices are full of hostility. And then, right in the middle of that kind of a of an argument, the phone rings. And, you go to the phone and say, “Hello” so sweet and nice. You can control it; and friend, you’d better learn to control it because if you don’t control it, you’re going to get out of control. I mean, just your very speech—learn to alleviate anger and watch what you say. I heard of a man pushing a baby carriage, and he said, “Easy, Harold—easy, Harold. That’s a boy, Harold. You’re doing fine, Harold.” And, somebody said, “It’s just so wonderful the way you’re so patient with little Harold.” “Oh, no, he’s Albert; I’m Harold. Easy, Harold.” Learn to control that speech.

IV. Walk in Wisdom

Now, let’s go to the last thing here—the fourth thing—and we’ll be finished: not only, dear friend, if you would have a home full of music, learn to laugh, cultivate contentment, alleviate anger, and, last of all, walk in wisdom. Look, if you will, in verses 21 and 22: *“Folly is joy to him that is destitute of wisdom: but a man of understanding walketh uprightly. Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established”* (Proverbs 15:21–22). Now friend, if you bring the wisdom of God into your home, stress in the home is just simply a sign that you have forsaken the wisdom of God. God is not the author of confusion; God gives wisdom.

Now, in order for the family to have wisdom, the family has to come together in a family council. Notice in verse 22: *“in the multitude of counsellors”* (Proverbs 15:22) this wisdom is established. You need, as a family, to come together.

You know, I’m at the age now where I’m looking to see, if I had it to do over again, what I would do. I can tell you one thing I definitely believe I would do. I would have more family councils. Now, we had family worship, but I would bring the family together—I would bring my children together—and I would let them understand what is happening in our family to a greater degree, where we would sit down, and I would hear them, and we would, as a family, say that everything that we had belongs to us equally. We have the amenities, and we have the responsibilities equally. And, we would learn to make decisions together. We would make a family budget; every one would have an allowance, and we would stick to it. We would make decisions as a family about

discipline—about all of these things, together. Now, of course, dad has to be the leader of the band. But, my dear friend, if you would take the strife out of your home, learn, as the father—or, if yours is a single-parent family, you are the head—bring those children together, and sit down together, and talk it out.

You know, when we have strife, the reason we have strife so many times is not because we have problems. Everybody has problems; every family has problems. But, you see, families that deal with problems the right way learn to attack the problem and not one another. Sit down, and walk in wisdom. Try to understand the other person. Try to see it from their viewpoint, from your child's viewpoint. Try to sit where the child sits. See it through the child's eyes. Empathize. Sympathize. Understand.

Sometimes a little paperboy is a better psychologist than a husband. Sometimes a husband will come home, and his wife will snap at him, and growl at him, and snarl at him—and he just picks up some verbal club and hits her back. A little paperboy goes and gets a new house on his route, and a dog comes out—and snapping and growling, and growling and snarling—and that boy knows he has to deliver that paper there every morning. He doesn't want to make an enemy of that dog. So, what he does—he doesn't pick up a stick and throw it at that dog (not if he's a smart paperboy). He'll just kind of try to make a friend to that dog and kind of just walk over him—"Come here, boy"—get his hand on his head just a little bit, and rub him, and scratch him behind the ear a little bit, and just rub him, and pat him a little bit and do that every day. And, after a while, the dog will come out wagging his tail. That dog doesn't know the paperboy; he's threatened by the paperboy a little bit. And, what the dog really wants is affection. Mister, when you come home and your wife is snapping and growling, what she's really saying is, "Show me some affection. Show me some love." See, maybe things have gone terrible for her; maybe she's threatened, or maybe she's fearful. And, try to understand what is bothering her like the paperboy tries to understand the dog. And, try to understand yourself when you come home in a bad mood and rip off at the wife. Is it really her that you're upset with, or is it the boss or that guy that headed you off at the expressway? Sit down at the family council and talk it out—just talk it out.

Attack the problem, not one another. And, when you come to these places where there's a multitude of counselors and there's a difference of opinion, as much as possible, give everybody in the family a chance to save face. You can disagree without being disagreeable. But, do it all in the spirit of unconditional togetherness. I think I've told you before that I told Joyce, "If you ever leave me, I'm going with you." I mean, together we do it. Friend, when all else fails, just read the instructions: learn to laugh, cultivate contentment, alleviate anger, walk in wisdom. And, if you don't, the string is going to snap, and the music is over.

Conclusion

Let's bow in prayer. Father, thank You for Your precious Word. Lord, I pray that You'll put the music back in our marriages, the melody back in our homes, and the rhythm back in our walk. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Innocent Blood

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: April 15, 1984

Main Scripture Text: Proverbs 6:16–19

“These six things doth the Lord hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood,”

PROVERBS 6:16–17

Outline

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- A. Abortion is the Taking of Innocent Life
- B. Abortion Transgresses the Golden Rule
- C. Abortion is Against God-Given Natural Instinct
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- F. We Need to Pray God Will Have Mercy on Us

Conclusion

Introduction

God’s Way to Health, Wealth and Wisdom.” An earthly proverb is this: “Early to bed and early to rise”—will do what?—“make a man healthy, wealthy, and wise.” Well, I don’t believe that’s the key to health, wealth, and wisdom. It’s good to take those steps—I’m

certain—but a proverb, in a human sense, is “a short sentence built on long experience.” However, sometimes, some of those short sentences are not true. They’re little more than clichés, sometimes contradictory. God’s proverbs are not “short sentences built on long experiences.” They are God’s eternal, rock-ribbed truths that have come down from Heaven.

Now we have been talking already about some things that deal with human life—where we live—because the Book of Proverbs is not way up in the ethereal. The Book of Proverbs is right down where we live. And our message today definitely is that way. I want to say that I have, in a sense, argued with the Lord about the message today. Not really—but I want to preach His Word, and I want to preach it like He wants it preached. But what I mean by that is, this is not the message that I would enjoy preaching. The message today is not a happy message. Today, the message is not an upbeat message. You’re not going to go out of here laughing. You’re going to go out of here with a broken heart. And if I have any *preach* in me, you’re going to go out of here deeply moved, and deeply concerned, because of the subject that we have today.

The title of the message today is “Innocent Blood,” and I want you to read with me Proverbs chapter 6 and verse 16, and following: *“These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren”* (Proverbs 6:16–19). Now I want you to go to the latter part of the Book of Proverbs—chapter 24—if you would, please, and read a corresponding passage. Proverbs chapter 24, verses 11 and 12: *“If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; if thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?”* (Proverbs 24:11–12).

I want to speak to you today on the tragic, horrendous, pathetic, grizzly, abortion business—hands that shed innocent blood. Here’s the diary of a little girl:

October 5th: Dear Diary, Today my life began. My parents do not know it yet. I am so small. I’m as small as the pollen of a flower, but it is I already. I will be a girl. I will have blonde hair and blue eyes. Nearly everything is settled already, even that I shall love flowers.

October 19th: I’ve grown a little, but I’m still too small to do anything by myself. My mother does almost everything for me. Though she still does not know it, she is carrying me under her heart. She does not know that she is already helping me, and that she is even feeding me with her own blood. She is so good, but is it true that I’m not yet a real person, that only my mother exists? I am a real person, just as a small crumb of bread

is still real bread. My mother is, and I am.

October 23: My mouth is just now beginning to open. Just think—in a year or two I'll be laughing and I will start to talk. My first word will be Mama.

October 25: Today my heart began to beat. It will beat softly for the rest of my life, never stopping. After many years, it will tire, then it will stop, and I shall die.

November 2: I'm growing continually. My arms and legs are taking shape, but I must wait a long time before those tiny legs will raise me to my mother's arms, and before those little arms will be able to conquer the earth and befriend people.

November 12: My fingers are beginning to form on my hand. How small they are. One day, I will stroke my mother's hair with them. I shall take her hair in my mouth, and she'll say, "Oh, nasty."

November 20th: Only today that doctor told my mother that I'm living here under her heart. How happy she must be. Are you happy, Mother?

November 25: My mother and father are probably thinking about a name for me. They don't even know that I'm a little girl, so they're probably calling me Andy, but I want to be called Barbara. I am growing so big.

December 10: My hair is growing. It is as bright and shiny as the sun. I wonder what kind of hair my mother has.

December 12: I'm almost able to see, though it's night all around me. When Mother brings me into the world, it will be full of sunshine and overflowing with flowers. I've never seen a flower, you know, but more than anything I want to see my mother. How do you look, Mom?

December 24: I wonder if my mother hears the delicate beat of my heart. Some children are born with sickly hearts, and then the gentle finger of the doctor performs miracles to make them healthy; but my heart is healthy. It beats so evenly. Tut, tut, tut, tut. You shall have a healthy little daughter, Mom.

December 28: Today my mother killed me.

A diary of a pre-born child.

Today, and every day, in the United States of America, ladies and gentlemen, 4,000 innocent babies will be slain. Today, and every day, in so-called *God-blessed* America. These little babies will not have a chance to have a trial, to see whether they should have capital punishment performed upon them. There will be no jury. They will not have a counselor, a lawyer to argue their case. They will be executed in a cruel and inhumane way. And you may watch your watch, and every 21 seconds a baby will be killed. A precious little baby.

Who are the conspirators in this atrocity? How did this thing come to pass? Who do we look to? To where do we point a finger? First of all, to the Supreme Court, these judges. Secondly, governmental social planners, intellectuals, eggheads. Thirdly,

physicians, doctors. Fourthly, owners of abortion clinics. Fifthly, willing mothers and willing fathers. About 1 ½ million precious babies will have their lives snuffed out in America this year. Herod, go to the back row! Pharaoh, you've been outdone! 1 ½ million lives in so-called *God-blessed* America.

How did it come to pass? January 22, 1973, nine men robed in black issued a decree that it is now legal to kill a baby. Only three requirements—number one: the baby still lives inside his mother's body; number two: the mother wants the baby killed; number three: a doctor's willing to do the killing. Those are the three requirements to kill a baby. To legally kill a baby. The baby lives inside the mother, the mother wants the baby killed, and a doctor is willing to do the killing. Did you know that in the United States of America it is now legal to take a life of a baby even while the mother is in labor? In these so-called *God-blessed* states of ours.

Now here's what the Supreme Court said in *Roe vs. Wade*, January 22: "A state is forbidden to proscribe,"—now the word *proscribe* means to forbid—"abortion at any time prior to birth." Now notice this. Some people don't realize what that law said: "At any time prior to birth, if, in the opinion of one licensed physician, an abortion is necessary to preserve the life or health of the mother." Now very few people would argue with saving the life of the mother, but what do they mean by the health of the mother? That is a term that has become so broad as to become practically meaningless. Here is the court's own definition of health. It means, and I quote: "The medical judgment may be exercised in the light of all factors—physical, emotional, psychological, familial, the woman's age—relevant to the well-being of the patient." All these factors may relate to health. And so it means this: that, if having a baby would force a distressful life and future on a woman, she may kill her baby. If it is determined that it would produce psychological harm to her, she may have her baby killed. If it would tax the mental and physical health of the mother by the childcare that would be necessary to take care of the baby after the baby comes, she may kill the baby. You may kill the baby if there is distress associated with the unwanted child; that is, you don't want a child, and that just distresses you. Oh, we're going to have a child, and we didn't want one.

I went to Washington one time to testify before a Senate Committee on abortion. Senator Warren Hatch questioned me, along with some others. They had me there because I was the past President of the Southern Baptist Convention. And as I went outside in the hallway, I was accosted by a young woman. I shall not call her a lady. She claimed to be a Baptist. She's a female deacon in a Northeastern Baptist church, and she was also a lawyer, and she was also a pro-choice advocate.

And she looked at me, and she said, "Mr. Rogers, you just don't understand how traumatic it is for a woman to have an unwanted pregnancy." I said, "Now let me see if I can get your line of reasoning. What you're saying is that people who traumatize other

people ought to be eliminated, exterminated—is that right? Because right now you’re traumatizing me.” And I said, “Is it your philosophy that if one person traumatizes another person, then the person who’s being traumatized ought to eliminate the other person?” I said, “Suppose I jump on you right now and put my thumbs in your throat and throttle you?” She looked at me up and down. I said, “At least, you could run. At least, you could cry out for help.” I said, “Who can a little baby go to? A little baby can’t even run.” I’m sure she went off and told everybody, That Baptist preacher threatened to strangle me.

The trauma caused by an unwanted child—when a child comes into the family already unable psychologically, or otherwise, to care for that child, then the child may be put to death. Or, if there will be the continuing difficulties and stigma of unwed motherhood—that is, if it’s just not socially acceptable to have this baby, then you may put the baby to death. Oh, but you say, “Brother Rogers, this is just happening to these little blobs of protoplasm.” Last year, in New York State alone, 4,000 third trimester babies were killed in one state alone—4,000 who were in the third trimester; that is, they could have lived outside the mother’s body.

You were here a while back when I preached on “An Old Fool With a New Name.” I was talking about humanism, and I told you about right over here in our sister state, in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, where a nineteen-year-old girl, Marie, went into her doctor’s office there to have what some called an abortion, this removal of a little piece of protoplasm, something I suppose she thought like a tonsillectomy. This girl had been carrying this baby for 28 weeks. When the doctor performed the procedure, he took that little so-called blob of protoplasm, and laid it on a table. It was a perfectly formed baby. It was still moving. He wrapped it in a towel and completed his procedure. Then he took that piece of humanity, and put it in a sack, and gave it to a friend of the girl who was having the abortion. She took it home. It continued to move. It continued to make noises. They got frightened, and they took this little baby that weighed 1 pound and 13 ounces back to the hospital. A team of physicians was called in. They wrapped that child in an umbrella of heat. They began to do all of these things. They spent \$150,000 to preserve that life, that a few moments ago was supposed to be a blob of protoplasm. Today, that little baby is alive and well.

I. Why is Abortion Wrong?

A. Abortion is the Taking of Innocent Life

Now I want to ask you a question. Was that human life or was that not human life? Well, should that baby have been killed or should that baby not have been killed? A young man, John DeHaze, he’s today almost five years old, he was aborted in Korea. And when they took this baby from his mother’s womb, and he was laid there, cast aside,

they noticed that there was still life. And some in that operatory there said, “No! You’ll not continue to commit this murder.” And they stood between and took little John. His head was all bent out of shape, because of what they had done to him. His body was mangled. His arms were twisted and mutilated. But they went to work. Today, John DeHaze is a happy, little boy who gave his testimony on Jerry Falwell’s television program. How glad he is to be alive. Don’t you let anybody tell you that these little creatures are not human beings.

Now I want to ask you a question. Do you realize that a pre-born child is human life? They don’t want you to believe that’s human life. I want to ask you a question. Is it alive? “Well,” you say, “yes.” What kind of life is it? Animal life? What kind of life is it? Vegetable life? That, my friend, is human life. It’s not a part of the mother’s body. It is a new life. It is totally different from the mother, and that life is from God.

Turn left. You’re in Proverbs 6. Turn left, if you will, to Psalm 139. Look with me in verses 13 to 17: *“For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother’s womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee,”*—dear friend, God knows the baby in the womb—*“when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect;”*—God sees the embryo as it develops—*“and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them. How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them!”* (Psalm 139:13–17). Do you know what that passage tells us, ladies and gentlemen? It tells us that when a woman is pregnant, that God is forming a child within that woman. And it tells us that that is both wonderful and a fearful thing. It also tells us that that pre-born life, that child, is the object of the Father’s love and affection. How wonderful are God’s thoughts toward that pre-born child.

When does life begin? Who’s going to settle it? God—God who made us all. Jeremiah chapter 1 and verse 5—listen to what God said to Jeremiah the prophet. Jeremiah 1, verse 5: *“Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations”* (Jeremiah 1:5). Do you know when Jeremiah was ordained to be a prophet? In his mother’s womb. “I sanctified you, even before you came into your mother’s womb. I ordained you.” Do you know who Jeremiah’s mother was carrying around? A fetus? An embryo? A prophet. A prophet of God was in this...—had that baby been aborted, someone would have killed a prophet of God. That’s what the Bible says. Let me tell you something. Jesus was being carried in the womb of Mary. John the Baptist was being carried in the womb of Elizabeth. And by the way, by today’s standards you would think that Mary would have had an abortion. After all, the baby that she had was

bringing shame.

I heard of a man who for a long time was a pro-choice advocate. What they mean by that is, that people ought to be given a choice to kill babies. And he worked with the National Association for the Repeal of Abortion Laws. He became the director of the first, and largest, abortion clinic in the Western World. He performed 60,000 abortions in 18 months—60,000 in 18 months. Let me tell you what Doctor Nathanson now says. He has changed his tune. And I quote him: “I am deeply troubled by my own increasing certainty that I had, in fact, presided over 60,000 deaths.” Can you imagine how that man must feel? “The certainty, the increasing certainty, that I had presided over 60,000 deaths.” How did he come to this conclusion? In this clinic, the doctors and the nurses began to tell him of the nightmares and the depressions that they were experiencing, and the personality changes that were taking place in the clinic there where they were working as they were systematically and clinically snuffing out the lives of these precious little babies.

B. Abortion Transgresses the Golden Rule

Why is it wrong? It is the taking of innocent life. No one to speak for these children; no one to stand up for them. Secondly, it transgresses the golden rule. Do you know what the golden rule is? Matthew chapter 7 and verse 12: “*All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them...*” (Matthew 7:12). Or, as we have said, “Do to others as you want others to do to you.” I wonder if there’s a mother here who would like for her daughter or her son to kill her? I mean, would you, mother, want your child to kill you by being dismembered? I wonder if there’s a doctor here who would like to be placed into a cell where he couldn’t get out, trapped into a cell, and then have someone come into that cell and pour over that doctor a corrosive liquid that would eat his skin and fill his lungs and let him die a painful and excruciating death in convulsions? Is there a doctor here who wants somebody to do that to him? I don’t think you ought to do it to anybody else. Is there a judge here who would like somebody to take some powerful machine, and reach into that judge’s house, and rip him out of that house, and dismember him, and tear him, and rip him apart with that powerful machine until he’s dead? Is there a judge here that wants that done to him? Now if there’s not a judge here that wants that done to him, he ought not to do that to somebody else.

C. Abortion is Against God-Given Natural Instinct

But now listen. Not only, dear friend, is it a transgression of the golden rule, not only is it the taking of innocent life, it is completely, totally, against God-given natural instinct. God gives instinct to protect the unborn. Every mother, by God-given instinct, has that within her. Every father has that instinct. To destroy that instinct is to go against God. As the Bible says in Romans chapter 1, verse 31, that there will be some so vile that they

will be “*without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection*” (Romans 1:31). And that word *natural affection* literally means “without family love.”

D. **Abortion is Based on Selfishness**

Now don't get the idea that most abortions are caused because the baby is deformed, or most abortions are caused by rape, or incest, or these kinds of things. Do you know what abortions are based on? They are based—rooted and based primarily— on selfishness. You see, we've been taught to believe that abortion is primarily for the overburdened and the poor. But 76% of those who are aborting are unmarried, 53% have no other children. Most are over twenty. They're not little teenagers. They are not minority. Most are white, middle, and upper class. Over one-third of the women who have had abortions are not just people who are caught in a situation that has come upon them. They are going back for the second, third, and fourth abortions—one-third of them. Most of them are people who've participated in illicit sex, or they are professional people who don't want their profession interrupted. They don't want to be bothered with a baby. That's another reason—just plain selfishness.

E. **Abortion is Based on Greed**

And another reason, friend, is just greed. Did you know that the abortion business is a moneymaking business? Did you know that if you have an abortion clinic, and you do business, friend, you've got a little oil well? You've got a little goldmine there, as these people are coming in, because it's a way to make a fast buck, taking the lives of these babies.

II. **Arguments of the So-Called *Pro-Choice* People**

These are the reasons that it is being done. And of course, they're not reasons at all. They're wrong. Now what are people saying? I mean, how do they answer this? You say, “Brother Rogers, what you say sounds so clear and so plain, but how do they answer it? Surely, they've got some answers. I mean, surely they see it from another viewpoint.”

A. **Life Begins With Breathing**

Well, they say things like this. They say, “Well, the baby is not really a human being until it begins to breathe.” God breathed into Adam's nostrils the breath of life, and Adam became a living soul. And so they say, “The baby doesn't become a living soul until it begins to breathe.” Friend, that little baby does breathe inside its mother. Through the umbilical tube, it receives oxygen necessary for life. You take that little baby from that mother's womb, and bring it into the open air, and, if it has reached the age of viability, it will immediately breathe the open air of space.

B. Abortion is Sometimes Necessary to Save the Mother's Life

“Well,” somebody says, “but sometimes, isn’t it necessary to abort a baby to save a mother’s life?” Yes. Yes. And I think almost all would agree that the mother’s life should be saved. But I want you to listen to what a very prominent doctor has to say, and I want you to think this through, because what he says is phenomenal. Dr. Jerome Lejeune, he is a world-famous geneticist, and here’s what he says. He said, “I would never attack and kill an unborn child,”—now listen—“I would never attack and kill an unborn child.” Now what he meant by that is this: that his purpose would never be to kill the child. His purpose would be to save the life of the mother. If the child died in the process, then that’s tragic; but he would never attack and kill the child. His aim is to save the life of the mother. We’re talking about those who attack and kill that innocent life—hands that shed innocent blood.

C. An Abortion May Be Necessary Due to Rape

You say, “But what about a case of rape?” How many of you have ever heard Ethel Waters sing? Let me see your hands. You know Ethel Waters. If you’ve ever heard her sing and give her testimony at a Billy Graham crusade, she’s famous for that quote, “I know I’m somebody, ’cause *God* don’t make no *junk!*” She blesses the hearts of millions. Ethel Waters’ mother conceived her as a case of rape, but she’s so happy that she lived to bless the lives of countless millions.

D. An Abortion May Be Necessary Due to Incest

“Oh,” you say, “what about incest?” Tragic, yes. Horrible, yes. But don’t play God. Have you read the Book of Ruth in the Bible? Ruth, who is an ancestress of the Lord Jesus Christ, was a descendant of Moab, born out of incest. Don’t play God. Don’t play God. You’re not wiser or smarter than God.

E. There May Be the Danger of Deformity

“Oh, but what about the danger of deformity? What about these little babies that may be deformed?” Well, are you going to say that defectives ought not to live? If you’re going to take the lives of those who are defective before birth, don’t you realize that before long they will be taking the lives of those who are defective after birth? I want to tell you something. Ain’t nobody perfect here today. All right? Ain’t nobody perfect here today. Just how defective do you have to be? And what Hitler is going to set himself up as the judge to say who is defective and who is not defective? We’re going to begin now to eliminate the unwanted. Where’s it going to end? First, abortion. Secondly, infanticide. Thirdly, euthanasia.

Some of you folks here, 30, 40, 50, feeling pretty good right now. You let this thing continue to snowball, and I tell you the social engineers have already got it planned.

When they get tired of warehousing you in an old folks home, they've got a plan for you. They're going to put you in a beautiful room. They're going to play serene music. They're going to give you some nice food. All your loved ones are going to come. They're going to numb you a little bit with a little dope in your food. Then, that nurse is going to come in and put a little sharp needle in your arm, and good-bye. We have taught a generation it's all right to kill the babies. That same generation is going to believe it's all right to kill the old folks.

Friend, I want to tell you. You think your pastor's exaggerating? I'm not a prophet, or a son of a prophet in the classical sense, but I tell you I stand here before God, absolutely, totally convinced that what I'm prophesying will take place, unless there's a turnaround in America, unless our Lord tarries. It will take place. It will. And we're snowballing, we're moving in that direction. When you decide that you are going to begin to eliminate those who are defective—Hitler would have loved that plan.

F. A Woman's Body is Her Own to Do With as She Wishes

"Well," somebody says, "the mother's life, the mother's body—it's her own. I don't want some Baptist preacher telling me what I can do with my body." Listen. My body is not even my own, when you think about it. I mean, suppose I reached under this pulpit this morning and took out a hatchet and started to chop off my fingers, one at a time. My thumb, there it goes. This finger, there it goes. By the time I got to the third finger, I hope you'd be up here, brother. I hope, Lee, you'd be up here. I hope, Ralph, that you'd be up here. I hope, Buck, that you'd be up here. I hope, Jim, that you wouldn't let me just sit here and chop off my fingers. You'd say there's something wrong with a man who is destroying his own body, and, whether he wants it done or not, we will stop him. Would you let me just chop off my fingers and say, "Get away! I know my rights. It's my body?"

Now wait a minute. We don't have an absolute right to our own bodies. They won't even let you ride a motorcycle in this state without a helmet on. Isn't that right? A little girl has to get permission from her parents to have her ears pierced, but she doesn't have to get permission to kill a baby and have an abortion. But to have her ears pierced, she has to get permission. But she doesn't have to get permission by the social engineers to be given contraceptives, or to have that little baby killed. No, she can do that without parental consent.

The woman says, "Well, it's my body." Well, friend, we're not talking about your body. That baby is not your body. I don't have a right to kill an unwanted guest in my home, and you don't have a right to kill an unwanted guest in your body. They are living within you. Let me tell you something, friend. You can talk about the woman's personal choice. You can talk about the woman's right to her own body. But you just put all that

garbage out the window and let me tell you this: no woman under Heaven has a right to kill a baby—nobody. I don't care how much rhetoric you put to it. That baby is not her body. That baby now lives within her body.

G. We are Told that Unwanted Babies will be the Victims of Child Abuse

“Ah, but,” somebody says, “you're going to have all these abused children around.” Did you know that 90% of battered and abused children are the result of a planned pregnancy—90% of them? Unwanted children are not those that are most abused.

H. Abortion Laws are Unfair to the Poor

“Ah, but,” somebody says, “it's so unfair. The abortion laws now, they're unfair. If you prohibit abortion, then you're going to have all those illegal abortions. You're going to have those back-alley abortions, and the rich people are going to be able to have abortions, and the poor people are not going to be able to have abortions. And so it's going to be more dangerous for them.” Well, I want to tell you something, friend. The rich people have more drugs. Did you know that? They get hold of those drugs, and it's safer for them to take those drugs. Not that any drugs are safe, but, you see, they have more immunity. They have more walls of defense. They have easier places to secure them. And if they get caught, they've got more high-priced lawyers. Right? The rich.

So let me tell you what the social engineer would say. Since the rich can have drugs easier than the poor can, it is our duty to supply heroin for the poor. I mean, that's their twisted logic. Since the rich can have an abortion more easily, now it is our duty to supply an abortion for the poor. The fact that some can get away with sin doesn't make sin right. The fact, dear friend, that it's easier for some does not mean that it is right, and that I, as a taxpayer, should pay to take the lives of little babies.

I. We Need to be Concerned about the Population Explosion

Now I tell you one at a time these excuses will falter and fail. Someone says, “Oh, but the population explosion. We have so many babies today. We're not going to be able to feed them all.” Did you know that in the United States we're under zero population growth? Did you know that our population is shrinking? Did you know, even to stay even, we have to have a 2.1 birth rate per family? We're at 1.9. Did you know there are people who are wanting babies, begging for babies, wanting to adopt babies, and can't get them?

III. What Should We Do?

What should we do? Go to the second text I read to you—Proverbs chapter 24. Look at it for a moment—verses 11 and 12. This is a frightening Scripture: *“If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; if thou*

sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?" (Proverbs 24:11–12). Do you think you can be neutral in this thing? Do you think that's Congress's problem? Do you think that's Pastor Rogers' problem? That's not your problem. You say, "I'm not pro-abortion. It's not my problem." I tell you, ladies and gentlemen, it is your problem. And we've gone a little long; but let me just tell you what to do.

A. We Need to be Informed

Number one: you'd better be informed. You cannot afford to be ignorant.

B. We Need to Work for a Constitutional Amendment

Number two: you'd better work for, and pray for, a constitutional amendment to outlaw abortion in America, except in those instances where the life of the mother may be at stake.

C. We Need to Teach Sexual Morality at Home and in the Church

You'd better see to it that sexual morality is being taught at home and in the church.

D. We Need to Speak Out Clearly

You know, some people get all bent out of shape when I teach a message like this from the pulpit. And by the way, if you don't like what I preached today, you come tell me and I'll think about preaching it again next Sunday. The one voice that ought to speak has been primarily silent. And the government, Hollywood, the social engineers, the atheists, the humanists—they've all been speaking. It's time for God's people to speak, and we need to speak out clearly. Isaiah 58, verse 1, says: "*Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins*" (Isaiah 58:1). We need to speak with the voice of a trumpet. No stutter, no stammer, no apology, and no fear; not let up, back up, or shut up, until we're taken up.

E. We Need to Have More Compassion for the Unwed Mother

I tell you what else we need to do. We need to learn to forget our self-righteousness, and have more compassion upon unwed mothers, and to show them love, and compassion, and understanding. So many times, we are driving them right into the arms of the abortionists. We need, with love, to give them some understanding, and to pray for them.

Now listen. Do not be swayed by their high-sounding arguments—the liberals, the humanists, the social planners and the experts—don't let them sway you. Let me give you a verse. Write it down. It is Isaiah chapter 5 and verse 20: "*Woe unto them that call*

evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!” (Isaiah 5:20). Ladies and gentlemen, it’s wrong to kill babies. Wrong! I don’t care how much rhetoric you drape over it. It is wrong, wrong, wrong before God! *“These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: ...hands that shed innocent blood”* (Proverbs 6:16–17).

F. We Need to Pray God Will Have Mercy on Us

The last thing we must do: we must pray to God that He’ll have mercy upon us, and give us space to repent. I tell you, I’m not nearly so much afraid of what the communists are going to do to us as I am what God is going to do to us in this country of ours. We’d better get right with God. But I tell you, I thank God, I thank God that the Bible still teaches, in 2 Chronicles 7, verse 14: *“If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and”—hallelujah—“will heal their land”* (2 Chronicles 7:14).

Conclusion

I’m living for that day when we have a revival of righteousness in America, and I want to believe it’s coming. That God—not any preacher, not any president, but God—is going to do something in America. Lord, haste that day. Don’t you long for a burning, sweeping, glorious revival to blow across America? Oh, for God to do something. God is our only hope!

The Peril of Pride

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: October 8, 1995

Main Scripture Text: Proverbs 16:18

“An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief,”
PROVERBS 16:18

Outline

Introduction

- I. Pride Defies God
- II. Pride Defiles Man
- III. Pride Divides Society
- IV. Pride Dishonors Life
- V. Pride Destroys Souls

Conclusion

Introduction

Praise the Lamb! Take God’s word, and open to the book of Proverbs, chapter sixteen and verse eighteen. And while you’re finding it, I want to ask you a question. See if you can find it, and answer the question at the same time. How many in this building have a personal problem with pride? Would you lift your hand? Ha ha ha ha well, I’m going to be preaching to you this morning, but I’m specially going to be preaching to those who did not raise their hand. (Congregational laughter) Ha ha ha ha pride is a very deceitful thing. Proverbs chapter sixteen and verse eighteen, “Pride goeth before destruction. Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.”

I’m speaking today on this subject: five ways that pride can destroy your life, five ways that pride can destroy your life. Let me say that pride is a dangerous, and a deceitful sin that’s doing more damage in homes, and hearts, and lives than any of us may dare dream. And every one of us, certainly that man speaking today, wrestles with the sin of pride.

Now pride is a dangerous sin. Pride, more than any other sin, is holding back revival in, in our land, in our home, and in our church. Pride, more than any other sin is destroying homes and ruining happiness and joy in the home. Pride, more than any other sin, is undermining the foundation of America, this great nation that we love. Pride, more than any other sin, is causing Christians, born again people, to live lives of defeat. Pride, more than any other sin, is populating and filling up the place that we call

hell. It is a dangerous sin.

But not only is pride a dangerous sin, it's a deceitful sin. Now so many people do not understand that they have pride or what pride is doing to them. There's a benefit and a bliss at least to being a drunkard or a thief, as bad as that is. At least the drunkard knows he's a drunkard. At least the thief knows he's a thief. But the proud person says, "Well, if I had any sin, I'd confess it." He doesn't admit his problem. His very pride, that is his problem, keeps him from admitting the problem.

I think it's illustrated by the Sunday school teacher who was teaching the lesson about the proud Pharisee. You remember that story there. And he, he prayed with himself and said, "Father, I thank you that I'm not as other men are." She did a good lesson teaching that lesson, did a good job teaching that lesson to her class. But when the class was finished she said to the boys and girls, "Now, boys and girls, aren't we glad we're not like that proud Pharisee?" Now the proud Pharisee was thanking God he wasn't like other people are. You see how deceitful this sin can be.

Now when we're talking about pride, we need to understand what pride is not and what pride is. Pride is not having a wholesome, biblical view of yourself. A proper, spiritual self-esteem is not pride. I mean standing erect is not pride, it's good posture. Going around all hung over is not humility. It's just poor posture. Thinking lowly of yourself is not humility. The Bible says of the Lord Jesus, in John chapter thirteen, "And Jesus knowing that he came from God and went to God, layed aside his garments, girded himself with a towel, and washed his disciple's feet." Now Jesus was the epitome of humility. There he was, the Lord of Glory, washing the disciples' feet. Jesus was not a proud man. He said, "I am meek and lowly of heart." Jesus washing the smelly feet of fishermen, and yet Jesus, knowing that he came from God and was going to God. Jesus knew who he was. So thinking lowly of yourself is not humility. Thinking rightly of yourself is not pride.

What is pride therefore? What is this, this thing that the Bible says goes before destruction? Well, let me tell you what pride is. Pride is a sense, an attitude of independence from God, first of all. It is an attitude of independence from God. That poem that we have often heard quoted Invictus, the man who wrote that said, "I am the captain of my fate. I am the master of my soul." That is, he's living a life independent of God. I feel like saying, "Captain, your ship is going to sink, because pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." Pride is a attitude of independence toward God. Pride therefore shows itself in unthankfulness to God for all that God has done. And pride also thinks itself better than other people.

Now if you'd like to take a little check before I give you these five dangers of pride, just to see whether or not you really are proud, let me ask you some questions. Do you get irritated when you get corrected for making mistakes? It's quiet out there. I can hear

the grass growing. Do you like to accept praise for things over which you have no control, like beauty, or talent, ability, or place of your birth? Do you find it difficult to admit it when you make a mistake? Do you excuse it or justify it? When somebody does you wrong or harms you, do you just decide well you can get along without that person? Do you find it difficult to seek counsel of other people? Do you find in your heart sometime an ungrateful spirit that often complains? Do you have in you a spirit of competition that measures success by victory over others? Are you discontent with what you have, and you want more; not necessarily more for yourself, but more than somebody else has? All of these are indications of a terrible, terrible disease that is in the human heart, and the Bible calls it pride.

Now the five terrible things that pride does are found in the book of Proverbs. So basically, if you keep your Bible open today to the book of Proverbs . . . And by the way you ought to teach your children the book of Proverbs. There are two books in the Bible that would be good for you to visit every morning. One is Proverbs, and one is Psalms. One teaches you how to live; the other teaches you how to worship. Now you can read all of the Bible and should read all of the Bible. But the book of Proverbs is such a practical book. And how you need to teach your children what the book of Proverbs has to say about pride. But, how each of us need to learn these ourselves.

I. Pride Defies God

Now number one. Pride defies God. Put it down. Pride defies God. Pride is arrogance against almighty God. Now in Proverbs chapter six, look with me, if you will, in verse sixteen. These six things doth the Lord hate: yea seven are an abomination unto him. There used to be a thing on radio called the Hit Parade. Well, here's the Hate Parade. God has seven things that he hates, and do you know who's leading the parade? Pride. Listen. These six things doth the Lord hate: yea seven are an abomination unto him. Number one in verse seventeen is this. A proud look. Now the Bible says that God hates it. God detests it. Look in Proverbs chapter sixteen with me. And by the way, just turn to these verses and look at them if you will. Proverbs chapter sixteen and verse five, "Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord. God hates pride. Pride is abominable to almighty God. Why? Because pride is in direct defiance of almighty God. Pride defies God.

Now pride came into the human race through the devil, but it was pride that made the devil the devil. Satan's heart was lifted up with pride, and as I told you last Sunday, I believe, it was pride that made Lucifer, the Son of the Morning, Satan, the father of the night. When he was lifted up with pride and he said, "I will be like the Most High. I will exalt my throne above the stars of God." And what he was doing at that time was defying almighty God.

Now when the Bible says a man is to be a preacher, one of the qualifications of that preacher is that he must not be a novice that is a man without experience, a man who has not been examined, and a man who's not been trained because if he is, he may be susceptible to pride. And first Timothy chapter three verse six says of this man, "Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil." That is he may have the same experience that the devil had, which is pride. Now God hates the sin of pride so much, because it made the devil the devil. It ruined the human race. When Satan came to Eve and said, "Eat of that fruit," what do you think the temptation was, to taste a piece of fruit? Ha, the garden was filled with fruit. No, the temptation was to be like God. "You will be like God." That is Satan said, "You can exalt yourself above God. You don't have to bow to God. You can be independent of God." And pride, I've already told you, is an attitude of independence from God.

It was pride that made the devil the devil. It was pride that ruined the human race, and therefore when you pick up the newspaper and read it, you can say this, "All rebellion, all sin, all sorrow, all suffering, all of it," you can say, "pride did this. Pride did this." That's why God hates the sin of pride. Now because God hates the sin of pride, when there's pride in your heart or in my heart, do you know what we do? We make an adversary out of God. Here's a scripture. Don't turn to it, but listen to it. First Peter chapter five, and verse five. The Bible says, "God resists the proud, but he gives grace to the humble." Now what you and I need is grace. But it doesn't say, "God merely fails to help the man who is proud." God becomes the adversary of the man who is proud. God resists the proud. Why? Because pride defies almighty God. Pride says, "God, I don't need you. I can do it myself. I will be my own god."

II. Pride Defiles Man

Now here's the second danger of pride. Not only does pride defy God, but pride defiles man. Look in Proverbs sixteen and verse five. "Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination unto the Lord. Where is that pride found? In the heart. Go over to Proverbs chapter twenty-one, and look in verse four. The Bible here says, "An high look, and a proud heart, and the plowing of the wicked, is sin." Did you know that you can sin by the way you look, a proud look? We sit in church heady, high-minded, unbent, unbroken, arrogant. We swagger. Did you know the Bible says, "The plowing of the wicked is sin?" This verse says so. When a farmer plows his field, when he puts the plow into God's fertile earth, when he is dependent upon God to give him rain and sunshine, when he is dependent upon God to germinate that seed, and he plows his field and does not give God the glory, he sins even when he plows that field. Why? Because he feels that he can do it himself. And the Bible mentions here in this verse that, that pride is down in his heart. Pride is a part of the sin nature. It's born in our hearts.

Now Mark chapter seven says this, and you might be interested in this verse. You can turn to it if you want. But Jesus tells us where pride comes from in verse twenty-one. "From within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy (now here it is) pride." Then he mentions foolishness. Then he says, "All these evil things come from within, and defile the man." Where does that pride come from? Pride comes from the heart, and it defiles the man. Pride defies God. Pride defiles man. You have something in you that defiles you. I do. It's in me. It's born into the human heart. It's a part of our damning nature.

An illustration that I use frequently, I don't know of a better one: When you see an apple with a worm whole in it, that does not necessarily mean there's a worm in the apple. The whole was not put there to let the worm in. The whole is there to show the worm came out. The worm was in the apple. He did not bore into the apple, he bored out of the apple. The worm was hatched in the blossom, and inculcated inside the apple, and it just simply comes from the heart of the apple, out.

The pride that's in our hearts and in our lives, is that which is already there on the inside, and it just simply comes out. Learn this about pride. Pride defies God. Pride defiles man. We have something in us that has defiled us, and we need to do something about it. What fools we are if we allow pride to continue to have headquarters in our heart.

III. Pride Divides Society

Now here's a third thing pride does. Pride defies God, pride defiles man, and then, friend, pride divides society. It divides society. Do you know why we have so much strife, and hatred, and war? Do you know why we can't get along with another? Look in Proverbs chapter thirteen, if you will, and look in verse ten. Proverbs thirteen and verse ten, one of the greatest verse in all of the Bible. It's, it's highlighted in my Bible. Look at it. "Only by pride cometh contention." Did you see that? Look at it. Only, only by pride cometh contention. Do you know what that means? It means that there can be no strife apart from pride. You see. Pride puts a man out of fellowship with God. And when a man is out of fellowship with God, he's out of rest with himself, and he cannot have fellowship with his brother or with his sister. Is there any dissension in your home? Maybe we ought to bring your children up, and let them give a testimony. Any strife in your home? Any arguments in your home? I can tell you without a stutter, without a stammer, without a scintilla of a doubt, if there is, it's because pride is in your home. There's never been an argument that was not caused by pride; never been a war that was not caused by pride; never been a divorce that was not caused by pride; never been a church fuss or a church split that was not caused by pride. Pastor Rogers, are

you certain? Absolutely. Look at the verse again. Only by pride cometh contention, only by pride.

Pride defies God, pride defiles man, pride divides society. Look again. Let me give you another verse. Turn to Proverbs chapter twenty-eight and verse twenty-five, Proverbs twenty-eight verse twenty-five, “He that is of a proud heart stirreth up strife.” He that is of a proud heart stir, stirreth up strife. Now this is the reason that we have so much divorce, because people are proud. You know most of us want to be the king or queen in our own little kingdom. Pride defies God. Pride defiles man. So when pride defies God and defiles man, ego is on the throne where Christ ought to be on the throne.

So let’s suppose a boy and a girl are going to get married. Let’s call the boy James and gi, the girl Mary. King James, and Queen Mary. And both of them are on the throne of their own lives. Ego is on the throne. James is on the throne of his life, and Mary’s on the throne of her life. And they both move into an apartment. And after a while, a war begins between these two kingdoms. Why? Because they are both of them filled with pride. And only by pride comes contention. It is ego against ego. There are no problems too big to solve, just people too small to solve them. And rather than attacking the problem, both of them prayerfully attacking the problem, they attack one another, because ego, pride, can never admit that it’s wrong. It can never say, “I’m sorry. I was wrong.” Or even when it’s right, it is so careful that every one knows that it is right. And so you have ego against ego, and before long there’s a divorce, because Jesus said, “A house divided against itself cannot stand.” There’s one king on this throne and there’s another king on that throne. And what is the problem? It’s ego. Another word for ego is pride.

Now suppose that King James abdicates the throne and puts Christ on the throne of his life. And suppose that Queen Mary and puts on the throne of her life. Then there’s one king over both thrones, and the Jesus in Mary is not going to fight the Jesus in James. And the Jesus in James is not going to fight the Jesus in Mary. When pride and ego is dethroned and Christ is enthroned, then there’s harmony in the home. Only by pride cometh dissention. It is pride that stirs up strife, whether it’s in a church, whether it’s in a country, whether it’s in the world, wherever it is, pride divides society. When self is on the throne, Christ is on the cross. When self is on the cross, Christ is on the throne. When self is on the throne, there is division and pride. When Christ is on the throne, there is harmony and peace. Put Christ on the throne of both hearts, he’ll slay the ego, he will banish the hostility, and Jesus will make your home a Christ-filled, happy home.

IV. Pride Dishonors Life

Now here's the fourth thing that pride does. Not only does pride divide society and bring war and strife, but pride dishonors life. You know the irony about pride is that pride says to the man, "You need to be lifted up. You need to be exalted. You need to be somebody. I can make you somebody." But what pride does is destroy honor rather than bring honor. Pride dishonors life. Look, if you will, in Proverbs chapter eleven and verse two. "When pride cometh, then cometh shame." Now, now the proud man wants honor, and glory, and praise. But the very thing that brings honor, and glory, and praise is not pride, that drives him to seek it, but humility. "When pride cometh, then cometh shame, but with the lowly is wisdom."

Turn to Proverbs chapter fifteen, and look with me in verse thirty-three. "The fear of the Lord is the instruction wisdom; and before honor is humility." Do you want to be honored? Well then don't be proud, because the very thing that pride seeks, the irony is, that it lose it loses that. Fast forward to chapter eighteen, and look with me in verse twelve. "Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, and before honor is humility." Before honor is humility. God keeps saying this. Look in Proverbs chapter twenty-nine and verse twenty-three. A man's pride shall bring him low, but honor shall uphold the humble in spirit. And a proud man wants to admiration of other people. He wants to be exalted above other people, but the sad thing is the very thing he wants, he does not gain. Rather than their admiration, he gains their contempt.

Someone has wisely said that pride is a disease that makes everybody sick except the person who has it. Of course he's the sickest of all in reality. What did Jesus teach, the wisest, most humble individual who ever taught? And yet many of us, most of us in this building, if not all of us admire him more than anyone else, would gladly die for him. What did Jesus teach? Jesus taught that the way up is down, and the way down is up. Jesus said, "He that humbles himself, shall be exalted, and he that exalts himself will be abased."

I don't think there's a better illustration of this than is found in Isaiah chapter fourteen. Turn to that with me for a moment. Remember we said that God hates the sin of pride, because it's pride that made the devil the devil. Now let's just see how Satan became the devil. Isaiah fourteen verse twelve, listen to it. How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer. Now underscore the word fallen. He's not exalted, he's fallen. O Lucifer, son of the morning. How art thou cut down. Underscore the word cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God. Now what was his desire? To be high, to ascend, to be exalted. I will exalt my throne above the stars of God. I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north. Now when he says, "the mount of the congregation" is, "I want to be a big shot before

everybody else.” Verse fourteen, “I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most high.” Notice in verse thirteen, he mentions it three times. In verse fourteen, he mentions twice. Five times, I, I, I, I, I, I. It’s pride. But now notice verse fifteen. “Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.”

He was Lucifer, the son of the morning, the light bearer, no one more beautiful, the grandest, most glorious of all of creation, and now he’s brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. Now look in verse sixteen. Remember what he wanted. He wanted to be glorified. Do you know what he wanted? He wanted to be exalted. He wanted to be admired above the stars of God. Now look in verse sixteen. Here is the devil’s final destiny. “They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee.” What does that mean? They’re going to squint their eyes; they’re going to stroke their chin; they’re going to consider thee. And consider thee saying, “Is this the man the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms; that made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof; that open not the house of his prisoners?” When that devil is brought down to the lowest hell, when he receives his ignominious, final torment, when he—he’s not yet there. He will be there—when he is brought to that place, then all of the beings in the created universes will look at him, and they’re going to say, “You mean that’s him? That worm in the ashes? That one so low, that one so stripped, that one so shamed, that one in the lowest hell, you mean that’s the one that caused all of the problems, that’s the one that caused the nations to tremble, that’s the one that wouldn’t loosen the bonds and the people in his prison house, that worm is him, in the lowest hell?” But what did he want, ha ha? He wanted glory. He wanted honor. He wanted to exalt himself. What an incredible illustration.

Now let’s just turn it around. You take the lowest man or woman upon this earth, the most humble man, the poorest creature who ever lived, uneducated, illiterate, wealthy, impoverished, who gives his heart to Jesus, who is saved, who humbles himself like a little child and receives as his personal savior. Do you know what his destiny is? To be like Jesus. Think about it. To be like Jesus, to be saved, to rule and to reign with Christ on high, as he humbles himself and cries out and says, “Oh God, be merciful to me a sinner. I repent of my sin. I receive Christ as my Lord and Savior.”

Friend, one day, now you listen carefully to me. One day, you will have a position in heaven that will be greater than Lucifer had before he fell. You say, “Can you be sure of that?” Yes, cause we’ll be like Christ. The Bible says, “One day, we’re going to judge angels.” Lucifer was an angel. We will have an exalted place, higher than the angels, made like unto the Lord Jesus Christ, but only, only when we come through the gate of humility. You see. Here’s the thing about pride. It dishonors life.

V. Pride Destroys Souls

Now here's the final thing that pride does. I am giving you five destructive, perilous qualities of pride. The fifth thing is this that pride destroys souls. Look, if you will, in Proverbs fifteen, if you will. Proverbs chapter fifteen and verse twenty-five, "The Lord will destroy the house of the proud." Look in chapter sixteen verses eighteen and nineteen. "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." Look in Proverbs chapter eighteen verse twelve. "Before destruction the heart of man is haughty." What, what, what are all of these verse telling us? That pride is a destructive force. It will destroy souls. It brings ruin. It brings national ruin. The reason that we don't have revival in America is America's not humbled himself. God says, "If my people which are called by my name shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, then will I hear from heaven." It brings national ruin.

It brings domestic ruin. Pride has turned homes into battle grounds. It brings financial ruin. Many of us are in economic difficulty because we are trying to keep with our neighbors, buying things we cannot afford. It's really rooted in pride. Brings emotional ruin. So many people have become a slave to somebody else's opinion, because Madison Avenue has told us we've got to do this or be this or look this way. It brings spiritual ruin. Some of you will never be used mightily of God. Listen very clearly to me. It's possible for you to be too big for God to use, but never too small.

It brings spiritual ruin, but here's the main thing. It brings eternal ruin. Jesus told about two men who went to the temple to pray. You can find it in Luke chapter eighteen. One man went to the temple to pray, and full of pride he lifted up his heart. And the Bible says, "He prayed with himself." That's very interesting. That means, he was just talking to himself. God didn't hear, prayed with himself. And he said, "Father, I thank you that I'm not like other men are." And then he said, "Lord, I fast twice a week. I tithe all I possess," and so forth. And he began to tell God what a good boy he was. And then Jesus said that another man came in. This time it was a publican. Now the publicans were the social outcasts of that day. They were the quislings who had given over to Rome, and were tax collectors for Rome. Everybody hated them. And this man however, convicted of his sin . . . Jesus said that he, that he fell on his knees. He smote himself upon the breast, and he said, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." Literally, the language says in the original, "Be merciful to me the sinner." He saw himself as the chiefest of sinners. And then Jesus said of those two men who went to the temple to pray, Jesus said, "I tell you this man went home justified, rather than the other." Now two men went home from church that day. One went home dignified. One went home justified.

Do you know what's going to happen today? I'll give an invitation today, and, and some folks who need to be saved will look around and, and say, "I wonder if any of

those old sinners are going to go down there and get saved. Ha ha, “Lord, I, I do this, and I do that.” And you think that the gospel is for the thief, and the murderer, and the prostitute. You don’t think that the gospel is for you.

Do you know why that Pharisee was so proud? Do you know why he prayed that way? He was comparing himself to other people. He said, “Lord, I thank you I’m not like others,” even as this publican. You can lie down in the gutter and stretch yourself out along side some other sinner, and think your a little bit longer than him. But I dare you to measure yourself by Jesus Christ.

You see. What is sin? Sin is coming short of the glory of God. Sin is not coming short of the glory of some other man. Compare yourself with God. When Isaiah saw the Lord, he said, “Woe is me.” When Job saw the Lord, he said, “I abhor myself.” When Peter saw the Lord, he said, “Depart from me Lord. For I’m a sinful man.” When Daniel saw the Lord, he said, “My comeliness is turned in, into corruption.”

Conclusion

Today, I’m going to ask you to give your heart to Jesus Christ. I’m going to ask you to lay your pride in the dust. I’m going to ask you to turn to the Lord, and ask him in repentance and faith to save you. I’m going to ask you to say in your heart these words, “When I survey the wondrous cross, on which the prince of glory died, when I see that, when I see Jesus, then I lay my self-righteousness in the dust. I pour contempt on all my pride. Then I come to him, and I say, ‘Lord, save me’.” Remember the scripture in I Peter 5:5. Listen to it. “God resists the proud. He gives grace to the humble.” Do you know what we need today? It’s the grace of God. And I’ll promise you on the authority of the word of God right now. If you will lay your pride in the dust, repent of that independence from God, cry out to God for mercy, God’s grace will save you today. And every sin will be forgiven. Jesus Christ will come into your heart. God will give you strength you’ve never had before, and when you die, you’ll go to heaven. And you can be in the crowd that sings, “When we all get to heaven, what a day of rejoicing that will be.”

I want every head bowed, and every eye closed, no one stirring, no one looking around. Father, I pray today that many in this place will say an everlasting yes to Jesus Christ and be eternally saved. In his wonderful name, amen.

Now look up here. We’re going to sing an invitational hymn. It says, “Lord, I believe, Lord I receive, and Lord I confess you now.” First you believe, then by faith you receive, and then you make it public. So I’m going to ask that no one stir, no one leave unless it is an absolute emergency. I’m going to ask you to be in a spirit of prayer for those around you who may not know Jesus. And when we begin to sing this song, I’m going to ask you to leave your seat and come forward. Your coming forward is your way of

saying, “Lord I believe, Lord I receive, Lord I’m confessing you.” Pastor Rogers, what should I say if I’m coming forward to give my heart to Jesus? Just tell that minister that you are trusting Christ, or that you’re giving your heart to him. We want to answer any questions, give you some scripture, and seal your decision in prayer. Others of you need a church home. I want to invite you to come, if you know that you’re saved. Come down any of these isles, and tell the minister that you want to place your membership in this church. Now if you’re up in the balcony, rather than coming down here, we’ve put ministers up there in the balcony. Just come to the minister up there, and tell him the decision that’s on your heart. Let’s stand together as we sing.

The Problem with Pride

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: April 30, 2000

Main Scripture Text: Proverbs 16:18

“An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief.”

PROVERBS 16:18

Outline

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- A. Pride is Not Having a Good Self-image
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- C. Pride is an Attitude of Independence from God
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- E. Pride is Esteeming Yourself Better Than Other People
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 - A. National Ruin
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Conclusion

Introduction

Find Proverbs chapter 16 and then verse 18. And, we're going to look at that in just a moment, but as I've already told you, we're going to be speaking today on "The Problem with Pride." How many of you have a problem with pride? Would you lift your hand? All right. I'm going to be preaching to you today, but I'm especially going to be preaching to those who didn't lift their hands. In all seriousness, pride is a problem that all wrestle with, and those who think they don't have it probably have more of it.

Proverbs 16, verse 18: *“Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before*

a *fall*” (Proverbs 16:18). There is a sin, a very dangerous sin, that, in my estimation, is doing more to hold back revival than any other sin, doing more to destroy homes than any other sin, doing more to ruin this nation than any other sin, causing more Christians to live in failure and defeat than any other sin, and that is filling Hell more than any other sin—and, very frankly, it is the sin of pride.

Now, we’re going to speak about that in a moment, but just put it down: it is a dangerous sin. And, the worst thing about it is it is such a deceitful sin. Many people who are infected and infested with pride have no idea that they are. There is at least a benefit and a bliss to being a drunkard: the drunkard knows he’s a drunkard. The thief knows he’s a thief. But, many times the proud person does not recognize that he or she is proud. As a matter of fact, the proud person is often very proud of his humility. It’s kind of catchy, isn’t it?

The Sunday School teacher was teaching that lesson in the Bible about the publican and the Pharisee. The publican would not even lift his head to Heaven, but he bowed his head and said, “*God be merciful to me a sinner*” (Luke 18:13). But, the Pharisee, the Bible says, stood and prayed, and he said, “Lord, I thank You that I am not as other men are. Why, I fast, and I tithe, and I do all of these things” (Luke 18:11–12). And, Jesus said that one man went home “*justified rather than the other*” (Luke 18:14). The Sunday School teacher was teaching this lesson, and she’d done a wonderful job. But, when she finished, she beamed, and looked out at her scholars in her class, and said, “And children, aren’t we grateful we’re not like that old Pharisee?” Now, you see, she was proud of her humility. It’s a very dangerous thing.

A. **Pride is Not Having a Good Self-image**

The Bible has a lot to say about pride. Now, we need to learn what pride is not. Pride is not having a good self-image. Don’t get the idea that, if you have a good self-image, that you’re proud. Not so. I want to tell you something: in Jesus, you’re somebody—you are somebody. Jesus is not ashamed to call you His brothers and His sisters. That means we’re next of kin to the Holy Trinity. Now, you say, “That’s megalomania.” No, it’s Bible truth. I hear people talking about the fact that they’re just sinners saved by grace. Well, that, technically, is true, but that’s not the Bible description of you. The Bible description of you is the righteousness of God in Christ. That’s what the Bible calls you, and you are somebody.

Read John chapter 13. The Bible says, “*Jesus knowing that...he [came] from God, and went to God...laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself...and [washed his] disciples’ feet*” (John 13:3–5). That is humility—not thinking lowly of Himself. He knew that He came from God. He knew that He was going to God. But, knowing all of that, He washed His disciples’ feet. Pride is not a good self-image.

Humility is not thinking lowly of yourself; it is not thinking of yourself.

B. Pride is Not Gratefulness for a Job Well Done

Pride is not gratefulness for a job well done. Well, you say about an individual, “He takes pride in his work.” We’re not talking about the kind of pride that I’m talking about right now. You ought, if you sweep the floor, sweep out the corners also. Do a good job.

These girls who play basketball—when the coach says, after a game, “I’m proud of you. I’m grateful for what you did,” that’s not the kind of pride we’re talking about. When a job is well done and you get recognition, or when you’re grateful for the grades that a grandchild or child makes, and so forth, that’s not what we are talking about when we’re talking about pride. It is... What is pride? Let me give you three things that will sum it up before we get into the message. And, by the way, I’m going to give you, this morning, five ways that pride will ruin and devastate your life. Pride is the most destructive thing in the universe, so don’t shut me out now. This pertains to you. What is pride?

C. Pride is an Attitude of Independence from God

Number one: Pride is an attitude of independence from God: “I don’t need You, God. Stay out of my life. I can handle it myself”—a spirit of independence from God. The man who wrote the poem “Invictus” said, “I am the master of my fate: / I am the captain of my soul” (William Ernest Henley). I feel like saying, “Captain, your ship is about to sink.” That is an attitude of independence from God.

You say, “Well, I don’t have that.” Well, let me ask you a question: Do you pray regularly? You say, “Well, I don’t pray as much as I ought to.” Do you know why you don’t pray? Your prayerlessness is not your great problem; your great problem is you don’t feel a need to. Come on. Listen, you don’t feel the need to. You say, “Well, I can handle it. Everything’s going fine.” Our prayerlessness is really a spirit of independence from God. And, if you’re wrestling with prayerlessness, may I tell you that what you’re really wrestling with is pride? Pride is a spirit of independence from God—an attitude.

D. Pride is a Spirit of Ungratefulness to God

And, following along with that is a spirit of ungratefulness to God when God has so blessed us. We have so many things. We act like we deserve it, and we’ve earned it, and it is ours. Paul asked this penetrating question: “What do you have that you’ve not received?” (1 Corinthians 4:7) You say, “Well, I worked for it.” Who gave you the ingenuity to work? Who gave you the strength? Who gave you the energy? Who gave you all of that? Did you create that? No. You don’t have one blessed thing that you’ve not received. Say “amen.” You know that is true.

E. Pride is Esteeming Yourself Better Than Other People

What is pride? Pride is also esteeming yourself better than other people. Do you think

that, because you have achieved certain things or have certain things, that you're better than somebody else? No. Pride esteems one's self better than others.

Well, let's see if we can just tighten the focus a little bit before I tell you these five terrible things that pride will do to you. Let's just take a test and see. Somebody has given this list of indicators of a proud person. A proud person becomes irritated when corrected for mistakes—hello! Number two: A proud person accepts praise for things over which he or she has no control—beauty, talent, abilities. Again, these basketball players, these girls—you could accept praise if you worked hard and practiced well, but you can't accept praise for that natural dexterity that you have, or your height, or your speed. Those are gifts. When you begin to accept praise for things over which you have no control, that's pride.

F. Pride Will Not Admit Mistakes

Pride will not admit mistakes. Are you married to someone who will never admit a mistake? Joyce is. I find it hard—always an excuse, always an alibi, in an attempt to justify one's self. And, pride says, when there's a disagreement, "All right. I can get along without you." Do you ever feel that way toward somebody else? What that is, is really pride. Pride refuses to take counsel and to learn from other people. Pride has an ungrateful spirit for all that God has done.

G. Pride Shows Itself in Competition with Other People

Pride often shows itself in competition with other people. Pride does not want more; pride wants more than somebody else. C.S. Lewis has said this—and I want to share it with you; I copied it down: he said, "Pride gets no pleasure out of having something, only out of having more of it than the other man. We say that people are proud of being rich, or clever, or good-looking, but they are not. They are proud of being richer or more clever or better looking than others. It is the comparison that makes you proud, the pleasure of being above the rest."

Now, we've talked about what pride is. We've talked about how it manifests itself. May I give you, now, five things that pride will do to ruin and devastate your life?

I. Pride Defies God

Number one: pride defies God. Pride is a fist in the face of God. Now, we're going to be in the Book of Proverbs. And so, if you want to just stay in Proverbs, we're going to go back and forth through the Proverbs, because the Book of Proverbs gives us some wonderful lessons on the problem of pride. Look, if you will, in Proverbs chapter 6 and verses 16 through 19: *"These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to*

mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren” (Proverbs 6:16–19). Those are seven things that God hates. Number one on God’s “hate parade” is pride—number one on God’s “hate parade” is pride, “*a proud look*” (Proverbs 6:17).

Why does God hate pride? Proverbs 16, verse 5 says this: “*Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD*” (Proverbs 16:5). That’s strong language. If you’re proud, you are abominable to God. Why does God hate pride so much?

A. Pride Created the Devil

Friend, listen to me: it was pride that created the devil. It was pride that turned Lucifer, the son of the morning, into Satan, the father of the night. The national religion of Satan’s kingdom is pride. That’s what Satan’s kingdom is built on. No wonder pride defies God!

When Paul was giving young Timothy the standard for a preacher, one of the things he said for a minister is this—in 1 Timothy 3, verse 6: “*Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil*” (1 Timothy 3:6). One of the prime requisites for a preacher, young or old, is humility. A wise man said, “Nothing will keep a minister more out of the devil’s reach than genuine humility.” And, the Bible says he cannot be “*a novice*”—that is, just new, untrained, unseasoned—“*lest being lifted up with pride he fall [under] the condemnation of the devil*” (1 Timothy 3:6)—the same thing that made the devil the devil. Why does God hate pride? It made the devil the devil.

B. Pride Ruined the Human Race

Why does God hate pride? Pride ruined the human race. In the Garden of Eden, when Satan came to tempt Eve, do you think that the temptation was to taste a particular kind of fruit? Good night! The Garden was full of fruit. That wasn’t the temptation. The temptation was, “Take this, and you will be as God.” It was the same thing that caused Satan to fall, the same thing that ruined the human race and brought sin into the world. No wonder pride defies God. Friend, look—look—heartache, all tears, all sorrow, all war, all strife, all pain, all agony, all shame, and you can say, “Pride did it”—“pride did it.” Pride has wrecked the human race. I’m saying that God is against this matter of pride.

Again, let me quote C.S. Lewis: C.S. Lewis said, “As long as you’re proud, you cannot know God. A proud man is always looking down on things and people”—“a proud man is always looking down on things and people”—“and as long as you are looking down, you cannot see something above you.” The man who is looking down on others is not looking up at God at the same time. Pride defies God.

Now, I said we’re going to stay in Proverbs, but here’s an ancillary scripture we cannot pass over—1 Peter chapter 5 and verse 5: the Bible says, “*God [resists] the*

proud, and [gives] grace to the humble” (1 Peter 5:5). Now, grace is both the desire and the ability to do the will of God—and we all need grace. But, grace and pride are antithetical, and God resists the proud. It is not that God merely doesn’t help the proud. God lines Himself up in battle array against the proud. God resists the proud. Is that what you want God to do to you? First Peter 5:5: “God [resists] the proud, [but He gives] grace to the humble” (1 Peter 5:5). That’s the first thing pride will do to destroy your life: pride defies God.

II. Pride Defiles Man

Number two: pride defiles man. Pride comes out of the heart, and it defiles the very heart of man. And, the seat of pride is the heart. Proverbs 16, verse 5 speaks of “*every one that is proud in heart*”—“*Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD*” (Proverbs 16:5). And then, Proverbs 21 and verse 4: “*An high look, and a proud heart, and the plowing of the wicked, is sin*” (Proverbs 21:4). That is, a man who would plow his field without giving God thanks for the sun and the germinating qualities and for the rain, he’s proud. He’s self-sufficient. And so, the Bible says that if you have pride, even when you plow a field, that it is sin; it just defiles man.

Where does this pride come from? Friend, we were born with it. Pride comes out of the heart. Again, Mark chapter 7, verse 21: “*For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride*” (Mark 7:21–22). That comes out of the heart. Little children were born with pride in their heart. You don’t believe it? Take a little child, surround him with toys (more than he needs)—he’s not playing with them. Let another mother bring her little baby and put him on the floor, and that little baby will go over there and pick up one of those toys. Your sweet little baby will leave the toys he’s playing with, go over there and bop that other kid and take that toy. Children are born with pride, and ego, and selfishness in their hearts. I hate to tell you, folks, but it is true. It comes out of the heart. You think these things are learned? They’re not learned; they’re part of human nature. Jesus said they come out of the heart (Mark 7:21).

I’ve often used this illustration: if you see an apple with a wormhole in it... You know the old saying, “What’s worse than finding a worm in your apple is finding half a worm.” You see that wormhole. How did that worm get into that apple? I read this, and it’s very interesting: the worm did not bore into the apple; the worm bored out of the apple. The worm was... The egg was laid in the blossom; the worm was hatched inside the apple and made its way out. And, the pride that has come out of us, folks, it was in the blossom; it was on the inside, and it just makes its way out. “Out of the heart,” Jesus said, “these things come” (Mark 7:21).

And so, pride defies God; pride defiles man. And, that's the reason every person in this building, if he's not been saved, needs to be saved and born again, because when we're born the first time, we were born with a nature that is inclined to pride. I hope you understand that.

III. **Pride Divides Society**

Number three—we're talking about five things that pride will do to you—number three: Pride divides society. It defies God; it defiles man, and it divides society. I'm going to tell you something, and you may disagree with me for a moment, but there has never been an argument, there's never been a war, there's never been a divorce, there's never been a church split that pride was not the major factor. Let me say that again: there's never been an argument, never been a war, never been a divorce, never been a church split where pride was not the major factor. "Pastor, can you prove that?" Yep—Proverbs 13, verse 10: "*Only by pride cometh contention*"—"Only by pride cometh contention" (Proverbs 13:10). Proverbs 28, verse 25: "*He that is of a proud heart stirreth up strife*" (Proverbs 28:25). It's obvious. If God resists the proud, then the proud man is out of fellowship with God. And, any man, woman, boy, or girl that's out of fellowship with God is going to be out of fellowship with other people—it follows as night follows days. And so, pride divides society.

Have you... Do you ever get into a discussion with your wife? You know, the way I'm using the word *discussion*—one that can be heard by the neighbors, a "discussion." What's that all about? It's about pride. Your arguments—they're about pride. The arguments that you have with your mate are ego against ego. There are no problems too big to be solved; there are just people too small to solve them. If you'll put the problem out in the middle and attack the problem, rather than one another, than you can solve the problem. But, we're not trying to solve the problem; we're trying to win the argument. You know it's true. And, that is pride. "*Only by pride cometh contention*" (Proverbs 13:10).

When Joyce and I have a disagreement, I go back and lick my wounds a while, and sulk a while, and try to pray a while. And then, finally, I say, "Okay, let's analyze it." Do you know the problem? My pride—my pride. That's it. God says, "Adrian, you are proud." It doesn't matter whether you're right or wrong. I might be right, and I'm still the problem because of my attitude, which is pride. And boy, it hurts and feels so good at the same time to go and say, "I was wrong, and I am sorry. And, forgive me." And, were it not for the grace of God, I couldn't do that, because of the natural inclination of a human heart for pride. "*Only by pride cometh contention*" (Proverbs 13:10).

Any contention in your home ever? I wonder if one of your children could come up here and give a testimony right now. Any contention in your home? Put it down big, put

it down plain, put it down straight: pride is the issue. *“Only by pride cometh contention”* (Proverbs 13:10). Again, I want to remind you that the problem is ego against ego. And, if you take ego off the throne and put Jesus Christ on the throne of your heart, and your wife or your husband takes ego off the throne and enthrones in his, in her life, then the Jesus in her is not going to fight the Jesus in you. And, the Jesus in both homes is going to be able to take care of the problem. Pride is the chief cause of misery in society.

We just had a meeting in the Pyramid, “Love Thy Neighbor.” What is the problem between races? I can put it down in one word—pride. Racial pride. No matter what color you are, that is the problem—and God is dead-set against it.

IV. Pride Dishonors Life

Now, number four; here’s the fourth thing that pride does: pride dishonors life. Let me tell you a great irony. Do you know what the proud person is wanting? Praise, honor, esteem—that is the very thing he wants. And, what does he get through pride?

Dishonor—pride dishonors life. Notice Proverbs 11 and verse 2: *“When pride cometh, then cometh shame”* (Proverbs 11:2). Does any body here want shame? No. What does the proud man want? He doesn’t want shame; he wants honor, but he doesn’t get it.

Put down Proverbs 15, verse 33: *“The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom; and before honour is humility”* (Proverbs 15:33). Humility comes before honor, not pride. Put this down—Proverbs 18, verse 12: *“Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, and before honour is humility”* (Proverbs 18:12). Put this one down—Proverbs 29, verse 23: *“A man’s pride shall bring him low”* (Proverbs 29:23). Is it not ironical, I say, that the proud man wants to be praised, petted, vaunted, honored? And, the very thing he wants is the very thing that he loses—the admiration of others. And, what he ends up with—the proud person always ends up not with admiration, but contempt. Somebody said, “Self-conceit is a disease that makes everybody sick except the one who has it. But, the truth of the matter is, he’s the sickest of all, full of conceit.”

Now, Jesus taught us very clearly and very plainly that the way up is down and the way down is up. Remember I told you that God hates pride? It’s number one on His list. Why does God hate pride? Let me tell you how the devil became the devil. I’m going to read to you from Isaiah 14, verse 13—God is speaking to Lucifer: *“For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven”*—I want you to listen to the perpendicular pronoun “I” now—*“I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north. I will ascend [up] above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee”—*that is, “They are going to have to squint in order to even see you”—*“and consider thee,*

saying, *Is this the man [who] made the earth to tremble, [and] did shake kingdoms*” (Isaiah 14:13–16).

Here is Satan saying, “I am going to be like the most High. I’m going up, up, up, up...I, I, I, I, I.” God says, “You’re going down, down, down, down, down, down, down, down.” One day, we’ll look and say, “Is that the devil? I can hardly see him. That’s him—that’s him.” What is our Lord saying? Our Lord is saying, “*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought [himself] not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, took upon him the form of a servant, and...God...hath...given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee [shall] bow...and...every tongue [shall] confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father*” (Philippians 2:5–11).

Listen, when you follow Jesus Christ in genuine humility rather than Satan and his arrogance, you’re going to be given, in the days to come—don’t let this go past—you are going to be given, in the days to come, a greater position than Satan had before he fell. It probably didn’t get in ‘cause I didn’t hear anyone say “amen.” You follow Jesus Christ—I am telling you; listen to me—you follow Jesus Christ, and God is going to give to you, His saints, a greater position than Satan had before he fell. The Bible says we will judge angels (1 Corinthians 6:3). Satan is a fallen angel. We will judge angels. The very thing that people want, they lose. Pride dishonors life.

Let me tell the boys and girls a story—a make believe story. Once there was a frog in the cold mud of Minnesota, and he saw some Canadian geese. And, he said, “Where are you guys going?” They said, “We’re going south for the winter.” That frog said, “I want to go with you.” They said, “You don’t have any wings.” He said, “But, I have an idea.” He said, “Let’s take a twig—and this goose will put a twig in his beak, and this goose will put a twig in his beak. And, I will take my mouth, and grab that twig, and hold on, and you can fly me south.” They said, “Do you think it will work?” He said, “Let’s try it.” And so, one big Canadian goose over here, another big Canadian goose over here with a twig between them—and that frog got hold. And, they’re flying south. Over Indiana, a farmer looked up and saw two geese with a stick and a frog, and he said, “Would you look at that? That is the most amazing thing I have ever seen. I wonder whose idea that was.” And, the frog said, “Miiiiiiiiiiiiinnnnnnnnne.” Pride dishonors life.

V. Pride Destroys Souls

Last of all—and here’s the fifth thing that pride will do: pride destroys souls. Pride, friend, populates Hell. Pride, ultimately, destroys all that it controls. It is the road to ruin. Proverbs 15, verse 25: “*The LORD will destroy the house of the proud*” (Proverbs 15:25). Proverbs 16, verse 18 and 19: “*Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall*” (Proverbs 16:18). Proverbs 18, verse 12: “*Before destruction the*

heart of man is haughty, and before honour is humility” (Proverbs 18:12). The seeds of destruction—eternal destruction—are in pride.

A. National Ruin

Now, no one can be saved apart from the grace of God, but the Bible says, “*God [resists] the proud, and [gives] grace to the humble*” (1 Peter 5:5). I’m telling you, pride is the road to ruin, whether it’s national ruin... America is so proud. What a proud nation we are! And, God says, “*If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land*” (2 Chronicles 7:14)—national ruin.

B. Domestic Ruin

Domestic ruin—there are congregations that have families that are breaking apart. Why? Pride, as I’ve already said.

C. Financial Ruin

Financial ruin—some of you, right now, are in financial bondage. Do you know why? I’ll tell you: your neighbors keep buying things you can’t afford, and you think you have to have it in order to stay up.

D. Emotional Ruin

Emotional ruin—if you’re a proud person, your emotions are going to be very thin, because you are going to be controlled by circumstances—if you don’t have the right car, if you don’t have the right clothes, if you don’t have the right decorations, if you don’t have the right this or that. And, emotionally, it’s going to get to you.

E. Spiritual and Eternal Ruin

But friend, primarily, it is spiritual ruin and eternal ruin. Do you know the reason that some people cannot have their ministry blessed? They’re too big for God to use. *You can be too big for God to use, but you can never be too small for God to use.* But, pride destroys souls. Pride is filling Hell.

Remember the story I told you earlier about Jesus talking about two who went to the temple to pray, one a publican and another a Pharisee? The publicans were the IRS of that day. They were the tax collectors. And, but, they were very, very crooked—very dishonest. Besides that, the Jews hated them because they worked for Rome, and Israel had been occupied by the Roman government and Roman law. And so, to say “publican” in that day was almost an epithet to a word of condemnation and scorn. And so, this publican went to pray, and a Pharisee. The Pharisees were the religious of the religious. Oh, man! A Pharisee wouldn’t even eat an egg that was laid on Saturday. I’m

serious. If a mosquito were biting that Pharisee on Saturday, he wouldn't slap it, because you would not go hunting on the Sabbath. Hey, this is truth. If he got a tack in his shoe, he would always pull it out before Saturday, lest he be accused of carrying a burden on the Sabbath, so religious were they.

And, this Pharisee is praying, and the publican, and he's saying, "Father God, I..." The Bible says... And, by the way, he prayed with himself (Luke 18:11). That is, God wasn't hearing his prayer. He said, "God, I thank You I'm not like other men are. And, I fast, and I do this, and I tithe, and I...and so forth." And then, he said, "And, I especially thank You I'm not like this...this publican" (Luke 18:11–12). The Bible says the publican smote himself upon the breast, would not even lift his eyes to Heaven, and he prayed, and he said, "*God be merciful to me a sinner*" (Luke 18:13). Actually, what he really said is, "God be merciful to me the chief sinner." He saw himself as the chief of sinners. You know what Jesus said? "Two men went to church that day—one went home dignified; the other went home justified" (Luke 18:14).

And, everybody in this building will go home one of those two ways—dignified or justified. I've been preaching long enough to know that when you preach and give the gospel invitation, there's certain very nice people, very cultured people, who will look around and see if there are any of those sinners are going to go forward to get saved, not understanding what the Bible teaches that "*all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*" (Romans 3:23).

Conclusion

Let me tell you about the grace of God. Remember, "*God [resists] the proud, [but gives] grace to the humble*" (1 Peter 5:5). The grace of God is sufficient for everyone in this building today. Now, listen—listen to me carefully: there's no one in this building so bad that God will not save him—no one. I don't care what you've done. I'll tell you on the authority of the Word of God, "*the blood of Jesus Christ [God's] Son [cleanses] from all sin*" (1 John 1:7). You can bank on it. If you want to be saved, God will save you instantaneously and keep you eternally. No one here so bad they cannot be saved.

Now, listen to the second thing—no one so good they need not be saved. About 6 billion people on the face of this earth—if you were to take all 6 billion people, and line them up, and go down the line, and extract from each of those 6 billion people any so-called "goodness" that is in any of them, and take all of those qualities out of those 6 billion people, and combine them into one individual, that one individual would have to kneel at the cross to be saved—no one so bad they cannot be saved, no one so good they need not be saved.

The Care and Cultivation of a Friendship

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: February 11, 1996

Main Scripture Text: Proverbs 17:17

“A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.”

PROVERBS 17:17

Outline

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Introduction

Thank you so much, Stephanie, and thank you, Jessica, for reminding us that Jesus will still be there. You could not have sung anything that would fit more wonderfully in with what I have to say tonight about “The Care and Cultivation of a Friendship,” because Proverbs chapter 17, verse 17 is the text that we’ll use tonight: *“A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity”* (Proverbs 17:17). Isn’t that a great, great verse? *“A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity”* (Proverbs 17:17). Somebody has said, “A friend is someone who comes in when everyone else goes out.” Jesus will still be there.

Now, this morning, if you were here, we talked about the Lord Jesus, the best friend that we ever had, and the blessings of knowing Jesus and having Christ as a friend, and

all of the things that means to us. We talked about how His friendship for us lifts us to a new level—that we didn't choose Him, but He chose us. It would be wonderful if we could just be as slaves, as servants, but He said, "I don't call you servant; I call you friends" (John 15:15). And then, we talked about how His friends become our friends. He said in John 15: "As I've loved you, you need to love one another" (John 15:9), because every friend of Jesus needs to be a friend of mine. And, our family just gets bigger and bigger, and we learned this morning that we come to know and love one another because of Jesus. Most of us here tonight would never have met the other person had it not been for Jesus. Thank God for that.

And then, we talked today about the cost of friendship. For Him to be our friend, He bought us with His blood. For us to be His friend, we know that a friend must be willing to lay down his life for others. That's what He told us there in John chapter 15. And, you don't have to die physically, though you might. You could die to pride, and ego, and ambition. There are no bargain friendships. A friendship that is worth anything is costly.

But then, we talked about the great reward for being a friend of Jesus; the compensation makes the cost seem so small, for our Lord says that when we're His friend, He's going to reveal those sacred secrets to us. He said the slave—the servant—doesn't know his master's will, or he doesn't know the intimate things about his master, but a friend does. (John 15:15) The slave is told what to do, but the friend is told why he does it. And, He has us as His intimates. And, because we have that spiritual insight, then we have that spiritual fruitfulness and we can pray in the name of Jesus and expect to get our prayers answered.

But, we also found out this morning that when we can say that the friends of Jesus are the friends of ours, then, correspondingly, we say that His enemies are our enemies. All of that's in John chapter 15.

But now, tonight, we're going to look a little more—a little more—carefully at this matter of friendship and talk to you about how to be a friend, and how to have a friend—how to cultivate and maintain a friendship. Now, friends are very, very important in life, and it's so important that we understand that not only must Jesus be our friend, but because He is, we need to learn to be friends to others. The deepest need of the human heart is for intimacy. That's just another way of saying "friendship."

Now, let me give you the marks of a true friend. What are the marks of true friendship? Now, I'm not talking to you about casual acquaintances, and I'm not talking to you about false friends, but true friends. Let me give you three marks of a true friend, and you can measure any relationship you have to see if your friend is a true friend.

I. A True Friend Sharpens You

Number one: A true friend sharpens you—a true friend sharpens You. That is, he will

make you a sharper person, a better person. Now, the text for that is Proverbs chapter 27 and verse 17: *“Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend”*—*“Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend”* (Proverbs 27:17). That is, a true friendship will put an edge on your life. It’ll make you—he or she will make you—a keener person. Now, some people are in difficulty because of false friends. False friends dull your life. They blunt your influence. They drag you down. Young people in the choir, young people in the congregation, listen to me very carefully: any body who makes it easier for you to do wrong is not a friend—not a true friend. A true friend sharpens. A true friend puts the keen edge on your life.

Some of you, perhaps, tonight, are not Christians because you’re afraid that your friends would laugh at you if you gave your heart to Christ and stood up for the Lord Jesus Christ. If that is true, you need some new friends. Our word *friend* is etymologically linked to the word *freedom*. The word *freedom* and the word *friend* have the same root in the English language. A friend is someone who frees you to be all that you can be. The word *friend* and the word *freedom* both speak of “that which spurs you on.” Remember those words that I read out of the message this morning? Someone wrote these beautiful words; I copied them down: “I love you not for what you are, but for what I am when I am with you. I love you not only for what you have made of yourself, but for what you’re making of me. I love you for not closing your ears to the discord in me, but for adding to the music in me by worshipful listening. You have done it without a touch, without a word, without a sign. You have done it by just being yourself. Perhaps this is what being a friend means after all.”

One of the true tests of any friendship is, am I a better person for having known this person, being in the presence of that person? Now, of course, we know that that’s why Jesus is such a wonderful friend. As I tried to tell you this morning, I teared up thinking about it. Everything that could be even considered good about my life is not my goodness, but His—and it shows the friendship that Jesus has shown to me. So, here’s the first thing you need to ask yourself: Does this person sharpen me? Does he or she make me a better person? If so, they may be a true friend.

II. A True Friend Sticks

But, not only does a true friend sharpen—a true friend sticks. Now, what do I mean by that? Well, put this verse down—Proverbs 18, verse 24: *“A man [who] hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh”*—*“that sticketh”*—*“closer than a brother”* (Proverbs 18:24). Or, if you want to put it this way: a true friend stays. A true friend not only sharpens you, but a true friend is steadfast. They stick to you closer than a brother. Again, Proverbs 17, verse 17: *“A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity”* (Proverbs 17:17). If you want to see who your real friends are, just

make a mistake and see whether or not they leave you.

Life is like a ship, and some people get on board and get off board very easily. Some will stay on board as long as everything is sailing smoothly. They'll get on board and sail with you. But, let the rough weather come, and they will abandon the ship. But, a true friend is the one who will stay with you and stick with you.

As I said, somebody says that a true friend is someone who walks in when everyone else walks out. And, again, isn't that like the Lord Jesus? The Bible says that though we deny Him, He abides faithful" (2 Timothy 2:13). And, the reason—the reason—that I am kept saved, very frankly, is this—that Jesus will never walk out on me. He *"is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother"* (Proverbs 18:24). And, that is a prophecy, I believe, in the Bible, of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Put this verse down—Proverbs chapter 27 and verse 10: *"Thine own friend, and thy father's friend, forsake not; neither go into thy brother's house in the day of...calamity: for better is a neighbour that is near than a brother far off"* (Proverbs 27:10). And so, a real friend is somebody who lifts you up. He sharpens you. He sharpens and he sticks.

III. A True Friend Stabs

And, here's another thing that a real friend does: he stabs. He sharpens, he sticks, and he stabs. You say, "I don't want to be stabbed." Well, listen to Proverbs 27 and verse 6: *"Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful"* (Proverbs 27:6). Do you know a real friend who really loves you will wound you? He wounds you if you need to be wounded. That is, he will tell you the truth, and he won't give you hypocritical kisses when he needs to do a little spiritual surgery on you. *"Faithful are the wounds of a friend"* (Proverbs 27:6).

Some years ago, I was attacked by a vicious gall bladder on a Saturday night. And, my good friend, and brother, and wonderful surgeon, Dr. David Dunavant, put me on an operating table and took a long knife, and he sliced me open. Can you imagine somebody doing that to somebody he loves? Can you imagine a deacon in our church taking a knife and cutting the pastor? Well, this one cut me. Why? Because he loved me. And, he took out that gall bladder because he loved me. Listen to the scripture again: *"Faithful are the wounds of a friend"* (Proverbs 27:6). I'm so grateful through life I've had those who put their arms around my shoulders and helped me when I've done wrong. Flattery is not true friendship. *"The kisses of an enemy are deceitful"* (Proverbs 27:6). Judas was not a friend of Jesus when he kissed Jesus and betrayed the Lord Jesus. He was not a friend in the true sense. Do you know the difference between a hypocrite and a flatterer? Well, a flatterer will say to your face what he'll not say behind your back, and a hypocrite will say behind your back what he'll not say to your face. Neither one of them are true friends. Now, a true friend cares enough to confront.

Here's what it is: a true friend will make you a better person, a true friend is truly faithful, and a true friend will care enough and love enough to confront.

Now, how do you make friends? Many of us say, "Well, I wish I had some true friends. I don't have many true friends." Maybe there's someone here tonight, and you say, "Pastor Rogers, I don't have one true friend." Well, true friends are built. You can't make a true friend overnight. There are no rush orders. Friendships are not toadstools; they are oak trees. You build true friends over the years.

Now, I'm going to give you five secrets for building a friend, but all of these five secrets are built on one principle. And, the principle is what I gave you this morning—when Jesus said, "You're to love one other as I have loved you" (John 15:9). That's just a restatement of the Golden Rule: "As you would that others would do to you do to them" (Luke 6:31). Now, that's the principle, but let me give you again these five secrets that if you would like to be the kind of a person that others will resonate to, others will be attracted to. Do you like to be an attractive, winsome, friendly person? I'm going to give you five things that begin with the letter "A" so you can remember them more easily. And, what all of these are, are characteristics of the greatest friend the world has ever known—the characteristics of Jesus—because what did Jesus say in the sermon on friendship in John chapter 15? We're to love others as He loved us (John 15:9). Now, what are the five "A"s—the five words—that will help you to be the kind of a friend that you could be and should be? There are five things that people—all people—want: you want, and I want. And, if I would be a friend, I must give these to you, and you must give them to me.

A. **Acceptance**

First of all, we all want acceptance—acceptance. You know, the Bible says in Ephesians chapter 1 that God has "*made us accepted in the beloved*" (Ephesians 1:6). We all want people to accept us. Jesus accepted the disciples. Remember what He said to them? "You didn't choose Me; I chose you and ordained you" (John 15:16). Jesus did not accept the disciples because they were perfect—God knows they weren't perfect. But, they needed Him, and He accepted them. Do you know why Jesus could accept them? Because Jesus knew who He was. He didn't need to manipulate them or use them. He could accept them. Do you know the people who have difficulty being friendly are the people who have never really accepted themselves? Now, let me just give you something here. Now, we're still under the heading of "acceptance," but there are some words that you need to learn.

1. **Grace**

The first word is grace. Do you know what grace is? Grace is God's acceptance of us. God accepts us not because we're good—God loves us by His grace. Grace is God's

acceptance of us.

2. Faith

Now, faith that lays hold of grace is my acceptance of God's acceptance of me. "*For by grace are ye saved through faith*" (Ephesians 2:8). God says, "I love you; I accept you." Faith says, "I believe it, and I accept that You accept me." Grace is God's acceptance of me. Faith is my acceptance of God's acceptance of me.

3. Peace

Now, here's the third word: peace—peace is my acceptance of me. Once I accept the fact that God has accepted me, then I have peace within myself. For the first time, I can say, "I accept me, not because I think I'm good, but because of the grace of God. He has made me accepted in the beloved (Ephesians 1:6). If God has accepted me, shouldn't I accept what God's accepts? I accept me." Have you ever seen people who have never accepted themselves? They're not at peace with themselves. And then, have you ever gotten around an individual who is at peace with himself? People who are at peace with themselves are wonderful people to be around.

You see, you are to love you. Don't ever let any body tell you it's wrong to love yourself. That's a lie. The Bible says we're to love others as we love ourselves (Mark 12:31). So, if you don't love yourself, how can you love someone else? People who don't love themselves are dangerous. I don't mean you to be an egotist. You don't stand in front of the mirror and sing, "How Great Thou Art." If you do that, you're sick. But, you accept yourself. God has "*made us accepted in the beloved*" (Ephesians 1:6). Read it yourself in Ephesians chapter 1. Grace is God's acceptance of me. Faith is my acceptance of His acceptance of me. Peace is my acceptance of me.

4. Love

Now, love is my acceptance of you. When I'm at peace with myself, when I truly accept me, then, for the first time, I can accept you. I don't have to lord it over you. I don't have to brag to you. I don't have to put you down. I don't have to show off in front of you. I don't have to misuse, abuse, or manipulate you. I know who I am, and, therefore, I can accept you. Remember that passage there in John where it says Jesus washed His disciples' feet? It said, "Jesus, knowing that He came from God and went to God, took a towel and washed His disciples' feet" (John 13:3–5). How could He do that? How could He accept them? How could the Lord of Glory wash the dirty feet of fisherman? He knew who He was. He knew that He came from God and went to God. He had nothing to lose. By showing them love, it didn't diminish Him. The people who are afraid to love other people are people who think that somehow there's not enough love to go around. They have never really accepted themselves.

5. Fellowship

Now, listen to it again: grace is God's acceptance of me; faith is my acceptance of God's acceptance of me; peace is my acceptance of me; love is my acceptance of you; and then, fellowship is your acceptance of me. Grace, faith, peace, love, fellowship—there's an unbroken chain. We need to learn—we need to learn—how to accept God's acceptance of us so we can accept ourselves, so we can accept others. Got it—got it. Now, let me tell you, the first “A”—the first “A”—in all of this is acceptance. People want to be accepted. Jesus said to those disciples, “You didn't choose Me; I chose you” (John 15:16).

B. Acknowledgement

Now, here's the second thing to want; here's the second “A” of these five “A”s: not only do they want to be accepted—they want to be acknowledged. Recognize that they're there. When you're around people, give them your full heart; give them your full attention. Understand that people are important. When you talk to people, listen to them. Look them in the eye. Understand that they're not just a lump of protoplasm.

Have you ever watched people in the store, maybe, paying a bill? And, the checkout girl never looks up to see who the person is; the person never looks up to see who the checkout girl is. They just kind of do a transaction, and nobody even acknowledges that the other person is really there. That girl who's checking you out in the grocery store may be lost and on the road to Hell. Her husband may have just walked out on her. Her little child may be in the hospital. Acknowledge people. Look at people. That's a soul for whom Christ died. And, people need this—to be acknowledged.

You know, I spend a lot of time on airplanes. I really don't like the Atlanta airport very much. That thing is so... I mean, have you been? How many of you have been through the Atlanta airport? Yeah, you know what I'm talking about. “The door is about to close. Stand back from the door. *Beep, beep, beep.* The door will not spring back.” And, I see these people—they go on down the escalator, and then they're going up that escalator. And, they're going in this thing. And, this little machine drives them around, and there's not even a driver in the thing. “*Mmmmm!*” They remind me of sausages in a factory: “*Shshshsh!*” That's the way our world is getting. You dial the phone: “If you want So-and-so, push *ding*; if you want So-and-so, push *ding.*” I say, “I want somebody. I don't want a... I want to talk to somebody.” Right? I mean, this is the way we're getting, folks. It's incredible. People want somebody to say, “Hey, you are a person. You're flesh and blood.” We need to acknowledge people.

Do you know what psychologists have told us? That of all adult communication, 9% is in writing, 16% is in reading, 30% is in talking, 45% is in listening. Listening to others is one of the chief methods of communicating with others. You see, that's a God-like

quality—to acknowledge people. Listen to these verses. Psalm 34, verse 15: *“The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry”* (Psalm 34:15). Now, if God’s that way, and He says we are to love others as He loves us, then our eyes need to be upon other people. Learn to look people in the eye. Learn to see them as a person. Learn to listen to them—and truly listen to them. Do you know what the Psalmist said in Psalm 116 and verse 1: *“I love the LORD, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications”* (Psalm 116:1). When we listen to other people, when we put eye contact with other people, we’re saying to those people, “You’re important to me. I acknowledge your presence and your importance.” People want to be accepted, and people want to be acknowledged.

C. **Appreciation**

Now, here’s a third thing, if you were to have a friend: people want to be appreciated. Now, all of these may sound alike, but they are all slightly different. They’re all very close because they’re all under the same heading of “doing unto others as you would have others do unto you.” But, people want to be appreciated. Dr. William James said, “The deepest principle in human nature is the craving to be appreciated.” I want to be appreciated. I got an e-mail letter from my missionary son yesterday. It brought tears to my eyes—literally brought tears to my eyes—because my missionary son said, “Dad, I’m just so grateful for the heritage that I have. Thank you, Dad.” Man, I could live six months on that. Really, I’m serious. I mean, it didn’t take him but a few minutes to write that little message, but that meant so much to me. If you tell me that you appreciate something that I do, I’d be lying if I told you that... Oh, well... I might act like *mmm*, but I’m listening; tell me more. I want to hear, and so do you.

Folks, you’re lying if you say you don’t want to be appreciated. Mark Twain said he could live three weeks on a compliment. Almost always, when Paul, when he’s writing his letters, his epistles, you’re going to find out before he really, if there’s a problem in the church that he needs to deal with, first of all, he gives words of appreciation. Read the letters to the seven churches in the Book of the Revelation and see how the Lord, even when these churches needed to be rebuked over something, first of all, the Lord gave them a word of appreciation. Learn to appreciate people because the Lord appreciates people.

Did you know that the Lord says you can’t even give a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple and that escapes the Lord’s notice (Matthew 10:42)? The Lord thanks us. Can you imagine Him thanking us for giving someone a cup of cold water? These girls that sang this beautiful song—this duet—when you see them in the hallway, you ought to say, “Thank you.” These wonderful young people here in this choir—thank them for being here. Thank God they’re not out on the street corners selling drugs, or running

around, or drinking beer, or fighting, or lying. They're here in God's house singing God's Word. Tell them that you love them; tell them that you appreciate them. Tell your husband you appreciate him; tell your wife that you appreciate her. Tell your children that they are appreciated. We all need it. God gives it; we should give it.

D. **Affirmation**

Now, here's the next thing: people need to be affirmed. You say, "What's the difference between appreciation and affirmation?" You give appreciation for what people do; you give affirmation for who people are. We live in a very negative world. Many people—many people—have a poor self-image.

Last week I talked to a pastor of a very large church. And, that pastor, if you were to look at him, you would say, "There is a self-assured man. He has education. He has vocabulary. He has stature. He has experience." But, he confessed to me, "I have a terrible self-image." He said, "The reason that I have a terrible self-image is my father never, never affirmed me." He said, "My father would tell other people that he thought I was good, but," he said, "I just lived for the fact for my daddy to affirm me." This is a man that everybody thinks is an assured man, a man who doesn't need any affirmation. But, we all need to be affirmed. And, the Lord Jesus, again, affirmed His disciples over and over again.

Did you know that your children need to be affirmed so much? So many of the children in our homes don't have affirmation. That's one reason there are so many teenage suicides. Do you know what enters into the mind of a teenager sometime? And, this is a tragic thing when it happens. They say, "Well, if I commit suicide, at least the next day on the campus they'll weep and wail over me because I'm gone. Maybe if I die, somebody will appreciate me and think, 'Well, maybe, you know, I really was important after all,'" and it drives some to suicide. That's so foolish. And so, suicide never solves a problem—never. It only makes any matter worse for the living and the dead. But, ours is a world of putdowns, and we're living in a world of putdowns.

It doesn't mean that you approve of everything that a person does when you affirm them. The Bible is full of affirmations, and yet the Bible acknowledges the fact that we're sinners and that we fail. Again, I need to be affirmed. Many times I go off on a trip, and I open my suitcase. And, I'll take out a pair of socks, and on that pair of socks is a note that Joyce has written to me, pinned to those socks. And, I won't tell you what it says, but it's good—it's good. It's fun to unpack a suitcase and get a little note like that—a note of affirmation. It was a blessing to me. This morning, after I preached, when my wife came into the office and affirmed me for the message that I preached, that means so much to me. Proverbs 11 and verse 9: "*An hypocrite with his mouth destroyeth his neighbour: but through knowledge shall the just be delivered*" (Proverbs 11:9). *The*

Living Bible paraphrases it this way: “Evil words destroy. Godly skill rebuilds” (Proverbs 11:9). People need to be affirmed.

E. **Assurance**

Now, here’s the fifth and final thing that they need, if you would make friends, and give, and to love people as Jesus loved His disciples: they want to be assured. Now, all of these may sound alike, but each one of them has a different nuance. They want to be assured that you understand; they want empathy. Jesus wept at the grave of Lazarus. The Apostle Paul said in Romans 12, verse 15: “*Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep*” (Romans 12:15). Find a way to let people know that you’re sensitive to what they’re up against, what they feel, what they’re going through. Assure them that you’re there, and that to your limited ability, you understand—or you’re trying to understand.

Now, what are these five things? People need to be accepted. They need to be acknowledged. They need to be appreciated. They need to be affirmed. They need to be assured. What are they? People need to be accepted. They need to be acknowledged. They need to be appreciated. They need to be affirmed. They need to be assured.

Now, as I told you this morning, friendship with Jesus is costly, and friendship with others is costly. How do you maintain a friendship? It’s not easy. Remember John 15, verse 13: “*Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends*” (John 15:13). Remember Proverbs 17, verse 17: “*A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity*” (Proverbs 17:17). You don’t just find time for a friend on your calendar; you make time. You pay the price: those phone calls, that visit, that gift, that loaf of fresh-baked bread, that basket of muffins, that deed of kindness, little or big. Do it. It’s the best investment that you can make.

Now, let me just talk to us as a church and tell you that we have taken here, at Bellevue Baptist Church, for the theme of our church for the foreseeable future, “Bellevue is a Family of Friends.” And, it’s very important for you, as an individual, to have friends and to be a friend. But, let me tell you, as your pastor now, in the few little days, moments that I have left—you thought I said, “days,” didn’t you?—in the few little moments that I have left, how we, as a church, can do a much better job of being a friendly church. By the way, when I went upstairs just a few moments ago and talked to our new members... I almost always ask the new members, “Tell me how you started coming to Bellevue?” And, almost invariably, they’ll say, “Well, we didn’t want to go to a big church because we wanted to come to a small church. But, we came and we got hooked, we didn’t want to leave.” But, you know, the image they had of a big church—not friendly. That’s what people think of when they think of a big church. They think

that's not friendly. Well, very frankly, that's not very smart thinking. If a big church is not friendly, how did it get big? You think about it: people come to a church when their needs are being met. That's what makes it a big church. And, one of the things that meets needs is that spirit of friendliness.

I was in Atlanta the day before yesterday, and a man came up to me. He looked me straight in the eye. He said, "I came to your church." He was a grown man, an intelligent man. He looked me straight in the eye. He said, "I came to your church." He said, "It is the most friendly church I have been to in my life." Boy, that made me feel good. He said, "From the time I walked on the parking lot, coming in, everywhere I went," he said, "I was welcomed, I was greeted, I was smiled at, I was affirmed." I said, "Thank You, Lord." And, I would that everybody, whoever comes to this church, could say the same thing.

Now, we must never become a program-centered church. We have wonderful programs at Bellevue Baptist Church, but we must be relationally centered. We, if we want Bellevue to grow—and we do want it to grow—we've got to keep and maintain the climate for growth. *Growing churches love, and loving churches grow—growing churches love, and loving churches grow*. Now, they took a survey to find out why people go to various churches. One of my favorite questions is to ask people, "Why do you come to Bellevue Baptist Church?" Do you know what I found out tonight? I met six people tonight who came to Bellevue Church. Do you know how they were reached? Through the MOMS program—the MOMS program—here at Bellevue Baptist Church—women who came here, and met some friends, and had some needs met. And, they said, "We were so blessed in the MOMS program that we got our husbands to coming to Bellevue Baptist Church, and that's the way we came." It wasn't the music. And, I hate to tell you, it wasn't the preaching. It was the MOMS program. It was that friendship. It was that relational thing that brought these people to this church.

They did a survey, and the survey was this—that friendliness was the key factor in people choosing a church. When they were asked, "Why do you choose a particular church?" nearly 50% of them said, "Friendliness." Only 15% said, "The program." Twelve percent said, "The location." By the way, we have a wonderful location, but location is not the reason that people come to Bellevue. People used to drive all the way downtown to come to Bellevue, pass churches to go all the way down there. We didn't leave downtown because we couldn't grow down there. We left because we grew too much down there. We outgrew our skin. And, let me tell you that friendliness is a far bigger factor in growing a church than location.

Now, you think about it—think about your own friends that you have. Do you put a circle on a map, and you just say, "Now, we're not going to have any friends outside this five-mile radius"? I mean, an automobile has made the thing of location almost

superfluous. You can be anywhere in a short time within reason. It's not location. Only 12% said that the belief of the church was the thing that attracted them. That ought to be higher. I'm just giving you facts. People are not attracted to church even because of the doctrines of the church—they should be. And, only 7% said denomination was the factor. The chief factor was friendliness.

Now folks, I want you to help me. You're the Sunday night crowd. Now, just forget that anyone else... Or, just don't tell any body else. It's just us right now. Okay, I want you to help me, to kind of warm up the Sunday morning crowd. I need some more "amens." I need some more smiling faces. Did you know that your face is seen in the Middle East every Sunday? And, did you know that Muslims want to know, "Are Christians happy people?" Your face is seen in the Middle East. Did you know that your face is seen in foreign countries? Those of you in the choir, did you know when they're listening to me preach, they're also looking at your mug? Did you know that? And, you men on the platform—they're watching. Listen, folks, it's so important that we create that ambiance of love, and fellowship, and welcome.

Now, I realize that sometimes we don't know how bad we look. When I'm not preaching, sometime, I'm sitting over there if we have a guest preacher. And, almost invariably afterward, people come up to me and say, "You don't feel good today, do you, Pastor?" I feel just fine. But, when I'm preaching, I'm animated. When I sit there, it looks like a picture on a bottle of iodine. And, I'm fine. I feel good and everything, but I need to tell myself that other people don't know that. Now folks, what I'm talking about now is just kind of psychology, but we need to understand this.

You know, a wife will beg her husband maybe to come to church, and maybe to get her off his back he promises to come. And, he comes—he comes and sits down there, and folds his arms, and looks out under his brow at me as if to say, "Boy, I can hardly wait to get out of here." He gets the program out and starts checking things off, hoping it'll be finished. Listen, you let a man come to a service like this, and there's no joy in the service, and you let the choir sing something in Latin he can't understand—let the preacher get up and give some soliloquy, or book report, or something; the song service sounds like a couple of calves dying in a hailstorm; people sit out there, and they never grunt, never say "amen," never smile, never laugh—he can hardly wait to get out of there. But choir, let me tell you something: you ought to show the love of Jesus. It ought to be written on your face from the time you get in there 'till the time you get out. There ought to be a smile. You ought to look in the mirror and practice smiling. There's ought to be victory upon your face. You let the choir come out and sing, like you did this morning, the call to worship with Jesus all over your face. Let the man of God stand up with authority, and yet love, and preach—open the Book of God and preach the Word of God and the Spirit of God to the people of God. And, let the people of God say "amen,"

and laugh when he tells something funny, and weep when something's sad, and fellowship when it's time to fellowship. And, when there's time to shake hands, let them go around and embrace, and touch, and love. That unsaved man's going say, "These folks believe that stuff." Before long, he'll be believing it, too.

Conclusion

Now folks, I'm telling you, there's more of a message that goes out of this place than what's preached in this pulpit, and I'm counting on you next Sunday morning for folks just kind of looking around and say, "Hey, what happened here? God must be here today." Well, He's here all the time, but what we need to do is just create a climate of friendliness. Can you imagine how intimidating it is to an unsaved person, maybe, to come down here? He doesn't even know what's going on. Now, we come in here. We know what's going to go on, but the unsaved—hey, they don't know. They...

Suppose you had some Buddhist friends, and they moved next door—Buddhist neighbors—and they invited you to the Buddhist temple. You think about it. They say, "Would you come to temple? Would you come to the Buddhist temple? Would you come?" "Well, we're busy, yeah." Finally, they get you penned up in the corner where you have to come, and they say, "We'll come by and pick you up." You say, "No, we'll take our car." Why? 'Cause you want to be able to leave when you can leave. You don't know what's going to go on in there. You're intimidated by the whole thing. Folks, there are people that feel that way about Baptists, really. I mean, they don't know who we are. They think we're going to handle snakes. They don't know what's going on here. It's up to you.

Friends

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: March 19, 1998

Main Scripture Text: Proverbs 17:17

“A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.”

PROVERBS 17:17

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Casual Friends That We Minister To
- II. The Friends That We Fellowship With
- III. Three Kinds of Young People
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 - a. Be Positive
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 - c. Be Transparent
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Conclusion

Introduction

Take your Bibles, and turn to Proverbs 17, verse 17. I want to talk to you tonight about friends, and especially talk to these young people tonight. How many teenagers do we have here tonight? All the teenagers, would you stand? Just stand. Now, watch this. Look at this. Look at that. Look at them. Look at them. Isn’t that wonderful? Praise God. That’s wonderful.

Now, teenagers are more affected by friends than almost anything else—more affected by friends, sometimes, than parents and pastor put together. Teenagers want friends. And, the deepest need of all of us, whether we’re young or old, is for enduring friendships. The deepest longing of the human heart is for a friend—somebody who loves us, somebody that we can share with, somebody that we can commune with who truly understands our deepest needs, our highest aspirations, and our worst fears. It’s wonderful to have a friend. A true friend is a great treasure. But, the wrong kind of friend

is the greatest danger that a teenager can possibly have—especially the younger teenagers, but all teenagers for that matter.

I. The Casual Friends That We Minister To

Now, Proverbs 17, verse 17: *“A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity”* (Proverbs 17:17). Now, basically, there are two categories of friends. There are what I want to call “casual friends that we minister to.” Now, these are not the kinds of friends that I’m talking about when I say a friend can either help you or hurt you tremendously. We all have casual friends. As a matter of fact, we teach our people to make casual friends. We teach “making friends forever,” and we scold you if you don’t have acquaintances in the world of the unsaved. So many times, we say we’re going to have the Singing Christmas Tree, or we’re going to have the Memphis Passion Play, or we’re going to have a revival meeting. Invite your unsaved friends. And, our people say, “Well, I’m a Christian. I don’t have any unsaved friends.” Well, don’t brag on that—don’t brag on that. You need to make acquaintances with the unsaved.

The Lord Jesus did. As a matter of fact, that’s one of the reasons they crucified the Lord Jesus. In Luke chapter 7 and verse 34, it says this: *“The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say”—*this is what they said of Him—*“Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!”* (Luke 7:34). They crucified Jesus for being a friend to sinners. And, very frankly, I’m so glad that He was and is, because without Him being a friend to sinners, this poor soul would have been eternally lost. And, so would you! And so, there are certain casual friends that we are to have.

You know, you don’t put the salt in one barrel and put the fish in another. We are the salt of the earth. And, too many—too many—churches are fatal fellowships, sacred societies, for snubbing sinners. And, when a person who’s not a Christian comes in here, no matter what their lifestyle, they need to feel the warmth and the love of the Lord Jesus Christ. And, we’re to be separate. But, remember this—that separation is not isolation. We’re separate from sin, but not the sinner. And so, we can adapt ourselves to people in order to bring them to Christ.

Now, I’m going to give you some scriptures, and I want you to listen to these scriptures, because I’m talking here about what I would call “casual friends.” Here’s what the Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 9, verses 20 and 23. Now, just jot this down. Don’t turn to it, because I’m going to give you more scripture than the law allows tonight, so you just—you just—jot them down. Here’s what Paul said. He’s...Paul is talking about his missionary strategy. He said, *“And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; To them that are without law”—*that is, to the Gentiles, those who don’t have the Old Testament—*“as without law, ([not] being...without law to*

God, but under the law [of] Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you" (1 Corinthians 9:20–23). Now, the Apostle Paul said, "I know how to accommodate myself to unsaved people. I know how to go out there and not make them angry. I know how to accommodate without compromising my convictions." This does not mean—and I want to say this very clearly, and I want to say especially to you teenagers—this does not mean that while you're making friends forever, and while you have casual friends, it does not mean that those casual friends are to become intimate friends. It does not mean that you are to have fellowship with them, that they are to become your companions.

II. The Friends That We Fellowship With

Now, let me give you some other scripture. I want to give you the other side of this now. Second Corinthians chapter 6, beginning in verse 14: "[And] be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship"—now, the word fellowship here means *koinonia*, "intimacy"—"what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?" (2 Corinthians 6:14). And then, he says in verse 17: "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you. And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters" (2 Corinthians 6:17). Now, here he's talking in a different category. He says, "You are not to have fellowship and communion with unsaved people. If you do, you're going to be headed for serious, serious trouble." You cannot have communion and fellowship with unsaved people. Casual friends—yes. Making friends for Jesus—yes. Accommodation without compromise—yes. Having people acquaintances that you can invite to church—yes. Showing love and friendship—yes. But, communion, fellowship, intimacy with these kinds of people—absolutely not! Learn that there are the casual friends that we witness to and then there are the intimate friends that we fellowship with. And parents, you'd better see who your children's intimate friends are, because they are going to be made or broken by their companions.

Proverbs 13, verse 20 says this: "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion"—listen to the word, now—"a companion of fools shall be destroyed" (Proverbs 13:20)—a companion. He's not talking, now, about making friends forever. He's not talking about casual acquaintance. He is talking about *koinonia*—fellowship, concord, companionship—and God says that if you have ungodly people for your companions, you're going to be destroyed.

One of the saddest stories in the Bible is found in 2 Samuel 13, and I want to read it

to you. I'm almost embarrassed to read this story, but I'm going to read it to you anyway. It's a story that took place in the Old Testament with the children of King David. Second Samuel 13, verse 1: *"And it came to pass after this, that Absalom the son of David had a fair sister, whose name was Tamar"*—now, Tamar was a good-looking girl. She was beautiful. When the Bible says that she was fair, you get the idea that she was lovely, gracious, beautiful, charming, vivacious—*"and Amnon the son of David loved her"*—now, this was his half-sister. And, when the Bible says that he loved her, it does not mean he loved her with godly love. As we're going to see, he was lusting after her—*"And Amnon was so vexed, that he fell sick for his sister Tamar"*—that is, he is eaten up with lust—*"for she was a virgin; and Amnon thought it hard for him to do anything to her"*—what he wanted to do was to violate her virginity, his own half-sister, but he didn't know how to do it. But, notice verse 3—*"But Amnon had a friend, whose name was Jonadab"*—now, don't forget that phrase—*"Amnon had a friend, whose name was Jonadab, the son of Shimeah David's brother: and Jonadab was a very subtil man"* (2 Samuel 13:1–3).

Now, what happened to Amnon now is terrible. This brother, this so-called friend, made a devilish suggestion. He said, "Amnon, if you would like to have an illicit relationship with your half-sister, let me tell you what to do. Pretend that you're sick, shut in your room. Ask your father, David, to have your sister, Tamar, to bring some food into your room for you. And, when the two of you are in there by yourselves, you can do what you want to do to her. Just play sick." And, this is what happened. And so, there he sacrificed her purity upon the altar of his lust and did a terrible, horrible thing to his half-sister.

And, in 2 Samuel chapter 13, verses 12 through 15, she's trying to keep him from doing this: *"And she answered him, Nay, my brother, do not force me; for no such thing ought to be done in Israel: do not thou this folly. And I, whither shall I cause my shame to go? and as for thee, thou shalt be as one of the fools in Israel. Now therefore, I pray thee, speak unto the king; for he will not withhold me from thee. Howbeit he would not hearken unto her voice: but, being stronger than she, forced her, and lay with her"* (2 Samuel 13:12–14). And then, the Bible says he *"hated her exceedingly"* (2 Samuel 13:15). After he got what he wanted, he did not want what he got. And, the Bible tells us that from there on that her life was ruined. This woman, beautiful, having her virginity taken from her, never got married, never had a husband, never had children. She is emotionally scarred all of her life.

Now, when Amnon's brother, Absalom, found out what Amnon had done to Tamar, Absalom murdered Amnon. Amnon is dead. And now, because Absalom has murdered Amnon, David is now trying to track Absalom down. And, Absalom gets his hair caught in an oak tree, and I don't want to go into all the details, but Absalom is run through

three times with spears. The whole tragic, dirty, sordid mess—do you want to know how it began? Amnon had a friend—Amnon had a friend!

I'm going to tell you something: you are going to be like your friends. You are already like them, or you will soon be like them. If you see a kid smoking dope, you see a teenager with needle marks up and down his arm, you see him with a sunken chest and hollow eyes, and you ask yourself, "How did you get to smoking dope? How did you get to snorting cocaine? How did you get to using crack? How did you do this?" he'll say, "Well, I had a friend"—"I had a friend." You see a teenager whose body is mangled in an automobile wreck and broken liquor bottles or beer cans are in that automobile, and he's been out riding around, endangering his life and endangering the lives of others—you ask that teenager, "Where did you begin to use alcohol? How did it happen?" "Well, I was over at a friend's house. Their parents were gone. I was at a friend's house. We opened the refrigerator, and there was some beer in the refrigerator. I had a friend. That's how I got started." You ask kids, "Where did you first begin to smoke cigarettes?" Hardly a one of them ever began smoking a cigarette by himself. He had a friend who said, "Try this. Smoke this." The Bible says, "*A companion of fools [will] be destroyed*" (Proverbs 13:20). Ask, "How do kids get hooked on pornography? How are they at somebody's house watching R-rated and X-rated videos? How are these kids on the Internet looking at pornography on the Internet? How do they get introduced to it?" Not by themselves. They have a friend—some friend that gets them on this thing.

I want to tell you parents, you can evaluate the spiritual condition of your children by their friends. It's an amazing thing. I've been pastor long enough to know that kids have a radar in them. If there are kids that don't want to serve God, and they come to church—I don't care whether it's Bellevue Baptist Church or any other kind of the church on the face of this earth—if they don't want to serve God, they will find some other kid just like them. They'll find themselves—like tonight, there may be two or three thousand people here, but those kids will find one another like a magnet. And, I'll tell you that godly kids will find one another. There's something about it. They just are attracted to one another; they are drawn to one another.

Now, you parents, I'm telling you, you can tell the spiritual state of your children by watching their friends. Some of you don't even know what their friends are like. Listen to their conversation. See how they're dressed. See if they've got safety pins hooked all over them. See if they've got some weird, outlandish hairdo. And, you don't have to be a rocket scientist to know there's something wrong with some kids by just listening to their conversation, watching the way they dress, and paying attention to the music they listen to. You know, you don't have to be all that brilliant. But, I'm telling you, you find the kids that your kids are hanging around with, and you will know something of the spiritual

condition of your kids.

Now parents, listen to me. I want to stop talking to the kids for a moment, and I want to talk to the parents for a moment.

III. Three Kinds of Young People

There are three kinds of young people. There are simple; there are scorners, and there are fools. You'll find these in Proverbs chapter 1, verses 20 through 22: the Bible says, *"Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets: She crieth in the chief place of the concourse, in the openings of the gates: in the city she"*—wisdom—*"uttereth her words, saying, How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?"* (Proverbs 1:20–22). There they are: simple ones, scorners, and fools. And, every teenager in the world is made up of one of those categories: either a simple, a scorners, or a fool. And, I'm telling you that if your children have a scorners or a fool for a friend, you are in for a terrible, horrible time.

A. The Simple

Now, what do we mean by the word *simple*? That does not mean, if your child is simple, that doesn't mean he's stupid. As a matter of fact, he may grow up to be a rocket scientist. He may grow up to be a surgeon. He may grow up to be a lawyer. He may grow up to be President. What do we mean by *simple*? The word just simply means "open." Now, our verse in verse 22 says, *"The simple one loves simplicity"* (Proverbs 1:22). That is, he loves what all teenagers love—and that is the easy way. He wants to go through life without any restraint; he wants to go through life without any discipline. He loves his simplicity, but he lacks understanding.

Proverbs 9, verses 1 through 4: *"Wisdom hath [built] her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars: She hath killed her beasts; she hath mingled her wine; she hath also furnished her table. She hath sent forth her maidens: she crieth upon the highest places of the city"*—now, listen. Wisdom says—*"Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: [and] as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him"* (Proverbs 9:1–4). Now, a simple child—a simple teenager—does not have understanding. This is true of all teenagers before they get understanding. I mean, they're born this way. They love simplicity. They don't have understanding. They just don't understand. And, when you say, "Honey, I don't trust you to do that," it doesn't mean that you don't trust their character. You don't trust their judgment; you don't trust their understanding.

Now, a simple person is easily led into sin and error. Proverbs 14, verse 15: *"The simple believeth every word"* (Proverbs 14:15). This is a reason that they are a piece of cake for Madison Avenue: *"the simple [believe] every word"* (Proverbs 14:15). He is just

open. His mind is like plastic. And, if he doesn't get a lock on the truth, if the simple doesn't believe God's Word, he is going to believe anything. It may be Madison Avenue. It may be false religion. It may be sinful friends. The simple is living in danger.

All of you who have teenagers, I'm telling you, every one of them, by nature, is simple. They love simplicity. They lack understanding. They are easily led into sin and error, and they are living in great danger. So many of you don't understand the danger that your teenager's in because they're simple. Proverbs 22 and verse 3: "*A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and [they're] punished*" (Proverbs 22:3). The simply just pass on; they don't understand. Simple-minded teenagers—and I'm not talking about stupid teenagers; I'm talking about simple teenagers—think that they are indestructible.

I clipped this from *USA Today*; it said this: "every 22 minutes, someone dies in a drinking, driving crash. Odds are 1 in 3 that the victim is 14 to 24. Most likely, beer is involved." Kids just don't think. You boys and girls, listen—if you get in a car, and you find out that the owner of that car or the driver of that car has been drinking, don't make a big fuss about it. Just say, "Would you pull over here a minute? I need to go in this drugstore," or, "I need to go in this gasoline station." Get out of that car; go into that gasoline station, and call your mom—call your dad—and say, "Would you please come get me." Just get out. And, don't let them give you any kind of talk about, "Well, I'm going to be careful." They don't have enough between their ears when they're drinking to be careful. If your mom and dad are not in, call Jamie Parker. If he's not in, call Jim Whitmire. If he's not in, call Bob Sorrell. If he's not in, call Bryson. And then, call one of these deacons, and call me. But, say, "*Somebody come and get me.*" "*The simple pass on, and [they] are punished*" (Proverbs 22:3). They don't understand; they think they're indestructible.

Two boys were trying to take a girl out. Her father came to the door and said, "You boys get off my property." He looked them up and down. He knew what they were like. He said—the daughter was 15—he said, "My daughter is not going out with you tonight, tomorrow night, or forever. She's not going out with you, so get off of my property." They were so angry. They got in the car, did a wheelie, a doughnut, threw gravel up against the man's house, sped down the road. Then they got angry again, and they came back—came and parked in front of that house, rolled down the window, and began to curse that man, and use vile obscenities and shout at him, then drove off again, came back again and began to curse and swear at him and call him every ungodly, lascivious thing that they could think of, vile and filthy names. They did that three times. Then, they were going downtown, and they saw a boy—one of their friends—just walking down the street and said, "Hey, get in the car with us." And, that young man just jumped in the car, and he said, "Where you going?" They said, "We'll show you where we're going."

And, they went back to that man's house again to vilify him and to curse him and to say words to him. But, he'd had enough. He was standing out there behind an evergreen with a loaded gun. And, as that car sped off one more time, he shot through the rear window. And, guess who was hit? That bullet went in his back and tore a gaping hole out of the heart of that boy, just simply walking down the street and got in that car with these people. And, I don't know what kind of epitaph they put on his gravestone, but here's what they might have said: "Here lies Jim, a good boy. He would be alive, but he had some friends." He just had some friends.

Now, these are simple. I'm telling you, it doesn't mean that your young people are not smart. It doesn't mean they don't have character. I am just telling you that they don't understand until they get wisdom from God. And kids, you need to understand now: I love you; I'm not putting you down. But, there is the simple.

B. **The Scorner**

And, every teenager starts out as a simple teenager, but he can become a scorner. God have mercy upon the scorner! What is a scorner like? Well, the Bible says in Proverbs 1, verse 22: "*How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and scorners delight in their scorning*" (Proverbs 1:22). Do you see the difference? The simple just love simplicity, but the scorner delights in his scorning. That is, he has got a warped character now. He's an evil person. He has the devil's initials carved on his heart. And, you can't tell him anything. You can't instruct him. You can instruct the simple, but you can't instruct the scorner. Proverbs 13, verse 1: "*A wise son heareth his father's instruction: but a scorner heareth not rebuke*" (Proverbs 13:1). You can always tell a scorner, but you can't tell him much. You talk to a scorner... Maybe there are some scorners here among the teens tonight. I hope not. If a scorner's here tonight, he's probably giving somebody an elbow right now, or she's writing little notes, laughing, trying to make light of what we're saying, because when you rebuke a scorner, you might as well be talking to a brick wall. He delights in his scorning. He refuses instructions.

And, he despises godly people. Listen to Proverbs 15, verse 12: "*A scorner loveth not one that reproveth him: neither will he go unto the wise*" (Proverbs 15:12). Correct a scorner—and even if he doesn't say anything, he'll put a look in his eyes that says, "I hate your guts!" That's the scorner. Rebuke him, and he will insult you to your face. Proverbs 9, verses 7 and 8: "*He that reproveth a scorner getteth to himself shame: and he that rebuketh a wicked man getteth [to] himself a blot. Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee: rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee*" (Proverbs 9:7–8). And parents, if your child is already a scorner, I pray God will have mercy on him. I hate to say this, but the chances are he's going to Hell. The Bible says in Proverbs 13, verse 1: "*A wise son*

heareth his father's instruction: but a scorner heareth not rebuke" (Proverbs 13:1). And, Proverbs 13, verse 13: *"Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed"* (Proverbs 13:13). He'll be destroyed. He's talking about everlasting destruction.

So, you have three kinds of teens. You have the simple; then you have the scorner. Do you know what a synonym for *scorner* is? "Smart aleck"—the smart aleck.

C. **The Fool**

But then, there's a third category of teen, and this is the fool. May God pity the mother, the father, of a fool! Listen to our verse again in Proverbs 1, verse 22: *"How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorners delight in...scorning"*—but now, watch—*"and fools hate knowledge?"* (Proverbs 1:22). They hate knowledge. They don't just merely delight in scorning; they literally hate knowledge. The scorner hates wisdom. Proverbs 1, verse 7: *"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction"* (Proverbs 1:7).

A fool will ridicule righteousness. Proverbs 14, verse 9: *"Fools make a mock [of] sin"* (Proverbs 14:9). I mean, the fool will laugh at ungodliness, immorality, homosexuality, fornication, drunkenness. He will make a mock of sin. He gets his jollies from sin. He rejoices in his sin. The Bible says, *"Folly is [a] joy to him"* (Proverbs 15:21) in Proverbs chapter 15, verse 21. His moral sense has been perverted. He wouldn't know the difference between right and wrong if it came walking down the street with a sign around its neck.

The Bible describes a fool in the Book of Isaiah, chapter 5, verse 20: *"Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!"* (Isaiah 5:20). The Bible says in Proverbs 26:11: *"As a dog returneth to his vomit, so a fool returneth to his folly."* May God have mercy if you have a fool for a child! A fool is destined for Hell. In the Bible, I can't find any hope for a fool. There may be, but Proverbs 17, verse 10 says, *"Reproof entereth more into a wise man than [a] hundred stripes [on] a fool"* (Proverbs 17:10). You're not going to beat it into him; you're not going to beat it out of him. His heart is hard. His conscience is seared. His mind is defiled. And, punishment will not change him. He has crossed God's deadline. His moral sensibilities have been destroyed. He is a fool!

And, I want to tell you parents something: don't you let your children hang around with scorners and fools. Don't you do it! I'm going to tell you, young people: don't you hang around with scorners and fools! Now parents, you need to help your children here, even when they may not want help.

1. Help Your Children Understand the Dangers That Are Involved

Help them, first of all, to understand the dangers that are involved. They don't understand. Let me give you a wonderful verse—Proverbs 19, verse 25: *"Smite a*

scorner, and the simple will beware” (Proverbs 19:25). What does that mean? Well, today, young people do not see the consequences of sin, because we have so dumbed down the consequences. Kids see somebody selling dope on a street corner. They see them arrested. And then, they see them back out on the street the next day. They watch politicians in high places that dissemble, and lie, and use deceit—they see their popularity soar. Now, what young people need to understand is that there are consequences to sin. “[*If you*] smite a scorner”—the Bible says—“*the simple will beware*” (Proverbs 19:25).

Now, I want to tell you dads what you need to do: dads, you need to take some Saturday nights and take your boy, or take your girl—take them down to the emergency room at Baptist, or Methodist, or St. Francis, and just wait out there and watch the people come in sliced up after having gone through a windshield. Just let your daughter see somebody with her pretty face so disfigured it will never, ever be the same. Take them to the morgue. If you’ve got a doctor friend or a hospital administrator, say, “I’d like to take my child in here to the morgue. I want him to see a body that had been broken because of sin.” Take your kids down to the rescue mission, or take them down to skid row.

I mean, they’re going to read all these ads here. I was watching the ballgame Saturday—and boy, it was a great game! And, because of Craig Parker’s sake, I was for Kentucky. It was a great game. I tell you, it made my blood boil when I saw those people come out with those beer ads right in the middle of that thing, and all these guys having such a wonderful time drinking that stuff. Take them and let them see some drunk in the gutter covered with flies in his own vomit. Take him down to the court, and let him listen to some of the court proceedings. You see, they don’t understand. They need to understand that sin has its repercussions. “[*If you*] smite a scorner, [*then*] the simple will beware” (Proverbs 19:25). Help him to understand the dangers involved.

2. Carefully Guard Your Children’s Company

Number two: Parents, carefully guard his company. Now, remember Proverbs 13, verse 20? The Bible says, “*A companion of fools [will] be destroyed*” (Proverbs 13:20). And, let me give you a great verse—Proverbs 22, verse 10: “*Cast out the scorner, and contention...[will] cease*” (Proverbs 22:10). If there’s a kid hanging around with your kid, and he’s a scorner, you say, “Son, there’s the sidewalk. Get on it! And, Mary or John, you’re not going with him.” And parents, don’t try to win some popularity contest. Choose your children’s friend. And, you girls, you get this old boy who wants to date you. Here’s an “Application for Permission to Date My Daughter.” Somebody handed me this. I love it. Here’s what the boy has to fill out. Note:

This application will be considered incomplete and will be rejected unless accompanied by a complete financial statement, job history, and current medical report

from your doctor.

Name _____

Date of birth _____

Height ___ Weight ___ IQ ___

Social security number _____

Driver's license _____

Boy Scout rank _____

Home address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Have you one male and one female parent? _____ If no, explain.

Number of years parents married _____

Do you own a van? _____

A truck with oversized tires? _____

Do you have an earring, nose ring, belly button ring, or any other body piercing?

Do you have a tattoo?

If you answered "yes" to anything on the last two lines, discontinue this application and leave quickly.

In 25 words or less, explain what "late" means to you.

In 25 words or less, explain what "Don't touch my daughter" means to you.

In 25 words or less, explain what "abstinence" means to you.

The church you attend _____

How often do you attend? _____

When would be the best time to interview your father, mother, and minister?

Answer by filling in the blank. Please answer freely. All answers are confidential.

If I were shot, the last place on my body I would want to be wounded is

_____.

If I were beaten, the last bone I would want broken is _____.

A woman's place is in the _____.

The one thing I hope this application does not ask me about is _____.

And then, what do you want to be *if* you grow up?

And then, there's a place for him to sign his name over this.

I promise that all information supplied above is true and correct to the best of my knowledge under penalty of American ant torture, red hot pokers, Chinese water torture, dismemberment, death.

And, there's a place for you to sign your name.

Well, it's not as far-fetched as it may sound. That boy wants to marry your girl—you'd ask him to come in and ask you. If he wants to date your daughter, have him come in. Look him up and down. You're going to have to guard their company. The Bible says, "*Cast out the scorner, and contention...[will] cease*" (Proverbs 22:10).

Listen, teach your children—and, young people, listen to your pastor: I love you—teach them the importance of their choices. Your life is the sum total of your choices. C.S. Lewis, one of the most brilliant men in past several generations, said this—and I quote: “every time you make a choice, you are turning the central part of you, the part that chooses, into something a little different than what it was before”—that is, every choice changes you—every one!—“And taking your life as a whole, with all of your innumerable choices, you are slowly turning this central thing into a heavenly creature or a hellish creature.” It’s your choices. Now kids, you’re free to choose, but you’re not free to choose the consequences of your choice. After you choose, then your choice chooses for you.

I want to say a word to you parents: I don’t know... I think your brain ought to be willed to the Smithsonian if you let your daughter, a little twelve-year-old, go out on a date with some old boy. I found these statistics. Here’s the percentage of kids that lose their purity as related to the age they began dating: the children who began dating at the age of twelve, ninety-one percent—ninety-one percent—of them lose their purity. If they begin dating at the age of thirteen, fifty-six percent of them lose their purity. If they begin dating at the age of fourteen, fifty-three percent at the age of fifteen, forty percent; at the age of sixteen, twenty percent. Now folks, wise up! These children are babies. They do not have what it takes to make these kinds of choices. Help your child select his friends. You may have to cast out the scorner. Peer pressure can be bad or good.

One of the best things to do is make your home the most fun place in town. Fill up the refrigerator. Get a table tennis table. Get some good music. And, let them sit on your couch and break it down. Let them drop stuff on your rug, but have them in your house so you can watch them and see what they’re like. They’re more precious than your furniture. They’re more precious than your groceries. Make your home the funniest place in town so that you can watch their friends.

3. Refuse to Honor Fools

And, I want to say something else to you parents: refuse to honor fools. Proverbs 26 and verse 1: “*As snow in summer, and as rain in harvest, so honour is not seemly for a fool*” (Proverbs 26:1). Now, what does that mean? Don’t get your entertainment from a fool. These kids in these rock concerts—I’m talking about the lascivious, ungodly, vile, fornicating, blasphemous...I don’t have enough words to describe them. And, you let your daughter, your child, go off there, your little teenie-bopper, and go and sit there and listen to that fool entertain you—actually pay money. You give your money. Why be entertained by a fool, those who have set themselves against God and set themselves against wisdom? “Well,” you say, “my kids won’t like me.” No, they may respect you. They’ll ultimately love you.

a. Be Positive

Let me tell you what you parents need to do. Number one: You have a positive attitude. Don't talk down to your kids. Words can hurt your children more than blows—more than a slap in the face, sometimes. Don't use words that belittle and put them down. Use words that build them up. Learn to listen to them—not the things that you want to tell them always, but the things that they want to tell you. Try to see life from their point of view. They are having it hard. And, I want to tell you something: the kids today are facing things that you and I never faced. I'm talking about some of the old coots like me. They're facing things that we did not have to face.

b. Be Gentle

And, be gentle with them. There's a verse concerning God in the Bible. It says, "[His] gentleness hath made me great" (2 Samuel 22:36; Psalm 18:35). I have noticed that fathers who have children that adore them are strong and wise, but gentle. They're not harsh. They don't shove. They don't push. They don't slap. They don't yell. They are very gentle.

Learn to touch your teenager. Learn to hug. Learn to show non-verbal expression. That old boy—when he gets to be fourteen years of age, mama, you go to hug him, and he'll shrink back. Just follow right after him. Go right after him and hug him up good. And, touch them. When you walk past them, lay your hand on them. And, be gentle with these kids.

c. Be Transparent

And, be transparent. Let them know your faults. They already know you're not perfect. Did you know that? They already know that. Do you know what your kids want out of you? Your kids don't necessarily want you to be perfect; they just don't want you to be a phony. My kids know that their dad is not perfect. Their mother may be, but they know I'm not. And, Joyce doesn't walk on water, but she only gets ankle deep. But, I'll tell you one thing: my kids know that their dad is not a phony. They know that I believe what I believe, and they know that I love them.

d. Be Available

And, be available to these kids. Anorexia is a terrible thing. Of thirty-nine girls who were recently surveyed that had anorexia, thirty-five percent of them had no close relationship with their father. A lack of an intimate relationship with a father is one of the biggest encouragement to producing promiscuity—greater than poverty. Young, white, fatherless families are sixty percent more likely to have premarital sexual intercourse. Promiscuity is much less likely when there is an intimate relationship to the father.

Now, young people, I want to tell you, you can have casual friends. Invite them to church. Invite them to the youth group. When they come in, be friendly to them. Sit down. Smile. Sing with them. Give them the songbook. Let them go out for a hamburger

after the service. You can do all of that. But, do not make these kids your companions. The Bible says, “*A companion of fools [will] be destroyed*” (Proverbs 13:20). You cannot have fellowship, intimacy, with these kinds of people. You need to understand what a true friend is. A true friend is somebody who is faithful. Proverbs 17, verse 17: “*A friend loveth at all times*” (Proverbs 17:17). A true friend is somebody that encourages you and makes you better. It’ll sharpen you. “[*As*] *iron sharpeneth iron, so a [man’s countenance] sharpeneth the countenance of his friend*” (Proverbs 27:17).

One of the marks as to whether or not your friend is a true friend, a godly friend, is are you a better person for having been with that friend, and is he or she a better person for having been with you? And, a true friend will challenge you. The Bible says in Proverbs chapter 27 and verse 6: “*Faithful are the wounds of a friend*” (Proverbs 27:6). A true friend will love you enough to say, “That is wrong, and I love you too much to let you get away with it.”

Conclusion

Now, I want to tell you, young people, I beg you—I beg you—choose your friends carefully. With all of my heart, I beg you. The greatest joy of your life, or the greatest disappointment of your life, is going to be your friends. And, thank God “*there is [one] friend that sticketh closer than a brother*” (Proverbs 18:24), and His name is Jesus. And, He’s the One that will help you to understand all these other friendships, and He’s the One that will guide you to the right friendships.

Teenagers, respect your parents. They’re not perfect, but they love you. And, I’m going to tell you mommas something—you girls something: your momma can tell more about that boy you’re dating by looking at him five minutes than you can after five months. Mamas just know those things. And, God’s just given them a built-in radar. Don’t you waste your life! Now, this doesn’t mean that we’re going to be a sacred society for snubbing sinners. I’ve already talked about that. We love these people that are lost. We become all things to all men. We reach out to them. We’re friendly to them. But, “*a companion of fools [will] be destroyed*” (Proverbs 13:20). And, God’s people said “amen.”

All right. Let’s bow our heads in prayer. Father, I pray that You’ll help our kids tonight that they might have true friends, and that there might be true friends, and that they might know the best friend, whose name is Jesus. In His wonderful name I pray. Amen.

Making Friends Forever

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: June 1, 1997

Main Scripture Text: Proverbs 17:17

“A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.”

PROVERBS 17:17

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Introduction

The title of the message this morning, “Making Friends Forever.” And what I want to do today is to underscore what we’ve talked about when we gave you that packet of materials to make friends forever for the Lord Jesus Christ. Turn to Proverbs chapter 17 and verse 17. The Bible says, “A friend loveth at all times and a brother is born for adversity.” A friend, a friend loveth at all times. We say at Bellevue Baptist Church, Bellevue is a family of friends and a friend to the family. One of the greatest and deepest needs of human hearts is for friendship. We have a longing for someone who knows us and loves us and accepts us, somebody with whom we can share, somebody who understands our deepest needs, our hurts, our fears, our wants, our victories. We need friends and to say that you don’t need a friend would be to deny your humanity.

I. The Marks of a Friendship

So I want to talk with you today about how to make friends—making friends forever. Now I want to show you how that can be one of the greatest ministries you can ever do in the name of Jesus and for the glory of Jesus Christ. Now think with me for a moment about the marks of friendship. Let me give you what I consider to be three marks of friendship—there are many more, but these stand out in my mind.

A. A Friend Is Somebody Who Shares

First of all, as I've already said, a friend is somebody who shares, a friend loveth at all times.

There was an English publication that ran a contest for a definition of friendship and there were some wonderful definitions. One of them was a friend is somebody who multiplies our joys and divides our grief. Isn't that beautiful? A friend multiplies our joys, a friend divides our grief. Another one. A friend is somebody who understands our silence. We don't have to be talking for a friend to really understand who we are. Sometimes just being there. But here's the one that won the prize in this English publication for a definition of a friend – a friend is someone who comes in when the whole world goes out. That is a friend.

And, folks, we need friends. We need friends who will strengthen us with their prayers. We need friends who will bless us with their love. We need friends who will encourage us with their hope. Now, a friend is on the scene when you need him. A friend is somebody who is wise enough to leave you alone when you want to be alone. A friend is there to help you to celebrate when there's something to celebrate, and a friend is a cause of celebration when there's nothing else to celebrate, just celebrating the presence of your friend. So, put it down, a friend is somebody who, who shares, who loveth at all times.

B. A Friend Is Somebody Who Sharpens

But secondly, a friend is somebody who sharpens. Proverbs 27 verse 17, Proverbs 27 and verse 17, listen to it: "Iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend." Do you know what a good friend will do? A good friend will put a keen edge on your life. A good friend will sharpen you, but a false friend will blunt and dull your life. Our English word friend, uh, relates to the word freedom, because really a friend is somebody who sets you free to be all that you can be. He puts the keen edge, the sharp edge on your life. A friend is somebody who encourages you, who knows how to speak the word that will draw you out and lead you on. Somebody has written these words, I think they're beautiful. One friend is talking to another friend and telling that friend why he loves that friend, and he said this, I love you, not for what you are, but for what I am when I am in your presence. I love you, not only for what you have made of

yourself, but what you are making of me. I love you for not closing your ears to the discord in me, but adding to the music in me by worshipful listening. You have done it without a touch, without a word, without a sign, you have done it just by being yourself. Perhaps this is what being a friend means most of all. Now folks, that's a wonderful, wonderful thought.

I have friends who make me a better person. I have friends who sharpen me. Of course my best friend is who, Jesus. He's a friend that sticketh closer than a brother and he's a friend that just sharpens me by his constant presence with me, but you know I have another friend, and thank God I'm married to her. You know, it's a wonderful thing when you can be married to a friend. Huh, it's another wonderful thing when the the person you're married to is a friend. But I can say beyond a shadow of any doubt, without any stammer, stutter or apology, that I'm a better person because of Joyce. And I have other friends, that when I'm in the presence of other people they sharpen me. Bobby Lewis over here, always encourages me. When I'm around Bobby, just after having been with Bobby, I feel lifted up. The same is true with these gentlemen over here, Scotty and Jim. They are friends. Do you have friends like that?

A friend sharpens you, he puts the keen edge on your life, and let me tell you another way that he sharpens you, not constantly encouraging you, but challenging you and confronting you when you've done wrong. Look at Proverbs chapter 27 and verse 6. The Bible says there "faithful are the wounds of a friend." Do you see that? "Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful." A friend will love you enough to confront you when you've done wrong. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful." You know what the kisses of an enemy are? That's flattery. Now we have a lot of people who love to flatter us, but flattery is a lot like perfume. You can sniff it, but don't swallow it. You know the difference between the flatterer and the hypocrite? They're, they're first cousins, but the hypocrite will say behind your back what he will not say to your face. The flatterer says to your face what he won't say behind your back. That's the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.

Faithful are the wounds of a friend. Thank God for those who love us enough to put their arms around our shoulders and tell us when there's something that needs to be corrected.

C. A Friend Is Somebody Who Sticks

You see, a friend shares. A friend sharpens. I'll tell you what else a real friend does. He sticks, he sticks. Remember our text, Proverbs chapter 17 verse 17? "A friend loveth at all times." If you want to know who your real friends are, make a mistake, make a mistake. But a real friend is a man who stays with you. Now the Bible says in Proverbs 18 verse 24, "There's a friend that sticketh closer than a brother." He sticks, he stays, and one of the great admonitions about friendship is found in Proverbs chapter 27 and

verse 10: "Thine own friend and thy father's friend forsake not." Don't forsake a friend – "Thine own friend and thy father's friend forsake not." Remember that definition of friendship? A friend is somebody who walks in when the whole world walks out. Not a fair-weather friend who jumps on board when the, the sun is shining and the wind is soft, but gets overboard or steps off when the rough time comes.

Charles Colson was called the hatchet man in Richard Nixon's cabinet. A brilliant lawyer. He was somehow wrapped up in the Watergate mess that caused Richard Nixon to lose his presidency and to resign in disgrace before impeachment. And, uh, people hated Richard Nixon, especially on the campuses, and people hated the Watergate debacle and they hated that coterie of friends that were there, uh, in that inner workings of the White House, but through all of that, Charles Colson came to know the Lord Jesus Christ as his personal Savior and Lord. He spent some time in prison. He came out of prison and wrote a book called Born Again. Because of that book, he began to lecture some, and he was speaking to a group of students in a western university. And, uh, they were very hostile, hostile toward Nixon and hostile to anybody who had a part in the Watergate thing, and after Charles Colson spoke they began to bombard him with questions and the questions got sharper and sharper and more hostile. And one of the students stood up and he read a criticism that Henry Kissinger had made of Richard Nixon, a very biting, hard, vitriolic, uh, criticisms of Richard Nixon and then that student said, Mr. Colson, I want to know, do you agree with what Mr. Kissinger has said? Colson in his book said he scanned the audience, he knew that every ear was listening to hear what he would say. It was one of those moments he thoughtfully replied, and here's what he said. We all know Mr. Nixon's negative qualities. He has been dissected in the press like no one in history. I can tell you his good points, but I don't believe that I can persuade you to accept them. But what it comes down to is, no, I don't go along with Mr. Henry Kissinger's comments. Mr. Nixon is my friend and I don't turn my back on my friends. When he said that, in this university, there was a moment, he said he thought the roof would fall in. There was a moment of silence. Nobody knew how they would respond, and then, do you know what happened to that hostile audience? They stood on their feet like one man and gave Charles Colson a thunderous applause, an ovation. Even hostile students like that could appreciate loyalty to a friend. Mr. Nixon is my friend and I will not turn my back on my friends.

A friend is somebody who shares. A friend is somebody who sharpens. A friend is somebody who sticks. And if you've got some friends, thank God for them. We all have a lot of acquaintances, but thank God for friends.

II. The Making of a Friendship

Now those are the marks of friendship. How do you make friends? Let's talk about the making of friends. You say, I want a friendship, I want some friends. Well let me tell you that friendships are built; they don't happen overnight. They're not like toadstools, they're more like oak trees. There are five secrets in making a friend. I'm going to give them to you in a moment, but all five of these secrets come out of one great principle, and that principle was given by the Lord Jesus Christ, not pop psychology, but deep, deep truth. It's found in Luke chapter 6 and verse 31: "As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise." Now that is the principle. Now there are five secrets that come out of that principle.

As a matter of fact, there was a man named Dale Carnegie who wrote a book, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. I don't know whether you agree with all of Dale Carnegie or not, certainly he was not writing by divine inspiration like the writers of the scriptures, but he said one thing in that book that was absolutely true in my estimation. Here it is – you can make more friends in two months by becoming interested in other people than you can in two years by trying to get other people interested in you. So many of us are so self-centered, are we not? Jesus said, "As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also likewise to them."

A. People Want to Be Accepted

What are these five secrets? Number one, people want to be accepted. Jesus called his disciples friends. Were they perfect? Huh, they were a motley crew, but Jesus opened his arms, his heart, his love, his mind. He accepted them. I've told you before, Jesus does not change us so he can love us, he loves us so he can change us. We are accepted by the grace of God and we ought to accept others by the grace of God. Acceptance, that's the first one of these five secrets.

B. People Want to Be Acknowledged

Number two, people want to be acknowledged. If you accept somebody, you've got to acknowledge them, you've got to know that they're there. The road to the heart is often through the ear. We need to pay attention to people. When people speak, when they're around us, give them your full attention, give them your eye contact. Don't be like that husband who said, I'm concerned about my wife – she always goes around the house talking to herself. And his friend said, She, does she know she's doing it? He said, No, she thinks I'm listening to her. I can say this that that husband wasn't much of a friend.

Do you know that active listening is a God-like quality? It's a God-like quality. psalm 34 verse 15: "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous and his ears are open unto their cry." Do you know what that means? God's eyes and God's ears are on you. God's eyes and God's ears are on you. If you want people to know you, love you, appreciate

you, put your eyes on them, open your ears to them and you'll be like God. The Psalmist said in Psalm 16 verse 1, "I love the Lord because he hath heard my voice and my supplication." When you, when you acknowledge a person, do you know what you're saying to that person? You are important to me. People need acceptance. They need to be acknowledged.

C. People Need to Be Appreciated

The third thing they need, they need to be appreciated. Find something in somebody that you can compliment and appreciate. Psychologist William James said the deepest principle in human nature is the craving to be appreciated. When I walked out of the house this morning, my wife said to me just as I was leaving, Sweetheart, I'm proud of you. I liked that, I liked it. People want to be appreciated. Mark Twain said that he can live three weeks on a compliment. You'll find in the Bible when the apostle Paul, he had a lot of problems he had to deal with with people in the Bible and he wrote those epistles, but almost every time before he was about to jump on them for something wrong that they'd done, he'd say one word of appreciation or some word of commendation. Appreciation. Learn to appreciate people.

D. People Want to Be Affirmed

People want to be accepted, they want to be acknowledged, they want to be appreciated. And they want to be affirmed. We live in a negative world. Do you know why people have difficulty doing these first three things? Because they themselves have such a negative self-image. We have a problem with teenage suicides. So many of these teenage suicides are with teenage kids who need to be affirmed. They need to be loved, they have a negative self-image, they are the victims of constant put-downs, they live in a fearful society, they feel they cannot cope, they feel they're not appreciated, therefore they're not affirmed. But many of them have the idea, well, I'm nobody on campus, my parents don't appreciate me, they never affirm me, but if I'm dead, maybe there'll be some tears shed for me at the high school. Maybe then, somehow, I will be the, the subject of somebody's sympathy and affirmation.

Now people want to be affirmed. The Bible says that "the hypocrite with his mouth destroyeth his neighbor, but through knowledge shall the just be delivered." That's been paraphrased. Evil words destroy, godly skill rebuilds. And people want to be assured. I mean by that they want empathy, they want understanding. The Bible says in the book of Romans chapter 12 verse 15, we're to rejoice with those that rejoice and weep with them that weep. I want to tell you something. When people are going through heartache and tears and problems, they're not primarily interested in your answers to their problems. They're not primarily interested in your solutions, your cure. I'll tell you what they will be interested in, if you'll sit down and cry with them a little bit. Just assure them

that you care, that you know. A gentle touch, a tender hand.

III. The Maintenance of a Friendship

Now we've talked to you about the marks of true friendship, we've talked to you about the making of true friends. Let me talk to you about the maintenance of a friendship. Because, you see, when you build a friendship, you've got to maintain it, it's gotta be maintained. Remember our text, "A friend loveth at all times and a brother is born for adversity." Adversity. Friendships are difficult to maintain. Don't have too many of them. Now, now, Proverbs 18 verse 24, one translation gives it this way: "He who would have friends must show himself friendly." But the New American Standard renders it this way. "A man of many friends will come to ruin." I thought, well how could they say that – he who must show himself frien – uh, who would have friends must show himself friendly. A man of many friends will come to ruin. Doesn't even sound like the same verse. When you think about it, it's just the same thing rendered a different way. I prefer, "He who would have friends must show himself friendly," but what it means is this – don't have more friends than you can show yourself friendly to. Don't get overextended with your friendships. You can have a lot of acquaintances, but genuine friends are costly. They cost time, they cost effort, there's investment. Uh, a friend is born, a brother is born for adversity, and you've got to maintain your friendship. Uh, it's costly, but it's wroth it.

C.S. Lewis, a brilliant thinker, said this: To love at all, to love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly broken. If you want to make sure of keeping your heart in tact, you must give your heart to no one. Wrap it carefully with hobbies or little luxuries. Avoid all entanglements. Lock it safe in a casket of your own selfishness. There it will not be broken, it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable. What's he saying? He's saying, Hey, it'll cost you.

Parents that have children that they love have had their hearts broken by those children. You've had your heart broken by your husband, by your wife. My friends, that will happen, but you've got to maintain that friendship. That's the reason old Ben Franklin said, Be slow in choosing a friend and slower in changing a friend. Friends can bring personal, social, emotional, and financial demands upon you, but you've got to maintain your friendship.

IV. The Ministry of a Friendship

Now here's the last thing I want to say, and it deals with those materials I've given to you this morning, uh, that we've given to you. We've talked to you about the marks of a friendship, we've talked about the making of a friendship, we've talked to you about the maintenance of a friendship. Now church, listen to your pastor, and I'm talking primarily to the members of Bellevue, but the rest can eavesdrop. I want to speak to you about

the ministry of a friendship, the ministry of a friendship.

Now let me tell you what the Lord Jesus Christ did with his friendship. The Lord Jesus ministered to us. Now look if you will in John chapter 15 and verse 13, "Greater love hath no man that this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you." Now the Lord Jesus Christ here is talking about his ministry, laying down his life for his friends. Now what we, what we're calling this program that we're introducing to you today and what I call this message is making friends, not for a lifetime, but making friends forever. Jesus was a friend of sinners. That's why they crucified him. There are lost people out there who need the love and the friendship of Jesus Christ and we are now his body and we're now to be reaching out to this community that is perishing for love and for friendship.

Now let me give you some practical ways, some practical ways that we can do this as a congregation.

A. **Set the Tone and the Atmosphere**

Number one, we as the leaders, and I'm talking about Sunday School teachers, I'm talking about deacons, I'm talking about staff, I'm talking about committee personnel, we need to set the tone and the atmosphere. We need ourselves to be approachable and real. We need to learn people, not as simply numbers, but as names. Memorize names.

B. **Learn How to Greet People**

Number two, we as a church, and I'm talking to all of us now, we need to learn how to greet people. We need to learn how to greet people, to shake hands. Do you know how to shake hands, I mean, not one of those cold, clammy kind of things, man, I hate those, and not one of those bone-crushers that will put you on your knees. Some little ladies have arthritis and so forth. Give a good warm handshake and a friendly touch. Give everybody who comes into this church when you meet them a look, a word, and a touch. A look, a smile upon your face. A word, Good morning! A touch, just a hand on the shoulder. I'm not talking about being overly, uh, aggressive in touching people, but people want to be met up close. We want to influence our church. Listen, it is far more important that we do it up close, uh, it's more important to influence people than it is to impress them. This place is impressive, just coming in here because it's so big.

C. **Put a Welcome Sign on Your Face**

Now next, listen, listen, I'm just talking about practical things, church. Put a welcome sign on your face, put it on your face. Learn to smile. Learn to laugh. Laugh is music, laughter is. Learn to laugh at yourself. You've got a lot to laugh about. We as a church need to watch our first impressions when people come in here. Statistics say that people make up their mind in the first twelve minutes whether they're going to feel at home or whether they're going to like a church or whether they're not. The first twelve

minutes when they come here. Sometimes it starts on the parking lot, but it certainly starts when they come in these doors. I don't want them to meet an usher who looks like an advanced agent for the undertaker. They need to be warmly welcomed in our church, and friend, you may be the first person they meet when they get on these grounds.

I want to ask you a question. Who is more important to an airline? The president of the airline, the pilot, or the person who writes the ticket and the steward in the airplane. Well obviously, the president and the pilot are more important than the person who writes the ticket or the steward, I'm not trying to put the ticket writer or the steward down. But where do you get your biggest impression about that airline? Most of you never see the pilot and you will never know or meet the president, is that right? Where do you get your impression of that airline? You walk up there and if that person who writes the ticket is horsy with you or pays no attention to you or the steward pays no attention to you, you say, I don't like this airline, is that not right?

Now folks I'm going to tell you that the people who meet you out there as you're coming into this church will get an impression of this church, it doesn't matter who the pastor is, it doesn't matter what goes on behind the scenes in, in the deacon's meetings. We're the people and first impressions are so very, very important. So therefore what we need to do is to be an easy place to be around. This place is big, it's intimidating to some people, did you know that? I have a lot of people that say, Hey, we made up our mind we were not going to go to Bellevue because it's so big. You ever heard anybody say that? Well you know what they say? They say, We came and we got hooked. What, why do you think that it gets big? Because people are having their needs met, because people are loving and there's a Bellevue spirit. It is the first impression that is so very, very important.

Now, you're at home here, but you think about the stranger who's coming for the first time. Many of them don't even understand Christ, they don't understand Baptists especially, they don't know who we are, what we do. They think we jump pews and handle snakes. They don't know what we do, they're scared to death. Suppose, suppose you went to a Buddhist temple for the first time, what would you be doing. You'd say, Oh, these folks are watching me, I'm going to be doing the wrong thing, I'm not gonna be swinging incense when I ought to or doing – you don't know what you're supposed to do. Now folks, don't take it for granted that everybody else is just like you, that they understand what you understand. Take the fear element out just by gentleness, winsomeness, love.

D. Don't Embarrass Guests

Don't embarrass guests. Don't do it in your Sunday School class. Do you know what the three biggest fears that people have, social fears? Number one is a gathering with

strangers. Number two, making a speech. Number three, answering a personal question in public. What do we do in the average Sunday School class. They get in with a bunch of strangers, we say, Well, stand up, tell us who you are, tell us about this or that. We think we're being friendly, we're scaring them to death. I'm telling you, today people don't want to say anything, they don't want to sing anything, they don't want to sign anything, they don't want to sacrifice anything. You say, Well they ought to, but they're lost! They don't know Jesus.

What we've got to do is to get an atmosphere here in this church where they can be welcomed, where they can feel at home. In the Sunday School class, learn to show hospitality. Have Sundays where you have big name tags and write the names big enough so people like me who wear glasses can read them without putting their glasses on. I, I've got good sight from that far on out, but right on here I can't, it happens at forty-two years of age, right there. Now look, look, folks. Put those name tags on there real big. You don't have to say Ajax Sunday School class in letters that big, they know they're in Ajax Sunday School class. Just, just put the name real big in the Sunday School class name real little on there so people can see it.

E. Serve Refreshments

Serve refreshments. You say, Well, well, should we serve – sure! Jesus, some of the greatest times he had with his people was when he was feeding them at a meal or serving refreshments. Jesus went to a party, he provided the refreshments at a party. There's something about that that's convivial, uh, with people, just, that, that relaxes. We're sharing together. That's what fellowship is.

What am I trying to say? I don't want to give you a whole course in this. What I'm saying is, Folks, listen, we have got to begin to love people to Jesus. There is a ministry of friendship. We've got to show the beauty, the love, the grace, the kindness of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. You say, Oh, but Pastor, our class is so friendly. You may think it is. You may think that you were friendly this morning when I said, Turn around and shake hands, you probably shook hands with four people you knew and didn't meet a stranger. Most of our so-called fellowships are sacred societies for snubbing sinners. We have little holy huddles and we say, Oh, don't we love one another, and over there standing in a circle and we never invite him in. Now not every visitor is a sinner and not every member's a saint. What I mean to say is that we need to include people. Jesus did.

Conclusion

Now folks, listen to me. This may be, you say, Well, Pastor, this is not all that inspiring. I'm not trying to be inspiring this morning, I just want to be helpful, I just want to be helpful. You say, Well, Pastor, I just don't have any friends. Well make some friends,

make some friends for Jesus. You say, Well I thought I was supposed to be separate from sinners. Well, Jesus did not condemn lost people. There's a difference in acceptance and approval. You can accept people without approving what they do.

The time has gone. Listen to me. Listen to me. Jesus, Jesus was crucified for being a friend of sinners. If you're here today without him, I want to tell you he loves you more than I can say. You say, Well, I, I'm grateful for his love, but do I have to admit that I'm a sinner to have his love? All have sinned. If Jesus were not a friend of sinners, I would be sunk. I would be sunk. Thank God that he loves me and if God has loved me, then I need to love you. If God has accepted me, then I, for Christ's sake, can accept you.

Folks, we need to be a family of friends as a church and I want you to get that little list of people that you're going to begin praying for and you're going to keep your regular friends, but you're going to begin to make some friends. Not merely for time, but for eternity.

Let's bow our heads together in prayer. Father God, I pray in the name of Jesus, uh, that you will lay this truth upon our hearts. And Lord, because of the best friend, the Lord Jesus, may we be his friend and a friend to those that he loves. And Lord teach us how to make friends forever. Now while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, will you just pray that God will lay some souls upon your heart. Would you pray anew and afresh that God will make you a soul winner, that God will make you a maker of friends? We're not talking about button-holing people, saying, Brother, are you ready to meet God? We're just talking about showing the love of Jesus, caring about people, making them feel at home when they're at God's house. Making friends and bringing them to special opportunities. Would you pray that God would do that in your heart and in your life? And if you've not yet met the Lord Jesus as your personal friend, would you like to pray right now and invite him into your heart? I invite you to pray this way – Dear God, if you're not certain that you're saved, pray this way. Dear God, I need to be saved. My sin deserves judgment, but I want mercy. Jesus, you died to save me, you promised to save me if I would trust you. I do trust you, Jesus. Would you pray that prayer, pray it in your heart. I do trust you, Jesus. Right now this moment I trust you to save me. I receive you by faith now as my personal Lord and Savior. Thank you for saving me. I receive it by faith. You're now my Lord, my Savior, my God, and my friend. And Lord Jesus, because you died for me, I will live for you and I will not be ashamed of you because you died for me. In your name I pray.

The Friendship Factor

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached:

Main Scripture Text: Proverbs 17:17

“A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.”

PROVERBS 17:17

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Introduction

Proverbs chapter 17 and verse 17. The title of our message: “The Friendship Factor.” Proverbs 17 says, “A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity”—“A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity” (Proverbs 17:17). I don’t know everything about you, but I know one of the basic needs and longings of your life is for a friend—a real friend, a true friend. I want to talk to you about friends: what they’re like, how to have a friend, how to be a friend. And then, I want to talk to you about the friend of all friends—what a friend we have in Jesus.

And you know, many people have given definitions of friends. Erma Bombeck said,

“A friend is somebody who doesn’t go on a diet when you are fat.” Somebody else said, “Well, a friend is someone who knows about you and loves you just the same.” Or, somebody else says, “A true friend will go on liking you no matter how successful either of you becomes.” On a serious note, “A friend is one who strengthens you with his prayers, blesses you with his love, and encourages you with his hope.” Or, somebody else said, “A friend is one for whom distance is no barrier to communication, or to concern, or to caring.” “A friend is someone who believes in you when you have ceased to believe in yourself.” “A friend is somebody who is on the scene when you need him and quietly leaves when you want to be left alone.” Somebody else said, “A friend is someone who is there when you call and sometimes even before you call.”

Now all of these are nice. And some of them are very good thoughts; some of them are frivolous. But what does the Bible say? What does the Bible say about a friend—a real friend, a true friend? What is the “friendship factor” that we find in the Word of God?

I. The Value of Friendship

You will be pleased, perhaps amazed, to see that the Bible places a great emphasis upon friends. And so first of all, I want you to think with me on what I’m going to call “the value of friendship.” Now look at our verse again—Proverbs 17, verse 17: “*A friend loveth at all times*” (Proverbs 17:17).

Now friend, if you have a friend—a real friend, a true friend—you indeed have something of great, great value. I do not have many friends. You say, “Wait a minute, Mr. Rogers, you ought to have a lot of friends.” I have a lot of acquaintances. I have many, many acquaintances—and I love my acquaintances; and I enjoy my acquaintances; and I thank God for my acquaintances; and I would not, for a moment, put down my acquaintances, thank God for them. I want you to understand that. But still, I don’t have many friends.

A friend is a rare thing. I used to hear people say, “Oh, if you can count your friends on one hand, you’re fortunate.” I thought, “My goodness, I have a lot of friends: the guys I play football with, the people I go to church with, the people I go to school with. Why, I’ve got hundreds of friends.” The older I get, hopefully, the wiser I get. And the more I understand the real issues of life and the more I understand what we’re really talking about when we’re talking about a friend, the more I realize what they used to mean when they’d say, “Anybody who can count his friends on one hand is very fortunate.”

Now we touch people on different levels. Our lives are sort of like an ocean vessel going through the sea of life, and there are some who just hop on board and hop off board. You know, these are just people that we need to be casual acquaintances. They touch our lives for a little while. We meet them; we enjoy them; we learn from them; we fellowship with them—and then, they’re gone. They just hop on board; and then, they

hop off board.

Then, there are other friends—I would call them “fair-weather friends.” They get on board, and they sail along with you. And they stay on board as long as the wind is calm and the sea is smooth. But when the storms come, then they abandon ship, and they will leave you. They’re what we call a “fair-weather friend.”

But there are other friends—real friends, true friends—when they get on board, I want to tell you, they stay on board in the calm; they’re there in the storm. They’re there when the wind is whipping the waves; they’re there when the lightening is flashing. They are there, and they will not leave until they see you safely into port. I’m talking about that kind of friend. And I don’t have many true, real, genuine friends, nor do you.

As a matter of fact, the Bible tells us that we’re not to have too many friends. As a matter of fact, the Bible warns against having too many friends. Did you know that? In Proverbs chapter 18 and verse 24, the *New American Standard* puts it this way: “A man of many friends will come to ruin” (Proverbs 18:24). Now it’s interesting—*King James* translates that, “He who would have friends must show himself friendly” (Proverbs 18:24) This is a very interesting translation, so I had to check it out several times. But literally, that is to be preferred as a direct rendering: “A man of many friends will come to ruin” (Proverbs 18:24).

Why is that? Well, friends are costly things to have. I mean, it takes effort; it takes time. A real friend is someone in whom you’re going to invest your energy, you’re going to invest your prayers, you’re going to invest your emotion. It’s going to be a demand upon your social life; it’s going to be a demand upon your financial life; it’s going to be a demand upon your emotional life. And you cannot afford the luxury of many friends—you could not maintain them. You only need one wife or one husband, and you need a few friends. “A person of many friends,” the Bible says, “will come to ruin” (Proverbs 18:24). But everybody needs a friend.

When I was in seminary, back in 19—none-of-your-business—when I was in seminary—they used to tell us, “You, as a pastor, ought not to have friends. On your church field, don’t have any friends. It will make people jealous or envious. And a pastor’s wife is not supposed to have friends.” I believe that was, and is still, bad advice. I believe to say to anybody who lives that that person should not have friends is to deny their basic humanity.

And I want to say, even the Lord Jesus Christ, when He was here in the flesh, had His friends. Now He loved everybody, but He had His friends. There were 12 disciples; and, out of those 12, there was that inner trinity of disciples—Peter, James, and John—who were intimate. And out of Peter, James, and John, there was one—John—who was the beloved disciple. Isn’t that right? And Jesus loved many people, but there was a home where Jesus would often resort—and it was the home of Mary, Martha, and

Lazarus. And He loved everybody, but these were His friends. And the Lord Jesus, in His humanity—these are His friends. And friend, oh, the value of a friend! Don't have many. Have some. Ben Franklin was a wise man. He said, "Be slow in making your friends—even slower in changing them." The value of friendship.

II. The Virtues of Friendship

Now I want us to move on just a little bit and talk not only about the value of friendship, but I want us to think about the virtues of friendship. Why are friends so valuable? Why do we talk about friends as being so wonderful and worthy an investment? By the way, *there are no bargain friendships—they are very costly things*. But it's worth it. Why? Well, when you see the virtues of friendship, you'll understand. Let me mention four virtues of real, genuine, biblical friendship.

A. True Friendship Is Selfless

Number one: True friendship is selfless—selfless. Now look at our Scripture: "*A friend loveth at all times*" (Proverbs 17:17). Now there are some people who will claim to be your friend, but they'll not love you at all times; they put a certain condition upon your friendship. They say, "I love you *if*," or, "I love you *when*," or, "I will love you *until*," or, "I love you *because*." All of these have conditions—that is, "There's something in me that, if you meet that condition, if you satisfy that need that I have in me, then I am your friend." But if a person claims to be your friend and says, "I love you *if*," "I love you *when*," "I love you *until*," "I love you *because*," they're not truly your friend. They are a fair-weather friend, because, if the *when*, the *until*, or the *because* is not just right, overboard they go. You see? They have a condition upon us. A real friend is a selfless friend who loves you not because of any need that he has in him, as such. But it is a selfless, unconditional love that says, "I love you, *period*." Real friendship is a selfless friendship.

B. True Friendship Is Steadfast

Now because it is selfless, it is steadfast. That's the second test: True friendship is steadfast. Look at the Scripture again. "*A friend loveth at all times*" (Proverbs 17:17) And again, the Bible says, as we're going to see a little later, "*There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother*" (Proverbs 18:24). A real friend sticks.

An English publication had a contest for the definition of a friend, and here are some that are good definitions that won honorable mention: One said, "A friend is somebody who multiplies your joys and divides your griefs." That's good; I like that. Somebody else said—and I really like this: "A friend is someone who understands your silence." A real friend is somebody who can just sit around; you don't even have to be carrying on palaver with a real friend. You can enjoy not saying anything with a real friend, and they understand your silence. But let me tell you the one that won the prize—and here it is:

“A real friend is someone who comes in when the whole world has gone out”—“a real friend is someone who comes in when the whole world has gone out.” That is, “A real friend loves at all times” (Proverbs 17:17). They’re steadfast.

Do you want to find out who your friends are? Do you? Make a mistake—not a little one; a big one—and see what happens. There are some people that you thought were your friends—they’ll leave you; they’ll be gone. Like rats leaving a sinking ship, they will leave you. They are not friends—not real friends.

Do you want to see whether you are a friend—a true friend—or not? I want you to look, if you will, in God’s Word, in Proverbs chapter 27 and verse 10—just turn to it with me for a moment: “*Thine own friend, and thy father’s friend, forsake not*” (Proverbs 27:10). Do you see that? “*Thine own friend, and thy father’s friend, forsake not*” (Proverbs 27:10). A friend will stick; a friend loves at all times. It doesn’t matter what you’ve done, that friend is going to be there.

C. True Friendship Is Sacrificial

Now not only is a friend selfless—he doesn’t put conditions upon it; and, because he’s selfless, he’s steadfast—conditions are not going to change and make him less a friend—but I want to say, thirdly, that a friend is sacrificial. It costs to be a friend. Proverbs 18, verse 24—look at it. The Bible says there, in Proverbs 18 and verse 24, that, “*A friend...sticketh closer than a brother*”—the last part of that verse (Proverbs 18:24). Now “*a brother is born for adversity*” (Proverbs 17:17). And when you have need, that friend is going to be there.

Now I’ve already told you, if there’s an emotional cost, there is a cost of time—that it demands social pressures and other pressures that are placed upon you, because you are a friend. And you cannot meet all of those demands any more than you can meet the needs of a dozen wives or a dozen husbands. And so you can have more friends than you can have mates. But I want to tell you, the Bible says, again, “A man of many friends will come to ruin,” because a friendship is a sacrificial thing (Proverbs 18:24). Sometimes it will cost you to stick; sometimes it would be easier to forsake your friend than to get yourself into trouble with your friend because he is your friend.

Do you know what the Indian word for *friend* is? I cannot pronounce it in the Indian, but I can tell you what it means. It’s a composite of several words: “one who carries my sorrows upon his back.” That’s a friend: “one who carries.” It reminds me of the Lord Jesus: “Surely He have borne our sorrows, surely He hath carried our griefs” (Isaiah 53:4). What a friend we have in the Lord Jesus Christ!

And so a real friend is someone who is a sacrificial person. That’s the reason why I said *there are no bargain friendships—it costs to be a real friend*. It cost the Lord Jesus to wear that title, “a friend of sinners.” Indeed, it cost Him. “*Greater love hath no man than this, that*

a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). It costs to be a friend. A friend is selfless—a true friend; a friend is steadfast; a friend—a true friend—is sacrificial.

D. True Friendship Is Sanctifying

I want to say something else about the virtues of friendship: A real friend is sanctifying—he sanctifies you with his friendship. There’s a sanctifying factor there. Look in Proverbs chapter 27 and verse 17. You’ll see what I’m talking about—Proverbs chapter 27 and verse 17: *“Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend”* (Proverbs 27:17). Do you see that? *“Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend”* (Proverbs 27:17).

1. A True Friend Will Have a Sharpening Influence on You

What does that mean? Well, you don’t sharpen an axe on a pound of butter. *“Iron sharpeneth iron”* (Proverbs 27:17). And what that Scripture means is this: that, if you have a real friend, that friend is going to have an uplifting—a sharpening—influence on your life. You’re going to be a better person. They’re going to wield a sanctifying power; that is, they’re going to make you more like what you ought to be. A true friend is going to put the keen edge on your life. You’re going to be sharper—you’re going to have that cutting edge there—because that friend has been in your life. A false friend will blunt your influence; a false friend will dull your usefulness; a false friend will wear you down. A true friend will sharpen you up.

Now one of the tests—one of the measurements—as to whether or not that person is a friend, is this test: “Am I a better person when I’m in their presence?” “As iron sharpens iron, so a man’s countenance sharpens the countenance of his friend” (Proverbs 27:17). You want to know who my best friend is? A woman—her name is Joyce. I’m married to her. My best friend is my wife. And I know, as sure as I know my name is Adrian Rogers and I’m standing in this pulpit today, my life is so much more because of my friend, whose name is Joyce.

And by the way, it’s good to have a friend that you’re married to—it’s a lot cheaper. You know, there are a lot of people who are in love—they’re married; they’re sweethearts—but they’re not friends. I mean, they love each other; they just don’t like each other. They get along about like a cobra and a mongoose.

Now we should be friends, because a friend will sharpen you; a friend will enhance you; a friend will put the sharp edge there. But a false friend dulls, and blows, and blunts. So a true friend has a sanctifying influence, and that’s the reason a true friend will never forsake you.

2. A True Friend Will Not Condone You When You Do Wrong

But now listen. A true friend will not condone you when you do wrong—a true friend will not condone you, not indulge you. But a true friend will confront you, that he might

change you and take the rough edges off. That's what it means: "As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend" (Proverbs 27:17).

Let me show you a passage of Scripture here, if you will look for just a moment here, in Proverbs chapter 27 and verse 6—look at it with me for a moment: "*Faithful are the wounds of a friend*"—isn't that a beautiful verse?—"Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful" (Proverbs 27:6). Judas kissed the Lord. How deceitful that was! He was a false friend. He pretended to be a friend, but all he did was flatter the Lord Jesus when he said, "*Hail, master*" (Matthew 26:49).

Flattery comes from false friends. True friends don't flatter you. They may compliment you, but they do not flatter you. Do you know flattery and hypocrisy are basically the same thing? Did you know that? Under the skin, they are the same thing. If you are a flatterer, I want you to listen. *Here's the difference between the flatterer and a hypocrite: A hypocrite will say behind your back what he will not say to your face; a flatterer will say to your face what he doesn't say behind your back.* And they're brothers under the skin, and they're all false friends. And "the kisses of an enemy are deceitful; the wounds of a friend are faithful" (Proverbs 27:6). That is, friends love us enough—they care enough—to confront.

In 1979, February, on a Saturday evening, I was sitting in my recliner chair at about 10:30, looking over my sermon notes, getting ready to go to bed. And as I started to get up, I felt a pain—mostly all over. I tried to locate it, figure out what it was. I didn't know what it was. I thought, "Well, maybe I'll just take a couple of Alka-Seltzer, and I'll be all right and go to bed, and I'll feel better in the morning." At 1:00 in the morning, I was still awake. I couldn't get any relief, so I thought, "Well, I better investigate." And I slumbered around the house trying to find a medical book to read, and I did a little research, you know. And I thought to myself, you know, "This is silly. I might be having a heart attack. I'll sit here and read while I die, and Joyce wouldn't like that."

You say, "Where was Joyce?" Well, she was away, and that's part of the problem: I'd done my own cooking. I...well actually, I had lunch at a restaurant. I had a child dog; and then, for dinner, I found a can of hot tamales. I took the lid off, put them in the microwave, and heated them up. Well, that triggered something down there; so, when I got to the hospital—I felt so silly walking in that hospital, you know; you just don't want to go; you don't want to give up; it's like you're admitting that you're weak—but I finally went down sheepishly to that hospital, walked in there, and I felt, you know, so weak, when I surrendered.

Here I am—I'm turning myself in. And they took me, and that doctor came in there. And I remember talking to that doctor—I said, "Now doctor, it's not my heart; I've got a good heart." I said, "It's not my appendix; it's on the wrong side." I said, "Doctor, it's not the flu; I don't have a fever." He said, "Would you just be quiet for a moment?" And he

did a few preliminary tests. He said, “Have you ever thought about your gall bladder?” And they made some pictures of me and found a rock collection down there.

And my good friend, Dr. Dave Dunavant, came in, and he said, “Preacher, we’re going to take that out.” Do you know what he did?—I’m talking about a good friend—do you know what he did to me? Folks, he put me on a table and he cut me. I mean, he sliced me—didn’t shed a tear, didn’t bother him a bit; I think he enjoyed it—just cut me. Now why would a friend do that to another friend? “The wounds of a friend are faithful” (Proverbs 27:6). He hurt me, that he might heal me. And why did he want to hurt me, that he might heal me? Because he loved me, because he was my friend.

I want to tell you something, friend: A real friend has a sanctifying influence on your life. He will make you a better person. And the test of your friendship is, “Am I a better person because of my friend?”

The friends that I have other than my wife—my real friends—I’m not with them two or three minutes before they’re giving me a new thought, a new blessing, a new idea. Whether we’re in an automobile, a restaurant, at a convention, in a motel room, instantly, my life is being built up by countenances—being sharpened. These people are adding to my life because they are a friend and they have something in the Word of God, or some blessing—something that will add to my life—because “iron sharpeneth iron, and a man’s countenance sharpens the countenance of his friend” (Proverbs 27:17). “Faithful are the wounds of a friend” (Proverbs 27:6). A friend will make you a better person.

These are beautiful words someone has written:

*I love you not for what you are,
But for what I am when I am with you.
I love you not only for what you have made of yourself,
But for what you are making of me.
I love you for not closing your ear to the discord in me,
But for adding to the music in me by worshipful listening.
You have done it without a touch, without a word, without a sign.
You have done it by just being yourself.*

—ROY CROFT

Perhaps this is what being a friend means, after all. And the key to that beautiful prose is in the first line: “I love you not for what you are, but for what I am when I am with you.” “As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend” (Proverbs 27:27). “The wounds of a friend are faithful” (Proverbs 27:6). And so what are the values of friendship? And why do we prize friendship? And why do we pay the price for friendship? And why do we take the risk for friendship? Because a friend, dear friend—a real friend—is something far, far beyond gold in value.

III. The Venture of Friendship

Now let me talk to you, thirdly and finally, not only about the value of friendship, and not only about the virtues of friendship, but let me talk to you about the venture of friendship—I mean, how to have a friend, how to be a friend—because I know what you’re thinking: You’re thinking, “I need a friend—that’s exactly what I need. I need, in my life, a friend.” Well, I want to tell you, and give you, some spiritual and practical ways to enter into this venture of friendship.

A. Meet the Best Friend

Number one: I want you to meet and know the best friend, whose name is Jesus. Now that’s the beginning point, and don’t think that’s of non-consequence. As a matter of fact, He is a friend that you need to meet. Do you remember all of these other things that I said about a friend? A selfless friend—oh, He first loved us. And do you remember what I said about a steadfast friend? He said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5). A sacrificial friend—“*Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down His life for His friend*” (John 15:13). A sanctifying friend—oh, Jesus can make me what He wants me to be. Jesus is that kind of a friend. And I want you to meet the Lord Jesus Christ.

Listen. Even His enemies called Him “a friend of sinners” (Matthew 11:19; Luke 7:34). You see, *He doesn’t love us because we’re lovely; He just loves us. We’re not valuable. He doesn’t love us because we’re valuable; we’re valuable because He loves us. I told you before—He does not change you in order to love you; He loves you in order to change you.* That’s a wonderful friend. That’s the kind of a friend that you have in the Lord Jesus. “*God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*”—“*God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners*”—“*while we were yet sinners*”—“*Christ died for us*” (Romans 5:8). What a friend we have in Jesus!

Now the secret for having human friends is to have Him for a friend. You see, let me show you why many of us don’t have more friends, or any friends: It is because we’re not the kind of a person that is easy to be a friend with. We have a basic character flaw that makes us, sometimes, almost obnoxious and hard to be around—and that’s the reason we don’t have friends.

Well, let me tell you what that character flaw is: It is insecurity. We have this basic insecurity; and, because we have this insecurity, that insecurity betrays itself and comes up in a life of selfishness. You see, when I’m insecure, I don’t feel that I have anything to give; and so, therefore, I become selfish—I become closed in. And I want to take from you and add to me. And even sometimes, when I’m trying to have a friend, what I’m trying to do is to latch on to somebody else, that I might leech them, that I might

suck from them strength to me. And so it's sort of a game relationship, and I'm trying to take from another person because I'm so insecure; I don't have anything to give; and I just feel unworthy. Now when I meet the Lord Jesus, who loved me when I was yet a sinner, who knows about me and yet He loves me, I've met the friend of sinners.

Now let me tell you what faith is:

1. Faith Is an Understanding of His Unconditional Acceptance of Me

Faith is an understanding of, number one, He accepts me not because of what I am or what I've done; He just loves me. I want you to listen to this now. He accepts me.

2. Faith Is My Acceptance of the Fact That He Accepts Me

Now *faith is my acceptance of the fact that He accepts me*—faith is my acceptance of His acceptance of me. He will accept you.

3. Faith Is My Acceptance of Myself

Now watch it—He accepts you; I accept that He accepts me; and now, I accept me. I mean, if He loves me and I accept His love, now I can love me. It's all right to love what Jesus loves. And if Jesus loves you, you can love you.

Have you ever heard anybody say, “Hey, don't love yourself”? That's bad. Oh friend, you're supposed to love yourself. Jesus said we're to love others as we love ourselves. Now if you don't love yourself, how are you going to love anybody else? You have to have a basic self-love that comes from the fact that you see that the Lord has accepted you—you accept that the Lord has accepted you; now, you accept you. And the Bible says you are “*accepted in the beloved*” —“*accepted in the beloved*” (Ephesians 1:6). I am now somebody in Christ. And that, ladies and gentleman, deals with my basic insecurities.

4. Faith Is My Acceptance of Others

Now watch what I'm saying—He accepts me; I accept the fact that He accepts me; now, I accept me; now, I am free to accept you. Now I don't have to be leeching onto you; now, I don't have to be manipulating you; now, I don't have to be using you; now, I don't have to be egocentric to build up that insecurity that's in me; now, I am free to love you as a real person.

5. Faith Is Your Acceptance of Me

And now you are free to love me, because that ugliness has been taken out of me and there is the basis of friendship. It's in the Lord Jesus. Number one: You know the Lord Jesus Christ to get your sins forgiven. Number two: You have something better—you have a friend in the Lord Jesus, who will never leave you, never forsake you.

Now remember when I said the Lord Jesus Christ was here in His humanity, that He just had a few friends? Do you remember that? Well, I wish I could have been one of

them. You can now. Let me give you a verse of Scripture—John 15, verse 15: Jesus said, *“Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you”* (John 15:15).

Now Jesus said this in that passage of Scripture where He is getting ready to go back to the Father and to send the Holy Spirit. Remember, Jesus said, “It is good for you that I go away”—“it is better for you, it is expedient for you”—“for if I don’t go away, the Holy Spirit will not come; but if I go, I’ll send Him unto you” (John 16:7). And do you know what the Holy Spirit is? He is a personal friend to every one of us in this room. You see, when Jesus was here in His humanity, He could not spend the night in everybody’s home. But you know, He spends the night in my home now. Did you know that? He could not be intimate with everybody; but now, He’s intimate with me.

When I say that you’re to love yourself, that doesn’t mean that you’re filled with ego and you stand in front of a mirror and sing, “How Great Thou Art.” I’m not talking about that. I am talking about the fact that you are, in the Lord Jesus Christ, somebody. I have become a royal blueblood—a child of the King. And He can be your friend, as though He had no other friends, through the Holy Spirit of God. Isn’t that wonderful? “Henceforth, I don’t call you servants any more; now I call you friends” (John 15:15). “And I’m sending the Holy Spirit to represent Me into your heart.” What a friend we have in Jesus!

And so my sins are forgiven when I receive Christ. I have that friendship. I’m never alone. The darkest night, the loneliest road—Christ is there. And then, I become a whole person. I can love me for the first time; and now, because I can love me, I can love you as I love me. And because I love you as I love me, you can love me, because that ugliness has been taken out of my life. And that is the basis, my friend, for having a friend, being a real friend—a true friend.

B. Take the Initiative

Now listen. The second thing—number one, meet the true friend, the friend of friends, the friend of sinners, Jesus—number two: Take the initiative. Now if you want a friend, be a friend. Galatians chapter 6, verse 7 says, *“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap”* (Galatians 6:7). That is, you’re going to get what you give. You want love? Give love. You want people to give to you? Give to them. *“Give, and it shall be given unto you”* (Luke 6:38). You see, people who want to have friends need to show themselves as friendly. You see, so many people are waiting for someone to come and be a friend to them.

*I went out to find a friend and could not find one there,
I went out to be a friend, and friends were everywhere.*

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

Now stop waiting for people to come to you. You take the initiative and go to them.

Dale Carnegie said this: “You can make more friends in two months by becoming interested in other people than you can in two years by trying to get other people interested in you.” Take the initiative.

C. Be Practical

And then, be practical. I mean, get in a place where you’re going to meet the right kinds of friends. You’re not going to meet the right kind of friends in the singles bar; you’re going to meet them in church—and not just primarily in the auditorium; you’re going to meet them in a Sunday School class.

Are you enrolled in Sunday School? You’re going to meet them in that social context of Christian people. You see, the way to find the right friend is to be the right person and be in the right place. And then, go ahead and take the risk—break the ice, find someone with a common interest, and begin to talk to that person and share with that person. And there is a risk—you might be unnoticed; you might be embarrassed; it might not work. You have to take that risk. You can do it now, because Jesus Christ is in you.

D. Be Yourself

And then, be yourself—be your best self, but be yourself. And be reasonable—don’t try to make it happen overnight. There are no real instant friendships. Don’t force it; don’t do an overkill. You’ll drive that new friend away. Just let it happen. God will give you friends.

Don’t pull your radishes up by the roots to see how they’re growing and then jam them back in the ground again.

Don’t make unreasonable demands. Don’t smother your new friend.

Conclusion

And you’re going to find out that, if you’ll do this—if you, on the one hand, will meet the Lord Jesus, let Him radically, dramatically change you; on the other hand, if you will take the initiative and begin to give; number three, if you’ll be practical; and, number four, if you will pray and say, “God, give me a friend,” He will. *“My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus”* (Philippians 4:19). And God answers prayers. If you need a friend, He’ll send you a friend.

Now I must close this message, but let me have every eye look right up here—look right at me. Do you know the Lord Jesus Christ? I say, do you know Him? I’m not asking, “Do you know about Him?” Is He a friend to you? Does God’s Spirit—look right here—does God’s Spirit bear witness with your spirit that you’re a child of God?

Don't Disintegrate, Communicate

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: May 6, 1984

Main Scripture Text: Proverbs 18:21–22

“Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.”

PROVERBS 18:21

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Conclusion

Introduction

Today I want to talk to you about the more important thing I know in the home (other than just loving the Lord), and that is this matter of communication. I heard of a man sitting next to another man on a bus, and the man noticed that his friend was wearing his wedding ring on his right hand and on the index finger. Now, most people wear their wedding ring, of course, on the hand, on this particular finger. The man said, "That's strange." He said, "Is that your wedding ring?" He said, "Yes." He said, "Why are you wearing it on the wrong finger?" "Well," he said, "I married the wrong woman." Now, it may be that you think that you married the wrong woman, but you may not have married the wrong woman. It may be that you never learned, really, how to communicate with your wife and vice versa. After many years of pastoring and after counseling many, many people, I am convinced—and I want you to listen to this—I am convinced that the number one problem in marriage—number one—is communication—number one is communication. Now, whether you're married or not, let me just say one of the number one problems in life is communication, because many times, many of us deliberately miscommunicate.

Now, listen to what the Bible says here—chapter 18, verse 21: "*Death and life are in the power of the tongue*"—now, that is a powerful statement, friend—"*Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof. Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD*" (Proverbs 18:21–22). And so, our Lord mentions a happy marriage and communication side by side: "*Death and life are in the power of the tongue*" (Proverbs 18:21).

A. Speaking

Listen, over and over again in the Bible—and especially the Book of Proverbs—the Bibles speak of the power of the tongue. Let's just do a little survey.

Look with me, if you will, for example, in Proverbs chapter 10 and verse 19: "*In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise*" (Proverbs 10:19). Now, that means plainly, folks, if you talk too much, you're going to get in trouble.

All right. Look, if you will, please, now, in chapter 15 and verse 1: "*A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger*" (Proverbs 15:1). So, keep your words soft; you might have to eat them.

Look in Proverbs chapter 17 and verse 27: *“He that hath knowledge spareth his words: and a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit”* (Proverbs 17:27). Now, notice he mentions understanding with sparse words. That is, we ought to listen more than we talk. God gave us two ears and only one mouth.

All right. Look, if you will, please, in chapter 21 and verse 23, and I want you to see that all of these are dealing with the mouth, with words, with communication: *“Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles”* (Proverbs 21:23). Now, do you want to live a life that is free of trouble? Then begin with your speech life, with this matter of communication.

Look, if you will, in Proverbs chapter 26 and verse 22: *“The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly”* (Proverbs 26:22)—or, “of the life.” Have you ever heard any body say, “Sticks and stones can break my bones, but words can never hurt me”? Don’t believe it—don’t believe it. The cruelest cut of all is often spoken words. The Bible says here, *“The words of a talebearer are as wounds”* (Proverbs 26:22).

Look, if you will, in Proverbs chapter 29 and verse 20: *“Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words? there is more hope of a fool than of him”* (Proverbs 29:20). That is, he’s going to have to move up on the scale a little bit to get to be a fool; he’s below a fool—a man who does not learn how to control his words. So, there’s the awesome power of communication—the awesome power of communication.

B. **Listening**

And, by the way, not only does the Book of Proverbs have something to say about speaking, but the Book of Proverbs has a lot to say about listening. Proverbs chapter 18 and verse 13: *“He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is [a] folly and [a] shame unto him”* (Proverbs 18:13). So, communication is both speaking rightly and listening rightly.

Now, not only does the Book of Proverbs speak on this subject, but almost all of the Bible writers speak on the subject of communication, and the right use of words, and the right use of the listening ear. You remember what James said: James said, *“The tongue is a fire, and a world of iniquity”* (James 3:6). He goes on to say, *“It defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell”*—that means the torched tongue can burn down a home. He goes onto say—*“For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind. But the tongue can no man tame”* (James 3:6–8). Watch the wild beast that lives in his lair right behind those ivory bars called teeth. Or, to put it another way, as you swim through the sea of matrimony, watch out for “jaws.” Now, what he’s saying is this—that the tongue is like a torch that can burn down a home. The tongue is

like a wild beast that can devour a marriage. He goes on to say that the tongue is *“an unruly evil, full of deadly poison”* (James 3:8). Wrong words can poison your home and your marriage.

Winston Churchill, who was a witty and an intelligent man, had an adversary who was a woman. He infuriated her one time in a debate. She came up to him in a huff, and she said, “If I were your wife, I would put arsenic in your tea.” He looked at her and said, “If you were my wife, I would gladly drink it.” The tongue can be very sharp, and it can, indeed, poison a marriage. It can, indeed, burn a home. It can, indeed, devour love like a wild beast. The awesome power of communication! *“Death and life”*—*“death and life”*—*“are in the power of the tongue”* (Proverbs 18:21).

C. **Sharing**

Now, why is communication so important? Well, the highest form of fulfillment is sharing with someone else. It’s not having things; it’s not doing things. It is sharing, whether that be with God or with someone else. Sharing—that’s the highest form of communication. Now, we basically share on five levels, and let me give them to you in an ascending scale.

1. Casual Sharing

The first level of communication is the very casual, flippant, or trivial type of communication, where we see somebody that we hardly know. We say, “Well, it’s hot today,” or, “What time is the bus here?”—“Do you have the time?” Or, we’re just talking about sports, or the weather, or whatever. It’s a very casual, trivial kind of conversation. We don’t really mean much by it: “How are you doing today?” “Hello,” whatever. Now, we all communicate on that level. That is the lowest, the easiest, but the least meaningful type of communication.

2. Sharing Factual Information

Now, the next form of communication—a step above that—is where we begin to share factual information, like a person who gives a lecture, or teaches something, or is dispensing information, wherever it may be. That is, we’re giving out facts. We’re very much like a newscaster when we’re doing this. We’re still dispassionate; we are just giving out facts. And, we, at this point, are not particularly threatened, unless we think we have our facts wrong.

3. Sharing Ideas and Philosophies

All right. Now, there’s a third level of communication. We move up. But, on this third level, we begin to give ideas and philosophies. We begin, then, to talk about things that are beyond the factual; they get into the metaphysical and the philosophical. And, at this point, we’re beginning to make ourselves vulnerable, because somebody might say, “I don’t agree with your idea,” or, “I think you’re wrong in that philosophy.” And so, it’s

harder—it's harder—to communicate on this idea, because we're afraid we're going to be ridiculed—we're going to be contradicted. And, we may just close up when we start on this level and very easily just fade away.

4. Sharing Emotions

Now, there's another level of communication that is above this, and that is where we begin to share emotions. We begin to talk about our dreams and our fears. We begin to talk about the fact that we love certain people and certain things. We want to know whether they love us, and we're talking about how we feel. And, this is very open, and we talk freely about these facts, and about these feelings, and about our dreams, and about our hearts, and about our emotions, and we just share on that level. Now, that's very hard to do, because we're afraid somebody's going to trample on our dreams; we're afraid somebody may ridicule our emotions, or we may love and they may not love back. So, that's so hard to do, and so many times, in order to protect ourselves, we don't communicate on that level.

5. Absolute, Total Openness

Is there a higher level than that? Yes, there is. The highest level of communication is where we have absolute, total openness. Now, I want to tell you something—and I'm going to make a confession: I don't believe I've ever reached that level. I want to, but I doubt very seriously if I have ever reached that level with another human being, even my wife, and I doubt that you have—total openness. I think there is a degree that all of us have a little façade up there. All of us are afraid to make ourselves completely, totally, 100% vulnerable, to share with somebody else completely and totally, and say, "This is me. The mask is off; the façade is gone. And, I'm willing to share trivial thoughts with you. I am willing to share facts with you. I am willing to share ideas with you. I am willing to share dreams, and emotions, and feelings with you. I am willing to share my faults, and my failures, and my fears with you. I am sharing openly, totally, with you." I think that's the goal toward which we, as husbands and wives, ought to be moving, because the Bible says we are to be one flesh—one flesh (Genesis 2:24). That ought to be the goal for every husband and every wife, and I think all of us are striving toward that goal, if we love marriage and love our mate. And, we say that is the ideal that God has for us. You say, "That's very hard to reach." Indeed, it is—indeed, it is, to reach that kind of a level.

I. The Power of Communication

Now, let me tell you how you can do that, and I'm talking now a little bit about the power of communication. Let me tell you how to do that. You need to get certain facts in your mind.

A. Realize Jesus Christ Has Accepted You

Fact number one is Jesus Christ has accepted you—Jesus Christ has accepted you. Jesus accepts you. Jesus accepts me. Now, just pull over and park with me for a moment, and think this through right now. When I say that Jesus Christ accepts me, that does not mean that Jesus Christ accepts my sin or that He approves my sin. But, dear friend, it means that He loves and receives me. “*God [hath commended] his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*” (Romans 5:8). “*He hath made us accepted in the beloved*” (Ephesians 1:6). Who is in the beloved? Who is the beloved? Jesus, and in Jesus, I am accepted.

Now, I want you to learn something: *Jesus Christ does not change you so He can love you; He loves you in order to change you.* Isn't that wonderful? He loves you in order to change you. He doesn't love you because you're valuable; you're valuable because He loves you. He just loves you! Now, the devil doesn't want you to understand that. He does not want you to understand that you are accepted by Jesus Christ. In spite of your weakness, your fears, your failures, your foibles, He accepts you. Okay?

B. Accept Jesus' Acceptance of You

Now, second thing: When I realize that He has accepted me, then I must accept His acceptance of me. Do you know what faith is—saving faith? It is my acceptance of God's acceptance of me. Now, the fact that He's accepted me doesn't do me any good until I accept the fact that He's accepted me. You see? I must accept the fact that He accepts me. I must receive Him. I must receive His love. I must believe that faith is my acceptance of His acceptance of me. I must believe that He means business. I must open my heart and say, “All right, Lord. You say that you received me. I receive that you receive me.” Okay?

C. Accept Yourself

Number three: Now, look—when I know that He accepts me, when I accept that He accepts me, then I can accept me. Hmm? All right. He accepts me; I accept that He accepts me; and now, I can accept me—I can accept me—not because I think I'm so great, but because of who He is and what He's doing in me. We need to learn to accept ourselves. Self-acceptance—that's not egomania. You're supposed to accept yourself. Is a man supposed to love himself? Absolutely—absolutely! I'm to love my neighbor as I love myself (Leviticus 19:18). My goodness, if I don't love myself, how can I love my neighbor? I must love me in order to love you. I must accept me.

Now, when I'm talking about loving me, I'm not talking about looking in the mirror and singing “How Great Thou Art.” I'm not talking about that. I mean, if I stand around constantly telling myself, “I love me—I love me,” I must be sick. I'm not talking about

that, but I am talking about a healthy self-acceptance of the fact that He's accepted me. I accept the fact that He accepts me; therefore, I accept myself. Now, are you watching this?

D. Accept Others

The fourth step: Because I accept me, I can accept you, because now I don't have anything else to prove. I'm no longer threatened. I don't have to go around trying to push myself up and put you down. I don't have to go around maneuvering you and manipulating you. I can accept you because I've accepted me. I don't have to project my frustrations on you and try to manipulate you. You see? And so, communication begins when I just see who Jesus Christ is, when I understand the grace of God: He has accepted me; I accept the fact that He accepts me; now I accept me, and now I accept you.

Now, this is something we need to do in the community, something we need to do in the Church. But oh, how we need to do it in the home—in the home! How we need to learn something about this art of communication! Now, there's power in communication. *“Death and life are in the power of the tongue”* (Proverbs 18:21). And, we need to learn how to communicate one with another.

II. The Problems in Communication

Well, now, let's move on a little bit to talk about the problems in communication. You ever have any problems in your house? Maybe we should just get your children up here and let them give a testimony, and we'll know. We do have problems. There are no perfect marriages. We're just imperfect people in an imperfect world, trying to learn to communicate and get along together.

Now, would you like to take a little test? Let's take a test, okay? Get out a piece of paper and a pen, and let's find out just how well you communicate. All right. Now, I want you to grade yourself and see how many of these things are true about you. Now, I'm going to give you, right now, twenty-one things. And, if more of ten of these are true about you, I'd say, as a highway patrolman would say, you're a in a heap of trouble. Okay? All right? This applies either to you or to your mate.

Number one: My mate often corrects my statements. Give yourself a “1” for that if that is true, or if you correct your mate's statements. Either way, that's a “1.” And, all of these will be the same.

Number two: My mate often contradicts what I say and tells me I'm wrong. Or, if you're the one who does the contradicting, give yourself another mark.

All right. Number three: My mate often challenges things I say—I often challenge things my mate says.

Number four: My mate often interrupts me. As one woman said, “Why do you keep talking while I’m interrupting?”

Number five: My mate talks more rapidly than I do and often finishes a sentence I have started.

Six: My mate tends to overreact and become angry, so I remain silent on some subjects.

Seven: My mate does not take time to understand what I’m saying, or I don’t take time to understand what my mate is saying—either one. Turn these around.

Eight: My mate often misquotes me.

Nine: My mate criticizes my friends, relatives, and/or coworkers.

Ten: My mate uses what I say against me.

Eleven: My mate tells others what I have said in private.

Twelve: My mate does not always take me seriously.

Thirteen: My mate pays little attention to me and doesn’t listen carefully.

Fourteen: My mate sometimes ridicules me or gets sarcastic when I speak.

Fifteen: My mate does not spend enough time talking with me.

Sixteen: My mate is often preoccupied with television.

Seventeen: My mate often has the radio on in the background.

Eighteen: My mate is often reading when I would like to talk.

Nineteen: My mate would rather listen to the stereo.

Twenty: My mate spends much time talking on the phone.

Twenty-one: My mate’s job requires a lot of talking; and when he/she comes home, he/she craves silence.

All right. Now, some of us have difficulty in speaking. Some of us have difficulty in listening. I want to remind you again that the Bible not only speaks of the power of the tongue, but the power of the ear: “*He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is [a] folly and [a] shame unto him*” (Proverbs 18:13)—Proverbs chapter 28 and verse 13. So, you’ve got to not only speak right—you have to listen right. One man said, “My wife—she just goes around talking to herself all the time—all the time, just talking to herself.” A fellow said, “Man, that’s terrible; does she know she’s doing it?” He said, “No, she thinks I’m listening to her.”

Now, to learn how to speak and to learn how to listen is a gift from God, and a great need—communication. And, I want to tell you something else, friend: you never grow out of your need to keep learning to communicate. Whether you’re grandparents or not, you’re going to have to admit you still need to work on this.

I know Joyce and I—we started out... You see, we’re different people than when we started out. I mean, we started out young. I married a beautiful, young little girl, almost. And now, she’s a lovely, mature lady. And she’s changed, and her ideas, and

philosophies, and experiences have changed. And, she married a handsome, young man—and I still am. And so, as you go through life, no matter what stage of your life, life is constantly changing and you have to constantly be adjusting in this area of communication. And, it is something I believe you will work at until the day you die. Learning to communicate in the home—nothing more important! Nothing will bring more genuine satisfaction. Remember, *“death and life are in the power of the tongue”* (Proverbs 18:21). There’s the awesome power—the awesome power—of communication.

Well, let me talk to you not only about the power of it, but let me just talk to you about some problems in communication. How do people often go about to solve their problems in the wrong way?

A. **Coercion**

Well, one way that so many people and so many married people are trying to settle these differences is by what I want to call *coercion*—to coerce the other person. Now, coercion can take many, many forms. There are all kinds of coercion.

B. **Brutality**

It may be brutality. A man may physically coerce his wife. He may abuse her with his fist or with brute force. I have no respect whatsoever for a man who physically, or mentally, or verbally would abuse his mate.

C. **Neurosis**

But, on the other hand, the wife may use coercion in just the opposite way. She may be the neurotic invalid, constantly sick. I’m not talking about the person who’s truly sick. I’m talking about the neurotic who uses that sickness, that whining, that pity party to get her own way. And, it is the direct opposite of the brute who tries to get his way with his strength. She tries to get her way with her supposed weakness.

D. **Forced Submission**

Or, there’s the man who—for example, the evangelical husband—who says the wife is supposed to submit, and he uses the Bible as a club to beat her over the head with: “Submit!” The Bible nowhere tells a man to force his wife to submit. The Bible tells the man to love his wife as Christ loved the Church (Ephesians 5:25). Jesus does not coerce me to submit to Him. All Jesus does is love me and keep on loving me, loving me, and loving me, and loving me. That’s the way He gets me; that’s the way He wins me, and that’s why I submit to Him—because He has loved me. You try to coerce your wife with a Bible verse—mister, you’re going to do the wrong thing. This Bible is a good sword, but it’s a poor club.

E. Finances

Now, there are ways that people coerce—sometimes by the finances. “And theirs was a model marriage but for one feminine flaw: he was quick on the deposit, but she was faster on the draw.” And, sometimes he’ll just say, “Well, I’m taking your checkbook away,” or, “I’m doing this or that.” And, he thinks the money is his. But listen, if she is a homemaker, she earns as much as you do by staying home and doing that. That’s her part; that’s her share. You’re *“heirs together of the grace of life”* (1 Peter 3:7).

F. Sex

Sometimes she’ll use sex as a club. In order to get her way, she’ll withhold love, and affection, and so forth. All of these are ways of coercing a person.

Now, let me tell you something, friend: when you set about to coerce a person—to force somebody to fit into your mold—you are a No. 1 egomaniac. What you are saying, in effect, is, “I can do more with your life than you can do with it. I have a right to force my opinion on you and to make you fit into my mold—my mold.” It is degrading. It is frustrating. It is humiliating, and it will not work.

G. Nagging

Nagging is one of the worst forms of coercion. The Bible says in Proverbs chapter 21, verse 19: *“It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and an angry woman”* (Proverbs 21:19). Proverbs 27, verse 15: *“A continual dropping in a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike”* (Proverbs 27:15). Drip, drip, drip—that’s what the Bible says. You know what the word *nag* means? It literally comes from a word which means “to gnaw,” like a dog gnawing a bone. Nagging is a form of coercion, and it will not get the job done—never has and it never will.

Now, that’s the way some people try to settle these things—by coercing the other person, by forcing their view on the other person, denuding that other person of their personhood, their selfhood, their self-respect. It’s not God’s way.

H. Desertion

Another way is just the opposite of that—talking about problems in communication now, not the power of it—but that’s just to flee. It’s what I call *desertion*—just getting out. And, you may say, “Well, I’m going to move into another bedroom,” or, “I’m going to move into another apartment,” or, “We’re going to get a divorce.” Or, you may desert by just being silent. You become the martyr. You begin to pout, to sulk, to give the cold shoulder and the silent treatment. That’s desertion. One man said, “The way to fight a woman is with your hat. Grab it and run.” Some people go to the bottle, some to the pill, some to the soap opera, some to the job—somehow, some way to get away, to turn their back on the problem, to flee from the problem.

Coercion is not the answer. Desertion is not the answer. There is a loving

confrontation that comes through godly communication, which is God's way.

III. The Procedure of Communication

We've talked about the power and the problems. Here's the procedure:

A. Try to Understand Your Partner

Number one: Try to understand your partner. What is really on her heart—on his heart? You see, many times we're fighting the wrong problem because we don't even know what the problem is. She may be grunting in one place and hurting in another. And, you need to say, "I need to understand her."

B. Understand Yourself

Not only try to understand her—but understand you. Is it really your wife you're angry with, or your boss, or that guy that stole your parking place or headed you off at the freeway, or whoever it is that gave you difficulty during the day? Honestly try to understand. And, by the way, the Holy Spirit will help you to understand. He will give you the knowledge, the wisdom, and he will help you understand your own heart. "Search me, and try my heart, O God, and see if there be some wicked way in me" (Psalm 139:23). Ask God to help you to have that understanding, number one, of your wife; number two, of yourself—or, number one, of your husband; number two, of yourself.

And, if you cannot get that good understanding, go to a counselor—a good Christian counselor that has the gift of wisdom. That does not mean he's smarter than you are. That does not humiliate you to go to a counselor. We all have blind spots; if we knew where they were, they wouldn't be blind spots. Go to a counselor who can take God's side in the thing and look in there penetratingly. You cannot get the problem settled until you understand what the problem is.

C. Learn to Talk

Number three—and oh, pay attention to this, dear friend; how important it is—number three: As you're trying to solve these problems, learn to talk. Keep on talking. Verbalize it. Express it. Don't clam up. Don't get quiet. Just keep on talking, but stay to the point. Don't bring up the past. Deal with the past and let the past be gone. Some of you are saving little trading stamps. You got a little book, and she does something—and boy, you put it in there, and you put another one in there, another one, and then you blow up and cash them all in. Just deal with those things one thing at a time, and talk it out. Continue to verbalize.

D. Learn to Attack the Problem Rather Than One Another

Number four—how important this is: Learn to attack the problem rather than one

another. Happy is the couple that can do this. You see, most of us are egomaniacs, and it's ego against ego. And, rather than trying to solve a problem, we're trying to win an argument. If we will attack the problem rather than one another, we can pretty well solve the problem. There are no problems too big to solve, just people too small to solve them. I'm talking about two Christian people that have God's help: they can solve a problem if they'll isolate the problem and the two of them work on the problem together.

E. Give Your Partner a Chance to Save Face

Next, give your partner a chance to save face. Never humiliate your partner in any decision. Now, when nations negotiate, they learn the art of compromise. And, there has to be something in it for both parties. Why fight a war where both are going to lose when you can make a compromise where both will win? I wish I had more time on that, but let's go on.

F. Don't Go to Bed Angry

"[Don't] let...the sun go down upon your wrath" (Ephesians 4:26). In plain English, do not go to bed angry with one another. Do not go to bed with that cold shoulder, back to back. The Bible says in Ephesians chapter 4, verse 26: *"Be...angry, and sin not: [and don't] let...the sun go down upon your wrath"* (Ephesians 4:26). Let me give it to you in The Living Bible: "If you are angry, don't sin by nourishing your grudge. Don't let the sun go down with you still angry. Get over it quickly, for when you are angry, you give a mighty foothold to the devil" (Ephesians 4:26–27). Now, that means, dear friend, that you might have to stay up for a week, but do not go to bed angry. That doesn't mean that you have all the problems solved. You might go to bed and say, "Honey, I still don't understand it. I still don't agree with you. I think you're wrong, but darling, I love you and I receive you. You are precious to me." We have that kiss. We have that love. We get on our knees and tell God about it, and we go to bed. The problem may not be solved, but we do not go to bed angry. We do not let the sun go down upon our wrath.

G. Hold the Concept of Unconditional Togetherness

Next, hold the concept of unconditional togetherness. Take your scissors and cut the word *divorce* out of your dictionary. If somebody mentions divorce, you say, "What does that word mean? I never heard that. What is that?" Just don't even mention it. It is not an option. You can argue with a lot more safety when you have this unconditional togetherness. When you get on this airplane called "marriage," you throw away the parachutes. You go down together, but nobody bails out. There is unconditional togetherness.

H. Do Not Fail to Bring Jesus Christ into It

Next—and finally: Do not fail to bring Jesus Christ into it. Now, I mention Him finally not

because He's least but because He's most. And, this is the climax of the whole thing. When you will get on your knees and when you will pray, the same Jesus Christ that performed the first miracle at that wedding of Cana of Galilee so long ago will perform a continuing miracle, as He makes two imperfect people one.

If this piano gets out of tune and this organ gets out of town, if I take a tuning fork and tune the organ to that tuning fork and tune the piano to that tuning fork, the organ and the piano have to be in tune with one another when they're in tune with that fork. And, when my life is in tune with Jesus and Joyce's life is in tune with Jesus Christ, then her life has to be in tune with mine and mine with hers. For the Jesus in me will not fight the Jesus in her.

Conclusion

Do you remember what I said—that Jesus Christ has accepted us? And then, you remember what I said that faith was? I said that faith is our acceptance of His acceptance of us. Do you remember that? Now, have you ever accepted the fact that He wants to accept you? Have you ever said, “Come into my heart, Lord Jesus”? Remember that His acceptance of you will do you no good whatsoever until you accept that He accepts you—that is, until you receive Him. Have you done it? I mean, if you were to die right now, are you 100% certain that you would go to Heaven? Do you know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior? Are you saved? Whether you're married, single, divorced, widowed, it makes no difference—you need Jesus. Jesus Christ can give you the power to receive Him, the power to receive yourself and then receive others. Do you know what that means? Peace with God, peace with self, peace with others through Christ. Huh? Isn't that wonderful?

And, you can do it today. “Pastor, would Jesus Christ save me today?” Yes, He will. “You mean I can be saved like all of the other Christians in the world who are truly saved?” Yes—yes—because, you see, you're not saved by joining a church. You're not saved by getting baptized. You're not saved by giving your money. You're not saved by living a good life. You are saved when you receive Christ. The Bible says, “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved*” (Acts 16:31). And, you can do that today. And then, you can accept yourself, and you can accept those that you love; and they can accept you. You do what Jesus Christ would have you to do, and I promise you on the authority of the Word of God that Jesus Christ will save you today, if you trust Him as your Lord and Savior. I wish I could do it for you; I can't. I preached as best I know how. It is your decision. There are not enough demons in Hell or out of Hell to keep you from coming if you mean business with God. There are not enough angels in Heaven or out of Heaven to drag you if you refuse. It is your decision. “Whosoever will may come.” (Revelation 22:17)

God's Answer to Anger

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: April 29, 1984

Main Scripture Text: Proverbs 19:11–12

*“The discretion of a man deferreth his anger; and
it is his glory to pass over a transgression.”*

PROVERBS 19:11

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Introduction

Today, we're going to deal with something that I just believe may be personal and pertinent to you. But I want to check up, so let me ask you a question, while you're turning to Proverbs chapter 19. How many of you ever get angry—let me see your hands—lose your temper or find it, whichever the case is? Well, I thought so, except for a few hypocrites out there who wouldn't lift your hand, and a few people who evidently

have ice water for blood. All right, Proverbs chapter 19—we're going to be speaking today on "God's Answer to Anger." Proverbs chapter 19 and verses 11 and 12: "*The discretion of a man deferreth his anger...*"—that is, a smart fellow is not quick to get mad. "*The discretion of a man deferreth his anger; and it is his glory to pass over a transgression. The king's wrath is as the roaring of a lion; but his favour is as dew upon the grass*" (Proverbs 19:11–12). God's answer to anger.

Now somebody has said that anger is an acid that destroys its container. And indeed, it does; and it's a gross form of acid that does harm to anything that it is poured on. I'm talking about ungodly anger, unjustified anger. Not all anger is bad, as we're going to see in a moment. As a matter of fact, some anger is good. As a matter of fact, we're going to see, in a moment, that the Bible, in at least one place, commands us to be angry. So we're going to learn about God's answer to anger—unjustified, ungodly anger.

I. Sudden Anger Is to Be Controlled

Now there are four basic thoughts that we have this morning; and, the first is this: that sudden anger is to be controlled. That is, if you're a person who prides yourself in having a short fuse, you'd better be careful. The Bible has a lot to say about you.

Now there are some people, you know, they just say, "Well, it's just my Irish blood; it just runs in the family," whatever it is. And they're like a loaded shotgun with a hair trigger; and anytime they're jostled, they blast away. "Oh, well," they say, "it only lasts a little while." Well, so did that tornado last week; but they're still cleaning up the wreckage. I want you to see what the Bible has to say about getting angry in a hurry, about being quick to be angry. Now our verse, our text, says here the discretion defers his anger. That is, a man who is a wise man does not fly off the handle.

Now let me give you some other scriptures—and, by the way, the Book of Proverbs has things that go all the way through it, so you might as well just lick your fingers, we're going to look at a lot of passages this morning in Proverbs. Proverbs chapter 14 and verse 17—look at it: "*He that is soon angry dealeth foolishly*" (Proverbs 14:17). Now friend, in plain unvarnished language, you are a fool, if you're quick to get angry. You say, "Don't call me a fool." I didn't—God did. "*He that is soon angry dealeth foolishly.*"

Look again, if you will, in chapter 15 and verse 18: "*A wrathful man stirreth up strife: but he that is slow to anger appeaseth strife*" (Proverbs 15:18). You want to get in trouble, I mean, if you want somebody to rearrange your face, then you be one of these kinds of fellows who is quick to anger, and somebody is going to explain some things to you that you don't want them to explain, one of these days. That's what God is saying right here is in Proverbs 15, verse 18.

Look, if you will, in Proverbs chapter 25 and verse 8: "*Go not forth hastily to*

strive,”—that is, don’t jump into an argument quickly—*“lest thou know not what to do in the end thereof,”*—that is, you’re going to start something you can’t finish, and—*“when thy neighbour hath put thee to shame”* (Proverbs 25:8). You put your mouth into action before your brain is in gear and you’re going to find out that that you’re not going to be able to finish what you’ve started. That’s what God’s Word says. Look, if you will, in Proverbs chapter 29 and verse 20: *“Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words? there is more hope of a fool than of him”* (Proverbs 29:20). You don’t even come up to being a fool; I mean, you’ve got to improve to be a fool. If you’re one of these people, quick to get angry, and yet, I dare say that many, many in this congregation not only are quick to get angry, but you somehow pride yourself in that. You think maybe that’s a badge of honor, that you are a person who’s quick to get angry.

Now when you’re quick to get angry, dear friend, there is so much that you’re going to lose. You can lose your job; you can lose your friends; you can lose your children; you can lose your wife; you can lose your health; you may lose a few teeth; you can lose your testimony. There’s nothing more debilitating to your Christian testimony than the fact that you just fly off the handle.

A. **Confess Your Anger**

Now the Bible tells us here that we are to defer anger; that is, sudden anger is to be controlled. Well, how do you control it? Well, first of all, you have to confess it. There are a lot of us who just...—we don’t like to admit that we get angry. I’m a Christian, and I am not mad. I mean, we...—sweet, little dear little us, now, we couldn’t get angry, could we? Of course we can! And so the very first thing we must do, is confess our anger. And then, after we confess it, after we admit that we are angry...—by the way, if you repress it rather than confess it, it will do you all kinds of damage. You may say that you’re not angry, but your stomach keeps the score.

As a matter of fact, you’d be surprised what kinds of physiological, psychological, and spiritual problems take place when you have repressed anger, or if, for that matter, even expressed anger that is not handled properly. First of all, your body responds and begins to pump that adrenaline in your blood stream, and then, your blood pressure rises, and then, your muscles get tense and ready for fight or flight or both, and your heart beats, your hands become sweaty, your eyes dilate. And listen. One man said, “My life is at the mercy of any rascal who can make me angry.” My life is at the mercy of any rascal who can make me angry. And every time you get needlessly, unjustifiably angry you just drive another nail into your coffin.

So first thing, when you find these feelings coming, confess them—confess them. Don’t repress them; confess them to the Lord, bring them to the Lord, and say, “Lord, there’s something moving in me I don’t like.” And tell the Lord about it. Someone has

well said that, if you repress anger, it's like lighting a wastebasket and putting it in a closet, and closing the door. It may burn itself out or it may burn the house down. It's just burning there. So the very first thing you need to do is just open the closet door and say, "There it is, Lord, in there; that's my wastebasket, and I set it on fire."

B. **Consider Your Anger**

Now that's the very first thing you need to do, is to confess it. And then, the second thing you need to do in order to get the handle of this sudden anger is, after you've confessed it, you need to consider it; you need to say, "I'm getting upset." Now you need to consider, and say, "What is it, Lord, that's making me upset?"

Look, if you will, in Proverbs chapter 14 and verse 29 here for a moment—chapter 14 and verse 29: "*He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding*" (Proverbs 14:29). You see, when you don't get angry right away, or when you feel this anger coming, you just kind of confess it to the Lord and say, "Now Lord, show me," he will show you. "*He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding.*" You need to analyze what it is that's making you angry so you don't go off half-cocked.

C. **Control Your Anger**

Confess it. Consider it. Control it. You say, "I can't control it." Oh yes, you can. You know, there are people who say, "Well, you know, it's just something that comes over me. I can't control myself." Yes, you can. Yes, you can.

You know, sometimes husbands and wives will be having one of these family discussions that can be heard about two blocks away, and they will just be at one another throats, and *rrrrrrr*, the phone will ring. "Hello?" Don't tell me you can't turn it on and turn it off—you can. Right? Yeah, you know, don't you? You say, "Pastor, how do you know?" I know too; I'm telling you, folks, I'm telling you that all of this is just a lot of excuses to say that we can't control it. We can control it, we can control it, and we'd better learn how to control it.

Look, if you will, in Proverbs chapter 29 and verse 11: "*A fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards*" (Proverbs 29:11). You can keep it—I mean, a fool just spouts off everything; a wise man can control it, if he will. Now we're talking about God's way to health, wealth, and wisdom; so, what I'm trying to say is that, if you find that first flash of anger over and over and over again, in the Book of Proverbs and in other places in the Bible, the Bible says that we are to control sudden anger. Do we have a chance to confess it, consider it, and contain it?

II. **Sinful Anger Is to Be Condemned**

All right now, look. Sudden anger is to be controlled. Secondly, sinful anger is to be condemned. Why do we defer anger, as our text tells us to do? Why is it that we're

slow? That we might find out whether it is righteous anger or sinful anger. If it is sinful anger, it is to be condemned; it is to be dealt with harshly; it is to be repudiated; it is to be repented of.

Now don't treat anger—unjustified anger, sinful anger—as weakness. It is not weakness; it is wickedness. One thing that God will not accept for sin is an alibi.

A. Sinful Anger Is Anger Without a Cause

Well, by the way, what is sinful anger? Well, number one, it's anger without a cause. Do you remember when Jesus said, "*whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause ... shall be in danger of hell fire*"? (Matthew 5:22). Anger without a cause.

Many times, the problem is not what somebody has done, but the problem is within us—it's our own frustration; it's our own lack of peace with God, and the sin that's in our own lives. By the way, nobody outwardly can control your emotions, you do that—anger without a cause.

B. Sinful Anger Is Anger That Is Centered in a Person

I'll tell you something else that's sinful anger: it is anger that is centered in a person, rather than anger that is centered on an offense. When you get angry, so that your anger makes you hate a person, rather than hate what that person has done—and we'll say more about that in a moment—that's sinful anger. Sinful anger is anger that burns, and desires revenge—that is sinful anger. Sinful anger is anger that is cherished up, and stored up in the heart. We're not to stir up anger, and we're not to store up anger. Some people love their anger, they hold on to it. Sinful anger, anger that has an unforgiving spirit, that refuses to forgive. Now we must deal with sinful anger as we would deal with any other sin. It must be condemned; it must be repented of. God will not accept an alibi.

III. Stubborn Anger Is to Be Conquered

All right, sudden anger is to be controlled; sinful anger is to be condemned. Now stubborn anger is to be conquered. Now the Bible goes on to say in our text—look at it again, if you will, here in Proverbs chapter 19: "*The discretion of a man deferreth his anger; and it is his glory to pass over a transgression*" (Proverbs 19:11). What a glorious victory it is when we learn to pass over our transgression! That is, to forgive and to get over it. But some people don't seem to be able to do that. Some people...—and I dare say there are some in this congregation today who have been angry for 15 years over something. You have what is called stubborn anger; and that stubborn anger is to be conquered. You see, you're not to be conquered by anger—God wants you to be victorious.

Look, if you will, here in Proverbs chapter 16 and verse 32. Look at it: "*He that is*

slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city" (Proverbs 16:32). You're to rule your spirit, you're to be mighty; and God has given you the ability to overcome stubborn anger. Alexander the Great conquered the world, but he wasn't able to conquer himself. You are better, to conquer that anger; it is better than to take a city.

Now how are you going to do it? How are you going to get rid of this stubborn anger? Well, leave the Book of Proverbs, and turn, if you will, for a moment, to Ephesians chapter 4. Let me show you some amazing scriptures here on anger in the Book of Ephesians; and we'll use our Proverbs as a stepping-stone to the New Testament. Ephesians chapter 4, and look with me, if you will, in verse 26: "*Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath*" (Ephesians 4:26). Now he's talking about stubborn anger here. When you let the sun go down upon your anger—that is, when you live with your anger. You husbands and wives get into an argument, and then rather than kneeling by the bed and getting right with God, and getting right with one another, you go to bed back-to-back, angry—you let the sun go down upon your wrath. Do you know what you've done? You've opened the door to Ole Slew-foot, to the devil. What you've done is this: you've said, "Devil, come in and wreck my home; devil, come in and destroy my family; devil, come in and ruin my testimony." You have given the devil a place—that's what the Bible says: "*Let not the sun go down upon your wrath: neither give place to the devil*" (Ephesians 4:26–27). What you've done is, you've given the devil a beachhead, a foothold, a toehold, a nest, a foul nest; and, believe you me, he is ready to come in. And it is that anger, that stubborn anger, that the devil loves to have as a campground.

A. How the Devil Works

Now let me show you how the devil works, when you open the door, when you let the sun go down upon your wrath. The devil has six steps that he's going to destroy you with—this matter of stubborn anger that I'm talking about. Begin in verse 31—we're in Ephesians 4, verse 31: "*Let all bitterness,*"—one—"and wrath,"—two—"and anger,"—three—"and clamour,"—four—"and evil speaking,"—five—"be put away from you, with all malice"—six (Ephesians 4:31). Those are the six steps—six, the number of a man. Let me show you how the devil works to get you—and when you open the door to the devil, when you let the sun go down upon your wrath, that is, you get what becomes stubborn anger—let me show you what happens.

1. Bitterness

First of all, he talks about bitterness here. Are you looking at it—verse 31? What is bitterness? Bitterness is that feeling of resentment when somebody does you a wrong, or you think they've done you a wrong, and you get bitter in your heart.

Now the Bible, in the Book of Hebrews, calls this a “root of bitterness” (Hebrews 12:15). In dealing with your lawn, weeding your lawn, have you ever tried to get a dandelion up? You know, you just pull the tops off, but you haven’t dealt with that rascal; because the root is down there. And there is that root of bitterness, and it gets in there, and you begin to feel hurt. Somehow, you feel that your rights have been trampled on; somehow, you’ve been overlooked, somebody’s done you wrong. And you feel that you’re justified. And that’s what the Bible calls bitterness—that’s step number one: bitterness.

2. Wrath

Now what happens to bitterness? Well, the next thing, the next word he uses here, is *wrath*—that’s step number two. The word *wrath* comes from a Greek word that means “hot”; you get all hot about it, you get all hot and bothered. There’s a slow burn that starts; and the bitterness turns to burning; and you just feel that start in there, and it smolders and smolders. Do you know that feeling? It’s an ugly feeling, isn’t it? That bitterness. I’ve felt it—that bitterness becomes that hotness, that burning, that smoldering thing.

3. Anger

And then, look at the third step here—the third word is *anger*. Now *wrath* speaks of that which is on the inside, but *anger* speaks of that which is on the outside. And the Greek word for anger here means that which is open and outward. It is outward hostility now, as the smoldering rags that are in the attic of the mind now burst into flames, and they’ve been bitter for quite a while. We may be doing the slow burn for quite a while, and then, just the right catalyst happens, comes, and then, it’s anger—that’s the third step. This is outward now, and it’s active now.

4. Clamor

And then, that’s followed by number four: *clamor*. Now the word *clamor* has the idea of being vocal, being loud. It may be tears, but most often, it is shouting. Have you ever noticed, when people get angry, their voice rises, and you talk to another person, you say, “Well now, you don’t have to shout.” He says, “I’m not shouting!” He gets louder, and clamor comes in.

5. Evil Speaking

But then, what follows, when we lift our voices that way? That clamor turns to *evil speaking*; then, when we get—we hear ourselves talking that way, and that open hostility breaks out—then, we start to say things we never really meant. We begin to speak evil, there’s evil speaking, slander—“I hate you”; “I wish you’d never been born”; “you’re a stupid child”; “you’re the meanest person I ever knew”—and we begin to say things that we know are not true; but, we are on a roll, aren’t we? I mean, we’re doing

good now. I mean, boy, the devil says, “And tell him *this*,” and, you start to say those things—you don’t mean them, but you verbalize them, because that bitterness turned to a burning, and that burning turned to an anger, and that anger turned to a clamor, and that clamor turned to an evil speaking.

6. Malice

And then, that evil speaking does what? Turns to *malice*. Do you know what malice is? That’s when you want to hurt somebody. Pow! Or, if you can’t hurt them with your fists, you’ll hurt them with words. If you can’t hurt them with words, you’ll hurt them with money. If you can’t hurt them money, you’ll hurt them somehow. That’s when a mother will slap a child; that’s when a husband will abuse a wife; that’s when somebody goes for a gun, or goes for a stick, or does some foolish, silly thing. And the ole’ devil just sitting over there grinning. Oh, he’s having a time; and you’re the one who will open the door, and say, “Come on in—wreck my home, wreck my life, wreck my health, destroy the whole thing.” You’re the one who did it; you gave a place to the devil, because you let the sun go down upon your wrath, and that smoldering anger there begins to take it’s toil. Terrible, isn’t it? Awful, isn’t it? Hideous, isn’t it?

I think there’s not a one of us who hasn’t been there at one time or another. You say, “Pastor, that’s exactly the way it works.” Sure, that’s it exactly—you don’t need some psychologist to tell you. God’s Word is already here to tell us exactly what the devil wants to do: to harm us, to hurt us, to ruin us, to wreck us, to destroy us, to destroy our testimony.

B. How to Conquer Stubborn Anger

Now what am I saying is this: that sudden anger is to be controlled till you have a chance to think it through; sinful anger is to be condemned immediately; stubborn anger is to be conquered. How are you going to conquer it?

1. You Must Recognize It

Well, number one: you must recognize it. I mean, you’ve got to trace it back. You say, “Why am I such an angry person?” And you’ve got to go back to find out where that root of bitterness is; because, I don’t care how much you pick off the tops of those dandelions, those roots are there, and you’re going to have to get down to the root of the matter and analyze it.

2. You Must Repent

First of all, you’ve got to recognize it, admit it, confess it, and then, secondly, you’ve got to repent. Now this verse says, in verse 31: “*Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you*” (Ephesians 4:31). Are you willing to put it away? Now friend, if you’re not willing to put it away, just forget it. God’s not going to do it for you. You can whine, and cry, and all of that, until you put it away.

The Greek word for repentance, *metanoia*, means a change of mind, means “I’m sick of it; I am done with it; I don’t want it, I don’t want it; I choose against it.” And nobody is going to choose against it but you.

3. You Must Repudiate the Devil

Now you must recognize it, you must repent—recognition, repentance, and then, repudiation. You must repudiate the devil. I mean kick him out. You gave him a place—say, “I’m taking it back, you can’t have it any more. You no longer are going to have a place in my life, and in my home, and in my family.” You go in the name of Jesus. “I gave you a place, and I’m taking it back. And the blood of Jesus Christ has cleansed that place. And out you go! Out!” The Bible says, “*Resist the devil...*”—he’ll do what?—“*flee from you*” (James 4:7). Kick him out, put him out in the name of Jesus; and then, rely upon the Holy Spirit of God.

Now the Bible says here, “*Grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption*” (Ephesians 4:30). That is—verse 30—the Holy Spirit of God is there; He’s going to give you the power to do what? Look in verse 32: “*Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you*” (Ephesians 4:33).

I tell you, dear friend, we’d better get into Ephesians chapter 4, we’d better get into the Book of Proverbs, and learn how to deal with this thing of stubborn anger. Some of you have been angry for a long time; your husband hurt you sometime, a long time ago, and you’ve been nursing a fever, feeding a grudge. Quit it! It’s not worth it. It’s not worth it.

IV. Sanctified Anger Is to Be Channeled

Now what are we saying here? Let’s go back to our text again. We are saying that, number one, sudden anger is to be controlled; we’re saying, number two, that sinful anger is to be condemned; we’re saying, number three, that stubborn anger is to be conquered; and, number four, sanctified anger is to be channeled. Did you know there’s something that I want to call *sanctified anger*? Did you know that it’s all right to be angry? Do you remember what our scripture says there, that I just read to you, in Ephesians chapter 4 and verse 26? What does it say? “Be angry.” “Be angry.” “Be angry.” When’s the last time you obeyed that command? But wait a minute—“Be angry, and sin not.” There is an anger that’s not a sinful anger at all. If anger is sinful, then Jesus was a sinner, right? Because Jesus was moved with anger.

Look, if you will, please, in Mark chapter 3—just turn to it now: Mark chapter 3. Just lick your fingers, and turn. Go ahead—Mark chapter 3: “*And he*”—that is, Jesus—“*entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had a withered hand. And they watched him,*”—that is, the Pharisees watched him—“*whether he would*

heal him on the sabbath day; that they might accuse him. And he saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth. And he saith unto them, Is it lawful”—he said unto them, that is, to the Pharisees, Is it lawful—“to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace. And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other. And the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him” (Mark 3:1–6).

Now Jesus was moved with anger, the righteous anger. You can be angry, and sin not, for Jesus Christ was without sin. What I’m trying to tell you, ladies and gentleman, is you can be *good and mad*. You can be good and mad; you can be angry, and sin not. Jesus was moved with anger. As a matter of fact, if there are some things that don’t move you to anger, I think there’s something wrong with you.

Do you know what moved Jesus to anger? It was the attitude of these Pharisees to that poor paralyzed man. Here was a man that had a deep need, but here were other people who were filled with selfishness, and pride, and arrogance, and self-seeking. What did they have against Jesus? It was not primarily because Jesus was teaching what He was teaching. Their problem was not theological; it was personal. What Jesus was doing was, as we would say today, He was *eating their lunch*. What I mean—all of the people were bragging on them, and following them, and preening on them, and all of these things. And they had the chief places, and so forth; and now, the crowds were going after Jesus, and they were filled with rotten envy—that was their problem. They were filled with selfishness and pride and self-seeking, and they cared not for people that were hurting. What motivates the liquor dealer? What motivates the pornographer? What motivates the slumlord? What motivates the dope pusher? The same thing: pride, self-seeking. They don’t care about other people. They don’t care how other people hurt. They don’t care how other people suffer. They’re just like these Pharisees in whose hearts the milk of human kindness had curdled.

Now I’ll tell you what made Jesus angry. Jesus got angry when he saw other people being taken advantage of. Jesus got angry when he saw people insensitive in the face of human hurt.

Listen. Sometimes we get the idea that it is love that keeps us from being angry. Sometimes, it’s love that makes us angry. I mean, when we see people that God loves, made in the image of God, being destroyed. Abraham Lincoln went down to the slave market in New Orleans—there he saw a beautiful black girl being auctioned off as a slave, perhaps a sex object. Abraham Lincoln stood there, tall and gaunt, and he felt a righteous indignation coming up in him, and he said to a friend, “That’s wrong, and one of these days, if I have a chance to hit it, I’m going to hit it, and hit it hard.” That’s

righteous anger.

Martin Luther, of the Protestant Reformation, Martin Luther said, “When I’m angry, I pray better, and I preach better.” There’s a little half-pint preacher named Chaney, he weighed 120 pounds, and he said, “When I get mad, I weigh a ton.”

I mean, doesn’t the killing of little babies—doesn’t that make you mad? Abortion. I mean, aren’t there certain things that stun you? If not, you’re not worth the gunpowder it takes to get rid of you. Things ought to stir you, move you—they did Jesus. Jesus never got angry when somebody harmed him; you’ll never find Jesus retaliating. When people did things to Jesus, He was not moved with anger, and He never got angry, even when they nailed Him to the cross; but, Jesus was moved with anger—righteous indignation—when He saw other people being misused and abused.

Now righteous anger is aimed, not primarily at the person, but at the injustice. It gets angry, not primarily at the sinner, but at the sin. “Well,” you say, “that’s fancy footwork; you can’t be angry at the sin, without being angry at the sinner.” Or, let me put it this way: you can love the sinner, and still be angry with sin, can’t you? Sure you can, sure you can. You know how I know? Because I get angry with me; and I love my wife’s husband. Sure! Do you ever get angry at you? Of course you do! We get angry at ourselves. Why did I do that? Dumb! That’s stupid! But yet, you love you. As a matter of fact, the reason that you love you is why you get angry with you, and it was love that motivated the Lord Jesus Christ.

Sometimes, anger is love’s clearest expression; but we need to be careful. You see, righteous anger, godly anger, is not getting even with somebody, it’s not trying to do somebody harm; it is a righteous indignation that does not sin, and real godly anger—pay attention now—comes at the right time, it is expressed in the right way, and it is against the right things. Righteous anger is to be channeled.

I pray to God that we would not just have so much rhetoric about the things that are wrong in our world, but when we get angry about the injustices that we see, we need to do something about it. I believe that there are enough people, I believe there are enough godly people—listen—there are enough godly people in this city that, if they were to get angry in the right way, they’d get rid of the pornography in this city—they could do it. I mean, you walk in the 7–Eleven and say, “What do you mean, Buster Boy, with this kind of stuff in here?” Some of you little housewives—man, they’re scared of you. I mean, go ahead say, “What do you mean?”

“Oh,” you say, “I wouldn’t go and do that; it’d embarrass me.” Well, that’s what I’m talking about. You see, I’m not trying to stir you up to act ugly; I’m just trying to stir you up to act Christian—it’s a beautiful way. You say, “Pastor, that’s what we pay you for. You get out there on the firing line. We’re behind you to the last drop of your blood, Pastor.” Listen, listen, friend. You get a city where people get righteously indignant,

that's worth more than all the laws on the books. Did you know that? We get stirred up about what is happening, and we get angry at the right time, for the right reason, against the right thing, in the right way.

You see, look—sudden anger is to be controlled; sinful anger is to be condemned; stubborn anger is to be conquered; sanctified anger is to be channeled. God's going to help us, when we let the love of God stir us up; and, we'll take the stand for those who are being harmed, and those who are being hurt.

Conclusion

Well, let's go back to our text, and I'll be finished. Look again, if you will, please, in Proverbs. One last thing I want to show you here in Proverbs chapter 19—look in verse 12, if you will. If you're not a Christian, if you're not saved, if you don't know that if you died right now you'd go to Heaven—look, if you will, in verse 12: *“The king's wrath is as the roaring of a lion; but his favour is as dew upon the grass”* (Proverbs 19:12).

Now the King of kings is Jesus. He's the Lion of the tribe of Judah. You can face His wrath, if you want to; or you can have His favor, if you want to. Do you want the King's favor, like the dew on the morning grass, sweet, gentle, loving, fruitful, multiplying, life-giving? You can have it. Do you want to be saved today? Not face the wrath of God, the King's wrath? Well, you can be saved, by receiving Christ as your personal Savior and Lord. You—listen, listen to me, friend—you're not going to be able to conquer anger, or anything else, until you have Christ on the inside. It is not victory over the devil you need—it is the Victor of the devil, the Lord Jesus Christ; and having Christ on the inside. And you know, whatever you're filled with, is what spills out when you're jostled— isn't that right? Do you want to know what you're filled with? Just see what spills out when you're jostled. If you're filled with Jesus, somebody jostles you, Jesus is going to spill out. That's all there is to it, friend.

Now you need to be saved, born again, born from above. To be saved means that every sin is forgiven; to be saved means that Jesus Christ now lives in your heart; to be saved means that when you die, you'll go to heaven. Are you saved? I want every head bowed and every eye closed.

Cardboard Christians

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: September 30, 1984

Main Scripture Text: Proverbs 21:28

“A false witness shall perish: but the man that heareth speaketh constantly.”

PROVERBS 21:28

Outline

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Conclusion

Introduction

I want you to take your Bibles today and turn to the Book of Proverbs chapter 21 and look at one verse. Now, we've been in the Book of Proverbs for quite some time, and the difficulty and the joy of studying the Book of Proverbs is that there is so much compacted in one verse. You're going to see that as we study this verse today. And, the more I looked at this verse, the more remarkable it became in my eyes. When I first looked at it, I said, "Well, that's an ordinary verse." Then, you know, the more I dwelt on it, I discovered that there are no ordinary verses. Every one is extraordinary. Listen to this—Proverbs chapter 21, verse 28: *“A false witness shall perish: but the man that heareth speaketh constantly”*—*“A false witness shall perish: but the man that heareth speaketh constantly”* (Proverbs 21:28).

Art Linkletter had a tragedy in his life, and it literally drove him to his knees. And, Art Linkletter told that after this tragedy, he was with some young people in the lobby of a hotel in San Francisco—of a dozen or so young people. And, he said that they got down on their knees to pray, and he got down on his knees with them to pray. And, he said, "I looked around, and I hoped no one would recognize me down on my knees." But, he

said, “I was not down on my knees but just a second when I did no longer care what anyone else thought, because,” Art Linkletter said in this discussion of his life—he said, “up until that time, I was very self-sufficient. I didn’t feel that I needed any body.” Here’s a man that for 40 years on the television screen and stage had entertained millions. He said, “I didn’t think I needed any body.” And, he said, “I thought of myself as being a good person.” But, he said, “I was”—and I want you to listen to this phrase—“a cardboard Christian.” That’s the title of my message this morning: “Cardboard Christians.” He says, “I was a cardboard Christian.” That is, “I was all facade. There was nothing real on the inside.” And then, he said, “I found reality.”

I want to speak to you today about reality, because if there’s any thing this world is hungering for it is reality. Now, I want to tell you something: this church or any church will reach people if they can come to that church and sense reality. They are tired of hypocrisy; they are tired of games, but they are seeking reality. And, the great hunger of every man’s heart, of every woman’s heart, of every boy, and of every girl, is to know Jesus Christ—not know about Him, but to know Him and to have reality. Right? Not only that, but the need of reaching people. Not only is it the hunger, but also it is the basic need of the Church. In order to evangelize, we must have this bright, shining, and living reality—and no longer be cardboard Christians.

Now, our text today speaks of that subject. And, actually, it just breaks it right down the middle: it deals with a false witness, and it deals with a faithful witness. It deals with the fatality of a false witness; it deals with the reality of a faithful witness.

I. The Fatality of a False Witness

Now, look at the fatality of a false witness—the fatality of a false witness. “*A false witness shall perish*” (Proverbs 21:28). That is, it’s fatal not to have reality, to be false, to be a phony, and to be a cardboard Christian. “*A false witness shall perish*” (Proverbs 21:28).

Now, put your bookmark there in Proverbs chapter 21 and go with me to Matthew chapter 7. And, I want to show you a very sobering passage of Scripture. And, I want every church member to pay strict attention, because one of the devil’s favorite ploys is to have you to be a member of a church. He wants you to be a false witness—not to be saved and not to be born again. Matthew chapter 7, in verse 21—these are the words of the Savior: “*Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven*” (Matthew 7:21). That is, everybody talking about Heaven is not going there, as the ol’ song says. Not everybody who says, “Lord—Lord” is saved; not everybody is born again. “*Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven*”—and then, notice these amazing

verses—*“Many will say to me in that day”*—He’s talking about the judgment day—*“Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity”* (Matthew 7:21–23).

A. **False Praying**

Now, look at this. There is false praying. *“Many will say [unto] me in that day, Lord, Lord”* (Matthew 7:22). These are people who knew to pray; they didn’t know how to pray, but they knew to pray. And, they are seemingly orthodox in their praying because they call Him “Lord.” *“Many will say [unto] me in that day, Lord, Lord”* (Matthew 7:22).

B. **False Preaching**

But, not only false praying—it’s compounded false preaching. *“Many will say [unto] me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name?”* (Matthew 7:22). Now, the word *prophesied* means “to stand up and preach with authority.” Did you know that many people who stand behind the pulpit are lost? They don’t know Christ as their personal Savior. I’m not trying to hold myself up to some grand example and think that I’m the only one who does. I thank God, across America, that many preachers do know the Lord Jesus Christ. But, the tragedy in our day and in our land is that many are standing behind the sacred desk who have never been born again. Judas was a preacher—“we prophesied in Thy name”—but Judas was lost.

C. **False Power**

But, not only false praying and not only false preaching, but also false power. This verse goes on to say, *“And in thy name...cast out devils”* (Matthew 7:22). Now, every time in the Bible when you see the word *devils* (plural), it means “demons.” There’s one devil, many demons. And, this may be translated “demons.” “In Thy name we have exorcised demons. We have cast out demons in Your name” (Matthew 7:22).

Well, did they cast out demons? No, they said they did—they said they did. They thought they did. Do you know demons are clever? Demons are so diabolical—demons are so scheming—that they will allow you to think that you have cast them out when you’ve not. Do you remember reading in the Bible the story of a man who had an unclean house? And, the Bible says that *“He findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he”*—the house, of course, was the temple of the body. And, this demon... This man was demonized, and the demon went out. And then, the Bible says that that demon went out—*“and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there”* And, Jesus said, *“and the last state of that man is worse than the first”* (Matthew 12:44–45).

Now, many times a demon will appear to cooperate. Many times he will let someone have some semblance of false power, that he might get a false following and deceive many. How many people are deceived by false power? Not every thing you see coming through television and not every thing you see that seems to be miraculous is miraculous. And, pay attention to that. Not everyone who seems to have power over the devil has power over the devil.

D. **False Performance**

“Many will say [unto] me in that day, Lord, Lord”—false praying—“have we not prophesied in thy name?”—false preaching—“and in thy name...cast out [demons]?”—false power—“and in thy name done many wonderful works?” (Matthew 7:22)—false performance. They sang in the choir. They were in the orchestra. They took up the offering. They worked in the nursery. They ran the television. They were on the church staff. “Lord, we did all of these things. We tithed. We did it all. We were there every time the church doors were open.” But, “a false witness shall perish” (Proverbs 21:28). Jesus said, “And then will I profess unto them...depart from me, ye that work iniquity”—“I never knew you” (Matthew 7:23). Now, “not that I knew you, and then you lost it”—“they never had it; they were never saved.” And, notice what Jesus said: “Depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matthew 7:23).

Now, that’s very important that you understand that, because they were saying, “Lord, look at all of these things we’ve done.” Do you know what Jesus called all of those things? Iniquity—iniquity. They didn’t say, “We robbed banks. We raped. We abused little children.” No, they said, “We were preaching, praying, working.” Jesus said, “Iniquity.” You see, the Bible teaches that even *“righteousnesses are as filthy rags”* in His sight (Isaiah 64:6). I’ve said it before, and I want to say it again—you pay attention: *the worst form of human badness is human goodness when that human goodness becomes a substitute for the new birth.* Jesus called it “iniquity”: “ye that work iniquity” (Matthew 7:23). “A false witness shall perish” (Proverbs 21:28). “Depart from me, ye that work iniquity”—“I never knew you”—“I never knew you”—“I never knew you” (Matthew 7:23). No reality. A cardboard Christian—the fatality of a false witness.

II. **The Reality of a Faithful Witness**

Now, let’s look at the other side of that text. Go back again, if you will, and look at our text—Proverbs 21:28: *“A false witness shall perish: but the man that heareth speaketh constantly.”* The reality of a faithful witness. What are the three marks of a faithful witness? What are the three marks of reality in this thing called “religion”—to know it’s real?

A. A Listening Worship

First of all, there must be a listening worship—a listening worship. “[He] that heareth...” (Proverbs 21:28). No man knows God, no man is real, and no man is prepared to serve the Lord until he’s first heard the Lord. One of the marks of all true Christians—all reality in spiritual matters—is that you have heard the Lord. “[He] that heareth”—“[he] that heareth”—“[he] that heareth...” (Proverbs 21:28). Now, notice He’s putting “[he] that heareth” (Proverbs 21:28) in opposition to the ones who are false witnesses. Now, what did Jesus say in John chapter 10? The Lord Jesus said in John 10, verse 27: “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them” (John 10:27). The Lord doesn’t know anyone unless they’ve heard His voice. “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them” (John 10:27). You cannot be a Christian without hearing the voice of the Lord Jesus Christ—I don’t mean audibly. But, you must hear God. And, I’ll tell you how to hear God in just a moment, but you must hear Him.

Jesus stood before that rascal Pilot, and Pilot tried to engage Jesus in a conversation, in banter, or in an argument. He wanted Jesus Christ to defend Himself, but Jesus Christ would not defend Himself to Pilot. But, here’s what Jesus said to Pilot—it’s very interesting—in John chapter 18 and verse 37: “Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world”—now, listen; pay attention—“that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice” (John 18:37). That’s one of the greatest statements in all of the Bible: “Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice” (John 18:37). A faithful witness hears.

And, what is it that you hear? His voice. And, what is His voice? His Word. These are the words of the Lord Jesus Christ. This whole book—from Genesis to Revelation—is the voice of the Son of God. And, you must hear Him—you must hear Him. “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17). You want to hear God? You want to hear God? “Faith [comes] by hearing...hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17). This is the way you’re going to hear God: this book—this book—is the way you’re going to hear God.

Beth sang, and she said, in effect, in that song, “When the Lord spake, universes sprang into existence.” He upholds everything by the Word of His power. There’s power in His Word—power for conversion, of being born again: “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever” (1 Peter 1:23). Power for completion: “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby” (1 Peter 2:2). Power for cleansing: “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word” (Psalm 119:9). Power for claiming: “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you” (John 15:7). Power for conquest:

“the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Ephesians 6:17). Power in this book—power for counseling: *“reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine”* (2 Timothy 4:2). You want to know what’s right, what’s wrong, how to get right, and how to stay right? There’s power in the Word of God, counsel in the Word of God. Power for communion: *“If [you] abide in me, and my words abide in you, [then you] shall ask what [you] will, and it shall be done unto you”* (John 15:7). You see, the mark of reality is that you’re hearing God—that you’re hearing God. You cannot be a real Christian until you hear from God. You must hear God speak.

Now, He may speak through a preacher, but it will not be the preacher speaking; it’s God speaking. That’s the reason the Apostle Paul said, *“We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him”* (Acts 5:32). If all you hear is me this morning, you’ve not heard. I want to be so full of the Spirit that when I preach, you’ll hear God—you’ll hear God. I want to stand behind this book so that when I open this book, you’re hearing God speak, because, dear friend, that is reality. You must hear. A faithful witness hears.

B. A Living Witness

There is listening worship. And, because there is listening worship, there is living witness. Now, listen. Look at the verse again: *“[He] that heareth speaketh”* (Proverbs 21:28). Did you hear that? *“[He] that heareth speaketh”* (Proverbs 21:28). Now, we dare not speak for God until we’ve heard God. But, if we’ve heard God, we dare not be silent. We dare not speak for God until we’ve heard God, but if we’ve heard God, we dare not be silent. *“[He] that heareth speaketh”* (Proverbs 21:28). We are to speak for the Lord because we’ve heard the Lord, but we’re not to speak for the Lord until we’ve heard the Lord.

And, again, that’s what’s wrong with so many preachers today: they are speaking when they’ve not been listening. And so, what you have is that they’re getting things out of their own heart rather than what the Holy Spirit has said. And, again, I’m not trying to hold myself up as some grand example, but I do not want to stand before you and simply be dredging from my own well. Do you know what the Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians chapter 15, verse 3? Tremendous statement: *“For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received”* (1 Corinthians 15:3). Hmm? I’m just passing it through. I’m not the generator; I’m the conduit. *“I [have] delivered unto you...that which [first of all] I [have] received”* (1 Corinthians 15:3). The Lord Jesus Christ Himself is the example of this. Listen to what Jesus said in John chapter 8 and verse 26: *“have many things to say and to judge of you: but he that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him”* (John 8:26). Jesus said, “What I hear, I speak.” Paul said, “What I hear, I speak.”

You see, this is the difference between a lawyer and a witness. Jesus didn't say, "You shall be my lawyers." Jesus said, "*Ye shall be witnesses unto me*" (Acts 1:8). Do you know what a lawyer does? A lawyer argues a case. Do you know what a witness does? He tells what he's seen and heard. Isn't that right? How can you be a witness if you haven't seen anything and if you haven't heard anything? God has not called you to be a lawyer; He's called you to be a witness. And, you can't be a witness unless you've heard. "*[He] that heareth speaketh*" (Proverbs 21:28).

Now, we're talking about reality. Let me tell you why I know that so many people are phony Christians: because they never speak—they never speak. You will never convince me that you have reality if you keep it silent. If Dale Evans Rogers stood in this pulpit, and she talked about Hollywood, and she talked about life on the road, and she talked about movies, and she talked about all of those things, but if she did not ring true about Jesus Christ, I'd think she's a phony—a phony. I don't care how much fame she has—she'd be a phony if she doesn't talk about Jesus Christ. But, here's someone who's heard Christ, and because she's heard Christ, she cannot be silent.

Do you know what R.A. Torrey had to say? Listen to this: he said, "I would like to know what right any man has to call himself a follower of Jesus Christ if he is not a soul winner." Did you hear that? "I would like to know what right any body has to call himself a follower of Jesus Christ if he is not a soul winner." How can we claim to follow Christ if His purpose is not our purpose? Hmm? Jesus said, "*Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men*" (Mark 1:17). If you're not fishing, you're not following—or else I don't know how to read, "*[Follow Me], and I will make you to become fishers of men*" (Mark 1:17). How can any man claim to be a follower of Jesus Christ if the purpose of Christ is not his purpose? Friend, "*a false witness shall perish: but [he] that heareth speaketh*" (Proverbs 21:28). To hear is to speak; to know Him is to say, "I cannot be silent."

Lee Scarborough, who was, one time, President of Southwestern Seminary, said, "To refuse to witness the saving gospel to a lost world day by day is nothing short of high treason"—"high treason." It's not just simply that you're missing a blessing. It's a clenched fist in the face of God. It is rebellion against Heaven's Commander-in-chief, the Lord Jesus Christ, who told us to "*go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature*" (Mark 16:15). "*A false witness shall perish: but [he] that heareth speaketh*"—" *[he] that heareth speaketh*"—" *[he] that heareth speaketh*" (Proverbs 21:28). You cannot speak until you hear. You cannot be silent when you hear. You must speak. You must share the Lord Jesus Christ. It's the hallmark of a born-again person.

Years ago, in the First Baptist Church of Dallas, Texas, Dr. W. A. Truitt was pastor before the illustrious Dr. Chris Well came. There was a little girl who came forward in the services—a tender little girl, just very young, wanting to be a Christian, wanting to

be baptized, and be a part of that church. And, the counselors dealt with her. And, because she was so young, they really felt that the little girl was sincere, but they recommended she not be baptized right away, that they wait a little while because they wanted to be certain. And so, they explained to her, “Now honey, we’re glad that you’ve come to give your heart to Jesus, but we want you to wait a little while before you’re baptized.” And, they watched her, and her little chin began to quiver. And, tears were coming down her cheeks, and they said, “Now darling, don’t cry. It’s all right. After awhile, you can be baptized and be a member of the church.” She said, “That’s not why I’m crying—not because I can’t be baptized.” She said, “I was thinking about my brother. I want him to be saved, too.” Well, the deacon said, “I believe we better receive her today.” Amen. That’s the mark—that’s the mark—of a Christian. That’s the mark of reality—not how well you sing, but that you have a burden for souls.

“What right does any body have to call himself a follower of Jesus Christ if he’s not a soul winner?” What right? *“A false witness shall perish: but [he] that heareth speaketh”—“[he] that heareth speaketh”—“[he] that heareth speaketh”* (Proverbs 21:28). You must hear Him. And, when you hear Him, you cannot keep silent. From the very time I knew I was saved ‘till this time, there’s been a burning desire in my heart to share Jesus Christ—one of the ways that I know that it’s real to me—because I want you to know what’s in my heart.

C. A Lasting Walk

The third thing: Not only a listening worship—that’s one mark of reality—not only a living witness—that’s another mark of reality—but a lasting walk. *“[He] that heareth speaketh constantly”—“constantly”* (Proverbs 21:28). That is, he stays with it. He doesn’t start and give it up. There’s a consistency. That’s the hallmark of reality.

We have people who join our churches: they stay with us for a while, and then they’re gone. What’s wrong? No reality. They may have joined the church, but no reality. They may have had head knowledge, but no reality. And, they go away from us, and some people say, “Well, they lost their salvation.” They did not lose their salvation. You look in 1 John chapter 2, verse 19—and here’s the answer: the Bible says, *“They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us”* (1 John 2:19). Well, what does that mean? Why do people start and fall away? They went out from us because they were not of us. Had they been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us.

Somebody says, “Well, I know somebody who was once a Christian and lost his salvation.” No, you don’t—no, you don’t. You don’t know any body who ever was once a Christian and lost his salvation. You can’t show me that. Dear friend, if you’ve got

reality, it's going to last. And, these people that go away never were saved. We have a little saying around here; I don't know who was the original with it: *the faith that fizzles before the finish had a flaw from the first*. "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for...had [they] been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that it might be made manifest that they were not...of us" (1 John 2:19).

Do you remember when I was talking to you about hearing His voice? John chapter 10, verses 27, 28, 29? Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them"—what kind of life?—"eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one" (John 10:27–30). And, dear friend, you don't have a piece of the rock. You're in the Rock. I mean, you are in Him, and He is in you. And, there's no power in Heaven above, Hell beneath, or Earth present that can take you out of the hand of Jesus Christ. "I know them...they follow me...I give unto them eternal life" (John 10:27–28). That is the mark of reality: it's going to last; it's real. God will keep you—He'll keep you.

I'm not saying that you can't be saved and stray away, but I'm saying that if you are saved, the love of God is like a strong rubber band. He puts it around you, and you stray away—He just brings you right back. Isn't that right? That's the way it is because He loves you. He keeps you by His grace and by His power.

And, what is the mark of a faithful witness? There's a listening worship. There's a living witness. There is a lasting walk. "[He] that heareth speaketh constantly"—"a false witness shall perish" (Proverbs 21:28).

There was a man named Cox. He was a church member, but he was like some today: he did not have the assurance of his salvation. And, he got tired of playing church, and he got saved—I mean, sure enough, saved, born again. And, he wrote a song, Brother Jim—the gospel song heard you and others sing:

O how well do I remember
How I doubted day by day,
For I did not know for certain
That my sins were washed away.
When the Spirit tried to tell me,
I would not the truth receive;
I endeavored to be happy
And to make myself believe.
[Then] I prayed to God in earnest,
And not caring what folks said.

And, by the way, folks, you'd better stop worrying about what people think.

*[Then] I prayed to God in earnest,
And not caring what folks said.
I was hungry for the blessing;
My poor soul—it must be fed.
Then at last by faith I touched Him
And, like sparks from smitten steel,
Just so quick salvation reached me.
O bless God, I know it's real
—HOMER L. COX*

It's real—it's real. I know it's real. Praise God. The doubts are settled, and I know—I know—it's real.

Do you know it's real? Is it that reality? Are you an exclamation point or a question mark? Which? Are you a cardboard Christian? Then, you're going to perish. I don't care if you're a member of this church—you're going to perish. *"A false witness shall perish"* (Proverbs 21:28). And, Jesus will say, *"Depart from me, ye that work iniquity"—"I never knew you"* (Matthew 7:23). Have you heard Him? Have you heard Him enough that you want to share Him? Is that constancy in your life? Is there? I say, is there? Is there? Are you saved?

Conclusion

Let's pray. Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed—no one looking around, no one disturbing the service by moving. If you don't know Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, I want you to know Him, and you need to know Him. And, I want you to know reality—not religion, but reality. To know Christ—not ritual, reality; not reaffirmation, reality. I want you to know Jesus Christ. I invite you to pray this way if you're not certain that you're saved and you may be a member of this church. You may be a Sunday School teacher; you may be a deacon, a staff member, or a minister:

"Dear God"—just talk to Him this way—"Dear God, I know You love me and You want to save me. And, I need to be saved, and I want to be saved. Jesus, You died to save me, and You promised to save me if I would only trust You. I do trust You, Jesus"—tell Him that right now—"I do trust You, Jesus—I do trust You, Jesus"—tell Him right now in your heart—"I do trust You, right now. I repent of my sin. I open my heart. I receive You, Jesus, as my Lord and Savior. Come into my heart, Jesus. Save me, Jesus"—just ask Him—"Save me, Jesus"—just say it from in your spirit. You don't have to say it out loud. Just quietly—"Save me, Jesus."

Did you ask Him? Were you sincere? Then, thank Him. Say, "Lord Jesus, thank You for saving me. I receive it now by faith like a little child, and that settles it, Jesus. Praise Your Holy Name."

Now, I want you to pray one more thing—pray like this: “Lord Jesus, help me never to be ashamed of You.” Art Linkletter said, “I didn’t care what folks thought when I kneeled in that place. I was tired of being a cardboard Christian.” And friend, when you give your heart to Jesus, “He that hears speaks” (Proverbs 21:28). You’re not going to be ashamed to confess the Lord Jesus. *“For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed”* (Romans 10:11).

And, I’m going to ask you, in just a moment, that you’ll make a public stand for Christ. So, it’s important that you pray right now, “And Jesus, help me not to be ashamed of You. Lord Jesus, give me that grace. Help me not to be ashamed of You. Help me not to be ashamed of You, who died for me. *‘[He] that heareth speaketh’—‘[He] that heareth speaketh’* (Proverbs 21:28). I’m not going to be ashamed of You, Jesus, because You died for me. Give me that courage, Lord. In Your name, I pray. Amen.”

How to Train Up a Child

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: May 8, 1988

Main Scripture Text: Proverbs 22:6

“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”

PROVERBS 22:6

Outline

Introduction

- I. Liberalism in Religion
 - II. Humanism in Education
 - III. Paganism in Society
 - IV. Materialism in the Home
- Conclusion

Introduction

Take your Bibles and turn with me, please, to Proverbs chapter 22 and verse 6, an oft-quoted verse. But I want us to take a fresh look at it. It has a word of instruction and a word of promise for us: *“Train up a child in the way that he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it”* (Proverbs 22:6).

Now look up here at me. Let me tell you something. Norman Evans did not learn how to play football by reading books about football nor even by watching football games on Sunday. How did he learn to play football? He was trained to play football. This verse does not say, *“Teach a child in the way that he should go: and when he is old, he shall not depart from it.”* There is a difference between teaching and training. And, many parents do not know that difference, and therefore they are losing their children. Nan Gill did not learn how to sing that way by listening to music alone, nor by reading books about music. She has a trained voice. Norman Evans is a trained athlete. Your responsibility is to train our children.

Now, you teach them the way that they shall go, and somebody else can come along and teach them another way, and they might go the other way. But, the Bible says that when you train a child in the way that he should go, when he's old, he will not depart from it. That doesn't mean he's going to get to be a grown man and then come back. The word *when he is old* literally has the idea of hair on the chin, a little peach fuzz; that is, when he reaches the age when many teenagers go astray, he will stay. She will stay. Train a child. Drill that child. When that child reaches puberty and

maturity, they will keep on loving Mama's God, keep on loving Daddy's Savior.

Our dictionary says *to train* means, "to prepare for a contest." It means, "to instruct by exercise." It means, "to drill." It means, "to form to a proper shape." It means, "to discipline for use." A lot of you fellows hunt birds. And, you've got bird dogs. And, you train that bird dog. That bird dog is taken out into the field and is trained over and over and over again. And, I'm going to say some of you dads spend more time training your dogs than you do your kids. You tie the dog up at night and let the kids run wild. "*Train up a child*"—train up a child, train up a child—"*in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.*"

Statistically, they tell us that 1.5 million children in America turn up missing. Many of them are runaways. Others of them have been snatched and kidnapped. And, that's a tragedy. But, there are many kids who have been taken captive by the devil right under their mama's nose, right under their daddy's roof, and Satan has moved in and taken them captive. I want to talk you today about how to train your children, and how to rear your children, on this Mother's Day, so that they will remain true to Mama's God and Daddy's God—faith of our fathers and our mothers. I want to warn you primarily about four dangers, because we are living in dangerous days.

And, it's a minefield out there to try to raise children. When our first child was born, Stephen, I went home and got on my knees at that little house trailer that I was living in while I was a student at Stetson University. Joyce was still there at the hospital with our firstborn son. And, I prayed, "God, if I never do anything else, I pray that you'll help me to be a good dad. I pray, God, that you'll never let me do anything that that son will be disappointed in. I want him to believe in his daddy's God, and I want him to believe in the daddy that holds that God." And, I prayed, and I said, "Lord, if I never preach a great sermon, if I'm never successful as a pastor, if I never have any of this world's goods, I want to be a good daddy." And, I mean that with all of my heart. I want my children to believe that George Washington and Abraham Lincoln were the Jesse James brothers compared to their preacher daddy.

And, I'll tell you one thing. I have failed and failed in many ways, and I'm sure that Joyce may have failed a time or two, but there's one thing that our children know, and I know that they know it, and they know that I know that they know it: they know that we love the Lord Jesus Christ. And, they know that Joyce and I are not phonies. They know we love God. And, I thank God we've got four children in the service of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And, I'm claiming the same for my grandchildren, because I thank God for a promise that He's given us here in the Word of God: "*Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old,*"—when he's old—"*he will not depart from it.*"

I want to warn you about four things, and I want you to listen today. This is not going to be so much an exposition of Scripture as it is going to be a warning taken from

Scripture.

I. Liberalism in Religion

The very first thing I want to warn you about, ladies and gentlemen, if you're going to train up your child, is liberalism in religion—liberalism in religion. I want to warn you about this. And, indeed I need to sound the warning. Many of you who are listening to me by way of television, and many of you who will move away, are in danger of getting into churches where the authority of the Word of God and the life of the Lord Jesus are not being made manifest. And, both must be made manifest: first, the authority of the Word of God; and, along with the authority of the Word of God, the life of the Lord Jesus.

Jude, that little postcard in the Bible, issues a warning. Jude says, in Jude verse 3, *“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ”* (Jude 1:3).

What is Jude saying? Jude said, “I set out to preach a gospel message. I set out to write a gospel tract about a common salvation. I wanted to talk about how wonderful it is to be saved. But,” he said, “it became necessary for me to warn you and exhort you that you should earnestly contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints, because,” he said, “certain men have crept in.” As I told you before when I preached a series on the Book of Jude, that word *crept in* is a very interesting word. It has the idea of a person who slips in the side door. It has the idea, it was used in the language of this day for a lawyer who is arguing a case, a very clever lawyer, and while people are unaware, he just slips into the argument a sentence, or a fact, or a word. He just slips it in there. No one pays much attention to it. But, later on, he's going to come back and build upon it. He knows exactly what he's doing, but no one else is aware of what he's doing. But, he's making a point. He just slips it in. It was used of an animal or a person who could slip into water without making a ripple.

You will remember an illustration I gave about the Tarzan movies we used to watch. Old Tarzan would be in that river, and the crocodiles on the shore would just slip into the water. You remember when they used to slide off the bank and you'd see those eyes that are coming? You'd say, “Tarzan, look out! Here he comes!” But, just without making a ripple, here comes that old crocodile after Tarzan. Now, that's the way liberalism is.

Let me tell you about liberalism. It never waves a flag. It never says, “I am

liberalism.” It just simply slips in. And, listen, folks. You may be as fundamentalist as Patty’s pig is Irish. But, listen. You had better be careful for your kids, because, you see, they’re going to get off in a college church. They’re going to get off someplace else, and they’re not going to get in a good, sound, Bible-believing church. And, you’d better train your children in the Word of God, not just simply read to them, not just take it for granted that they’re in Sunday School. But, do you know that they know the fundamentals of the faith? Do you know that they know why they believe and what they believe? Have you trained your children?

Liberalism is a parasite. Liberalism can’t build churches like Bellevue Baptist Church. This church has been built by Bible-believers. And, I’ll tell you, liberalism can ruin a church like Bellevue Baptist Church as it slips in, if we don’t keep our guard up. Let me tell you what happens to any great institution, or any great fortune, or any great anything. Generally, about three generations will destroy it. The first generation generates. The second generation speculates. And, the last generation dissipates, and it’s gone. That happens to family fortunes. It happens to institutions. It happens to anything else, unless we keep our guard up. And, friend, we’re living, many times, in an age of speculation that will end in disintegration, if we do not keep the guard up and do what God tells us to do.

Now, you warn your children. Build something into your children. A Youth for Christ pamphlet has told us this: that in the fifties our young people lost their innocence. In the 50’s: that’s when it started to happen. The kids got cars. The kids got money. The kids got education, music, film; television came, and we got a little group of sophisticated kids. And, in the 50’s, they lost their innocence. But then, in the 60’s, they lost their source of authority. Do you remember the 60’s? Do you remember what it was like trying to raise kids in the 60’s? Every answer was challenged, whether in the pulpit, whether in government, in school, parents; they said there is no authority. Now, while the authorities were challenged, nothing was given to take the place of those authorities. In the 50’s, they lost their innocence. In the 60’s, they lost their authority. In the 70’s, they lost their love. The 70’s were a decade of *me-ism*. It made for a generation of lonely people. And, these teenagers needed something. They were hungry for love, but rather than love they substituted sex. And now, in the 80’s, having lost their innocence, having lost their authority, having lost their love that they need in their heart and in their lives, they’ve lost hope. We have a generation of kids today who have no hope, one billion kids who’ve stopped believing in the future. And, suicide is at an astronomical rate.

Much of it is because kids are not grounded in the Word of God, because, dear friend, in the Word of God you have everything that this generation has lost—right here in God’s Word. And, I want to warn you, if you’re a parent and you’re going to raise a

child, you'd better make certain that you train that child in the Word of God, that they know what they believe, and that they have not only the authority of the Word of God, but the life of the Lord Jesus.

Here at Bellevue Baptist Church we're committed to helping your children grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. But, moms and dads, we need your help, and we cannot do what the home can do. You must do it at home, and then you must cooperate with us, and see to it that your children do the Bible memory. See to it that they're in Sunday School. Get to know their Sunday School teacher. See to it that they're at youth camp. See to it that they're in the choir. And, cooperate. And, don't ever criticize your church in front of your children. Be on fire about Christ in the church, and live the life of the Lord Jesus before those kids. And, train them, train them, train them in the way that they should go.

I'm warning you: beware of liberalism in the church. You're not going to have them with you always. They're going to get out. And, I'm telling you, friend, anything you can talk them into, someone can talk them out of. But, anything you train them in, that is theirs, is going to stay with them for life.

II. Humanism in Education

Second thing I want to warn you about. Not only had you better beware of liberalism in religion, but you'd better beware of humanism in education—humanism in education. Now, I want to say a word right here before I go on about our good, godly educators—many of them in the public, as well as in the private schools. Many of them are doing a wonderful job. And, I thank God for them. I thank God for their dedication. But, we have some real problems, and it is a problem that I'm going to describe under the word *humanism*.

Now, I know there are those today who just say, "Humanism, that's just a catchword. You preachers have got to have something to preach about, so you've made up a bogeyman and then named it *humanism*." Well, let me tell you what humanism is. Humanism is a camouflaged way of saying atheism. Now, people today can't say *atheism*, because that's more or less out of vogue. But, they can say *humanism*. And, *humanism* sounds good, because it sounds so much like *humanitarianism*. But, what it is, is *atheism* with a new name, and the name has been changed to protect the guilty.

Now, thank you. Let me read from the Humanist Manifesto. Article one—listen to it. And, by the way, this Humanist Manifesto has been signed by many social, political, economic, and religious leaders. Article one: "Religious humanists regard the universe as self-existing and not created." That is, God did not make everything. They believe in the eternality of matter, not in the eternality of God. Article 10 says, concerning the humanistic society, "There will be no uniquely religious emotions and attitudes of the

kind associated with belief in the supernatural. We don't want that kind of emotion. We don't want that kind of an attitude that recognizes a God." Then, they say, "We believe that traditional religions that place creed and revelation and God, or ritual, above human needs and experience do a disservice to the human species. No deity will save us. We must save ourselves. Promises of immortal salvation, or fear of eternal damnation, are both illusory and harmful." That's what the humanists are saying.

Well, what effect has it had? Do you remember the problems when you were in school in the 40's? Some of us were in school in the 40's. I'm talking about grammar school. I want to tell you what the problems were then: skipping school, running in the hallway, loafing after school, not returning library books, chewing gum in class, talking in study hall, broken windows. With the exception of one or two, I just plead guilty. You're looking at the guy right now. Thus, there were the problems then in school. Do you know what the problems in school today are? Violence, stealing, rape, teacher abuse, deadly weapons on school grounds, vandalism, arson, gang war, pregnancy, abortion, venereal disease. Things have changed. I'm telling you, dear friend, it is a terrible thing.

When I was in high school, I was president of my senior class and captain of the football team. Joyce was a cheerleader. We had prayer at noontime. We gathered kids there at our school at lunch. We got in a circle. We shared testimonies. We read the Word of God. We sang a hymn. We joined hands and just fellowshiped in the Lord Jesus. Today we wouldn't be able to do that. I don't think it hurt me. I don't think it hurt those 'round about us. I believe it helped. But, today, you can go to the high school at lunchtime and play at earsplitting decibels rock music, but you can't get on the P.A. system and thank God for the food.

Something has happened in America that is un-American, as far as I'm concerned. And, dear friend, many sincere teachers are innocently passing along the humanistic line. They don't know what they're doing. They're like someone who passes a counterfeit bill. But, America has been infiltrated with godless humanism.

Let me read something that came from a Childhood Educational Seminar. And, the man who gave it was a professor—now, listen—of educational psychiatry at Harvard University. I want to give you a quote. He said, "Every child in America entering school at the age of five is mentally ill, because he comes to school with certain allegiances toward our founding fathers, toward our elected officials, toward his parents, toward a belief in a supernatural being, toward the sovereignty of his nation as a separate entity." The child is sick, because he loves his founding fathers, because he loves his mom and dad, because he believes in God, because he believes America is a great nation. He says he's sick at the age of five. So, it's their job to make him well. And, as these doctors of education feel, the child will be well when he's just like they are.

Now, friend, that's out there, and it's very real. And, if you don't think that there is a

systematized effort to seduce your children, you are dead wrong. Let me read a quote from an article in *The Humanist* magazine, January/February 1983, page 26, called “A Religion for a New Age”: “The battle for humankind’s future must be waged and won in the public school classroom by teachers who correctly perceive their role as the proselytizers of a new faith.” What are they saying? They’re saying that that this humanism is our religion and the classroom is our Sunday School. And then he goes on to say, “The classroom must and will become an arena of conflict between the old and the new: the rotting corpse of Christianity and the new faith of humanism.”

Now, that’s not what we say they’re saying. That’s what they said in their magazine. They’re out, my friend, for your child. And, one of the ways that they do this is a thing called *values clarification*. It is a code word that you need to be aware of. And, what it is, it is a form of group therapy and sensitivity training and peer pressure brainwashing, where the child is put into an adult situation and asked to find out what he would do in this or that situation so as to clarify his values. “Now, Adrian, what would you do if you saw Phil Weatherwax cheating? Write down your answer. Would you tell the teacher? Would you tell Phil that he ought not to cheat? Would you help Phil to cheat? Would you do nothing? Would you talk to Phil after school? What would you do? Now, remember, Adrian, there are no right or wrong answers.” You see, the child is to make his own mind up what he thinks is right and what he thinks is wrong, because the humanists do not believe there is a set standard for right and wrong. And so, you just sort of clarify your values.

A pastor friend of mine said he was visiting a home, and in that particular home, there was some tension between the child and the parents. The pastor thought he would intercede and talk to this child. And, this youngster said to the pastor, “I don’t have to do what my parents tell me to do. My teacher told me I have a right to my own opinion.”

Now, obviously, that’s just one case, and maybe a horror story, but, friend, I want to tell you, many of our children are being brainwashed in school with an education that does not have a moral base. This is what’s wrong with sex education in the schools without a moral base—without a moral base.

I don’t know who Herman Crowder is, but he wrote a letter to the Commercial Appeal. It was so good I clipped it. Here’s what he said: “It is perverse rationalization to argue, as many do, that since teenage sexuality is already a fact of life, it must be accepted and granted implicit approval by including sex education in the scholastic curriculum. Teenage car theft is also very much a fact of life. If we applied the same syllogism to the same situation, we would have to abandon our hypocritical attitude that stealing cars is wrong. We would have to accept it and offer scholastic credit for it. How about chop shop 101?” And then, he goes on to say, “Let’s not overlook the other facts

of life. Teenage drug and alcohol abuse: why not strip all of the moral camouflage from that problem also? We could expand our consciousness and our curriculum to deal with it by enrichment of standard chemistry courses—highly advanced and enhanced chemistry; the stuff dreams are made of. That should do the trick very nicely. Once we shake loose from the restrictive bonds of right reason and a morally accountable conscience, there is virtually no limit to how progressive we can become.”

Did you hear what Mr. Crowder said? Well, Mr. Rogers, the kids are going to fornicate. Let’s tell them how to do it safely. Kids are going to steal cars. Tell them how to do it safely. The kids are going to use drugs. Let’s tell them how to do it safely. No, friend, there must be a moral education that says that fornication is wrong, that stealing is wrong, that drug abuse is wrong. We need to get back to that. Folks, we’ve been sold a bill of goods. In the classroom, you can blaspheme God; you just can’t praise Him. And, you need to be building something into your kids, because they’re going to face some things that you never faced before.

III. Paganism in Society

Let me move on to a third area very quickly that I want to mention. Not only liberalism in religion, not only humanism in education, but you need to beware of paganism in society. We are living in an increasingly pagan society, and your kids are being bombarded on every side, being told to do this and to do that.

For example, think of beverage alcohol. Billions of dollars are spent advertising beverage alcohol. Why? Because they want your boy or your girl. They’ve already got the other people. Did you know that 32 gallons per capita of beer were drunk last year in the United States? I mean, for every man, woman, boy, and girl, 32 gallons. Somebody had 64 gallons, because I didn’t drink any of mine. Thirty-two gallons. Thirty-two gallons! Line up 32 gallons of beer. Every person, every baby, every boy, every girl—32 gallons!

And they tell us, “Well, really, moderation is the answer.” No, friend, moderation is not the answer to the liquor problem. It’s the reason for it—it’s the reason for it. It’s the moderate drinker that encourages the other people to drink. We have been told everywhere on every hand everybody does it. One out of every 15 who begin to drink will become an alcoholic. Suppose we had any other substance that caused that much damage that was licensed. What would we do about it? But, you see, we’ve been sold a bill of goods today. There’s very little that we can do about it.

Our young people watch through the image that comes through on television. They see these guys out there in a bass boat. They just landed a big bass, and they pull out that Old Milwaukee, and they pop the top on that, and the foam comes out, and they hold it up, and they’re laughing, and they’re all jovial, and one of them says, “It doesn’t

get any better than this.” And, he’s right. It just gets worse. I mean, dear friend, they don’t show the end results. They don’t show the drunk in the gutter covered with vomit and flies. They don’t show that. A bunch of liars is what they are—liars. The kids don’t understand. They don’t know.

You parents ought to say, there will be no beverage alcohol in our home—not any. That’s the first thing to do. And, I’ll tell you something else to do. When your kids get home after they’ve been out to a party or a date, you be awake when they come in. And, Daddy, give him a big hug. I mean, up close. You have a non-drinking tradition in your family. Our family doesn’t drink. And, I’ll tell you what else to do. You take him to the emergency room of the hospital on Saturday night. Sit there with him for a while. Let him watch some of those people having been sliced up going through windshields. Let him see. Take him here to the court. Take them here to the tank, and let him look in the prison and see those fellows with the sunken eyes and with hollow chests and rotted teeth. Let him see the fellow on skid row. Take him to the morgue. Many children have never seen a body in the morgue before it’s been all decked with flowers. Get a physician friend. Go ahead and take him to the morgue, and let him see somebody like that. It will scare the wits out of him.

You see, the Bible teaches that youngsters are what we call *simple*. That doesn’t mean, “stupid.” The Bible word *simple* means, “naïve.” And, listen. Proverbs chapter 19 and verse 25 says, “*Smite a scorner, and the simple will beware*” (Proverbs 19:25). Do you know what that means? When a simpleton sees a scorner suffer, he learns. The blow that strikes one hits two. It really reaches two. Proverbs 21, verse 11: “*When the scorner is punished, the simple is made wise*” (Proverbs 21:11).

You see, we live in a permissive society. Our kids never really see the unfinished product of the brewer’s art. And, we need to somehow to get these things in their mind. They’re being bombarded. And, I’ll tell you the major way that they’re being bombarded is through rock music—through rock music. Rock music—porn rock—is the ultimate form to corrupt the minds of young people. It’s rock music and pornography together. I’ll give you another word for it: MTV. That’s what it is. And, you’ve got it piped into your room. Do you know what the message is? It is the message, primarily, of the glorification of sexual promiscuity, bisexuality, homosexuality, fatalism, drugs, alcohol, rebellion, and suicide, drummed to music over and over and over again.

“Well,” you say, “my kid’s hooked on it. I’d never get rid of it.” I’ll tell you what you ought to do, mister. You ought to play the man, and you ought to go in there, and you ought to say, “This stuff is going out.” You say, “Well, he’d rebel. He’d pitch a rebellion.” Well, you just pitch a bigger rebellion. You say, “He’d get nervous.” Well, you get more nervous than he gets. You say, “I’d lose my child.” Sounds to me like you’ve already lost him.

Now, friend, I'm not talking about coming with a heavy, unloving hand. Now, what you need to do is to start building some bridges between you and your child, until he knows that you love him, until he knows that you love God, until he knows that you have a standard, and get that standard in his heart. And then, you get that rock music, and you sit down and listen to the lyrics and show him where this is wrong. And, you need to be honest enough, mister, to let him listen to the lyrics of the music you listen to also. There are many parents today, you're not listening to rock music; you're listening to country and western. Rock music glorifies fornication. Country and western glorifies adultery. Rock glorifies drugs, and country and western glorifies beer and whiskey. It's the same thing; same song, just different tunes. And, you need to say, "We're going to get some good music in our home to take the place of that other music."

IV. Materialism in the Home

I wish I had more time, but let me just close and say, dear friend, that, even if you deal with liberalism in religion, and humanism in education, and paganism in society, you've still got another problem. And, most parents are failing right now. You're going to have to deal with materialism in the home—materialism in the home. I want you to take your Bibles very quickly and turn to Hebrews chapter 11—Hebrews chapter 11. And, I want to show you something here. It talks about Moses. Moses had some parents that raised him right. Notice verse 23: *"By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandments"* (Hebrews 11:23). Do you know what that means? It means they had enough faith to say, regardless of all of the dangers inherent, in spite of the fact that there's a king who wants to kill this baby, by faith, we're going to raise this child for God.

And, I want to want to show you what happened. Notice verse 24: *"By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;"*—now, if you have your Bible and don't mind marking in it, put a circle around the word *refuse*. All right now, look in verse 25—*"choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;"*—put a circle around the word *choosing*. Verse 26—*"esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward"* (Hebrews 11:24–26). Put a circle around the word *esteeming*. And, there you have it: refusing, choosing, esteeming.

Now, why? Why, dear friend, did he refuse sin? All right, verse 25, he chose righteousness. Why did he choose righteousness? Because he had esteemed or considered something.

Now, let me tell you how to raise children. First of all, you're going to have to get that proper estimation in their heart. First of all, they're going to have to have something to

believe in. They're going to have to have something that is worthwhile, and that is that holy estimation, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt. You're going to have to teach your kids what they have in the Lord Jesus Christ, until they make a proper estimation. And, when they make a proper estimation, at that time, they're going to choose Jesus. All right, first of all, esteeming. And then, choosing. All right, and when they choose Jesus, then they're going to refuse sin.

Now, I want you to get it right: esteeming, choosing, refusing. Do you know why many parents make a mistake? They try to get the kids to refuse rather than to choose. You try to take a bone away from a dog, a nasty old bone, and you're going to get bit. But, I'll tell you how to take a bone away from a dog. Just put a piece of steak down on the ground. You know what that that dog will do? First of all, he'll do some esteeming. He'll look at it, taste this, and look at that. He'll say, "That is better than this." Then, when he does some esteeming, he'll do some choosing. He says, "I want that." And, when he does some choosing, he's going to do some refusing, right?

Now, that's the way it goes. You go in there and you say to this kid, "Get rid of that music. Don't do that. Be here at a certain time. So and so, and so and so"—you're just trying to get him to refuse. He's not going to do it. You're liable to get bit. Try to take that bone away from him. But, you show what he has in the Lord Jesus Christ, and don't you let your home be a materialistic home.

Conclusion

I'm telling you you're walking through a minefield, and you'd better beware, because there's liberalism in the churches, there's humanism in the schools, there's paganism in society, and God help us, materialism in the home. But, may the beauty of the Lord Jesus be seen in your home, and may you not just simply teach your kids, but may you train them in the way that they go. And, when they are old, they will not depart from it.

Raising Young Champions

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: June 30, 1990

Main Scripture Text: Proverbs 22:6

“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”

PROVERBS 22:6

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Introduction

I want you to take God's Word, and open, please, to Proverbs chapter 22, and one of the most familiar verses in all of the Bible, as we continue our series, "A Future For Your Family." Now, if you can't raise your kids right, your family's not gonna have much of a future. So, we want to speak to you today about "Raising Young Champions," and your child should be a champion—not necessarily a champion in the spelling bee, not necessarily a champion in the halls of academia, not necessarily a champion on the football team, but a champion for Jesus Christ. And, this book is the breakfast of champions, folks. And, I want us to look in here and see what God has to say about raising a child.

A familiar verse: *"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it"* (Proverbs 22:6). Now, what does it mean to train up a child? May I tell you, my friend, there is a difference in teaching a child and training a child? So many of us have taught our children and then see them turn and go wrong. Our problem is neglect and indifference. We think, if we simply teach that, that's all that needs to be done, but then we find out that the child becomes self-willed, self-centered, and goes his own way. Let me tell you what the dictionary says "to train" means: it says, "to prepare for a contest; to instruct by exercise, to drill, to form to a proper shape, to discipline for use."

Now, nobody ever learned to play football by simply reading a book on football or simply sitting in a classroom with a blackboard up there and a coach drawing things on the blackboard, as they used to call that, "skull practice," when I was playing football. But, you really learn to play football under the tutelage and the guidance of a coach, out on the field.

So, let me give you four things, parents, and I hope you'll take notes, because there's an awful lot in this message. But, there are four things I want you to learn that this verse tells us. Proverbs chapter 22 and verse 6 says to *"train up a child in the way [that] he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it"* (Proverbs 22:6).

I. It Is Training That Commences with Childhood

Number one: It is training that commences with childhood. Do you see it? *"Train up a child in the way [that] he should go"* (Proverbs 22:6). It doesn't say, "Train up an adult," but, *"Train up a child"* (Proverbs 22:6). You must begin early. As a matter of fact, this word "train up" is a word that is used only four other times in the Bible. And, in those four other times, two times it is spoken of as a man dedicating his house. And, two times it talks about Solomon dedicating the house of the Lord to the Lord. And so, the idea of training up actually has the idea, first of all, of a dedication. You should begin by just simply dedicating your child to the Lord, because the word "train up" and the word

“dedicate” are interrelated and interlocked. The very first thing you should do is just give that child to the Lord Jesus Christ. We’ve done that with all of our children. We’ve gotten on our knees and offered our children up to the Lord. Begin, my dear friend, before they are born. Just dedicate them to the Lord. *“Train up a child”* (Proverbs 22:6).

Now, let me give you some other verses. Proverbs 19, verse 18: *“Chasten thy son while there is hope”* (Proverbs 19:18). Now, you see what that says? “Start early, while there’s hope.” Dear friend, if you don’t start early, you’re going to come to a hopeless situation. Proverbs 13, verse 24: *“He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes”* (Proverbs 13:24). Now, if you have a *King James*, that’s what it says—“betimes.” But, the word “betimes” literally means “early”—“early.” It has the idea of the dawn—that is, in the dawn of his life, while he is a child, then you get started.

Don’t ever think that little children cannot learn. Friend, little children are learning a language before they are learning to walk. About the time they’re learning to walk, they’re hearing little words; they are beginning to articulate little monosyllables like “Da-da” and “Ma-ma.” And, before long, that little two- and three-year-old child can speak an entire language. How many of you know more than one language? Well, the language that you know, you learned as a baby.

Listen to Isaiah 28, verses 9 and 10: the Bible says little babies—*“them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts”*—can learn; and then, this verse goes on to say that’s the way children learn—*“For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little”* (Isaiah 28:9–10). And, you don’t think they’re learning, but like a sponge, they are absorbing it all. Let me tell you why to start early with your children.

1. With a Child, the Curiosity Factor is Very High

You see, with a child, the curiosity factor is very high. What is the word that you hear from a little child so often? *“Why, Daddy?” “Why, Mommy?” “Why?”* Don’t despise them when they ask, “Why?” What a golden opportunity that they’re asking you, “Why?”

2. With a Child, the Memory Factor Is Very High

But, not only is the curiosity factor extremely high, the memory factor is incredibly high. Little children have a great ability to memorize things. And, we often say, “Oh, if I were only a child again! If I could only memorize like little children can memorize!”

3. With a Child, the Humility Factor Is Very High

The curiosity factor, the memory factor—and oh, thank God, the humility factor. Little children are so humble. You see, when we get to be obstreperous adults like some of us, it’s so hard now to break through that abominable pride and get in. That’s the reason the Lord Jesus said to adults, *“Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye*

shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:3).

Sometimes a little child will come forward and give his or her heart to the Lord Jesus Christ, and some well-meaning counselor will get that little child and ask that little child a lot of adult questions. And, if the little child can't answer the adult questions, they say, "The little child is not ready." Friend, you've got it just backward. It's not that the little child has to become like the adult; the adult has to become like a little child.

4. With a Child, the Trust Factor Is Very High

Friend, when you have that curiosity factor, that memory factor, that humility factor—and then, that ability to believe... Children have an incredible trust factor. Oh, they can trust. Now, that's not bad; that is wonderful. That is the way that God intended it.

So, the Bible says that you must commence with childhood. Do you remember what the Apostle Paul told young Timothy? That *"from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation"* (2 Timothy 3:15). Oh, dear friend, that child that God has given you is a great bundle of potentiality, and how you need to start so very early! Tomorrow that baby won't want to be rocked. Tomorrow, my dear friend, that toddler will not be asking, "Why?" Tomorrow that schoolboy will not want you to help him with his lessons. Don't let this time pass through your fingers.

Now, notice what here, *"Train up a child in the way"—"in the way"—"[that] he should go"* (Proverbs 22:6). Now, look at the word *way*. The word *way* there has the idea of a bend in a branch. It actually has something to do with a bend in a bow, like a bow and arrow. And, what it means is that every particular child has his own particular way. Children don't just come in standard packages. You have to read the label very carefully—*"in the way [that] he should go"* (Proverbs 22:6)—and that's true with all of us. You see, my dear friend, God never makes copies; He only makes originals. And, every one of us has those little idiosyncrasies, proclivities, and things that God has put into every one of us. And, your child comes with a certain conglomerate of genes, a certain conglomerate of talents, and abilities that later will become his spiritual gifts. And, how wise you are as a parent if you'll look at that child and see the way that he should go.

And, you see, dear friend, like a river, if you were to go out here and try to change the course of the mighty Mississippi, it would be difficult to do here at Memphis. But, if you go up to the headwaters, where it's just a little rivulet, or a trickle, then you could do something about it. If you tried to bend the trunk of a mighty oak, you'll not do it. But, if you'll take mighty oak when it's just starting and just a little branch there, a little twig, then you can bend it. That's what God is saying: *"There is a way in which the child should go"* (Proverbs 22:6). And, you need to study that child.

Children are different. Friend, it is incredible how different children can be with the same parents! Now, if you're like Bob Sorrell—just got one little daughter, and raised her well—Bob would go struttin' all over the place. But, let me tell you something: you

ought to have four like Adrian. Now, let me tell you something: we had four—well, actually, we have five. We have a little boy in Heaven. But, they're all so incredibly different.

If you were to study the children in the Bible, you'd find out that Cain and Abel were sons of Adam and Eve. How different was Cain from Abel! Absalom and Solomon were both sons of David. But, who studies the Bible and cannot see the incredible difference between an Absalom and a Solomon? Jacob and Esau were sons of the same father and the same mother, but what a difference there was between Jacob and Esau. And, I think of our four children and the way they are so different. Sometimes I wonder if they have the same parents, but I'm absolutely certain they do. And yet, they are so different in their attitudes, in their gifts, in their demeanor, and in their psyche—they are so different. But, thank God, they have all one thing in common: all of our children love the Lord Jesus Christ. But, see, the Bible says to find out the way in which he should go (Proverbs 22:6). And, don't fight against it. Cooperate with it.

Perhaps I've told you about Thomas Alva Edison. We owe a lot to Mr. Edison because we're sitting underneath the light bulbs that he invented this morning. He was an incredibly brilliant man; he was a genius. But, let me tell you something about Thomas Edison: when he was a little boy, he went to school, and you know what the teacher said? "Take this child out of school; he's too stupid to learn any thing. I can't teach him any thing. He is a stupid child." Do you know what Thomas Edison's mamma said? She said, "My boy is not stupid. You just don't understand him. He's not stupid. Give him to me. I'll teach him." And, she taught him. She saw something that a teacher could not see. And, parents, if they are led of the Lord, will understand that they are to "train up a child in the way [that] he should go" (Proverbs 22:6).

II. It Is Training That Communicates with Creativity

Now, dear friend, it is training—if you're going to train a champion—number one, that commences with childhood. Number two: It is training that communicates with creativity. It commences with childhood; it communicates with creativity. Now, the Bible says here, "Train up a child" (Proverbs 22:6). Now, I've told you that word "train up" has, in its etymology, the idea of dedication. But, it has another meaning also: it has the meaning of putting something in the mouth to be tasted.

In Bible times, the midwives, in order to get a little baby to begin the sucking motion, or to create taste so the little baby would swallow its food, the Arab midwife and the Hebrew midwife would sometimes take crushed dates and mix them with honey or olive oil, put that on their finger, and then rub the pallet of that baby. Now, the word "train up" actually has in its root also "to touch the pallet." Now, don't do it right now, but if you want to make yourself swallow, just take your finger and rub it back there on the back of

your mouth, and you can't help but swallow. It just...it just triggers the swallowing motion. And, to get a little baby to swallow, they would touch the pallet. Now, that's very interesting, because that is the word that is here in Proverbs 22, verse 6, which says, *"Train up a child"* (Proverbs 22:6). What it means is this, dear friend: "put something in their mouth to be tasted"; "create a thirst—create a hunger—for the Word of God." You will never force-feed a child the Word of God. Oh, how we need to creatively teach the Word of God!

When I began this series, I used Deuteronomy chapter 6, verses 6 and 7 as the message. And, I want you to listen to it again—Deuteronomy chapter 6, verses 6 and 7: *"And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart"*—and, first of all, friend, it's got to be in your heart before you can put it in the heart of your child. You can't teach what you don't know any more than you can come from where you've not been—*"And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children"*—now, watch this—*"and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up"* (Deuteronomy 6:6–7). This is not talking about a formal family worship—though I believe in that; this is talking about a way of life. Just when you're going in and out, when you're lying down, getting up, and sitting around the house, you just talk of them.

Now, the Bible teaches what a wonderful way this was to teach. Who was the master teacher? Who was the best teacher who ever taught in the world? Who was He? Of course, Jesus. And, how did Jesus teach His disciples? Well, as He was going along, He'd see someone sowing, and He'd say, *"Behold, a sower went forth to sow"* (Matthew 13:3). And then, He'd teach a spiritual lesson. He'd see some beautiful flowers, and He'd say, *"Consider the lilies how they grow"* (Luke 12:27). And then, the Lord Jesus would teach. I mean, Jesus saw lessons in everything. He was the master teacher.

Now, that's the way you are to teach your child: when you rise up, when you lie down, when you go in, when you come out, go out and come in, and all of this. You see, put something in the mouth to be tasted. It doesn't have to be dull; it doesn't have to be dry. There can be Bible reading, Bible stories, Bible games, Bible memories, Christian books, Christian music, and Andrew Culverwell's tapes. Get them. Have them in your home. Learn to give rewards for work well done. Give rewards for memory verses. You say, "Well, I don't believe in bribing people to do things." That's not a bribe. Do you know the difference between a bribe and a reward? A bribe is where you try to get someone to do what—hex someone to do what—he ought not to do for money, or for some other thing. It is a bribe—is an inducement—to do wrong. A reward is, "Thanks for doing right." Teach the children that there is a law of sowing and reaping, and reward them for these things. Don't ram it down their throat, but teach them—teach them.

III. It Is Training That Corrects with Consistency

All right. Now, what am I saying here? Dear friend, this verse teaches that if you're to raise a young champion, it must be training that commences with childhood. Number two: It must be training that communicates with creativity. Number three: It must be training that corrects with consistency. Did you get the word *consistency*? That corrects with consistency. Now, don't get the idea that your little darlin' doesn't need to be corrected. Now, the modern behavioral psychologist—he'll just teach you that your child is like a little rose bud and all you have to do is let him unfold and just let him bloom. He'll unfold to black your eye. Let me tell you something, friend: don't get the idea that your child is a little angel.

The Bible says, "*Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child*" (Proverbs 22:15). It doesn't say that a child is a fool. No child is a fool. But, "*foolishness*"—the word literally means "silliness"—"*is bound [up] in the heart of a child*" (Proverbs 22:15). And, don't you buy into the psychology that says that if little Throm Morton wants to cut the leg off the dining room table, you keep the saw sharp so it won't frustrate the little dear. No—no. There comes a time when you have to correct. And, there is a predisposition in that child, your child, my child, and any child to do wrong. And so, there must be correction with consistency.

A. Use Discipline

Now, you need to discipline your child.

1. Four Reasons for Disciplining a Child

Let me give you four reasons for disciplining any child.

a. You Discipline the Child because You Love the Child

First of all, if you love the child, you'll discipline the child. Proverbs 13, verse 24: "*He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes*" (Proverbs 13:24). That means he does it early. You say, "Well, I just love him so much; I can't do it." You're telling a lie. You don't love him. You love you. It gives you displeasure, and, therefore, you don't do it—not out of love for the child, but out of selfish love for yourself. You're not better than God, and the Bible says in Hebrews 12, verse 6: "*For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth*" (Hebrews 12:6). Are you better than God? "*Whom the Lord [loves] he [chastens]*" (Hebrews 12:6). I'll tell you... And, by the way, my dad, when he used to spank me, said, "Son, I'm just doing this because I love you." Did your dad ever tell you that? Boy, I knew I was my dad's favorite. He loved me a lot more than he loved my brother. "*Whom the Lord [loves] he [chastens]*" (Hebrews 12:6).

b. You Discipline the Child Because of the Nature of Human Nature

I'll tell you another reason you need to do it—not only because you love your child, but,

as I've already alluded to, because of the nature of human nature. Proverbs 22, verse 15: *"Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him"* (Proverbs 22:15). Now, lest any body write me a letter and say, "Oh, you ought not to beat a child with a rod," may I tell you that the word *rod* here—R-O-D—does not mean a stick like the handle of a shovel. It's a word that can simply mean a branch, a twig, or like a switch, that will sting, but do no harm. We'll talk about that a little bit more later on. But, children, my dear friend, need to understand that there is a moral nature in the universe—that there is retribution for doing wrong. Fear is a good lesson, and everybody needs to learn it. You say, "Well, I don't want my child to be raised in fear"—not cringing fear. But, dear friend, *"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge"* (Proverbs 1:7). There's the beginning of wisdom. The man, the boy, and the girl who fears God the most, loves Him the best. *The fear of the Lord is love on its knees.*

c. You Discipline the Child Because It Will Save You from So Much Disgrace

I'll tell you what else it'll do: if you'll correct your child, it'll save you from so much disgrace—oh, so much disgrace. Do you know what juvenile delinquents are? So many times they're the result of delinquent parents; I could say "juvenile" parents. Proverbs 29, verse 15: *"The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame"* (Proverbs 29:15). It's the reason so many kids are roaming the streets today. We call them "latchkey kids." They're raised with a television for a babysitter. Yes, they bring their mother to shame. Proverbs 29, verse 17: *"Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul"* (Proverbs 29:17). My dear friend, if you don't want to come to shame and if you don't want your children to be a reproach to you, then you'd better begin early.

d. You Discipline the Child Because It Will Keep Your Child out of Hell

Now, I'll tell you the greatest reason, though, for disciplining and correcting with consistency: it'll keep your boy or your girl out of Hell—out of Hell. Listen to Proverbs 23, verses 13 and 14: *"Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell"* (Proverbs 23:13–14). Now, that does not mean that you'll beat sin out of a child. Nobody can beat sin out of a child. It does not mean child abuse. The Bible is very clear and very plain against any kind of child abuse. God has given children a spanking place. And, we'll talk more about that later on. But, if the child that does not learn to respect authority from his parents, he will not respect authority in the schoolroom. He will not respect authority in the church house. He will not respect God's authority. And, ultimately, he will become a rebel and a fool, and he will die and go to Hell. That's what the Word of God says. Listen, the Bible says that if you withhold correction from your child, you're making him a candidate for eternal punishment.

2. Rules for Chastisement

Now, let me give some rules, therefore, for chastisement here. And, moms, dads, grandparents, and those who're going to be parents, I want you to take notes.

a. Start Early

Number one: Again, I want to say, in disciplining a child, start early—start early. He's old enough—she's old enough—to be disciplined when they're old enough to willingly and knowingly disobey. Some have waited too late. The Bible says in Proverbs chapter 19, verse 18: *“Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying”* (Proverbs 19:18). Don't let him bully you with his crying.

b. Use Spanking as a Last Resort

Now, number two: Use spanking as a last resort and not the first option—a last resort. You know, the Lord, speaking to us, said in Revelation chapter 3, verse 19: *“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten”* (Revelation 3:19). The rebuke is God speaking first. Chastening is coming later on. Speaking always comes before spanking. There are always times for explanations. There are always times for warnings. There are always times for second chances. Don't just try to cure everything with a spanking.

c. Keep Your Word

But, if you promise a spanking, keep your word. I've told ours, “If the Rapture comes, you're gonna get it on the way up.” Now, listen, folks, keep your word. Don't make idle threats that you don't intend to keep. What you're doing is worse than any thing in the world—to say, “I'm going to spank you if you do thus-and-such” and then fail to do it. And, if there is a spanking that is due, administrate it promptly. Do you remember what we preached about last week? Ecclesiastes chapter 8 and verse 11: *“Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil”* (Ecclesiastes 8:11). When you say, “I'm going to do it,” then, friend, as soon as it is practical, you need to do it.

d. Husbands and Wives Should Present a United Front

And, husbands and wives need to present a united front. Don't ever let the child play one parent against another. When punishment is due, let both parents agree so that none will show favoritism. Perhaps one parent shall hold and the other shall administrate. Always be a team. Children are very wise. They'll learn to play one parent against the other. And, when you give a spanking, never, ever cause bodily harm. I want to say again, the word *rod* can mean “switch.” And, God has given children a spanking place. But, do a good job, and a few good spankings will last a lifetime. It is not something you have to do over and over again, but do a good job—not just a peck, and not just a little whack. Do a good job, and after you've done it, and that child cries, pick that child up in your arms, hug that child, express love, dry away the tears, and let the child go out to play. But, let the spanking be such that the pain will be severe

enough—not doing bodily harm, but severe enough that he’ll never want to buy another one; that, whatever it was that caused it, is not worth what he got.

e. Always Discipline in Love

Always—listen—always discipline in love. *“Whom the Lord [loves] he [chastens]”* (Revelation 3:19). Listen to this—Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 4: *“And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath”* (Ephesians 6:4). Don’t provoke them into wrath. Have you ever seen parents who don’t discipline in love? They’re not trying to discipline the children. You’ll think they’re trying to get even with them. *Whack!* “Get out of the way of the television!”

Have you seen a mother in a grocery store kind of whacking her kids? *Bah, bah!* “Get out of the way!” That’s not discipline; that’s just an irritated mother. That’s all that is. Just do it in love. The Bible says in James chapter 1 and verse 20: *“For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God”* (James 1:20). Wrath produces wrath. Bitterness produces bitterness. Remember, it’s correction and not revenge.

f. Ask the Child to Consider Asking God to Forgive

And now, dear friend, always—whenever you have to correct, chasten a child—always work for repentance in the child’s heart. Remember that if a child has disobeyed, he has sinned because he has rebelled against his parents. That’s breaking one of God’s commandments. Teach the child that not only has he sinned against father and mother, but he’s also sinned against God. And, ask that child to consider asking God to forgive. Now, you cannot be the Holy Spirit. You cannot force that child to repent. All you can do is correct and pray that the child will repent. You cannot do the work of the Holy Spirit. But, my dear friend, there needs to be that discipline.

B. Set Limitations

Now, let me say something else here. We’re talking about correction that is consistent. Listen, commence with childhood, communicate with creativity, and correct with consistency. Pay much attention to what I’m about to say now: set limits for your children—set limits for your children. Every child needs to be given, number one, some goals and, number two, some limits. Now, if you don’t give some goals and some limits, you don’t love your children as you ought to. God, with His children, in the Garden of Eden, gave them goals and God gave them limitations. Now, when you set down certain limitations for your children, your children will test them immediately. That’s the nature of human nature. They’re going to test those limits. And, if that barrier that you’ve set up—if that limitation you’ve set up—moves, then the child will have no security whatever. He’s going to push against it. And, when he pushes against it, it moves, and it’ll give him no security. These limitations and restrictions will be tested. And, if you don’t give the child limitations, it implies to the child that you have rejected him. And, if

you don't conquer your child, they will feel rejected, and someone else will conquer them.

Now, why is it that parents don't want to set limitations? Why is it that modern parents today do not want to say, "No"? May I give you several reasons? And, you're going to hear yourself if you're not careful, if you are what we call an "indulgent parent," if you have refused to correct, and if you have refused to set limitations. I'll tell you why.

1. Modern Parents Are Trying to Avoid Confrontation

You're trying to avoid a confrontation—that's what you're trying to do, because you fear rejection. The Duke of Windsor, when he visited the United States, somebody asked him, "What do you think about America?" He said this: "The thing that impresses me most about America is the way the parents obey their children." Why don't we set limitations? Number one: We don't want confrontation that'll lead to rejection.

2. Modern Parents Haven't Given Their Children Their Time

Number two: We give our children things and indulgences because of the fact that we've not given them our time. And, we try to give them things as a substitute for time, and ultimately, though, the children will take what we give, do what we allow, and they will ultimately resent us for our warped priorities and these meaningless gifts.

3. Modern Parents Are Trying to Compensate for Their Own Deprivation

Another reason that we do it is we're trying to compensate for our own deprivation. Have you ever had any body to say to you, "I don't want my children to do without things as I did without them"? Have you ever said that about your own children—"I don't want them to have to do without what I did without"? Well, why not? How did you turn out? If you are able to give things to your children, it means, evidently, that you have attained things. And, if you're successful—you came out of poverty and now you live in a fine home, and have a nice automobile—your boy graduates from high school, and you just buy him a brand new automobile just like that because you didn't have one when you were a kid, do you think you're really teaching that child right? I'll tell you what you're trying to do, dear friend: you have become an achiever, and, therefore, you're able to buy that automobile for that boy. But, what you're teaching him to be is an under-achiever; you're teaching him that he can get what he wants without working for it.

4. Modern Parents Want to Keep up with the Joneses

Another reason that we often have indulgent children is just status. We're trying to keep up with the Joneses. The Joneses let their kids do this, and the Joneses let their kids do that. The Joneses buy this, and the Joneses buy that. And, the Joneses' kids are probably going to Hell. Don't let yours go with them. Set some limitations. I was reading Proverbs this morning, early, looking for proverbs that tell us to set limitations. There are

so many in the Book of Proverbs. We just give in to our children because it's the easiest way out. Mother is working, and Daddy is working. Everybody is pushing, pushing, pushing. They're so hurried; they're so tired. They just let the kids do what the kids want to do because it is the easiest way.

C. **Assign Responsibilities**

Let me say one other thing, here. I'm still talking about training that corrects with consistency. I said to use discipline, set limitations, and, number three, assign responsibilities. Refrain from giving your child so many freebees. Don't use the television as a babysitter. It's not just simply what he sees on television that's so bad, but that television is absorbing that natural creativity and high energy. It's dissipated into passive activities—just sitting in front of the tube. Make your child complete what you tell him to do. You could clean up the room in 15 minutes; it may take him or her two hours to do it, but see that they finish—see that they finish.

See that your child is held personally accountable. Give them an allowance. See to it that they give away some money. Don't let your child come to church on Sunday morning without an offering. Let him. Don't give him something to give. Give him an allowance that is his, and let him give of his own to the Lord. Teach him to give money; teach him to save money, and teach him to spend money wisely. Oh, I wish I had time for all of these things, but I must get to the last and final point.

IV. **It Is Training That Consummates with Conversion**

Now, listen to what we have said. We have said that Proverbs 22, verse 6 (Proverbs 22:6) says, number one, that there is training that commences with childhood. We have said that it is training that communicates with creativity. We have said that it is training that corrects with consistency. And, last of all, it is training that consummates with conversion. What is the goal of all of this? It is to bring a child to Jesus Christ, to help a child to have something that will last him all of his life. *“Train up a child in the way [that] he should go: and when he is old, [he'll] not depart from it”* (Proverbs 22:6). It doesn't mean that when he's old, he'll come back to it. It means that he will never, ever forsake it. That is, that he will have in his heart a principle, that he will have the Lord in his heart.

Now, how old should a child be before we bring that child to the Lord Jesus Christ? Don't get the idea that a child has to have a Ph.D. in sin in order to be saved. I hear people say, “Now, I just don't believe in childhood conversions.” Well, my dear friend, I want you to know, I do with all of my heart and soul. And, I'm gonna tell why. And, if you are a parent, as soon as is possible and practical, you need to lead your child to Jesus Christ. As soon as your child can comprehend the conception of sin—that sin is not just naughtiness, but rebellion against God—the moment that child understands that, your

child is ready for conversion. It is not unusual for children to be saved. Listen, seventy-five percent of all people who trust Christ—are you listening?—seventy-five percent of all people who trust Christ are saved before the age of fourteen. Did you know that? Seventy-five percent are saved before they're fourteen.

Have you ever read Matthew Henry's commentary? Matthew Henry was saved at the age of eleven. Have you ever heard about the sermons of Jonathan Edwards, the great revivalist—"Sinners in the hand of an angry God..."? Jonathan Edwards was saved at the age of eight. Polycarp, one of the first Christian martyrs, burned at the stake for the Lord Jesus Christ, was saved as a child at the age of nine. He lived for the Lord Jesus Christ all of his life and was burned at the stake at ninety—saved at nine, burned at the stake for Jesus at ninety. *"When he is old, [he'll] not depart from it"* (Proverbs 22:6). Charles Hadden Spurgeon—many who say was the greatest preacher who ever lived—Charles Hadden Spurgeon was saved at the age of twelve and, by his own testimony, said, "I would have been saved much earlier had somebody pointed me to Jesus Christ." We have taken a survey among our Southern Baptist missionaries, and we've found out that of our Southern Baptist missionaries at home and abroad, most of them—ninety percent of them—are you listening?—ninety percent of them were saved before the age of eleven. Of all of our missionaries, thousands of missionaries, the average age of conversion for all Southern Baptist missionaries is eight years of age.

Now, be careful with little children. Do not shove little children—that's wrong—but don't bore little children—that's wrong. Guide little children—guide little children—that they might come to know the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord. Oh, my dear friend, you want a champion for the Lord Jesus Christ? How wonderful if we will train them up with training that commences at childhood, communicates with creativity, corrects with consistency, and consummates in conversion!

Conclusion

Now, I'm finished with my message, but let me just say this about this proverb: Is this proverb a promise? Well, yes and no. It is a proverb. That does not mean that you can override your child's will. You can do everything right—listen to me; now, listen—you can do everything right, and your child can rebel against God. But, if you want to do everything right and give your child the best way, it's Proverbs chapter 22 and verse 6 (Proverbs 22:6).

Heads are bowed; eyes are closed—no one's stirring. You're not ready to train anybody until you yourself have submitted to the Lordship of Christ. No one stirring—no one moving. Heads are bowed. How many in this congregation today would say, "Brother Rogers, I know that if I died today, I'd go straight to Heaven, because I have

repented of my sin, I've trusted Jesus Christ as my personal Savior, and God's Spirit agrees with my spirit that I'm a child of God. I have the inner witness in my heart that I'm saved, and I know that I know that I have been born again"? Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed. Would you give me that testimony with a lifted hand? Hold it up where I may see it. Thank you; take them down. That's many, but, of course, it's not all of us.

To those of you who are not saved, may I tell you that God brought you here today to be saved? And, the Bible says, "*For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved*" (Romans 10:13). You're not saved by joining a church or by getting baptized. This is well and good, but that won't save you. You're not saved by keeping the Ten Commandments or by living a clean life. That's well and good, but that won't save you. The Bible says, "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved*" (Acts 16:31). Trust Him as your Lord and Savior. The word "to believe" means to commit. Commit your life to Jesus Christ, and He will save you. Your sin has already been paid for, but that does you no good. It only increases your judgment unless you repent of your sin and receive Christ.

Now, right where you are, if you'd pray a prayer like this: "O God, I'm a sinner. I'm lost, and I need to be saved. Jesus, You died to save me. You promised to save me if I would trust You. And, I do trust You, Jesus. Come into my heart. Forgive my sin, and save me." Pray a prayer like that, and He will save you. Lord, I pray that many today will come to Christ. In His wonderful name. Amen.

The Techniques of Training Children

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: May 13, 1984

Main Scripture Text: Proverbs 22:6

“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”

PROVERBS 22:6

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Introduction

Proverbs chapter 22 and verse 6. Today is Mother's Day, and we have a Mother's Day text: Proverbs chapter 22 and verse 6. We've been preaching through the Book of

Proverbs in a series we've entitled "God's Way to Health, Wealth, and Wisdom." And my! What wisdom we have here today! *"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it"* (Proverbs 22:6). "The Techniques of Training Children"—that's the title of our message today. And dear friend, I want to tell you that the devil does not want you to listen to the message that we have today. It is Satan's plan to fracture our families, because the devil knows that if he can ruin us at home, he can ruin us all over.

G. K. Chesterton said that we spend the first half of our lives fighting with our parents, and the second half of our lives fighting with our children. If that is true, that is sad indeed. But as I look around, I see that the homes of America are really a spiritual disaster area. And I want to tell you some things that have broken my heart as I consider them. One hundred thousand of America's children are in prison. I'm talking about children not being in reformatories, but literally in prison. Did you know that four out of ten children live in a broken home, a home that has been broken by divorce? Count them: one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten. Four out of that ten live in a broken home. And 65 out of every 1,000 children between 7 and 11 have received psychiatric help.

I'm talking about children, now, between the ages of 7 and 11. The average age for beginning to smoke is no longer 14. It is now 10—10-year-olds. That's the average age where they begin to smoke. One million girls in America this year will conceive out of wedlock and bear a child. Little girls between the ages of 12 and 17, 1,000,000 of them between 12 and 17, and that does not count those that will be aborted. According to the horrible statistics that I have found, one in five children uses drugs at least twice a week. I'm not talking about medicine. I'm talking about illicit drugs. Ten million minors have venereal disease in America, and suicide is becoming a problem among children. It's alarming. One statistic says that between 10 and 15 percent of all children have seriously considered suicide or attempted it. Some of them as young as 7 and 8 years of age. Now I went on to find out that so-called juvenile delinquency is increasing seven times faster than our population.

Now we think we're pretty smart; but we're not doing a very good job. And when all else fails, what? Read the directions. Read the directions. *"Train up a child in the way that he should go, and when he is old he'll not depart from it"* (Proverbs 22:6). What is the cause? Well, first of all, I want to say it is failing fathers. God gave fathers to the home to provide stability and leadership and character and strength. But most fathers today are interested in business and sports and pleasure and sex and hobbies. They're dropout fathers and misdirected mothers.

Everybody is telling us today that being a mother is a second-class, second-rate job, and that a woman today has more abilities and talents and gifts that she ought to give

herself to. And this is something that will somehow keep her from fulfillment. By 1990 I am told that 45% of the work force in America will be women. And already today we have 6,000,000 children under the age of six that have working mothers. “Oh,” you say, “that’s all right. I have them in a daycare.” Read Proverbs chapter 29 and verse 15 with me for a moment—Proverbs chapter 29 and verse 15. The Bible says here: *“The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame”* (Proverbs 29:15).

“Now,” you say, “I don’t leave him to himself; I leave him with someone.” But what this verse literally says is, “A child that is put off—that is, a child that is shoved off to somebody else—is going to bring his mother to shame and to heartbreak.” And I want to tell you, not only has the daycare become the tool that many mothers use, the television has become the tool that many mothers use. And the television is kind of a built-in babysitter, even when we have them home.

Now if next door to you there were a couple living in immorality, not married, would you tell you children, “Now look, Mama is busy. You need to entertain yourself. Go get on a soapbox and peer into the venetian blinds and entertain yourself”? Now you wouldn’t tell them to do that. But did you know, according to the National Federation of Decency, 88% of all sex that is portrayed on television, eluded to or whatever, 88% is outside the bonds of matrimony, 88%.

Did you know that liquor, if anything is drunk—ten to one—ten to one it will be alcoholic beverages—ten to one. More than anything else—the next drink is coffee—but, ten to one, it will be some form of liquor. They don’t drink water; they don’t drink soft drinks; they don’t drink lemonade. It is liquor, some form of alcoholic beverages. That’s what they’re watching on television day after day after day. And no wonder we’re raising a generation of kids who are going wrong. You say, “Well, my kids are doing pretty good.” The reason that some think their kids are doing so well is they don’t know what their kids are doing. They really do not know. They’re not even with them.

Now the Bible gives us some techniques for training children. And I want us to see what they are, because they’re all wrapped up here in Proverbs 22 and verse 6: *“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it”* (Proverbs 22:6).

I. Commence with Childhood

Four things I want to give you: Number one—number one, it is the training that commences in childhood. It commences with childhood.

Now notice what the Scripture says—*“Train up a child.”* And the word *train* has the idea of dedicating. As a matter of fact, it has been used in Hebrew literature, the same word, to mean, “dedicating.” *Dedicate* a child in the way that he should go. Have you

dedicated your children to the Lord? I tell you, when all of ours were born, Joyce and I got on our knees and gave our precious children to the Lord Jesus Christ. We have dedicated, rededicated them to the Lord over and over again. Why is this? Why should you start when they're young? Why should you commence with childhood? Why does the Bible say train up a child? Why doesn't it say train up a teenager? I'll tell you why.

A. **The Correction Factor**

There are several factors. First of all is the correction factor. It is so much easier to correct them when they're young. It's so much easier to steer them when they're young.

Now you can take a little rivulet, and a little stream, and you can make it grow however you wish. But it's hard to steer the mighty Mississippi. You can take a little twig, and you can make it grow however you wish; but it's hard to bend an oak tree. You can correct a child when he is a child; but, once he gets to be a man, it's going to be very hard to change him.

Look, if you will, in Proverbs chapter 19 and verse 18: "*Chasten thy son while there is hope*" (Proverbs 19:18). Now just take your pen, if it's your own Bible that you're using this morning, and underscore that phrase: "*while there is hope.*" Someone will come to a pastor for counseling, and they say, "Pastor, I just don't know what to do with my son. He's on drugs. He's a drunkard. He's a sluggard. He's lazy. He's dishonest. He's into rock music. He's into this; he's into that, I can't do anything with him. He's rebellious. What do you think I ought to do Pastor?" Well, do you know the problem? They're starting 16 years and 200 pounds too late. That's the problem. The Bible says, "*Chasten your son while there is hope.*"

Look, if you will, in Proverbs chapter 13 and verse 24—Proverbs 13 and verse 24: "*He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes*" (Proverbs 13:24). Now if you're using the King James, it says, "*chasteneth him betimes.*" But the word *betimes* literally means, "early." That is, when he's young. I'm telling you, dear friend, that when they are young this is the easiest time to correct them. "Well," you say, "they don't need correcting; they're little angels." I know, I know, they're all little angels. But I want to tell you, as their legs get longer, you're going to find out their wings are going to get shorter. And they are not the little angels that you really think that they are. And the time for correction, the time that you begin, is with a child. The Bible says, "*Train up a child in the way that he should go*" (Proverbs 22:6). It is the best time for correction.

B. **The Communication Factor**

It is a wonderful time for communication. Did you know that little children have a great ability to learn? Why is this? Well, number one, they have a great curiosity factor. "Why, Daddy? Why, Mommy?" Do you know what I'm talking about? "Why?" Well listen. Don't

put them down over that. Don't say, "Stop asking so many questions." That is what God built into that child. As a matter of fact, the Bible says, in the Old Testament, when a child says, "Why are you doing this?" you're to tell him, "This is the way God has set it up." "What does this mean?" You see—that's the way you are to teach. That's the way you are to communicate truth. They have a great curiosity factor, and they have a great memory factor. It's amazing what the little rascals can learn.

May I tell you about my little granddaughter? Listen. I have a granddaughter who is two this month, and do you know she's already learned a foreign language? English—I mean, she wasn't born with that language. She was born with no language, and she—I'm talking about a two-year-old child—has learned a complicated language like English. Don't tell me they can't learn. Why, I want to tell you something even more amazing. Over in Japan there are some kids that learn Japanese. Now boy, that's a hard language. They learn Japanese. How does a little two-year-old learn Japanese? Because God has given to them a curiosity factor; and God has given to them a memory factor; and God has given to them a humility factor; and God has given to them a trust factor. And all of this is built into those little children. It is the time, dear friend, for correction. It is the time for communication. And tomorrow, that toddler won't want to be rocked. And tomorrow, that toddler won't be asking "why?" And tomorrow, that schoolboy will not be asking for help with his language. And tomorrow, that teenager will not want to bring his or her friends home so that they can enjoy the things in your home.

Now we need to start early, because it is the time—early is the time for correction.

C. **The Conversion Factor**

Early is the time for communication. Early is the time for conversion. We ought to see to it that our children pray, and see to it that our children find Christ at an early age. I am sick and tired of people playing down childhood conversions, like it's wrong to lead a child to Christ. It is wrong to not to lead a child to Jesus Christ. This idea that a child has to have a PhD in sin before he can get saved is ridiculous.

Now of course, we're not to manipulate children, for that matter. We're not to manipulate anybody—an adult, or anybody else. We don't manipulate people. But with a child, we do not shove the child; and with a child, we do not block the child; but we guide the child. And it ought to be perfectly normal and natural that children would come to know the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord, if they're raised in a Christian home. You read there in Mark the 10th chapter where the mothers brought the little babies to Jesus, to be blessed of Jesus—little children, literally, to Jesus, that he might lay His hands on them and bless them. And the disciples said, "Oh well, you keep these children away from Jesus. We're the learned doctors, and we're the chosen disciples, and so forth. Jesus doesn't have time for these little children." The Bible says that Jesus

was filled with indignation, and He said, “You bring these little children to me.” And Jesus put them in his lap and blessed them. And then, Jesus said, “If you don’t receive the Kingdom of Heaven like one of these little children, you’re not going to see it all.”

Now we try to sometimes think the little child has to become like an adult, when God says the adult has to become like a little child. And children can be saved, and should be saved, at an early age. If you know anything about theology, and commentaries, and great Christians of the past, you’ve used Matthew Henry’s commentary. Matthew Henry was saved at the age of 11. If you know anything about Christian history, and great preachers, you know Jonathan Edwards, that preacher in that great American revivalist who preached “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.” Jonathan Edwards was saved at the age of 8. If you know anything about preachers, you know about Charles Haddon Spurgeon. Charles Haddon Spurgeon, perhaps the greatest preacher since the Apostle Paul, was converted, came to the Lord Jesus Christ, at the age of 12. And Charles Haddon Spurgeon said, “I would have been saved earlier, had I had someone to instruct me and to guide me.” And then, he said, “A child of 5 can savingly believe as a child of 50, to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Now I’m not saying that any child ought to be led to Christ before he has the comprehension, and the knowledge, and the conviction of sin. But I’m trying to tell you, ladies and gentleman, that we ought to train up a child in the way that he should go. And we should commence with childhood, and begin to teach that child the things of God, and lead that child to Jesus Christ. Ninety percent of all of our Southern Baptist missionaries who are on the foreign field, according to a survey, 90% of them, 90% of them, were converted before they were 11. And the average age of their conversion was 8. I’m talking about our missionaries. The church father, Polycarp, was converted when he was 9. He died in the flames for Jesus at 90. Sounds to me like there was a childhood conversion that stayed and stuck! No, we’re not to manipulate children—of course we’re not. But I tell you, it ought to be our joy to lead our children to Christ. And not only to lead them to Christ, but see to it that they are Spirit-filled. For a child needs to be Spirit-filled, like an evangelist, or a pastor; and we need to see to it that they’re filled with the Spirit, and learn to walk in the Spirit.

So what I’m saying is that the first technique for raising children is, you need to commence with childhood. You need to commence with childhood. Train up a child. Train up a child in the way that he should go.

II. Correct with Consistency

Second technique, not only do you need to commence with childhood, but you need to correct with consistency. Correct with consistency. The word *train* is a bigger word than *teach*. So many people think it means, “teach,” but it literally means, “train.” And the

Hebrew word has entered the idea of correction. It has entered the idea of discipline. We are to discipline these children. We are to correct them.

A. Because You Love Them

Now let me give you some reasons why we ought to correct them. Most of them are found right here in the Book of Proverbs. Turn to Proverbs chapter 13 and verse 24. Proverbs 13 and verse 24—look at it: *“He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes”* (Proverbs 13:24). *“Betimes”*—that is, he chastens him early. Do you remember what I told you that means? He chastens him early. He that spares his rod hates his son.

Now sometimes somebody will say, “Well, you know, I just can’t whip him. I just love him so much.” That’s a lie. You don’t love him. You love you. You don’t like to hear him cry. You don’t like the displeasure of having to discipline that child. It’s too much difficulty, and so you just let the child go. The Bible says in Hebrews chapter 12 and verse 6: “Whom the Father loves, He chastens” (Hebrews 12:6). You’re not better than God. If you love your child, you’re going to correct your child.

B. Because of the Nature of Human Nature

I’ll tell you another reason you ought to do it. Not only because you love them, but because of the nature of human nature. What is the nature of human nature? Look, if you will, in Proverbs chapter 22 and verse 15—Proverbs chapter 22 and verse 15: *“Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child”* (Proverbs 22:15)—*“Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child.”* Now the word *foolishness* does not mean, “silliness,” that they like to play little games—that’s not what it means at all. It means “wickedness,” in the sense that the Bible uses the term *fool* in the Book of Proverbs—the *fool* hates God, ignores God. That’s bound up in the heart of a child. You say, “My little angel?” Yes, your little angel. I mean, do you know what the behavioral psychologist will tell us? That all little children, they’re just little rosebuds waiting to unfold. And so you don’t do anything to harm his little psyche. And if junior wants to cut the leg off the dining room table, you keep the saw sharp, so it won’t frustrate him. And you just let that little thing unfold. That’s not what the Word of God says. The Word of God says that foolishness is bound up in a heart of a child.

Now he learns a moral lesson. What does it mean when it says, “The rod of reproof will drive it far from him?” (Proverbs 22:15). It means that, when a child learns there’s a moral authority, when a child learns that he cannot be a rebel, then, you teach that child a moral lesson. I want to tell you, friend, there are some things that a child can learn through the seat of his pants, before he’s 12, that he’ll only have to learn through great pain and disaster afterward—that there is a moral authority. There is a right and there is a wrong in this world.

C. Because You Might Want to Save Yourself Disgrace

Now I'll tell you another reason you ought to do it. Not only because you love them, not only because of their nature, but because you might want to save yourself a little disgrace, and give yourself a little pleasure. Look, if you will, in Proverbs 29, and read with me verse 15. Proverbs chapter 29 and verse 15: *"The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself"*—and remember what the word *left to himself* literally means, a child "put away"—*"bringeth his mother to shame"* (Proverbs 29:15). Now if you don't do it, lady, one of these days you're going to be ashamed, or, at least, you ought to be ashamed. Look, if you will, in verse 17, however: *"Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul"* (Proverbs 29:17). What a joy—what a joy to see children who have been corrected with consistency!

Now dear friend, stop trying to win a popularity contest with your children, and begin to plan for the future. *"Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward"*—the Bible says—*"it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby"* (Hebrews 12:11).

D. Because You May Save a Soul from Hell

But let me give you a major reason for correcting your child with consistency. Look, if you will, in Proverbs chapter 23, verses 13 and 14—Proverbs 23, verses 13 and 14: *"Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell"* (Proverbs 23:13–14). Now let's just slow down here a little bit. When the Bible says, "beat him with a rod"—that sounds awful cruel. And if you think I'm talking about child abuse, you're dead wrong. Mister, you don't understand what I'm talking about. The word *rod* here is not the idea of a club—that's not it at all. It is, you get you a spanking utensil, whatever it is that will cause the smart, that will cause the pain, that will cause the sting, but will not do any harm.

Now let me tell you that God has it all arranged where you ought to spank a child. God built every child with a spanking place. Did you know that? My daddy never whipped me on an empty stomach—he just turned me over; and that's the place, right there; that is the spanking place that God has given. And by the way, it's good to use an instrument like that rather than your bare hand. Don't strike a child with your bare hand; and especially, don't strike a child in the face. Use some neutral instrument, so that your hand can be thought of as a hand of caressing and loving and so forth. But the Bible says here that God gives you an instrument. You're to use it—the right time, the right place, the right way. Never, ever are you to do physical harm to a child. You can chastise a child, without doing physical harm to the child.

And the Bible says that you'll save a soul from Hell. How is that? Well, you see a

child that doesn't learn to respect authority in the home is not going to respect authority in the school; he's not going to respect authority in the church; he's not going to respect authority in Heaven; he's not going to respect governmental authority. The great major problem in America today is we have an unruly, unwashed generation that has no respect for authority—God's or anybody else's. And it begins with the lessons that we learn at home. And the Bible says, "He will not die"—he'll not die. Now he'll make the neighbors think he's going to die—but he's not going to die; and, to the contrary, you're going to save his soul from Hell.

E. Rules for Discipline

Now let me talk to you just a little bit, very practically, if I can, on this Mother's Day, about some rules for discipline, things that we've learned from life, and learned from the Word of God.

1. Start Early

Again, I want to tell you, start early—start early. When should you begin to chastise a child, correct a child? When they're old enough to knowingly and willingly disobey. When they're old enough to knowingly and willingly disobey, then that's the time for you to knowingly and willingly to start.

2. Spanking Should Not Be the First Thing

Now secondly, don't think of a spanking as the first thing that you ought to do. A spanking is not the first thing—it's the last resort. You ought to talk first. You ought to reason first. You ought to warn first. You ought to instruct first. For example, in the Bible, the Lord Jesus said, "*As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten*" (Revelation 3:19). First, He rebukes, and then, He chastens. We ought to learn we can do more with our words than we can do with our whip. We can do more with telling and leading and teaching and explaining; and so, speaking ought to come before spanking.

3. Keep Your Word

Now remember this—that there are all kinds of training, not just simply taking a rod after a child. But on the other hand, if you've told a child, "Child, if you do this, or if you do that, just as surely as I live, you're going to get a spanking," then keep your word—keep your word.

On one occasion, I left the pulpit, and came down out of the pulpit, when I was preaching, and administered a little corporal punishment to one of mine before the congregation. I was an immature, young man, and I don't think I should have done that; but I'll tell you one thing: neither the child nor the congregation has ever forgotten it. But I just said to mine, "If you do that, I'm going to do thus and such." I believe you ought to tell them, "Look. Listen. If you do this, you're going to get a spanking." Tell them, "Look. I mean, if the Rapture comes, you're going to get it on the way up; but I'm going to keep

my word.”

Now listen. What I’m talking about is the consistency; there needs to be a consistency in this thing. Now keep your word.

4. Administrate the Punishment Promptly

Next, administrate it promptly. If there’s time for corporal punishment, give it promptly.

5. Present a United Front

And next, husband and wife, you need to present a united front. Don’t let one do the spanking, and another do the hugging. As a matter of fact, one can hold, and another can administrate; and then, they both can hug after it’s over. But a child is very clever. A child will play one parent against another.

6. When You Spank, Do a Good Job

And another thing, when you do it, do a good job. Have you ever seen a mother in a supermarket kind of whack at her children? Whack, whack, whack, whack—have you ever seen that? A kid just dodging like *this*—looks like Sugar Ray—and the mama just kind of whacking at the child. Don’t do that. I mean, if you’re going to give them a spanking, get in the right place, the right time, and do it in the right way. And I’ll tell you what—you don’t have to do it very often. A few good spankings and your spanking days will be over. A few good spankings and your spankings days will be over. I mean, they’ll be over. A good spanking ought to last several years. You don’t have to be constantly whacking at them, thumping, beating them, and so forth. But what I’m trying to say is that there comes a time, there comes a time when it must be done. And when you do it, do a good job. And if that child is still sulking, if that child is still rebellious, give another good job. You need to stay with it a little bit longer.

7. Always Discipline in Love

Now in case somebody thinks that I’m the meanest man that ever lived, especially little boys and little girls here, I want to say to parents, always discipline in love—discipline in love. Do you know what the Bible says in the Book of Hebrews chapter 12, verse 6? “Whom the Father loves, He chastens” (Hebrews 12:6). Whom the Father loves, He chastens. And the Bible says, in Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 4, “*And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*” (Ephesians 6:4). And that word *nurture* actually means, in the “discipline” of the Lord.

But don’t do it in wrath. How can you provoke a child to wrath? I’ll tell you how to provoke a child to wrath. Wrath produces wrath. As a matter of fact, the Bible says, “*For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God*” (James 1:20). And that is, if you are punishing your child, and you yourself are angry, don’t punish that child. Never punish a child when you’re angry—never. The wrath of man does not work the

righteousness of God. Wrath produces wrath, and bitterness produces bitterness, and love produces love. And when you chastise a child in love, it's going to come through that this indeed has broken your heart, and that child is going to know that love.

Never withhold your love as a form of punishment. Never say, "You did wrong and I'm not going to have anything to do with you." "You did wrong—Daddy doesn't love you." "You did wrong—Mama doesn't love you." Chastise the child, and then, sit down and cry with them, and hug them, and love them—but do it in love. Again, I'm not talking about child abuse. I'm not talking about being cruel. I'm talking about good old Bible wisdom. And I thank God for Dr. Benjamin Spock in some of the things he said. But I want to tell you, there are occasions when spanking is better than Spock. Some parents are not on spanking terms with their children. They ought to be. Do it in love.

8. Always Work for Repentance

Let me say something else—when you chastise a child, always work for repentance—repentance. You see, you're not getting even with the child—that's not the thing. You're trying to correct the child. But you're trying to correct the child more than just outwardly; you're trying to correct the child inwardly. Do you know what that child did to cause that child to get a spanking? The child sinned—sinned. Why? Because the Bible says, "Honor your father and your mother," "Children, be obedient," and so forth. And so when you teach the child, when a child gets old enough to understand this concept, that, "Look, Precious, you've sinned; this not only breaks God's law, it breaks God's heart"; and, if you as a parent can pray with a child, and help that child to understand that they've done wrong, and lead that child to ask God to forgive them.

Now I want to say something here—that your desire, your goal, you may not reach it. You cannot be the Holy Spirit in the child's life. You cannot make a child repent, but you ought to pray that the child would. That ought to be your goal. That ought to be your responsibility—that as you chastise that child in love, you do it promptly, you do it gently, as the Bible says, not causing physical harm—the right time, the right place, the right way. And then, you go a step further: you express your love to that child. Receive that child, put your arms around that child, and play with that child, and teach that child to seek the forgiveness of God, and, at least, point that child in that right way. I believe then you will be correcting with consistency. And God will use it, and God will honor it.

III. Communicate with Creativity

Now what have we said? Number one: commence with childhood; number two: correct with consistency; number three: communicate with creativity. Communicate with creativity. Now notice again what the Bible says. The Bible says, "*Train up a child in the way that he should go*" (Proverbs 22:6). It doesn't say teach him; it says train him. Some of you men spend more time training your dogs than you do your children. And then,

you tie your dogs up at night, and let your children run loose. Train a child. Train a child very much as you would train an animal or whatever. We need to spend time training our children.

And how are we going to train them? Creatively. Why creatively? Well, notice what the Scripture says. It says: *“Train up a child in the way that he should go”* (Proverbs 22:6). And the idea is there that every child is an individual. Actually this Hebrew word *way* is a word that is used in the Bible to mean, “the bending of a bow.” Do you know what a bow is, that you shoot an arrow with? That bow has a bend in it. It is bent, and it just has a natural bend in it; and that’s the word. Now let me give it this way, let me give you a loose translation: “Train up a child in the way that he is bent.” That’s really what it means, “the way that he is bent.”

You see, all children come into the world with a natural bent. All children are not the same. God does not make carbon copies. God does not make duplicates. God only makes originals. And your child came into the world—God gave you that child. And in his genes and in his chromosomes, in his innate talents, and in his yet to be God-given spiritual gifts, there is a unique mix in which God made that individual a particular unique individual. And therefore, you must deal with that child as an individual—as an individual. And God will give you wisdom to communicate creatively, and with creativity, because every child has a particular bent. All children are not the same; children are different.

Now if you’ve just had one child... Ole’ Bob Sorrell here—where’s Bob? Bob was in that other service sitting up there so proud when I was talking. Sitting up there in that gray suit of his, with that maroon tie, just nodding his head and saying, “Amen—Mrs. Buna, down here on the front row. I said, “Yeah, they think they know all about it, because they had sweet little Lea Ann. One girl, one precious little Christian girl, tender, sweet, Lea Ann.” I said, “Ole Bob, what he needed was a couple of ole boys”—that’s what Bob needed. And then, Bob wouldn’t be sitting up there just smiling and saying, “Yeah, I know all about it.”

I want to tell you something, friend—we’ve had four, and all four of them are different. It’s an amazing thing. You study the Bible, you’re going to find out that Adam and Eve had what? Cain and Abel. One became a murderer, and the other became a missionary. Isn’t that an amazing thing? Two boys coming out of the same mother’s womb, surely the same background, the Garden of Eden—pretty good environment. And here are two children—here are two children who are very different. Look at Jacob and Esau—twins. And look at the difference between Jacob and Esau in the Bible. Think of the sons of David. Think of, for example, Solomon and Absalom—what a difference there is in these sons. And God gives you children; and those children—each one is unique. You know, some children—all you have to do is speak to them—they’ll

just melt in tears. Other kids—boy, I tell you—you have to carry them to the back bedroom, and give them peach-tree tea. I mean, they—there’s just a difference. There is a difference. And you’d better be wise enough, and sensitive enough, to train up the child in the way that he should go.

And don’t try to make something of your child that God does not want to make out of that child. Do you try to succeed through that child, and force your desires and your ambitions and your goals upon that child? God has a way that that child should go, that God is bending to that child, that He put into that child. You say, “Mine are not bent; they’re warped.” Well, whatever it is, dear friend, God has put into that child something that is unique in that child. And there is a warping—there’s that warping of sin. But there’s that bent, that proclivity that God has put into that child. And therefore, what I’m saying is, that you need to communicate with creativity.

A. The Bible Should Be Taught Creatively

Now are you following? Commence with childhood. Correct with consistency. Communicate with creativity—with creativity. Now how should you communicate the Word of God? Well, first of all, let’s think a little bit about creativity. How, should you teach the Bible? You know, there’s so many ways to teach God’s Word rather than just reading the Bible. Do you have any Bible storybooks in your home? You ought to have some Bible storybooks. There are some great ones. Our bookstore has some. Some Bible games. Did you ever play Bible baseball, Bible memory contest? Christian books? Another reason we have our bookstore is so that you can have Christian books in your home. Buy, invest some money in those books, and see to it that the children read them.

One man named Charles “Tremendous” Jones—many of you have heard him speak. He’s a motivational speaker. Got the idea—there’s his son growing up. Before long, his son was going to want an automobile; so, Charles Jones got a bookshelf full of books that he wanted his son to read, and said, “Son, pretty soon, you’re going to want to have an automobile; so, here’s what happens. For every one of these books that you read, Dad will put so much in the automobile fund. But you must write a report on the books after you read them.” “Now,” he said, “You read like a bum, you’ll walk like a bum. But you read the right way, and you’re going to drive the right way.” That salted the kid down pretty good, didn’t it? I mean, here he is, ready to read. That, to me, I think, is creativity, because he knew that particular boy.

B. The Bible Should Be Taught Consistently

Are you subscribing to Christian magazines? Do you have magazines like the Moody Monthly and other magazines like that coming into your home? Are there tapes and music and albums and these things? What I’m trying to say is that the Bible can be

taught creatively. The Bible needs to be taught consistently. And I just want to show you something right here. Would you turn to Isaiah chapter 28? And this is worth turning to. I want you to see it here—I said, chapter 28. Turn to it and read with me verses 9 and 10: “*Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine?*”—now, notice—“*them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts*” (Isaiah 28:9). Isn’t that an amazing thing?

Now they tell us today we can’t teach little children doctrine, we can’t give little children knowledge. God says you can take a little baby that’s just been weaned, teach him “Jesus loves me, this I know,” and, that child can learn about God, and respect, and reverence. Now he may not understand it and comprehend it all intellectually, but he will be learning all the same. And how will he learn? Look, if you will, in verse 10: “*For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little*” (Isaiah 28:10). Amen and amen. Precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, there a little, here a little, there a little—in all that we do, we’re teaching.

Dorothy Law Nolte wrote these words:

If a child lives with criticism, he learns to condemn.

If a child lives with hostility, he learns to fight.

If a child lives with ridicule, he learns to be shy.

If a child lives with shame, he learns to feel guilty.

If a child lives with tolerance, he learns to be patient.

If a child lives with encouragement, he learns confidence.

If a child lives with praise, he learns to appreciate.

If a child lives with fairness, he learns justice.

If a child lives with security, he learns to have faith.

If a child lives with approval, he learns to like himself.

If a child lives with acceptance and friendship, he learns to find love in the world.

—DOROTHY LAW NOLTE

C. The Bible Should Be Taught Compellingly

The Bible should be taught, dear friend, creatively. The Bible should be taught consistently, here a little, there a little, and the Bible should be taught compellingly.

Now look again at our text: “*Train up a child in the way that he should go*” (Proverbs 22:6). Do you know what the word *train* here means? Not only does it have the idea of dedication, not only the idea of discipline, but also, it’s very root has the idea of putting something in the mouth to be tasted, or more literally, “to touch the palate.” Now what does that mean—“to touch the palate”? Well, if you put your finger in your mouth—and please don’t do it right now—but, if you were to put your finger in your mouth, you find

that hard surface, and then, just move it on back. You'll find it will start to get soft. And then, you'll get back there by that little uvula—you know, the thing that looks like a little boxing bag back there. You go right on back there, and when you touch that soft part, when you touch that palate, you know what's going to happen? You're going to swallow. That's going to trigger the swallowing impulse in you.

Now what this verse says is, you put something in the mouth to be tasted. That's the way the ole Hebrew mama would wean her baby. She didn't have Gerbers and strained beets and all of that; but what she'd do, she'd just strain the food by putting it in her mouth and chewing it up; and then, she'd reach and take a little bit of that chewed-up food, that she'd chewed up, and made it palatable to that baby, and put it on her finger, and just reach in that baby's mouth, and touch the palate. And that baby would swallow. And that's the way it was done. Wasn't that a creative way of doing it? You see—we don't just ram it down their throat. Now that's the problem with so many parents trying to teach the Bible to kids: they're not teaching it compellingly, they're just trying to ram it down their throat. "You sit still, while I instill"—and, that's why some kids don't like family worship. You know, it's like cod liver oil—"a dose a day keeps the devil away." And that's the wrong way to do it—that's the wrong way to do it.

Listen. They're individuals. They have a particular bent about them, and we are to teach the Bible that way. We are to commence with childhood. We are to correct with consistency. And we are to communicate with creativity. And when we do that, when we train up a child in the way that he should go, according to that particular child—and, by the way, you say who can do that? God will give you wisdom, dear mother, and God will give you wisdom, dear father, if you were to depend upon him.

IV. Continue with Confidence

Now the final thing I want to say—and it's really not a technique; it's just a word of encouragement. If we'll do these other three things, then, we can continue with confidence; because, what does the Scripture say? If we commence with childhood, if we correct with consistency, if we communicate with creativity, then, we will continue with confidence; for the Bible says, "*When he is old, he will not depart from it*" (Proverbs 22:6). That doesn't mean when he's an old man. The word *old* here actually has the idea of hair on the chin. When he begins to be able to grow a beard—that is, when he's a young teenage boy—he's not going to go away from it.

You know, some people have the idea that you're supposed to raise little children, teach them about God, then, when they're teenagers, they go off; and then, after a while, they come back. And I've heard people say, "Well, you know, my son's not living for God. But you know what the Bible says: 'When he is old, he'll not depart from it.'" That doesn't say he's going to come back. It says, dear friend, that you can train him up,

and there will be consistency, and the child will not go away in order that he might come back. I know of no promise that the child is going to come back. He may, in the mercy of God; but that's not what this verse is talking about. God's Word says, if you do what God says to do, if you train them in the way that they should go—I'm not just talking about cramming them in Sunday School, they ought to be in Sunday School—but, if you're the home, train them.

Conclusion

I want to tell you, dear friend, they are going to live for God, and you can bring your children to Christ. I tell you—I thank God for the ability and the opportunities that God has given me to serve Him—but, I tell you, if I failed my children, I feel that I have failed. And if I succeed with my children, no matter what else happens, if my children love the Lord Jesus, I'll say, "Thank you Lord, it's been worth living. I've had a wonderful time."

Training Up a Child in the Way He Should Go

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: June 21, 1998

Main Scripture Text: Proverbs 22:6

“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”
PROVERBS 22:6

Outline

Introduction

- I. You Need to Love Them
 - A. By Telling Them
 - B. By Touching Them
- II. You Need to Lift Them
- III. You Need to Limit Them
- IV. You Need to Lead Them
- V. You Need to Laugh with Them

Conclusion

Introduction

I want to talk to you about something that I have proven in my own life. I am a bona fide father and a bona fide grandfather. And, I have four wonderful children who are not perfect. They don't have a perfect daddy. They have an almost perfect mother. But, they don't even have a perfect mother. And, the kids are not perfect. But, one thing about them: all four of the kids love Jesus, and all four of our children love Mom and Dad, and all four of them love one another.

And, I just want to share with you just out of my heart a little bit about “Training Up a Child in the Way That He Should Go.” You know, the Bible says, in Proverbs 22 and verse 6, *“Train up a child in the way that he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it”* (Proverbs 22:6). It doesn't say, “teach” a child. You can teach them one thing, and somebody else can teach them something else. It says, *“Train up a child.”* And, that is to mold into shape by discipline and by practice. Very few of our children today are being trained by godly dads and godly moms.

Way back in 1953 in Cooperstown, they were remodeling the Baseball Hall of Fame, where all of the greats in baseball—not basketball, but baseball—are ensconced there.

And, as they were moving the cabinets around, they found in the back of a cabinet a picture. It was not a picture of a man in any of the well-known baseball teams, but this was a man in a baseball uniform. It had on the front, "Sinclair Oil." He was playing on some sort of a team for his company, Sinclair Oil. He was kind of a pudgy guy, nondescript guy. Nobody had ever heard of him. And, on that picture that was slipped behind the cabinet was a note, and it said to him, "Thank you, Dad, for being the dad that you've been. Thank you that you were not too tired to play baseball with me. Thank you for coming to watch me play ball. Thank you for taking your day off to help build the Little League baseball field. Thank you for being such a wonderful dad. And, you are in my Hall of Fame." And, they found that picture back there, tucked behind, where nobody else could see it, that somebody had taken that picture, and when nobody else was looking had slipped it back behind that and had his own little ceremony. Well, when they found that picture and they brought it out, a national sports magazine did an article on it. And, finally, a man came forward and confessed that he had done that, that his dad, now in heaven, was such a wonderful man he just wanted to have his own ceremony, and to say, "Dad, you may not have been a great athlete in the eyes of this world, and nobody would ever recognize you as one of the world's great baseball players, but I want you to know you're the greatest dad in the world, and you are in my hall of fame."

I don't whether that story moves you or not, but I want to be not in the Preaching Hall of Fame or in the Basketball Hall of Fame; I want to be in my children's hall of fame. And, I want to be used of God to help to raise a godly seed, great kids.

Now, let me tell you a few things that I think that you need to do. And, these are very simple things. I've just jotted a few words down. I let them begin with the letter *I* so you can remember them.

I. You Need to Love Them

How are you going to really mold your kids? First of all, the most obvious is by loving them—by loving them. Kids today don't know what it is to be loved. You don't spell love *m-o-n-e-y*. You spell it *t-i-m-e*. By loving those kids. And, let me just tell you two ways that you can love them in a very practical way. This is not going to be long and involved.

A. By Telling Them

But, number one: by telling them. You cannot tell them too many times that you love them. I've talked to my children on the phone today, because it's Father's Day. They called me to tell me that they love me. And, I told them clearly and plainly, "I love you." Over and over and over and over again, tell them that you love them. That may sound corny, but do it.

B. By Touching Them

But, not only by telling them, but also by touching them—by touching them. That is, hug them. Kids need to be touched. They need to be hugged. When you walk past them, just put your hand on them. Let them know that there is that affinity there.

You know, the bumper sticker that says, “Kids need hugs, not drugs,” is a good bumper sticker. So many of these kids who are on drugs have never had somebody just to demonstrate love to them in that way. Your teenage boy, when he gets to be about 15 or 16, you try and give him a hug, he’ll go like *this*, and he’ll just kind of pull away. Well, just go after him. Go after him and hug him. And, if he says, “Ah, Mom,” do it anyway. He really wants you to do that. I don’t mean just slobber all over the kid, but touch them, hug them, squeeze them. Did you know that many girls who are in promiscuity and have given themselves over to some lecherous, unclean man are girls who never felt comfortable around their daddy and whose dad never really expressed genuine affection to those children?

II. You Need to Lift Them

So, number one: Do it by loving them. And then, number two: Do it by lifting them. Kids today need to be encouraged. They need to be lifted. The Bible says, “Fathers, don’t provoke your children to wrath” (Ephesians 6:4). That is, don’t put them down, but lift them up.

Now, so many of us think that praising a child is encouragement. It may not be encouragement. That may be discouragement. For example, if your child cleans up his room. You know, one mother said, “I’ve been thinking about getting a riding vacuum cleaner to go into my son’s room.” Well, if he cleans up the room, or whatever, it’s one thing for you to say, “You did a wonderful job on your room,” or, “You did a wonderful job cleaning the yard,” or, “You did a wonderful job on your report card. You made straight A’s,” or, “You were the best soloist,” or, “You made, Cameron, the winning shot,” and you praise a child for that, do you think that encourages that child? No. That doesn’t encourage a child. As a matter of fact, that could discourage the child. Do you know what that means? It means, “My parents appreciate me on the basis of performance. That is, if I make straight A’s, they’re proud of me. If I get my room done, they’re proud of me. If I’m good cleaning the yard, they’re proud of me. And, I am graded on my performance.”

Do you know what encouragement says? Encouragement says, “You are valuable in the sight of God. You may not have made straight A’s, but, honey, I appreciate your effort. You did good. You tried. You’re worthwhile. You can make it. God has an investment in you.” Learn the difference between praise and encouragement. Lift these kids.

III. You Need to Limit Them

But, not only do you love them, and not only do you lift them, I'll tell you something else you need to do, and it's very important. I want all you coaches and all of you teachers and all of you parents to learn this. If you love kids, you have to limit them.

Now, today, kids don't want anybody to set limits on them, so they say. And, if you tell them, "You can't watch MTV"—and, by the way, you need to tell them that. It's nothing but pornography set to music—and, if you tell them, "We're not going to have HBO in our home"—that's Hell's Box Office, you know—"and, you're not going to watch it over at somebody else's house either," they'll swell up like a poison pup. They'll get all upset if you're not going to let them listen to this kind of music, go to these kind of places, stay out at this time of night. But, if you love them, you are going to set limits. You're going to set limits.

And, if you don't set limits, do you know what it implies to that child? It implies to that child, rejection—rejection. It says, "They really don't care about me." You set some limits. And, by the way, God, in the Garden of Eden, gave us this example. He gave them everything they needed. And, you, as a parent, should provide for your child. But, God said, "There's something in this garden you can't do," and God set some limits.

Now, when you set limits, your child will push against those limits. When you set boundaries, your child will push against those boundaries. If you give, and that boundary gives way, that child will have no security whatsoever. If they push against those limits, and those limits stand, then that child is going to learn to live in a world that has consequences, that you love them enough to set limits.

When our children were small, they would constantly come with us with this question: "Why can't we do this? Why can't we do that? So-and-so's doing it. So-and-so is doing it. Thus and such a girl." You know what I told them? I said, "When those people raise children as fine as my children, then maybe I'll start doing what they're doing." They don't know how to answer that. That really frustrates them.

IV. You Need to Lead Them

But, friend, listen. By loving them, and by lifting them, and by limiting them. One other thing I want to say—and, that is, by leading them. And, this is so very important. All the rest of this is not going to make much sense if you don't lead with an example. And, that's training up a child in the way that he or she should go. And, again, I don't want to talk too much about the Rogers family, because if you were to look in all the nooks and crannies, you'd say, "Aha, there's a fault there. There's a problem there. There's a failure there." And, you wouldn't know half of it. But I want to tell you one thing about our family, and I'm not ashamed to say this and not afraid to say this, and I would say if all of my children were here. Our children know their mother and father are not phonies.

They know we're real. They know that we're not saying to them one thing and doing something else. They know that we're not living a double life in front of them. They know that under God we are trying, as best we know how, to practice what we preach. You need to lead your children with an example. And, don't ever say to a child, "Don't do as I do; do as I say do." That's kind of phony. You know, it says of the Lord Jesus, "These things the Lord Jesus began to do and to teach" (Acts 1:1). Jesus didn't preach what He practiced: He practiced what He preached. He did it before He taught it. And so, learn to lead your child. And, God will bless you as you do that.

One of our church members here, one of our young deacons, said something. I think I shared it with you. But, it was such a blessing. He had one of the sons, and that young deacon and that boy may be here tonight, so I'm not going to call names, because it may embarrass the boy a little bit. But, I hope not. Anyway, the boy lipped off at his mother. And, this deacon said to his son, "Son, come in here. I want to tell you something." And, I may not be repeating the exact words, but he said, "Son, you sassed your mother. And, when you sassed your mother, you sinned against Almighty God, because the Bible says you're to honor your mother. You're not right with God, and you need to get right with God. And, you're going to have to deal with God about this." Well, then, he said, "I want to tell you something else, son. Not only did you disobey God, but you disrespected your mother. Your mother would die for you. Your mother went down into the valley of the shadow of death to bring you into this life. She has suffered for you. She has sacrificed for you. She lived for you. She's loved you. And, you sassed her. You're going to have to get right with your mother. When you disobeyed God, that's between you and God. When you sassed your mother, that's between you and your mother." But, he said, "I'm going to tell you something else. Not only is she your mother; she's my wife, and you were disrespectful to my wife, and you're going to deal with me about that."

Boy, I love that. That is so great to let a boy see a man say, "You're not going to talk that way to my wife, anymore than I'd let any other man talk that way to my wife." That's the kind of training that we need in our homes today, and, boys and girls, to see that there are just some limits and that Mom and Dad are setting the example.

V. You Need to Laugh with Them

Here's the last thing—and I want to be exceedingly brief. You need to be loving them. You need to be lifting them. You need to be limiting them. You need to be leading them. And, last of all, let's just end on a little happier note: You need to be laughing with them. I mean, your home, your home ought to be the happiest place in the entire neighborhood. Your family ought to be the place where all the rest of the kids want to hang out. You say, "Well, man, if I had all the kids hanging out, they'd break down my

couch; they'd get my rug dirty; they'd eat everything in the refrigerator." Wonderful! Wonderful! What's worth more: your rug, your couch, your groceries? You get the guys and gals over to your house, you can look them over. You can see who's there. You can see what they say, how they act, how they dress. You can see who your kids are keeping company with. Let your home be a place of happiness and fun and joy. Let your house ring with laughter, for the Bible says, "*A merry heart doeth good like a medicine*" (Proverbs 17:22). And, I think there's one thing that I could thank God for, and it is our house has been a house of laughter. So many times, our children were asked when they were little, "What's it like living in a preacher's house?" I mean, they think, good night! You've got your pastor for a daddy. I mean, what does he do? Go around the house preaching all day long? You know, does he wear a necktie all during the daytime, or whatever? I'm not sure about this, but I would say we probably have more laughs per hour in our house, by far, than the average house—just the joy of the Lord.

Conclusion

And, if you'll just do those simple things, I think you'll learn how to raise some young champions for Jesus, and maybe it may be just one day that somebody might want to put your name in their hall of fame.

Treasuring Truth

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: September 6, 1998

Main Scripture Text: Proverbs 23:23

“Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding.”

PROVERBS 23:23

Outline

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Conclusion

Introduction

Would you find in God's Word Proverbs chapters 23? And, in a moment, we're going to look at verse 23. But, as we preached last week, truth is fallen in the streets, and the casualty of twentieth century America is fallen truth. We have sacrificed truth on the altar of pragmatism, and we don't ask any more, "Is it true?" We have lost the idea that there is such a thing as fixed truth. We just simply ask, "Does it work?" Now, we are

drowning in an ocean of facts. When I'm talking about truth today—and, by the way, the title of the message is "Treasuring Truth"—when I'm talking about truth today, I'm talking about truth that goes beyond facts. Now, facts, in and of themselves, may be true, but I'm not talking about an accumulation of facts; I am talking about truth itself. Now, we are drowning, I say—especially through the use of the computer and the Internet—we are drowning in facts. There's a difference in acquiring facts and learning truth.

I read recently that there are 3,000 pages of new stuff printed every second—3,000 pages. One thousand books in America are published every day. You will never read them all. And, the Bible says, "In the last days, knowledge shall increase, and men shall rush to and fro" (Daniel 12:4). Well, folks, we are seeing that.

As a matter of fact, let man's accumulated knowledge from creation to 1845 be measured in inches—all of that knowledge from creation to 1845 would be on our scale just one inch. But, from 1845 to 1945 it would have grown to be three inches. But, from 1945 to 1975 it would be as tall as the Washington Monument. And, from 1975 to the present it would be out of sight.

We are drowning in an ocean of facts. But, the Bible speaks of those who are "ever learning, and [not coming] to the knowledge of truth" (2 Timothy 3:7). America today needs truth. And, you can see this because where are facts taking us? Where does mere intellectual knowledge take us? Today we see more suicide, more broken homes, more drug abuse, more illness, more heartache than ever before, and yet we have facts. You see, facts are like a recipe; truth is the meal. And, we've not learned truth.

Now, look at our passage of Scripture here in Proverbs chapter 23, verse 23: "*Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding*" (Proverbs 23:23). Buy the truth, and don't sell it. Now, Satan is the sinister minister of evil. He is the master of camouflage and deception, and his method is to deceive. Jesus spoke to the Pharisees of His day, and He said in John chapter 8 and verse 44: "*[You] are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he*"—Satan—"is a liar, and the father of it" (John 8:44). Satan is the master liar. There is no truth in Satan. And, Satan has corrupted our world. He has ruined God's creation through a lie. Jesus said of Satan that his motive is murder. He wants to bring death to youth, happiness, joy, purity, spiritual death, physical death, eternal death. He is a murderer, and his method is the lie. His motive is murder; his method is the lie. And so, we need, today, to learn to treasure truth.

Now, again, look at our verse of Scripture. The Bible says here, "*Buy the truth, and sell it not*" (Proverbs 23:23). Three things I want to lay on your heart today out of that

verse of Scripture.

I. We Must Prize the Truth

Number one: Brother and sisters, we must prize the truth. That is, we must value truth in our own heart.

A. Truth Is Indispensable

Truth is indispensable. Why did God give us the Bible? Well, the Lord Jesus says the Bible is truth. It is called the Word of truth. Why did God send us the Holy Spirit? Well, He is called the Spirit of truth. Why do we have that Savior that we just sung about? “Oh, What a Savior!” He said, *“I am the...truth”* (John 14:6). Why are we worshiping here in this church building with our brothers and sisters in Christ? The Church is called *“the pillar and [the] ground of...truth”* (1 Timothy 3:15). What gives me, as a father, joy and, as a pastor, joy? The same thing that gave the apostles joy—John: *“I have no greater joy than...that my children walk in the truth”* (3 John 1:4). Now folks, truth is indispensable.

B. Truth Is Absolute

I want to say something else: truth is absolute. We have lost our absolutes today. Today we are told we’ve got to be tolerant. And yet, in math, we’re not told that we need to be tolerant. In medicine, we’re not told we need to be tolerant. In mathematics and physics, we’re not told that we need to be tolerant. But, when it comes to the greatest truth of all—spiritual truth—we’re told that we need to be tolerant, that there are no fixed absolutes in this world.

One professor in a liberal college stood up, and he began his lecture by saying to his students in a philosophy class, “There is nothing that we can know absolutely”—“nothing that we can know absolutely.” A student lifted his hand and said, “Professor, are you sure about that?” He said, “Absolutely sure!” Now, do you see the contradiction there? Truth is absolute. Truth is indispensable. Truth is absolute.

C. Truth Is Attainable

But folks, I’ve wonderful news for you: truth is attainable. We can know the truth. This Bible contains the precepts of truth. Jesus said in John chapter 17, verse 17: *“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth”* (John 17:17). The Bible is the precepts of truth. Jesus Christ is the person of truth. Jesus said of Himself in John 14:6: *“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”* And, the Holy Spirit is the power of truth. In John chapter 16 and verse 13, He is called *“the Spirit of truth”*—and Jesus said—*“he will guide you into all truth”* (John 16:13). Now, you see, if you have the precepts of truth, understand the person of truth, but you don’t have the power

of truth, then truth without power is deadening and depressing. That's what the Bible calls the letter of the law rather than the spirit of the law. *Knowledge without transformation avails nothing*; it only increases your judgment.

If you sit here today and hear truth and do not allow the Holy Spirit, who is the power of truth, to transform you from information to transformation—if that doesn't happen—your judgment is going to be all the greater. Perhaps we ought to put a sign over the church door that says, "Warning: A church attendance could be dangerous for you." It could be. Listen to 2 Peter chapter 2, verse 21: "*For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them*" (2 Peter 2:21). One of these days, you're going to give an account for what you will hear this morning in this building, and it would be better for you not to have heard it than to hear it and to refuse to live by it. So, what I'm saying is, first of all, we must value—we must prize—the truth.

II. We Must Purchase the Truth

Number two—look at the text again: we must purchase the truth. Do you see what it says? It says, "*Buy the truth*"—now, notice also it says—"*also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding*" (Proverbs 23:23). Now, how do you get the truth? Through wisdom, instruction, and understanding. You see, the search for truth is costly. There's a price to pay if you would have truth.

Now, you remember what Jesus said in John chapter 8 and verse 32? "*Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*" (John 8:32). We hear that often quoted, but people don't quote the whole verse. Let me read the whole verse to you—and put it down in your margin. John 8, verses 31 and 32: "*Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed*"—and the word *disciples* means "learners"—"*then are ye my [learners] indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth [will] make you free*" (John 8:31–32). Now folks, truth alone will not make you free. No matter how much truth you're surrounded by, if you do not know the truth, learn the truth, understand the truth, then that truth is...it avails you nothing.

First of all, He's speaking to those who believe. You must believe. And then, after you believe, you must continue in the Word. And, in order to continue in the Word, you have to be a disciple—that is, you have to be a learner. And then, when you're a learner, you know the truth. And then, the truth makes you free. The thing that keeps me going in my Christian life—and I've been on the trail long enough to look back and analyze some things—is not how I feel; it is what I know. It is the truth that delivers me from ignorance and the bondage to sin. Now, Jesus said, "You must be My disciples." Discipleship is costly—discipleship is costly—but ignorance is far more costly. Do you

want to know truth? Do you want to teach your children truth? What's it going to cost?

A. It Will Cost You Time

First of all, it's going to cost your time—it's going to cost you time. Time is precious. Ignorance is more costly, however, than time. And, in your quiet time and in your search for truth, hurry is the death bell of prayer, study, and meditation. We sing a song, "Take Time to be Holy." Most of us in this building are not paying the price to purchase truth. It costs precious time.

B. It Will Cost You Discipline

Another thing it's going to cost you is discipline. Now, look in verse 23. There's the word *instruction* (Proverbs 23:23). Do you see it there? That word may be translated "discipline." *Instruction* means "self-discipline." Now, you can pray for wisdom, but you have to study for instruction. How many in this building really are serious Bible students? Very few. And, it's no wonder that we're so easily led astray.

You never get beyond the place where you continue to study. Study is becoming more and more important to me. There's an interesting passage of Scripture; I want you to look at it. It's in 2 Timothy chapter 4 and verse 13—2 Timothy chapter 4 and verse 13. Now, Paul is in prison, and it's his second imprisonment. He's writing to Timothy. Perhaps it's the last letter he will ever write. This is the last part of that letter, and I want you to see that old warrior. He's in that prison, his weary old bones creaking—his joints. He's shivering a little bit because it's the end of summer; winter is coming. That old cell is damp and dark. And, here's what he says as he writes to Timothy in 2 Timothy chapter 4 and verse 13: "*The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee*"—old Paul said, "I need my coat. It's chilly in here." And then, he says this; listen to this—"*and the books, but especially the parchments*" (2 Timothy 4:13). Now, here's Paul. He's in prison. Do you know what he wants? He wants something, first of all, to protect his body. He said, "Would you bring me the coat?" And folks, you know, you never get so spiritual—I hope you never get so spiritual—that you neglect your body or see that we all have physical needs as human beings. And, God knows that. And, our bodies are important to God. And, I, you, need to take care of your health. You need to preserve your body. And, no matter how spiritual you are, the common mundane things are very important.

I was in the grocery store a while back, and a woman saw me. And, she said, "Oh, Pastor Rogers, I didn't know you had to buy groceries." Yeah, I do. Paul—here's Paul, the mighty apostle, the author of most of the New Testament. He says, "I need a coat. Bring the coat." But then, he says, "*Bring...the books, [and] especially the parchments*" (2 Timothy 4:13). Now, the books—evidently, those were just books that he'd accumulated, like your library and my library. He had some books. Books were very

important to the Apostle Paul, as books are very important to me. And, books should be very important to you. That's the reason we have a Christian bookstore in our church. He said, "Bring the books." And then, he said, "*especially the parchments*" (2 Timothy 4:13). And, most Bible commentaries believe that those parchments were the Old Testament scriptures that he had. And so, he's saying, "I want some books to read."

Now, I want you to consider this: here's the Apostle Paul—hey, folks, choir—he's at the end of his life, his ministry, and he's still a student. He still wants to read. And, here is a man who's proficient in many languages. Here is a man who wrote most of the New Testament. Here is a man who has seen the Lord face to face. Here is a man who has been to Heaven and back in a vision, and he still wants some books. And, he's the same one who said to this Timothy: "Timothy, 'till I come, give yourself to reading."

Now folks, you're not going to learn simply by watching ABC, NBC, CBS, and CNN. You're not going to get truth by those little knick-knacks and those sound bites. As a matter of fact, you're going to be led away from truth if you don't get away and get some good, solid reading material and do as the Apostle Paul told Timothy—to give yourself to reading. Now folks, it's going to cost you some discipline. Here's the Apostle Paul.

Now, let me tell you why you read. Warren Wiersbe has pointed out at least four reasons why we ought to read.

1. You Should Read for Enlightenment

Number one: You read for enlightenment—enlightenment. You read to get hold of truth.

You see, truth is to your spirit what food is to your body. Truth is to your spirit what light is to your eyes. Truth is to your spirit what melody is to your ears.

When you read, don't read merely to get facts—read to get truth. Now folks, you've only got one life. Do you want to live and die without learning the truth? You see, to know truth is to know God. To know truth is to know Jesus. Jesus is the truth. All truth is God's truth. The devil doesn't have any truth. He is the source of deception. You say, "Then, Pastor, I'm just going to read the Bible and nothing else." No, that'd be a mistake. You need to read widely; the Apostle Paul did. He said, "Bring the books, and also bring the parchments" (2 Timothy 4:13).

Now, obviously, there are some books that no Christian should read, but as you read the Apostle Paul, you'll find that Paul was a very literate man. For example, he quoted the Greek poets and the philosophers. He was familiar with the philosophers. He was familiar with all that went on, because Paul knew that all real truth intersects. And, he said, for example, "*In him we live, and move, and have our being*" (Acts 17:28), as many of your poets have said. In other words, he read what the Athenians were reading. He knew these things.

Dr. Wiersbe said, "If you were to read seriously on any subject, just simply whether—just 30 minutes a day—whether it be nutrition, history, or whatever, in ten

years you would have the equivalency of a PhD in that subject.” You don’t have to go off to college to learn. You can learn if you will read. And, you know, you, of course, you read other books, and you read the Bible. The Bible gives you a lens, a radar, by which you trust and test all other truth. All truth intersects. And, when you learn the truth, then you’re going to see how it relates to all other truths, and it all comes together.

Now, when you learn, when you read, you don’t read just to be a gatherer of facts. You learn to be a channel of truth. If you read and you grow in knowledge, but you don’t grow in grace, you’re going to make yourself obnoxious. You’re one of these people who parades your knowledge. The Bible says, “Knowledge puffs up. Love builds up” (1 Corinthians 8:1). Don’t read so you can split a theological hair into nine different sections, but read so that you can be a whole person. You read for enlightenment. To know truth is to know God.

2. You Should Read for Enjoyment

Number two: You read for enjoyment—read for enjoyment. I cannot get enough reading. You know, one of the terrible things that we do in school—they did when I was a little boy in school—they made students read to punish them. If you did something wrong, the teacher said, “You’re going to have to stay in after school and read two or three chapters of this book.” And, somehow we associate reading not with enjoyment, but with punishment. Reading is not dull; reading is exciting.

You take books, and you can meet people that you’ve always wanted to meet—the great leaders of all history. You read books, and you can visit great periods of history. You can go back in time by reading books. Read books, and you can visit faraway places—places you will never go to if you do not read. Read books, and you can grapple with the great issues of life, and death, and eternity. There are no problems that are new. Listen, folks, there’s nothing new under the sun. That’s the reason a wise man said, “Those who don’t study history are destined to repeat it.” And, those who don’t study the future—they won’t really have a future. Think about the great issues that you can study. When you read books, you can learn great truths. And, the greatest truth of all is theology, which is called “the queen of the sciences.”

Would you like to be a helper of people? Would you like to be a counselor? I know people that, if I had a problem, I’d want to go to those people. And, I’ll tell you those are the people who have learned, who have acquired knowledge, especially theology. Do you know what counseling is? Counseling is just loving people, and knowing God, and getting the two together. That’s all it is—loving people, and knowing God, and just bringing people to God. You don’t solve their problems. If you’re a counselor and you try to solve their problems, what you are doing is taking the glory from God and you’re making them dependent upon you rather than upon the One in whom we live, and move, and have our being. You read for enlightenment. You read for enjoyment.

3. You Should Read for Enrichment

You read for enrichment—for enrichment. People say, “Well, books are expensive.” Friend, ignorance will cost you a whole lot more. Buy books. Education costs money. Your treasures in your home ought to be your books. Your children can inherit your books. Your children can enjoy your knowledge. In your home, you need to be building character by putting truth into your children. There needs to be devotional truth for the heart. There needs to be doctrinal truth for the mind. There needs to be practical truth for the will. Getting truth into the hearts of your children—practical truth is so important. Children need to learn about missions, about prayer, about soul winning, about home building, other disciplines.

Would you like to test yourself right now to find out whether or not you’re growing in knowledge, growing in truth?

a. Are You Excited about Truth?

Let me ask you this question: Are you excited about truth? A person asked me... I had dinner with a person, last...well, last Thursday night. And, that person leaned over to the table—over the table—and she said to me, “Pastor”—she’s not a member of this church any longer; a former member. She said—“Pastor, what new truths are you learning?” That blessed me so much: “What new truths are you learning?” May I ask you that question: What new truths are you learning? Are you excited about truth?

b. Are You Experiencing Freedom in Your Life?

Let me ask you another question: Are you experiencing, in your life, freedom? Jesus said, “[*You’ll*] know the truth, and the truth [*will*] make you free” (John 8:32). Are you still in bondage to political correctness, prejudice, lies, the party line, pressures, and fears? It is because you’ve not understood the truth.

c. Are You Learning Humility?

Are you learning humility? A man who is learning truth doesn’t tell you how much he knows; he’s telling you how little he knows and how much he has yet to learn, because the more you learn, the more you realize that the ocean is so big and your boat is so small—humility. “[*Knowledge puffeth up, but charity [edifies]*” (1 Corinthians 8:1).

d. Are You Learning Balance?

Are you learning balance? God help us to have balance—not all worship and no evangelism, not all evangelism and no worship, not all prophecy but no devotion, not all program but no meditation. You need to be balanced. What I’m saying is this, friend—that you need to “[*buy the truth, and sell it not*]” (Proverbs 23:23). And, it will cost you time. It will cost you discipline.

4. You Should Read for Enablement

But, not only do you read for enrichment—you read for enablement, to do what you need to do. You know why I continue to read? So I can be your pastor, for one thing. Would you like a pastor who never read, a pastor who is just simply drawing out of his own well? No! I could not stay and pastor this church for 25 years if I remain static and I don't grow. I want my doctor to continue to read. If a man's going to work on my automobile, I want him to be up-to-date. I'd even like for my cooks to continue to read. My wife does. I mean, you want to do your job better? You need to upgrade your skills. You Sunday School teachers—you need to read a book on teaching. You wives—read a book on homemaking. You husbands—read a book on how to love your wife better. Now, reading it, alone, will not change you. You need to apply what you read. Don't become a book recluse. *Readers are leaders, and leaders are readers.* It's going to cost you. Friend, it's going to cost you time. It's going to cost you discipline.

C. It Will Cost You Obedience

Now, watch, and listen carefully: if you buy the truth, it's going to cost you obedience. Now, this is very important. If you are just simply a gatherer of facts, a note taker, but you do not obey what you hear, you're living dangerously. Truth is to be transformational. The Bible says, *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is...reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be...transformed"*—how?—*"by the renewing of your mind"* (Romans 12:1–2). As your mind feeds on truth, your mind is renewed. When you learn truth and don't act upon it, you do yourself danger. A wise man has said that "impression without expression leads to depression"—"impression without expression leads to depression."

The Apostle James said in James chapter 1 and verse 22: *"be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves"* (James 1:22). A person who hears truth and does not act upon truth is self-deceived. What would you think of a person who comes to Bellevue Baptist Church on Sunday morning and goes home raving about the choir, talking about the message, but does not put it into practice? You know what James says about him? He's self-deceived. You know what Jesus said about him? Now, don't get angry, but I'm going to tell you what Jesus said: "Whoso heareth these words of Mine and doeth them not is like a foolish man" (Matthew 7:26). Jesus said, "You're a fool if you hear and you do not do."

There's a story I've often told about—I don't believe the story literally happened, but it illustrates the truth—of a theater that was packed who came to hear a great actor. And, everybody wanted to hear this man. He was world-renowned. The manager of the theater came to him just before he was to step on the stage and said to the actor, "We

have an emergency. A fire has broken out in the wings of the theater, and we don't want the people to stampede. We don't want to do as they say—to yell fire in a crowded theater—so what we would like is for you to go out, tell the people that the theater's on fire, but keep the crowd under control. And, ask them to leave quietly and politely, and nobody's life will be in danger.” So, when this great actor stepped on the platform, they applauded. He held up his hands to stop the applause, and he said, “Ladies and gentlemen, may I have your attention? I have a serious announcement to make, and I want you to listen very carefully.” He said, “Now, I don't want there to be any panic. There's no cause for panic. Everything is under control. But, I have been informed that a small fire has broken out in the wings of this theater; and so, it is important for our safety that we rise from our seats and carefully leave the building. There's enough time for everyone to leave in order.”

You know what happened when he made that announcement? They said, “Bravo! Bravo!” They thought it was a part of the act. “No,” he said, “ladies and gentlemen, this is not a part of the act. There's a fire. It is important that you leave the auditorium now.” “Bravo! That's even better.” Now, with the tears streaming down his cheeks, he said, “For God's sake, you must go!” “Yes, wonderful—wonderful.”

So many times we sit in church and hear truth that way, as if the preacher is some actor and this is some form of entertainment, and we do not act upon that truth. And, Jesus said when we hear truth and we do not obey the truth, we're like a foolish man that built his house upon the sand (Matthew 7:26). And, the storms are coming. James said that—*“be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves”* (James 1:22). “Impression without expression leads to depression.”

And so, folks, if you would buy the truth, it's going to cost you: it's going to cost you time; it's going to cost you discipline; it is going to cost you obedience. But, it'll be worth it. *“Buy the truth, and [don't] sell it”* (Proverbs 23:23).

III. We Must Preserve the Truth

Now, here's the third and final thing this morning: you must prize the truth; you must purchase the truth, and you must preserve the truth. Now, look at this verse of Scripture—Proverbs chapter 23, verse 23: *“Buy the truth, and sell it not”* (Proverbs 23:23). Get a bulldog grip on the truth, and never, never, never, never let go! There is nothing so valuable that you should exchange that for the truth.

Put these scriptures down—Titus 1:9: *“Holding fast the faithful word.”* Philippians 1, verse 27: *“that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel”* (Philippians 1:27). Jude 1, verse 3: *“that ye...earnestly contend for the faith”* (Jude 1:3).

A. There Are Those Who Deny the Truth

Now, we're in a battle for truth. Those who deny the truth... There is an open war today on the Word of God like I've never seen in all of my life. There are those who deny the truth.

B. There Are Those Who Distort the Truth

Even more dangerous are those who distort the truth. We have now, in extreme charismatic areas, those who are getting extra-biblical revelations, and visions, and ecstasies. And, what they are doing is simply distorting the truth. And, when a person gets into these extra-biblical revelations—and somehow, what they say, or what they think, as compared to the Word of God—they distort the truth. And, it's a very dangerous thing, because soon this extra-biblical revelation becomes anti-biblical revelation, and people are led away from the Word of God. There are those who deny the truth, those who distort the truth.

C. There Are Those Who Dilute the Truth

There are those who dilute the truth—that is, that they mix the truth with error to try to accommodate biblical truth to what they believe to be, for example, modern science. I've seen people who try to accommodate themselves to modern evolution because they believe that that's the scientific truth; and yet, they say they believe the Bible. So, they just say, "Well, I believe in evolution, and I believe the Bible; and I just believe that evolution is God's way of doing it." Friend, I want to tell you something: that's very sloppy thinking. That's trying to ride one horse in two different directions. And, when you become a thinking person, you're going to find out that that is impossible. You cannot have both, because they are antithetical. They do not work together; they do not merge together. But, there are those who today would dilute the truth.

They remind me of a preacher. One time, a man came to him and said, "Will you do a funeral for me?" The pastor said, "If I can get it on my schedule, I'd be happy to do it. Who has died?" He said, "It's my dog, old Shep, and," he said, "I'd like for you to do Shep's funeral." The preacher was a little incensed. He said, "Hey, look—we don't do funerals for dogs." The man said, "I'm sorry, I guess I'll have to go somewhere else." He said, "I wanted to give the church \$1,000, whoever it was that did old Shep's funeral." The pastor said, "Why didn't you tell me old Shep was a Baptist?"

There are those who try to just simply fit things together that are not fitting together. They just dilute the truth.

D. There Are Those Who Defile the Truth

And then, there are those who defile the truth—that is, somehow they preach what is true, but they do not live what they preach. And, they make merchandise of the Word of

God. And, Paul said in 2 Corinthians 2, verse 17: *“For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity”—“but as of sincerity”—“but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ”* (2 Corinthians 2:17).

Conclusion

So, let me just sum it up. Listen to me, folks: *“Buy the truth, and sell it not”* (Proverbs 23:23). And, when the child of God looks into the Word of God, and sees the Son of God, and is changed by the Spirit of God into the image of God for the glory of God, he has found the truth of God, as he’s been set free.

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed. Now remember, Jesus is the person of truth. The Bible is the proclamation of truth. The Holy Spirit is the power of truth. I have given you God’s Word today, and I want to present to you the Lord Jesus Christ, who loves you so much that He died for you as if you’d been the only one who ever needed it. He took your sins and carried them to the cross, and with His own blood He paid the sin debt that your sins have incurred and bore the punishment that is due to you. Jesus Christ baptized His soul in Hell for you. Jesus Christ died in agony and blood for you. Jesus had sweat His great drops of blood in the Garden of Gethsemane for you. And, when Jesus bowed His head and died, He said, *“It is finished”* (John 19:30). That means it is paid in full. The debt that your sins have incurred has been paid with the precious blood of Jesus Christ.

Now, what must you do? You must believe that. You must receive that. You must confess it. Would you believe it? Would you say to God, “God, I believe that Jesus Christ is Your Son. I believe that He died on the cross for my sins. I believe He walked out of that grave risen and victorious. I believe it”? And then, would you say, “Lord, I receive it right now. I open my heart and by faith I receive your Son, who is truth, into my heart. Lord Jesus—Lord Jesus—come into my heart—come into my heart—right now. Forgive my sin. Cleanse me. Make me your child. I receive it by faith right now, this moment, in this seat today, now, this moment. Now, I give You my heart. I receive you”? Tell Him that: “Lord, I believe; Lord, I receive.” And then, tell Him this: “Lord, I will make it public. I will not be ashamed of You. You hung naked on a cross for me. When that man gives the invitation, I will go forward. Lord, I believe. Lord, I receive. Lord, I confess you now.” And, I want you to tell the Lord, “Lord, if you’ll just give me the strength, I’ll let it be known that I’m trusting you. I believe. I receive. I confess you now.” Lord, I pray that many will do just that in the strong, strong name of Jesus. Open hearts and draw people, Lord Jesus, to yourself. In your holy name. Amen.

Treasuring Truth

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: August 20, 2000

Main Scripture Text: Proverbs 23:23

“Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding.”

PROVERBS 23:23

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Conclusion

Introduction

Find in your Bibles the Book of Proverbs—right after the Book of Psalms—and turn to the 23rd chapter. And, most of our time we’re going to spend in just one verse. We’re

going to be talking about truth today—about truth. You know, we live in a strange day. Everybody is talking today about pluralism: “this is America, and there has to be room for everybody”—pluralism. And, you know what? I agree with that, but I want to tell you something: these people who are talking about pluralism—they do not mean pluralism.

For example, in a public gathering, it’s time to pray, and they’ll ask a rabbi to pray. And, he’ll pray, and that will be fine. They will ask a Muslim, perhaps, to pray, and he’ll pray, and that will be fine. But, ask a Christian to pray, and he might pray and say, “And, in Jesus’s name.” They’ll say, “Oh, don’t say that. Don’t pray in Jesus’s name.” Well, why not? That’s pluralism, isn’t it? Listen to me, folks: a rabbi ought to pray as a rabbi prays. A Catholic priest ought to pray as a Catholic priest prays. A Muslim ought to pray as a Muslim prays. And, a Christian ought to pray as a Christian prays. That’s pluralism. You know, none of us are going to agree with everybody else, but in pluralism, we all say, “Hey, this is who we are. This is what we believe.” But, you see, we have a world that doesn’t really believe in pluralism. What they want is syncretism. That’s just a big word; it means “mush everything up, nobody have any sharp edges, nobody really even believes any particular thing.”

A. **We Have Gone from Virtues to Values**

And then, we have a generation today that talks so much about values. Boy, I’m telling you, in the next few months you’re going to hear more and more about values, and values, and values, and values, and they’re going to prate about family values. Well, folks, let me tell you something: everybody has values. The mafia has values. Everybody has values. It is not values that we need; it is virtues. There’s a difference: values come from autonomous individuals who just decide what they want to believe. And, I was surprised to listen—at some of these political rallies, when they would talk about a woman’s right to kill her baby, everybody would applaud. Applauding that, applauding that, cheering for that—why? That is their values. My friend, it may be a value, but it is not a virtue. You see, what we’ve done—we’ve come from pluralism to syncretism. We have come from virtues to values.

B. **We Have Gone from Truth to Facts**

Now, another thing that we have done is this: we have come from truth to facts and we have a generation today that does not know how to differentiate between truth and facts. Now, facts deal with knowledge. And, knowledge may double, but truth—never. Listen to me: if it is new, it’s not true. Truth is settled in eternity.

Listen to the Word of God—Proverbs chapter 23 and verse 23: “*Buy the truth*”—“*buy the truth*”—“*and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding*” (Proverbs 23:23). The casualty in modern America today—and yes, around the world—is that truth has been sacrificed on the altar of pragmatism. We’re going to be hearing a lot, “Are

you better off than you were eight years ago?” Friend, that is not the question. Here’s the question: “Are you better than you were eight years ago?” You see, what we have is just simply this: if our pockets are full, then everything is fine—not necessarily so. Have we moved from one nation under God to one nation under greed? “*Buy the truth, and sell it not*” (Proverbs 23:23). Now, we have substituted facts for truth—not that facts in themselves are wrong. Facts are stubborn things. But, there is a difference in acquiring facts and learning truth. We’re drowning in facts.

Did you know 3,000 pages of new stuff are printed every second—every second, 3,000 pages of new stuff? A thousand books a day are published—every day a thousand books. If you were to take man’s accumulated knowledge and just start from the time that history began, wherever that was, and up to the year 1845 (just let that—watch; look up here now—just let that equal an inch)—from creation to 1845, that’s an inch—that’s how much accumulated knowledge, so far as facts, man has. All right. Then, if you would go to 1845 to 1945, that inch has gone to 3 inches. So, a man has really learned a lot. But, if you were to go from 1945 to 1975, that 3 inches would be as tall as the Washington Monument—just in those few years. And, from that time on, from 1975 till today, the accumulated facts would be out of sight in the stratosphere.

We’re learning more and more facts, and that’s what the Bible prophesied. The Bible says, “*In the last days, knowledge shall increase*” (Daniel 12:4). And, that, my friend, is truth. But, truth has not changed one bit. And, you see, we have a generation that is devouring facts and crucifying truth; and so, we see more crime, more suicide, more mental illness, more broken homes, more drug abuse than ever before.

What’s the difference between facts and truth? *Facts are like a recipe; truth is the meal. When you digest the truth, it will change your life.* That’s the reason that Satan’s chief tool in trade is a lie, which is antithetical to the truth. Jesus, speaking to a Pharisee of His day, said, “[You] are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father [you] will do. He was a murderer from the beginning”—now, watch this—“and abode not in the truth”—his motive is murder; his method is to lie—“He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth”—and then, Jesus said—“because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it” (John 8:44). He’s the father of all lies, and any liar is acting like his father, the devil. Now, three things I want to lay on your heart today about truth.

I. Prize the Truth

First of all, we must prize the truth. We must treasure the truth.

A. Truth Is Indispensable

Truth is indispensable. Young people, listen to me: it is absolutely, totally indispensable.

Why did God write a book? The Bible calls itself “the Word of truth.” Why has the Holy Spirit come? He is called, in the Bible, “the Spirit of truth.” Who is our Lord and Savior and Messiah? He said, “*I am the way, the truth, and the life*” (John 14:6). What is the Church called? The Church is called, in the Bible, “*the pillar and [the] ground of the truth*” (1 Timothy 3:15). What did the Apostle John say as he wrote his epistle? He said, “*I have no greater joy than to [know] that my children walk in [the] truth*” (3 John 1:4). Hey, those of us who are parents, is that not true? Boy, when you your kids getting hold of truth, it’s such a joy—such a joy. “*I have no greater joy*”—for me that is so true—“*than to [know] that my children walk in [the] truth*” (3 John 1:4). It rejoices our heart. See, truth is indispensable.

B. Truth Is Absolute

And friend, listen to me now: truth is absolute. Did you get that? Truth is absolute. You see, in mathematics, truth is absolute. Two and two is four. In mechanics, truth is absolute. In medicine, truth is absolute. And friend, in faith and morals, truth is absolutely absolute.

You know what people accuse folks like the one standing up here as being? I am being accused of being narrow-minded. Any body ever call your pastor narrow-minded to you? Well, hang around a little; they will. Well, you know, you get so broad-minded—your mind gets thin in the middle. You know that, don’t you? You get open-minded—your brains will fall out. No, we’re called “narrow-minded.” Well, I’ll tell you one thing: I want my banker to be narrow-minded when he’s handling my money. I want my pilot to be narrow-minded when he’s flying that airplane—I certainly do. And, I’ll tell you something else: I want my pharmacist to be narrow-minded when he’s mixing those medicines. Why should we not, in the most important thing of all of earth—being right with God—want truth that is absolute?

Now, we’re living in a day today where the idea of absolute truth is being jettisoned. The society today calls itself “postmodern”—“postmodern.” The modernists were arguing about what is true; the postmodernists say, “Forget truth. What’s true for you may not be true for me. And, you have your truth, and I have my truth. And, we just become autonomous and create our own truth.” There is a movement, a very strong movement, in the world today. You may not be aware of it, but it’s called “humanism,” and it is more than a philosophy; it also has its own organization. And, they have their printing, and they have there own *Humanist Manifesto*. Let me tell you what the *Humanist Manifesto* has to say about the difference between truth and non-truth: “Moral values derive their source from human experience. Ethics is autonomous and situational.” That is, you make up the rules as you play the game.

In Plato’s *Republic*, he wrote about some sailors who lost their compass, and so

they put a light on the bow and steered by that. That's what we're doing today. That's "morals, values, man is autonomous." And so, when our kids are going off to college—many of them going off to college now—they will be told in the normal, average university that there are no moral absolutes. As a matter of fact, one professor was teaching that in a particular class, and he said to the students, "There are no absolutes—none." And, a student said, "Professor, are you sure about that?" He said, "Absolutely."

C. **Truth Is Attainable**

Truth is indispensable. Truth is absolute. And, thank God, truth is attainable—it is attainable. The Bible says, "*Buy the truth*" (Proverbs 23:23). How is truth attainable?

1. **The Bible Has the Precepts of Truth**

Well, again, I remind you that the Bible has the precepts of truth. John 17, verse 17: Jesus is praying for us, and Jesus says, "*Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth*" (John 17:17). You get a rock-ribbed grip on that. God's Word is true. And, the God of truth could not inspire error. The Bible has the precepts of truth.

2. **Jesus Is the Person of Truth**

Jesus is the person of truth. John 14, verse 6: He said of Himself, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life*"—"the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). Jesus is the truth that makes any other truth true.

3. **The Holy Spirit Is the Spirit of Truth**

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth. Notice what Jesus said when He talked about the Holy Spirit coming into the world in John chapter 16, verse 13: "*Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth*" (John 16:13). That's the reason I'm telling you that truth is attainable—not apart from the Holy Spirit. But, if you take the Bible, which is the Word of truth, which presents Jesus, the man of truth, and let the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of truth, open your understanding, friend, I'm telling you, truth is attainable. You can know truth.

Now, it's not just enough to know truth, however. You see, listen—truth without power is deadening and depressing. The Bible speaks in 2 Corinthians chapter 3, verse 6 of being "*ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth...the spirit giveth life*" (2 Corinthians 3:6). If all you have is the letter of the law, you don't have the Spirit. You have the words, but you don't have the music. Then, that's deadening truth. You see, *knowledge without transformation avails nothing*. All it does is just increase your judgment. The Bible says it would be better for you not to have known the way of righteousness than to know it and then not live by it (2 Peter 2:21). Maybe we ought to put a sign on the church doors, "Danger: Attendance here at Bellevue Baptist Church may be dangerous to your spiritual health." It may be. Friend, it

would be better for you not to hear truth than to hear truth, to learn truth, and not to act upon truth (2 Peter 2:21). Truth is attainable.

Now, what have I—am I—saying? First of all, folks, listen to me: we must prize the truth.

II. Purchase the Truth

But now, look at our text again: we must also purchase the truth. Look in verse 23: *“Buy the truth”* (Proverbs 23:23). Buy it. Salvation is free, but you pay a price to have truth. Truth is costly. And, I’m going to show you what it’s going to cost you. You know, we’re hearing banded about—these words, these days: “the truth will set you free”—“the truth will make you free.” Well, that’s only part of the truth, and part of the truth without all of the true is an untruth. You know, you take a scripture out of context, and you miss the whole thing.

Now, let me give you the whole verse, where Jesus said, “The truth will make you free.” And, by the way, you might want to turn to it or put it in your margin—John chapter 8, verses 31 and 32: *“[And] Jesus [said] to those Jews which believed on him”—underscore that—“If ye continue in my word”—underscore that—“then are ye my disciples indeed”—underscore that—“And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall [set] you free”* (John 8:31–32). Did you hear that? Now, listen to it: truth alone does not make you free.

First of all, you must believe the truth. Listen, the Jews believed on Him. You must believe on the Lord Jesus. Now, once you believe on the Lord Jesus, is it done? No! Then, He says what? *“Continue in my word”* (John 8:31). Are you—are you—finished then? No! He says what? “Then, become a disciple” (John 8:31). And, the word *disciple* means “learner.” “Be a disciple indeed” (John 8:31). Now, a lot are disciples in name. If I were to ask you, how many of you are disciples of Jesus? “Yeah, I’m a disciple of Jesus.” But, He says, “Be a disciple indeed” (John 8:31). And then, He says, *“And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free”* (John 8:32).

You see, when you believe the Word, or when you believe in Jesus, when you continue in the Word, when you become a disciple—a disciple, indeed—then you know the truth, and then you become liberated. There are a lot of you today who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you’re going to Heaven; but friend, you are not a liberated person because you have never really absorbed truth. You’ve never taken truth... You’ve never taken time to purchase, to buy, the truth. You know, the word in that sentence that is the rub? Disciple. Do you know another word that is akin to *disciple*? Discipline. And, people don’t like discipline, because we have a generation who wants to be free. You see truth as restricting you and discipline as restricting you.

I read a quote somewhere. I don’t know who said it, but it stuck in my heart: “he who

is a slave to the compass is the master of the oceans; the rest have to sail close to the shore.” Is that not correct? “He who is a slave to the compass”—the compass is what the ancient mariners used to guide their ships with—“He who is a slave to the compass is the master of the oceans; the rest have to sail close to the shore.” Friend, you see, truth liberates you. Truth makes you free; truth sets you free. Buy the truth.

Now, discipleship is costly, but ignorance is far more costly. So, how do you buy the truth? How do you purchase the truth?

A. It Costs Time

Number one: It’s going to cost you precious time. That’s one of the costs you’re going to have to pay. You’re not going to get it by osmosis. Time is precious, but it is not as precious as truth; and, therefore, hurry is the death knell of prayer and Bible study. You want to buy the truth? It’s going to cost you some time. Most of us won’t pay that price. We don’t want to pay the price—the simple price—of time. As a matter of fact, that’s one of the lowest things on our priority in the morning. We wake up a little late, hurry through the morning, read the newspaper, drink a scalding cup of coffee, rush out the door, and say, “Well, Lord, bless this mess.” No, it’s going to cost you time. You know, I love that song, Brother Jim, “Take Time to be Holy”—“Take Time to be Holy.”

B. It Costs Discipline

And, I’ll tell you something else: it will cost you discipline. Look in verse 23 again: “*Buy the truth...sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction*” (Proverbs 23:23). Do you know what *instruction* means? Actually, the Hebrew word literally means “self-discipline.” Now, you can pray for wisdom, but you have to study for instruction. Many of us are not serious in our Bible study. No wonder we’re so easily led astray.

Paul was in prison. By the way, you might want to reference this verse or even turn to it—2 Timothy chapter 4 and verse 13. It is Paul’s second imprisonment. He is writing, perhaps, the last epistle that he will write, and he’s getting down to the end of that epistle. Now, I want you to see the old Apostle Paul. He’s in this cold, damp prison. It is so cold he is shivering. He needs a coat, and he’s all alone. And, he has no television; he has no transistor radio. He has none of that. He’s there in this prison, and here’s what he is writing—I want you to listen to it: he says, “*The cloak that I left...with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments*”—“*the parchments*” (2 Timothy 4:13).

Now, here’s old Paul. He had to leave in a hurry—didn’t have time to get his coat, didn’t have time to get his library, didn’t have time to get his Bible, the parchments. Can you imagine a man like Paul being in prison like that without anything to read? We’re talking now about instruction. Now, when, in his rush to leave Troas, he left all this, he said, “Now Carpus—Carp, old boy—take care of this for me. I’ve got to get out of here.”

And so, he says, “Now, look—when you come to me, bring the cloak. It’s wet in here, damp in here. I’m shivering in here.” Don’t ever get so spiritual that you don’t take care of your body. Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost of God. Don’t ever get the idea that if you’re spiritual, you don’t have to worry about those kinds of things.

I was in a grocery store buying some groceries. A lady came up and said, “Dr. Rogers, I didn’t know you had to buy groceries.” Yeah. No, I just live on manna, you know. “Bring the cloak. The winter is coming. There’s going to be the chill of this old dungeon”—then he says not only “bring the cloak,” but he says—“bring the books; bring the parchments. I want to study. I need something for my body, but I need something for my soul” (2 Timothy 4:13). Now, who was this man who was saying this? This was the Apostle Paul. He had been to Heaven and back in a vision. He had met the Lord Jesus on the Damascus Road. He had written much of the New Testament, and yet he wants to study—he wants to learn.

By the way, I just had some time off. I hope you missed me a little bit. But, do you know what I did? I got in a room. The only thing we did, Jim, was to go out and eat at nighttime. And, I read and studied, rolled out a bed right to the kitchen table in that apartment. It was glorious! It was—it was—wonderful to be able to do that. Do you ever get beyond the place where you need to study, where you need to learn, where you need to grow? Here’s the Apostle Paul at the end of his journey, saying, “I want to learn.” He told young Timothy, “Timothy, give yourself to reading” (1 Timothy 4:13). Why do you think we have a bookstore over here? It’s not a business; it’s a ministry. Do you think you can get it all just coming on Sunday morning, listening to me preach? It would be like having a newborn baby and giving him five gallons of milk on the weekend. You need to learn to read.

Warren Wiersbe has given some reasons why we ought to read. I want you to jot them down.

1. Read for Enlightenment

Number one: You read for enlightenment—enlightenment. You read to get hold of the truth. Truth is to your spirit what food is to your body, what light is to your eyes, what melody is to your ears. You read to get truth, not just facts. Hey, folks, you only have one short life to live. To know truth is to know God, for God is truth. The devil wants to obscure the truth and to hide the truth from you. Paul read widely. Also, he read more than the Bible. He said, “Bring the books and the parchments” (2 Timothy 4:13). If you read the Apostle Paul as he writes, you can tell he was well read. He read... For example, in the Book of Acts, he’s preaching, and he quotes one of their poets there in Athens. He said...one of the Greek poets. He read their plays and so forth, and he quoted him: *“For in him we live, and move, and have our being, as...[one] of your poets...said”* (Acts 17:28). You can tell that Paul was a man who read much. He knew

what was going on.

Dr. Warren Wiersbe said, “If you were to have spend only 30 minutes a day on any subject—nutrition, history, whatever—just 30 minutes a day on any subject consistently, in ten years, you would have the equivalency of a PhD in that subject.” For you, there’s so much knowledge here. You know, as you read widely... But, as a Bible student, you measure everything that you read and test everything by that you read by the Word of God. You have a grid that it all has to pass through. You have a radar. You see, all truth intersects, and one of the tests of any good book is this: when you put that book down, do you begin to think because it will relate to everything else that you know? All genuine truth intersects because all real truth is of God. And, God did not make you just to be, however, a reservoir of facts, but He means for you to be a channel of truth. If you are growing in knowledge but not growing in grace, you’re going to be dangerous. I’ve met those people: they can split a theological hair into nine separate sections, but they’re not growing in the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. So, you read, number one, for what? Enlightenment.

2. Read for Enjoyment

Read, number two, friend, for enjoyment. You know, one of the worst things that they used to do—I hope they don’t do this any more in school—but when we would act up (and even your pastor, as a schoolboy, acted up some), you know what they said? “You’re going to have to read so many chapters in a book.” That was our punishment—to read. Teacher, if you’re a teacher, never punish a child by making a child read. No. Bless a child by letting a child read. Don’t look at reading as something dull. By reading a book—friend, when you read—you can meet people you’ve always wanted to meet—the great leaders. You can visit periods of history that have gone before you. You can visit far away places that you’ve never been to. You can grapple with issues and think about these things. You can study the past. Now, you say, “If you don’t study the past, you’re destined to repeat it.” You can study the future. If you don’t study the future, you probably don’t have much of a future. You can understand great truths. And, by the way, theology has been rightly called “the queen of the sciences”—the study of theology. Why? Because God is the greatest fact. You see, you read, friend, for enjoyment. You get so full of truth. When you learn about the world and you learn about God, you can be such a blessing to people.

You know what counseling is? Jamie, you’re in counseling. You’re a good one. But, do you know what counseling is? *Counseling is just knowing about God and knowing about people and getting the two together.* That’s it—just knowing about God and knowing about people and just getting them together. You’re not the answer; God is the answer—God is the answer. And, any good counselor is not solving people’s problems; he’s bringing people to God. That’s what it’s all about. So, you read for enjoyment.

3. Read for Enrichment

You read for enrichment. You want...you... People say, “Books are expensive.” Friend, ignorance costs a whole lot more than books cost. You can be rich. You know, your children can inherit your books, and your children can learn from your knowledge while you’re living. And, the purpose of truth is building character by truth.

a. Devotional Truth for the Heart

And, and so, when you read, read devotional reading for the heart. I just started looking again at Sidlow Baxter’s book, *Awake My Heart*. What a great book! Joyce and I read this morning from Oswald Chambers, and we read almost every morning from Oswald Chambers’s *My Utmost for His Highest*. You read devotional reading for the heart.

b. Doctrinal Truth for the Mind

And, you see, by the way, don’t just read the cookbook; eat the meal—eat the meal (doctrinal truth for the mind). Sharpen your mind.

c. Practical Truth for the Will

Practical truth for the will—when you read, you remember this, church: you’ll learn more about missions. You ought to learn more about soul winning. You ought to learn about home building.

By the way, would you like to find out whether you’re growing in knowledge, whether you’re really purchasing the truth? Ask yourself this question: Am I getting excited about truth? I am. I don’t want to say it boastfully, but I want to say it thankfully: I am excited about truth. I can hardly wait to get my hands on more truth. Some people just want to study methods. You will never, ever get excited about methods unless you learn the truth behind the method. Why do you do this?

Are you experiencing freedom? “Real truth,” as Jesus said, “sets you free” (John 8:32). You’re going to be free from the prejudice and the party line, and from lies and from pressures and from peers, because truth has a way of liberating you.

You ask yourself this question: Am I learning humility? You know, the more a man learns, the more he knows he doesn’t know. Is that not true? And, as you study, you begin to get more and more humble.

Well, ask this question: Am I learning balance? You see, if you’re studying and buying the truth, you ought to be balanced—not just all worship, but know evangelism; not just all prophecy, but know devotion; not just all program, but know theology.

4. Read for Enablement

And then, last of all, read for enablement—enablement—not just enjoyment, but enablement. You know, I need to read to do my job better. I have a conviction: as long as I’m growing, this church will be growing. I want to be a growing Christian. I want my

doctor to continue to read. I want my mechanic to continue to learn. I wish the cooks in the restaurant would go back to the cookbooks. Somebody asked me the other day—they said, “You’ve been preaching all this time. Does it get any easier for you to preach or harder for you to preach?” Believe it or not, it’s getting harder, but I’m enjoying it more. And, I trust the preaching is getting better.

What’s it going to cost? It’s going to cost you time; it’s going to cost you discipline.

C. It Costs Obedience

And, listen, friend, it’s going to cost you obedience. Now, if you don’t obey the truth, then that’s dangerous. *Impression without expression leads to depression.* And, James says—James 1, verses 21 and 22: “*Wherefore lay [aside] all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls*”—now, listen to this—“*[And] be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only*” (James 1:21–22). A person who comes to this worship service this morning and goes home bragging about the music, raving about the message, and doesn’t change his life, Jesus said—not Adrian, Jesus said—“That man is like a fool” (Matthew 7:26). Jesus said, “Who—the one who hears these sayings of mine and does them not is like a foolish man” (Matthew 7:26). Now, what does it cost? It costs time. It costs discipline. It costs obedience.

III. Preserve the Truth

Now, here, finally—and I must get to the final thing—not only do we prize the truth, and not only do we purchase the truth, but friend, we must preserve the truth.

A. There Are Those Who Would Deny the Truth

Now, look in verse 23 again: “*Buy the truth*”—now, watch this—“*and sell it not*” (Proverbs 23:23). Sell anything else before you would sell the truth. Titus 1:9: “*Holding fast the faithful word...*” Jude 1:3: “*earnestly contend for the faith [that is] once [for all] delivered [to] the saints.*” We have to guard against those who would deny the Bible.

B. There Are Those Who Would Distort the Truth

There’s an open war on the Word on God today. We have to guard against those who would distort the truth. We have, in the modern world, charismatic extravagances today. We have all of those who getting all this extra-biblical revelation. Well, friend, when you start getting extra-biblical revelation, it’s only a half-step to anti-biblical revelation. Listen to me now: there are those who deny the truth; there are those who distort the truth.

C. There Are Those Who Would Dilute the Truth

There are those who would dilute the truth. For example, many people, in order to appear intellectual, have to jettison the Book of Genesis that tells us, “*In the beginning*

God created the [heavens] and the earth” (Genesis 1:1), and substitute evolution for that. Well, that’s just a dilution of the truth. You can believe that monkey mythology if you want to; I don’t believe it. Don’t change the message to please the congregation. We have people today who are talking about “user-friendly churches.” Well, I want to be as friendly as we can believe—we can be—but friend, it’s not primarily my job to fill the auditorium; it’s my job to fill the pulpit. We can’t dilute the truth.

D. There Are Those Who Would Defile the Truth

There are those who would defile the truth. Second Corinthians 2, verse 17: *“For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God”* (2 Corinthians 2:17). Now, look up here, and let me tell you something: the Bible says, *“Buy the truth, and sell it not”* (Proverbs 23:23). And, when the child of God looks into the Word of God, and sees the Son of God, and is changed by the Spirit of God into the glory of God—the image of God for the glory of God—I believe he’s learned the truth of God. Now, prize the truth—yes, praise God. Purchase the truth—yes. Preserve the truth—yea, verily.

Conclusion

But now, let me just proclaim the truth very quickly. All truth comes to one great focal point. Let me tell you what it is: *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever [believes] in him should not perish, but [should] have everlasting life”* (John 3:16). Now, look up here, and let me tell you something: that, my friend, is the gospel truth—that is the gospel truth. And, I am telling you with all of my heart, if you, today, will open your heart and receive Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, God will forgive every sin, bury it in the grave of His forgetfulness; God will fill you with His Spirit and give you peace and power that you’ve never known; and God will set you on a journey of discipleship, where you can be a disciple, indeed, and learn truth, and that truth will make you free.

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed. If you’re not certain that you’re saved today, I mean, we can get it settled today. We sang that chorus, “Saved by His power divine, saved to new life sublime!” If you want to be saved, I remind you again that Jesus died for you. He paid for your sins on that tree, on the cross. Your sins have all already been paid for. Now, you must open your heart and receive the gift of God.

Pray like this: “Dear God, I am a sinner. I am lost. My sin deserves judgment, but I want and I need mercy. Jesus, you died to save me. You promised to save me if I would trust you. Lord Jesus, I do trust you”—tell Him that out of your heart—“I believe you are the Son of God. I believe you paid my sin debt with your blood on the cross. I believe that God raised you from the dead. And now, by faith, I receive you into my heart, right

now, as my Lord and Savior. Forgive my sin. Cleanse me. Save me, Lord Jesus.” Pray that.

Did you pray it? Did you? “Save me, Lord Jesus.” Then, pray this way by faith: “Thank You for doing it—thank You for doing it. You cannot lie. I stand on your Word. I don’t look for a feeling; I don’t ask for a sign. I stand on your Word. You cannot lie. Thank you for saving me. Begin now to make me the person you want me to be. And, Lord Jesus, help me never to be ashamed of you. When the pastor gives the invitation, Lord Jesus, I will make it public. I will not be ashamed of you because I’m trusting you. In your name I pray. Amen.”

The Sin of Silence

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: January 24, 1993

Main Scripture Text: Proverbs 24:10–12

“If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small.”

PROVERBS 24:10

Outline

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Conclusion

Introduction

If you feel as I feel and you are pro-life, you know that what we have worked for and prayed for has taken some very severe blows. But, it is not a knockout punch; it is a wake-up call. God’s Word says in Proverbs 24:10: *“If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small. If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth [he] not...know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?”* (Proverbs 24:10–12).

The title of our message today: “The Sin of Silence.” There’s something happening in America, and those who know the Lord dare not be silent. Tomorrow, in America, some 4,000 lives will be snuffed out. In the last twenty years, some thirty million innocent people have died. They have died by execution. They’ve had no trial. They’ve had no counsel. They have been executed in a cruel and inhumane way. And, if you will look at your watch, every 21 seconds a little baby will die in the United States by execution.

Now, who are the conspirators in this crime? Well, there are the Supreme Court Justices who rule such a thing—self-appointed high priests of humanism. There are governmental social planners who tell us this will be best for us. There are physicians whose job it is, whose responsibility is, to prolong life, who now will take life for money. There are the abortionaries—abortatoriums, or abortion clinics—that are reaping a harvest of money in this harvest of death. There are mothers and fathers who are willing to have their offspring put to death. All of these are perpetrators in this crime, but there are also others who are silent and will not speak up. Friend, we dare not—we must not—be silent.

Pharaoh, Hitler, and Herod the Great have fallen back in the shadows. Something is happening today in America that is unfathomable. In America, you can be fined \$5,000 or one year in jail for crushing the egg of an eagle—\$5,000 for crushing an egg. Yet in this same America, you can make a handsome living putting babies to death. It is now legal in America for any physician to kill a baby while that baby is in the mother's womb, even if the mother is in labor. The Supreme Court, in its January the 22nd, 1973, decision called *Roe v. Wade*, on abortion ruled—and I quote: “A state is forbidden to proscribe”—that is to forbid—“abortion any time prior to the birth, if in the opinion of one licensed physician an abortion is necessary to preserve the life or the health of the mother.”

We'll talk more about the matter of the life of the mother in a moment, but what about the health of the mother? What is the court's definition of “health”? Again, I quote: “The medical judgment may be exercised in the light of all factors—physical, emotional, psychological, familial, and the woman's age—relevant to the well-being of the patient.” All of these factors may relate to health. Explanation: If it would force upon the woman a distressful life, she can abort her child. If it would produce psychological harm, she may put to death her baby. If it would tax the mental and physical health by childcare, she may put the baby to death. If it would bring the distress associated with an unwanted child, the baby may be put to death. If it would bring a child into a family already unable psychologically or otherwise to care for it, the baby may be put to death. If it will bring the continuing difficulties and stigma of unwed motherhood, the baby may be put to death.

Today, in America, a teenage girl who is in junior high school or high school can receive—and will receive, in most cases—sex education in a sex education class. She'll be taught, and young men will be taught, how to practice sex without the consequences of disease or pregnancy. They will also give the child contraceptives without parental permission. But, if that child does get pregnant, she can go to a clinic. And, without her parents' knowledge or consent she can have that unwanted pregnancy terminated and the baby aborted. Now, in the same United States, that same school-based health clinic

cannot even dispense an aspirin without parental permission. And, a girl cannot have her ears pierced without parental permission. There's something very, very, very wrong in America.

Now, I want to give you three reasons why we dare not be silent. I know what I have to say is distasteful; I know it's not one of those happiness reports. But, I dare not be silent, and you dare not be silent, for three specific reasons.

I. It Is a Matter of Life

Number one: It is a matter of life. Get that riveted into your heart. It is a matter of life. Turn with me to Psalm 139, 13 to 16: the psalmist says, *“For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them”* (Psalm 139:13–16). What does that verse tell us? Many things. It tells us that when a woman is pregnant, God is forming a child—God Himself is forming a child in that mother's womb. And, it is both fearful and wonderful. The psalmist also said that this child in the mother's womb is the subject and the object of God's love and concern.

Learn this from the Word of God—that the Bible does not distinguish between prenatal and postnatal life. Some verses I would like for you to jot down other than Psalm 139, 13 to 16 are Jeremiah 1:5: God said to Jeremiah the prophet, *“Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee”—*now, what some would call “a little mass of protoplasm,” God says—*“before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations”* (Jeremiah 1:5). Jeremiah was set aside and sanctified to be a prophet of God while he was in his mother's womb. I'm so grateful he was not aborted.

When Elisabeth was still carrying John the Baptist in her womb, she met Mary, the mother of Jesus. The Lord Jesus was cradled in the womb of Mary. Listen to what happened in Luke 1:41: *“And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb.”* That is, John the Baptist in Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost. John the Baptist, still in his mother's womb, in the presence of the yet unborn Lord Jesus Christ, was so touched by the Holy Spirit that, even as a babe in the womb of Elisabeth, he leaped for joy. Now, the word for babe is the Greek word *brevfoß*. That's the word that was used here when it says, *“The babe leaped for joy”* (Luke 1:41). The Greek lexicon says *brevfoß* means—and I quote: “an unborn child, embryo, fetus”—now, listen—“a newborn child, an infant, a babe.” It means all of those

things, not some of those things. The word *brevfoß* that is used here to speak of a baby leaping in Elisabeth's womb is a word that is used for a baby, whether born or unborn.

Now, it is a matter of life—I'm telling you, a matter of life. When does life begin? According to the Bible, it begins at conception. But, what about science? Well, scientifically, it is so easy to see that life begins at conception. You see, friend, a human cell is composed of 46 chromosomes—23 are furnished by the father, and 23 are furnished by the mother. That cell structure in the baby is as much a part of the father as it is the mother. That's the reason that no mother says, "Well, it's nobody else's business what happens to my body." It is not her body. There is a different creature in her. The chromosomes of both a father and a mother are there. That baby is in a continuing process of development. If you take a baby just conceived, that is a person. If you take a baby developing in a mother's womb, that is a person. If you take a baby just born, that is a person. If you take a baby that becomes a toddler, that is a person. Take a child at the first day of school—that is a person. Take a person like a young handsome adult—that is a person. Take a person maturing in age—that is a person. They are all in a continuing stage of development, but all are persons according to the Word of God, and even to science. It is a matter of life.

Listen to Proverbs 6, 16 and 17. Let me tell you how God feels about the abortion business: "*These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him*"—this is not just something that God is not fond of; He hates, number one—"a proud look"—number two—"a lying tongue"—number three—"hands that shed innocent blood" (Proverbs 6:16–17). Romans 13:9 says, "*Thou shalt not kill.*"

Former assistant professor at Cornell University Medical School, Dr. Bernard Nathanson, was at one time the director of the largest abortion clinic in the Western world. However, after presiding over his clinic that had performed 60,000 abortions in just 18 months, Dr. Nathanson resigned. This is a medical doctor now, an assistant professor at Cornell University at one time. Here's what he said: "I am deeply troubled by own increasing certainty that I had in fact presided over 60,000 deaths." Doctors and nurses had told him of nightmares and depressions they were experiencing and personality changes developing among other personnel at the clinic. Now, Dr. Nathanson is a pivotal leader in the National Association for the Repeal of Abortion Laws.

We dare we not be silent. It is a matter of life—a matter of life. We're not just talking about desires but a child in its mother's womb.

II. It Is a Matter of Love

Now, here's the second reason that we dare not be silent: not only is it a matter of life, but it is a matter of love. What is wrong with abortion? Well, if that is indeed a baby in

the mother's womb, then how is it to be treated? I'll tell you how it should be treated. Well, no—I'll let Jesus tell you. Matthew 7:12 says, "*Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do [you] even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.*" And, what Jesus meant by saying, "*This is the law and the prophets*" (Matthew 7:12), is that the whole Bible is summed up in "doing to others as you would have them do unto you."

Now, what mother would want to be killed by being dismembered? Well, mother, if you would not have somebody do that to you, don't do that to your baby. What doctor would like to be trapped in a cell and have his life taken by having some corrosive acid poured over his body and forced into his lungs and left to convulse for hours until he was dead? Now doctor, if you wouldn't want somebody do that to you, don't do that to somebody else. What judge would like to be ripped out of his home and torn apart by some machine? Your Honor, if you wouldn't want that done to you, don't do it to somebody else. It transgresses the Golden Rule, and it is completely and totally contrary to basic human instinct.

In Romans 1:31, God describes a society on its last legs. God says that one of the marks of that society is this—that people will be "*without understanding*"—my friend, that day has come. They will be—"*covenantbreakers, [and] without natural affection*" (Romans 1:31). "Pastor, does that refer to sodomy and homosexuality?" No, the literal meaning of this scripture is "without family love." It speaks of lack of affection toward one's own children. What is the whole abortion business rooted in? It is rooted in selfishness. We have come to a day and age where we have a generation of people without natural affection. We're told by the social planners that abortion and abortion laws are primarily for the overburdened and the poor, but seventy-six percent of women aborting are unmarried and fifty-three percent have no other children. It's not because they're overburdened. Most of them are over twenty, so it's not because they're children. Most of them are white and middle- or upper-class. It's based primarily on selfishness.

One-third of those who are having abortions are going back for the second, third, and fourth abortions. It is not because something just happened. It has become a matter of birth control. Many of these are those who have participated in illicit sex. And, by the way, there are no illegitimate children, just illegitimate parents. They have participated in illicit sex. Or, they are professional people who don't want their profession interrupted, or they just simply don't want to be bothered with children. It is a matter of selfishness, in contrast to the Word of God that teaches love.

The ultimate selfishness in my estimation is the multimillion dollar abortion industry. There are doctors in America today who are living lavishly in homes because these doctors are in the grizzly business of taking lives. Every brick in that home is a child's

bone, and every mortar in that home is a child's blood. They're in the business of killing for hire. Deuteronomy 27:25 says, "Cursed is the man who accepts a bribe to kill an innocent person." The curse of God is on him—I can tell you that, my dear friend.

III. It Is a Matter of Logic

Why dare we be silent? It is a matter of life. It is a matter of love. It is a matter of logic. Now, there are those who have some convoluted, obtuse, double-jointed, high-sounding arguments that are very angry—I know that. But friend, we cannot be silent. And, I want you to listen to some of these arguments and see if they really sound right.

For example, there are some who say, "Well, it's not a baby while the baby's in the mother's womb. Life begins with breathing." That's foolish, my friend. Number one: The child needs oxygen to survive in its mother's womb. Number two: It is already alive. The oxygen comes through the umbilical tube.

Somebody else says, "But, abortion may be necessary to save the mother's life." Of course. And, if we have to choose between the preborn baby and the mother's life, then, indeed, the mother's life may be chosen because she was here first. But, I want you to listen carefully to what Dr. Jerome Lejeune said. It is some of the greatest wisdom that I've heard on this subject. He's a world-famous geneticist, and this is what he said: "I would do everything I would do to save the life of the mother, but I would never attack and kill an unborn child." What's he saying? He's saying, "Here's a pregnancy that is in trouble." If it looks like the baby may die, or the mother may die, or the baby and the mother may die, what does he do? He says, "I do everything I can do to save the life of the mother, but I never move with the purpose to kill a baby." Do you see the difference? My dear friend, we are not in the business of taking the lives of babies for convenience when we're in the business of saving the mother. But, with today's medicine, such a case is rare, indeed. It would be tragic if the child's life were lost in the process.

Someone else says, "But, what about all of those babies that are conceived out of rape and incest?" Are you going to play God in a matter like that? Are you going to say that a baby conceived out of rape or incest should not live? I remind you that Ethel Waters was born out of a pregnancy caused by rape. Thank God for the way that she touched this life, this world. I remind you that Ruth, an ancestress of the Lord Jesus Christ, had her life come to her as a descendent of Moab, who was born out of an incestuous relationship.

Now, if you say, "A baby that is born out of rape or incest ought not to live," let me put it to you this way: what if there was a one-month-old baby in the crib that was born out of rape or incest—would you kill that baby? What if there is a two-month-old or a five-year-old, would you kill that child? Are you the one who is going to say because the

child was conceived in circumstances that you don't approve of that the child should be put to death? Remember that the child is a child in the mother's womb as much as a child outside of the mother's womb.

The abortionists don't want you to understand this. This is not the reason that they are pro-abortion—because of those babies that are born as a result of rape or incest. That's an infinitesimal amount of the problem. One-tenth of one percent of today's abortions are performed on babies conceived by rape or incest. That's just the smokescreen; that's just the argument they use. "Well," somebody says, "what about the matter of deformity? What if we know that the baby in the mother's womb is going to be deformed—should we not put it to death?" Well, I want to ask you a question: Do you believe it's logical to follow that line of reasoning? Do you believe that people who are defective should be put to death? If so, there are some folks in this building who may not be alive, including the one that's speaking. All of us have defects.

Just how perfect do you have to be in order to live? Where do we start when we start eliminating those who are defective? What do we do with babies that are born deformed and defective? Do we kill them? And, when we start eliminating the unwanted, where do we end? I mean, infanticide after abortion—the baby is defective? Let's kill it. Euthanasia—the person is old? Let's get Dr. Kevorkian and his crowd to deal with them. Genocide—let's just have some ethnic cleansing and get rid of a whole race. Where do we end? Friend, all of these things are illogical.

Somebody brings another argument: a woman's body is her own to do with it as she pleases. Well, that's not entirely true. According to today's laws, it's not legal for her to be a prostitute in most states. It's certainly not legal for her to inject her veins with heroine. Why, in Tennessee, they tell me I even have to wear a seatbelt. I thought it was my body. No, we realize that in a civilization that a woman's body is not always her own to do with as she wishes. But friend, we're not talking about her body; we're talking about life living in her. She is simply the host, and there's a guest in her womb, wanted or unwanted.

Suppose there's an unwanted guest in my house. Do I have the right to murder an unwanted guest and say it is my house? Let me put it this way: let's suppose we had been back in the days of Nazi Germany, as some of us were. Suppose some said that Hitler ought not to be eradicating and killing the Jews in the Holocaust. But, suppose one of our politicians were to stand up and say this: "I am personally against killing Jews, but what somebody does in his own private gas chamber is his business." "I'm personally against abortion, but what somebody does with their own body is their business." Do you see the parallel? If we say, first of all, it is a matter of life, then there's certain logic that follows in all of these reasons for abortion that don't fall in line.

Somebody says, "But, what about the baby who's going to be the victim of child

abuse if that child is brought in the world?” This has always seemed kind of strange to me: “we don’t want the child abused, so we’ll just kill it.” Ninety percent of battered children are the result of a planned pregnancy. Unwanted children are not those who are the most abused. By the way, friend, if you don’t want that baby, there are plenty of people standing in line who’d be glad to have that child.

“Well,” somebody says, “but the abortion laws are unfair to the poor. The rich can go out and get an abortion, but you’re condemning these poor people to back alley abortions. It’s discriminatory.” Well, may I tell you that it’s probably safer for a rich person to break most any law—they can afford better counsel; they have better means of hiding what they do. But, do you believe that because it is easier for the rich to do wrong that we ought to make it right for the poor to do wrong? Rich people have better access to drugs. Rich people have better access to heroine, crack, cocaine. They can buy it. They can get it easier. Therefore, would you say that we must supply heroine for the poor because the rich have better access to it? No, friend, it’s not a matter of who has better access; it’s simply a matter of what is right or what is wrong. No mother has the right to kill her children. What are we talking about, friend? We are saying that it is wrong, and we dare not be silent. Why? It is a matter of life. That little baby is life.

You know what a woman wrote Abby, that eminent theologian, “Dear Abby?” Somebody wrote Dear Abby, and here’s what they said—their argument was this: “To believe that the ovum and the sperm united are human life would be like believing that a vehicle was in existence after a nut and bolt were joined together at the beginning of an automobile assembly line.” They’re saying, “Don’t tell me that little sperm and that little egg is human life any more than a nut and a bolt joined together is an automobile.” But, the analogy fails horribly. Friend, a nut and a bolt joined together is all it will ever be unless you add some other component to it. It is just simply a nut and a bolt. But, when a sperm and an egg come together, that is an individual, and nothing changes. All you do is just add nutrition—that’s all. You don’t add any more parts. You don’t add anything else. All you do is add nutrition, and it continues to develop. The analogy is a terrible and a foolish analogy, and any body with a mind who will think knows it. I’m saying, friend, we dare not be silent.

Number one: It is a matter of life. Number two: It is a matter of love. And, because it is a matter of life and love, it is a matter of logic. It is wrong. But, what must we do?

1. We Need to Be Informed

Number one: You need to be informed, and that’s why I’m preaching this message.

2. We Need to Work for and Pray for an Amendment That Will Make Abortion on Demand Illegal

Number two: We need to work for and pray for a constitutional amendment that will make abortion on demand illegal.

3. We Need to Teach and Preach Sexual Morality

Number three: We need to teach and preach sexual morality—at home, yes, and in the church.

4. We Need to Have More Compassion for an Unwed Mother

Number four: We need to have more compassion for an unwed mother. So many times, we are driving them into the arms of the friendly abortionists. Thank God for Life Choices. Thank God for the ministry of this church through and to Life Choices. And, for those of you who have a little baby, you don't know what to do with it, come and let us help you. Let us guide you through this period of time.

5. We Need to Speak Out Clearly

Number five: We need to speak out clearly. We dare not be silent. Isaiah 58:1 says, *“Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and [in] the house of Jacob their sins.”* You need to refuse to be swayed by the high-sounding arguments of the liberals, the humanists, the social planners, and the experts. What do they know? Isaiah 5:20 says, *“Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!”*

6. We Must Pray to God and Ask Him to Have Mercy upon This Nation

What else must we do? We must pray to God and ask God to have mercy upon this nation and send a spiritual revival. *“If my people, which are called by name, [will] humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land”* (2 Chronicles 7:14).

7. We Must Preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ

What else must we do? We must preach the glorious saving gospel of Jesus Christ and get people to know Christ as their personal Savior, and change their hearts, so we can change their lives. Do you know what's wrong in America? Do you know who's failed, primarily? We preachers of the gospel have failed. The churches in America have failed. We once had a biblically based morality in the United States, but that is fast receding over the horizon. Today, we're living in a different society where it is morality by majority and expedience rather than a fixed face of right or wrong. I believe that there's little wrong in America today that could not be changed radically, dramatically, and swiftly if we had a generation of preachers who would stand up in pulpits across America and say, “Thus saith the Lord.” We are in a crisis, and we dare not be silent. Speak every way you can. Write your congressman. Write you senator. Write your President. Speak to your school board. But, above all, keep your knees on the floor and pray to Almighty God.

Conclusion

In a congregation like this, there will be many who have already had the trauma of an abortion. May I tell you that God's grace is sufficient to cleanse and to forgive, and that God loves you, and we love you? You don't need to be haunted by the ghost of guilt. There's no way that it can be undone, but the blood of Jesus cleanses from every failure. And, the best thing you can do, if that's been your experience in the past, is not to go hide or to have a double load of guilt. The best thing you can do is to say, "Lord, thank you for cleansing me, and I will become an instrument of your love and mercy and keep others from making the mistake that I made." God loves you, and we love you. And I mean that with all of my heart.

Six Ways to Handle Anger

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: April 9, 1989

Main Scripture Text: Proverbs 25:8–28

“Go not forth hastily to strive, lest thou know not what to do in the end thereof, when thy neighbour hath put thee to shame.”

PROVERBS 25:8

Outline

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Introduction

Proverbs chapter 25—and we’re going to begin reading in verse 8. Then, we are going to read some selected verses from Proverbs chapter 25. We’re dealing with this subject: “Six Ways to Handle Anger.” Now, I know that you have difficulty with anger, so why don’t you take some notes for a friend, all right? And, get out a pen and write down what God has to say about how to handle anger, because, dear friend, I don’t know any thing that’s doing more damage to people personally than is problem of uncontrolled, un-Christian anger.

Proverbs chapter 25 and verse 8 says, *“Go not forth hastily to strive, lest thou know not what to do in the end thereof, when thy neighbour hath put thee to shame. Debate thy cause with thy neighbour himself; and discover not a secret to another: Lest he that heareth it put thee to shame, and thine infamy turn not away. A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver. As an earring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise reprovewer upon an obedient ear. As the cold of snow in the time of harvest, so is a faithful messenger to them that send him: for he refresheth the soul of his masters”* (Proverbs 25:8–13). And then, verse 15: *“By long forbearing is a prince persuaded, and a soft tongue breaketh the bone”* (Proverbs 25:15). Verses 21 and 22: *“If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to*

drink: For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee” (Proverbs 25:21–22). Verse 28: *“He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls”* (Proverbs 25:28).

So, we are talking today about how to handle anger. May I tell you that not all anger is bad? Some anger is good. The Lord Jesus got angry. You know, the Bible says in Ephesians chapter 4 and verse 26: *“Be ye angry, and sin not”* (Ephesians 4:26). So, you can be angry without sinning, right? You can be good and mad. You can—it’s all right. The Lord Jesus says the way to be angry and sin not is to be angry only at sin. You see, you’re to love the sinner and hate the sin.

You say, “Wait a minute. You can’t slice it that thin. You can’t tell me that I can love a man and hate what he does.” Oh, yes you can. Let me ask you a question: Have you ever gotten angry at yourself? Of course you have—sure. Have you ever felt like kicking yourself in the seat of the pants? I have many times. I get angry at me quite often. Do I love me? Yes. Do you love you? Yes. Do you ever get angry at your children? Sure, not because you don’t love them, but because you do love them. You see, love and anger are not mutually exclusive. Sometimes anger is the best expression of love. I’m talking about good anger, godly anger, and righteous anger. The Bible says, *“Be ye angry, and sin not”* (Ephesians 4:26). But, there is an uncontrolled anger that I’m talking about, and ungodly angers Him.

You know, there are some people who are proud of their anger—I mean, they, literally, are proud of it. They think that their temper is a mark of strength, or character, or something. They say, “Well, you know, I get mad at the drop of a hat, and I’ll even supply the hat.” Then, there are other people that are not that way: they don’t fly into a rage; they’re angry, but they’re, on the inside, angry. On the outside, they’re just as cool as they can be, but they’ve got anger that’s eating them alive from the inside. It’s ungodly, unrighteous, and uncontrolled anger.

Let me give you five marks to know if your anger is sinful anger: Number one is when it is without sufficient cause. Jesus spoke of him who was angry with his brother without cause (Matthew 5:22). If you do not have a righteous reason for anger, of course, then, it’s sinful anger. If that anger is against the person rather than the offense, then, my dear friend, it is unrighteous anger. If you have a desire for revenge, it’s unrighteous anger. If you harbor that anger in your heart and don’t want to give it up, it’s unrighteous anger. If you have an unforgiving spirit, you’ve got unrighteous anger.

As a matter of fact, in the Gospel of Mark—there, in Mark, the 3rd chapter, about the 5th verse—we read where Jesus was about to heal a man, and the Pharisees were there. And, in their hearts, the milk of human kindness had curdled. And, the Bible says that because of their reaction against the miracle that He was doing, the Bible says that He was moved with anger (Mark 3:5). Again, the Bible tells how Jesus plaited a whip

and drove the money-changers out of the temple, and He was moved with anger (Mark 11:15). What made Jesus angry was not what people did to Him, but when Jesus Christ saw people abused, misused, downtrodden, and neglected. When He saw the wickedness of people against the downtrodden, Jesus was moved with anger. And, if some things don't make you angry, I feel sorry for you.

I was watching the bowl games this past New Year's, and after a great and exciting game, a beer company—I'll not advertise them by giving their name—came out and said, "Now, here's the player of the game." They took a fine college athlete, and around his name was the name of this beer company—around his face was the name of this beer company. And, they're doing their best to associate booze and beer with college, youth, health, athletics, and all of these things by association. That already made me angry. And then, to top it off, they said, "And, in this fine athlete's name, we're donating \$2,000 to SADD—Students Against Drunk Driving." Whoop-de-doo! Think about it: the next thing you know, Hugh Hefner will be giving an award for moral chastity. And, Abu Nidal will award for those who help put down terrorism.

My dear friend, listen: certain things ought to make you angry. Pornography ought to make you angry. Child abuse ought to make you angry. The drug traffic ought to make you angry. The slumlords ought to make you angry. Those who oppress the poor and the downtrodden ought to make you angry. But, be careful that you're good and mad. You see, the way to be angry and sin not is to be angry only at sin. You see, you're to love the sinner and hate the sin.

Well, thank God, God tells us how to handle anger. And, I'm going to give you six principles right here out of the Word of God—and all of them taken from this 25th chapter of Proverbs. I hope you'll jot them for your friend who needs them.

I. Learn to Deal with Anger Patiently

And, first of all, let me tell you what to do: number one is to learn to deal with anger patiently. Look, if you will, please, in Proverbs chapter 25 and verse 8: "*Go not forth hastily to strive, lest thou know not what to do in the end thereof, when thy neighbour hath put thee to shame*" (Proverbs 25:8). That is, don't get angry in a hurry. Don't rush in without praying, without thinking, and without mulling it over. What has made you angry? Just take your anger apart a little bit, back off, and look at it. That's just so hard to do, isn't it? You see, what you have to do is to get ready ahead of time, because it's too late when the problem has come. You have to get this into your heart; you have to let the Holy Spirit of God teach you this lesson and write, right now, upon your heart: "the next time that thing comes that makes me angry, I am not going to rush in blindly just without even thinking."

Look, if you will, in Proverbs chapter 14, verse 17. By the way, let me give you

several proverbs, because there are many proverbs that say the same thing. Proverbs chapter 14 and verse 17—listen to it: *“He that is soon angry dealeth foolishly”* (Proverbs 14:17). Do you know what that means? Would you get angry just like that? You’re a fool. Now, I didn’t say that. God said, “You were a fool” (Proverbs 14:17). Look in Proverbs chapter 15 and verse 18: *“A wrathful man stirreth up strife: but he that is slow to anger appeaseth strife”* (Proverbs 15:18). That is, God says, “Just be slow; don’t be in such a hurry to get angry” (Proverbs 15:18). Look in Proverbs chapter 18 and verse 13: *“He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him”* (Proverbs 18:13). He says the same thing over there in our text that we just read. He said, “You know, you can be put to shame by getting angry too quick. You just jump at conclusions. You don’t even know; you answer a matter before you hear it.”

I heard of a mother who had a little boy who’d been known to misbehave. She sent the little boy to a birthday party and said, “Now, I’ve told Mrs. Jones that if you misbehaved, to send you home early, and I’m going to punish you if she has to do that.” The little boy went off to the birthday party, and in about 15 minutes, he was back home. Boy, I mean, she flew off the handle; she took the little kid and skinned him—I mean, just whipped him good. And then, she said, “And, what did you do that Mrs. Jones sent you home?” He said, “I didn’t do nothing.” He said, “the party ain’t ‘till tomorrow.” *“He that answereth a matter before he heareth it”* (Proverbs 18:13).

Years ago I heard a little thing about a dog named August who was always jumping at conclusions. One day he jumped at the conclusion of a mule. It was the last day of August. He that *“answereth a matter before he heareth it”* (Proverbs 18:13)—the Bible says, “He’s a fool” (Proverbs 14:17).

Now, listen to Proverbs chapter 29, and see what it says here in verse 20: *“Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words? there is more hope of a fool than of him”* (Proverbs 29:20). So, what you need to do is just cool it. Don’t be in such a hurry. You say, “Well, I can’t help it. I just can’t control it.” Don’t tell me that you can control it. You can control it. Don’t tell me you can’t.

Have you and your wife ever been in one of those discussions that can be heard for about a block away? And, I mean, you’re just right into it—I mean, really in to it. You are just out of control, you think. And then, the telephone rings. You pick up the phone: “Hello.” How do you do that? I mean, how do you just turn it off just like that? I’ll tell you how: because your pride doesn’t want to let the person on the other end know that you’re in an argument. You can control it—you can. You choose not to control it sometimes, and you get yourself in all kind of trouble.

Now, the Bible says that you are to deal with anger patiently. Look again, if you will, at Proverbs chapter 25 and verse 8—look at it: *“Go not forth hastily to strive”* (Proverbs 25:8).

II. Learn to Deal with Anger Privately

Number two: Not only should you deal with it patiently, but deal with it privately. Verses 9 and 10 say, *“Debate thy cause with thy neighbour himself; and discover not a secret to another: Lest he that heareth it put thee to shame, and thine infamy turn not away”* (Proverbs 25:9–10). That is, once you start something like this, you can’t stop it. So, don’t share secrets. I learned a long time ago, dear friend, “if you don’t want it told, then don’t say it.” And, you keep the circle of knowledge no larger than the circle of need. A secret’s something we tell one person at a time.

Now, the Bible says you just *“debate thy cause with thy neighbour himself; and discover not a secret to another”* (Proverbs 25:9). If somebody has done you wrong, do as Jesus said and go to that person privately after you’ve cooled down—according verse 8 (Proverbs 25:8). Then, according verse 9, you go to him as an individual, privately, carefully, coolly, face-to-face, heart-to-heart, and individually (Proverbs 25:9). The Lord Jesus taught exactly the same thing in Matthew chapter 18, verse 15: *“Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone”* (Matthew 18:15). You keep the circle of knowledge no bigger than the circle of need. You know, there’d be... A lot of church splits would be avoided if people would just do this one thing, isn’t that right? A lot of family grief, a lot of neighborhood spats, would be solved if people would just do this one thing.

Let me show you another proverb that teaches the same thing. Proverbs chapter 17 and verse 9—look at it: *“He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends”* (Proverbs 17:9). True friends—that’s what it means. When you repeat something, friend, just hear it. If somebody’s done wrong, cover it. “Love covers a multitude of sins” (Proverbs 10:12). Pride wants to uncover, and love wants to cover. Go tell that person who’s done you wrong—just tell him. Don’t tell somebody else; tell him. Go to your neighbor alone. *“If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone”* (Matthew 18:15).

Some of you young married, listen to me: you get, and you have, your first argument. And, young lady, maybe your husband will do something to you that maybe he ought not to do. Maybe he’ll just walk out of the house and slam the door so hard a picture falls off the wall. Or, maybe he’ll say something real cruel to you. Or, maybe he’ll just shove you. Or, maybe he’ll strike you. God have mercy upon a man who’d do that. But, maybe he would. And then, later on, you two make up. You ask God to forgive, and you forgive one another. And, God puts it back together—and He can, can’t He? He sure can. But, what if you go tell your mama what happened? I’m going to tell you something: your mama will remember that long after you’ve forgotten it. Did know that? She will—she’ll remember it long after you’ve forgotten it. And, she might not know what you did to provoke him to that point. Now, I’m not saying he was right. But, I’m just

saying it's a thin pancake that doesn't have two sides, isn't that right?

Now, listen, folks—listen: you just keep the circle of knowledge no bigger than the circle of need. Sometimes you do need to share. I mean, sometimes there is a time when you need to share. But, just keep the circle of knowledge no bigger than the circle of need. And, go to that person privately. Oh, how much grief and heartache would be spared us if we would simply obey the Word of God, if we would just deal with it patiently and deal with it privately!

III. Learn to Deal with Anger Prudently

Now, here's the third way: deal with it prudently. Begin to read here in chapter 25, verse 11: *"A word fitly spoken"*—that means "prudently spoken"—*"is like apples of gold in pictures of silver"* (Proverbs 25:11). Actually, in Bible times, they didn't have apples like we have them. Most scholars believe this means "oranges." An *apple* means "something round." You're spoken of as "the apple of your eye"—"your eyeball." It means "something round." *"Apples of gold"* (Proverbs 25:11)—or, oranges—can you imagine any thing anymore beautiful than bright golden oranges in a silver basket? Now, listen: *"As an earring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise reprover upon an obedient ear. As the cold of snow in the time of harvest, so is a faithful"* (Proverbs 25:12–13). Now, what he's saying is, "Be so wise in the way that you use your tongue in the time of anger" (Proverbs 25:12–13). Now, words can bruise, or words can bless. Now, look—these speak of the beautiful use of words.

But, just fast-forward over here in this same chapter, if you would, and look in verse 18: *"A man that beareth false witness against his neighbour is a maul"*—that means "a battle axe"—*"and a sword, and a sharp arrow"* (Proverbs 25:18). Have you ever heard any body say, "Sticks and stones can break my bones, but words can never hurt me"? Friend, words can do more than sticks and stones. Now, like a like a battle axe, words can crush. Like a sword, they can slice. Like an arrow, they can pierce.

But, words can heal. Go back again. He's saying that "words can be fitly arranged, carefully selected like apples in baskets of silver" (Proverbs 25:11). Can you see a housewife—she's selecting this sweet and succulent fruit. She polishes it, puts it in a silver basket, and puts it there. How beautiful that is! And, God says that you should be that selective with your words. "O God, set a watch upon my lips" (Psalm 141:3). *"Let your speech be...seasoned with salt"* (Colossians 4:5)—*"a word fitly spoken"* (Proverbs 25:11). Be careful with your words. Oh, when you get angry, be careful with your words! My dear friend, you have to choose your words.

Did you know that you can say the same thing two different ways? You can say to a woman, "You look like a breath of spring," or you can say to her, "You look like the end of a long, hard winter." It is the same thing. You can say to her, "When I look into your

face, time stands still, or you can say, “You’ve got a face that’d stop a clock”—same thing. *“A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver. As an earring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold”* (Proverbs 25:11–12)—something that can be worn, something that can be displayed, and something you don’t have to be ashamed of. *“As the cold of snow in the time of harvest...”* (Proverbs 25:13).

Can you imagine someone out there in the valley of Jezreel—and in about late October or September? The sun is so hot there in the Middle East. And, he looks up there, and sees snow-capped Mt. Hermon, and says, “Oh, for a drink of that ice water!” Dear friend, that’s what your words can do. They can refresh. They can cool down an opponent.

That’s the reason you need to deal with it patiently—so you can deal with it prudently, to go back and think about what you want to say. Oh, I cannot tell you the importance of obeying the Word of God at this point: *“a word fitly spoken”*—*“a word fitly spoken”* (Proverbs 25:11). That means prudence.

Go back to Proverbs chapter 15, and look with me in verse 1 while we’re on this same subject: *“A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger”* (Proverbs 15:1). Your words can smother an argument, or your words can be like pouring kerosene on a fire. Look in Proverbs chapter 15, verse 23: *“A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth: and a word spoken in due season, how good is it!”* (Proverbs 15:23). You husbands especially need to pray over your words. You need to get alone and write down what you want to say to your wife. There’s something she does that angers you—put it in. *“[Words] fitly spoken”* (Proverbs 25:11)—deal with it prudently.

IV. Learn to Deal with Anger Powerfully

Now, next of all, deal with your anger powerfully. You say, “Well, I don’t want to be a wimp. I want to get something done about it.” Wonderful. Let me show you how to be powerful. Look, if you will, here in Proverbs chapter 25 and verse 15: *“By long forbearing is a prince persuaded”*—that’s pretty powerful if you can control the throne—*“and a soft tongue breaketh the bone”* (Proverbs 25:15). Did you know that you have more power doing it God’s way than you have doing it your own way? I mean, you want to set things right?

Now, if you’re just trying to get even, that’s another matter. Sometimes we punish our children—we’re not correcting them; we’re just getting even. But, I mean, if you really want to solve the problem, God says, “I’m going to show you how to be so powerful that you can literally rule the king as he rules the throne.” How can you break the bones of the enemy? By that soft answer, by that prudence, by that patience, and by that dealing personally as God would have you deal with that matter of anger. So many things that we think are strength and power are not strength and power.

I was reading recently about Mike Tyson—Mike Tyson, the heavyweight champion. I tore this out of *USA Today*. It says here, “Mike Tyson’s volcanic rage has erupted again.” Now, this was Oct. 4, 1988. “The heavyweight champion smashed windows in his 4.25 million Bernardsville, New Jersey, mansion Sunday morning, causing his wife and mother-in-law to flee and call police.” And, I’m going to skip a little bit here, but it says that “Tyson threw chairs through windows, took an instrument from the fireplace, and ran through the estate smashing windows.” And, it goes on to talk about some things that he did. Now, he’s a tough guy, big. Don’t get in the ring with him. But, I’ll tell you what: sounds to me like he belongs in Romper Room. Now Mike, if you’re watching, I’m just kidding. But, you think about it—here’s this man with this tremendous power and this tremendous wealth, and he’s taking a poker and running around breaking out windows in a house that cost over four million dollars. Friend, that is not strength; that’s weakness.

You know what strength is? *Strength is power under control*. That’s what God says here. God says, “Listen, I’ll tell you how to persuade kings. I’ll tell you how to break bones with a soft tongue” (Proverbs 25:15).

Friend, do you want to bring the power of God into your home, the power of God into your business, the power of God into your life, and into your relationships with your children? You screaming mothers, you’re wrecking that home—you’re ruining that child. “The law of kindness being in the mouth” (Proverbs 31:26)—that’s where the power is. That’s what’s going to mold that life and make that life. Deal with anger powerfully. Your temper tantrums are not strength; they’re weakness. God’s not in the tornado; He’s in the still, small voice (1 Kings 19:12).

V. Learn to Deal with Anger Positively

All right. Now, next, deal with your anger positively—not negatively, but positively. We’re back in Proverbs chapter 25, and look with me in verses 21 and 22: “*If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee*” (Proverbs 25:21–22). Now, that’s the way again to get the power of God into this thing. The Bible says, “Do good to those that despitefully use you” (Matthew 5:44; Luke 6:28). It’s so hard to want to do this because everything in us says, “I’ve got to get even.” Isn’t that right? But, just do them good—not evil for evil, but good for evil. Let...

There are several areas of life. The lowest level of life is to do evil for good. That’s the satanic level. The human level is to do good for good and evil for evil. But, God’s is to do good for evil—to do good, to bless and curse not. You see, let me tell you how to get rid of your enemies: make a friend out of them. And, don’t just lord it over them with that sticky, ooey-gooey goodness. But, I mean, really, truly, do them good. You’d be

amazed how good it feels—how wonderful it is! And, God moves in. You say, “They don’t deserve it.” Hey, did you deserve it when Jesus saved you? *“And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you”* (Ephesians 4:32). Friend, those who deserve love the least need it the most. They’re the ones who need it the most. Be positive. *“Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good”* (Romans 12:21).

VI. Learn to Deal with Anger Personally

Now, last of all—and here’s the sixth way that the writer of Proverbs tells us how to handle anger: not only should you do it positively, not negatively, not rendering evil for evil, but good for evil—but then, deal with it personally. Notice how he ends this marvelous passage here in verse 28: *“He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls”* (Proverbs 25:28). You see, before you deal with any body else, you’ve got to deal with yourself. How are you going to deal patiently? How are you going to deal personally? How are you going to deal prudently? How are you going to deal, my dear friend, with these ways, unless you’ve first of all dealt with yourself?

Now, the reason you fly out of control is that you’re out of control; you’re not ruling your own spirit. And, when you don’t rule your own spirit, what happens is you open yourself up to demonic invasion. That’s the reason Paul said there in Ephesians 4: *“Be ye angry, and sin not”*—and then he goes right on to say—*“Neither give place to the devil”* (Ephesians 4:26–27), because when you’re angry and you sin, that becomes the devil’s campground—that becomes the devil’s beachhead. You’re like a city without walls. And, the devil comes in, and he begins to war. You get out of control. You’re more vulnerable when you’re angry—you’re more vulnerable to Satan than perhaps at any other time because you’re out of control. You’re trying to hurt somebody else, and who you’re really hurting is you. Anger is an acid that destroys its container. You’re really hurting.

Did you ever watch *Amos and Andy*? You know, one day, Amos and Andy were walking along, and Amos saw Andy in a big overcoat. And, in that overcoat, there was a bulge. And, Amos said told Andy, “It’s suppertime. Why you got that overcoat on? And, what’s that bulge up there?” He said, “It’s dynamite.” He said, “I’ve got dynamite strapped on my chest.” He said, “Why?” “Oh,” he said, “I’ve got a guy. Every time he talks to me he always thumps me on the chest. He said, “It makes me mad. The next time he does that,” he said, “I’m going to blow his hand off.” Yeah, and he’s going to blow his heart out too, right? That’s exactly what we do. In blowing their hand off, we blow our heart out.

See, look at it again; look and see what he says: *“He that hath no rule over his own*

spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls” (Proverbs 25:28). You say, “He made me angry.” No, he didn’t. You made you angry. You had no defense because you didn’t rule your own spirit. Nobody can make you angry. It’s not what they do that makes you angry; it is your response to what they do that makes you angry. If you’re asleep and somebody says all kinds of bad things about you, and you’re sleeping so sound you don’t hear them, then that doesn’t make you angry. But, if you’re awake and you hear them, then you could get angry. So, obviously, it’s not what they do; it’s what your response is. The first time they did the same thing, but you were asleep. It is response to what they do that makes you angry. Now, if somebody can make you angry, it’s because you don’t rule your own spirit. You see, if somebody can push a button and you explode in anger, then you are their slave. They can make you angry any time they want to. All they have to do is just push the button—and bang, there you go. Well, who’s in control? Not you—they. There you go. Why? Because you have not ruled your own spirit.

Conclusion

Now, the time to get these principles in your heart is now. The time is not when you’re in the middle of that argument, because you can’t go say, “Well, let me go get those sermon notes here.” No, this is a way of life. This is why you have to wake up in the morning and bathe yourself in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ and be filled with the Spirit, because “the fruit of the Spirit is”—what?—“love, joy, temperance, goodness, mercy, faith, temperance” (Galatians 5:22–23)—is the last one. Temperance—you know what temperance means? “Control,” not self-control, but as the Holy Spirit of God working in you, that attitude of control that is really Spirit control.

You know what our prayer ought to be every morning?

*Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me
All His wonderful passion and purity
O, Thou Spirit divine, all my nature refine
[Let] the beauty of Jesus be seen in me*

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

Do you know what spills out when you get jostled? Whatever you’re full of. If you’re full of Jesus and somebody jostles you, then Jesus will spill out. If you’re full of wrath, or anger, or frustration, then that’s going to spill out.

If you want to know what I am, don’t watch me now. What you’re seeing right now are my actions, and I’m trying to control them. I’m aware that you’re watching me. I’m watching you, too—you don’t look so good, either. I know that it’s Sunday morning. Want to see the real Adrian? Watch him on the expressway when somebody heads him off, or watch him as somebody steps in line in front of him, or watch him as somebody

insults him. And, what spills out, that's the real me; that's the real you. And friend, that happens long before the incident, whether you've stored up Jesus or not in your heart. That's the reason why, every morning, we have to lean our arms on the windowsill of Heaven and look into the face of Jesus. I'll say, "Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me." Deal with it personally. If you don't rule your own spirit, you're like a city without walls. And, the enemy's going to come in when you're least expecting him, and you're going to say, "I don't know what happened to me. I'm just surprised at myself." Well, God's not surprised, because you've been running on empty.

That's six ways to handle anger right out of the Word of God.

The Perils of Postponement

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: October 7, 1984

Main Scripture Text: Proverbs 27:1

“Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.”

PROVERBS 27:1

Outline

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Introduction

Take your Bibles and turn, if you will, please, to Proverbs chapter 27 and verse 1. We're in a continuing series on "God's Way to Health, Wealth and Wisdom," taken from the Book of Proverbs. I've told you before that a proverb is a short sentence based on long experience. That is, a human proverb. "Stitch in time saves nine." You can think of so many proverbs. "Haste makes waste." Some of these proverbs are good. Some of them are silly. Some of them are absolutely contradictory. But those are human proverbs.

Now, the proverbs in God's Word are not short sentences based on long experience. They are compacted truth given by divine inspiration. They are nuggets from the gold mine of God's Word. Some of the Proverbs we're very much familiar with, the one today is one like that, Proverbs chapter 27 and verse 1. *“Boast not thyself of tomorrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.” “Boast not thyself of tomorrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.”* Proverbs chapter 27 and verse 1.

Now, I preach to many people, have preached to many people, and I've seen thousands and thousands and thousands of people come to the Lord Jesus Christ through the ministry of God's Word. But I hate to say it, but I must say it; I've seen thousands and thousands and thousands of people go away unsaved after I've preached. They have not received the Lord Jesus Christ. There's been no change. They

have heard the Word of God, and they've gone out unsaved. Some of them have died and gone to Hell.

Now, I have to ask myself, "Why do some people hear the Gospel and not receive it? One reason: some people simply don't believe it. Or if they do believe it, they still have such a rebellion toward God that they stand and shake their puny fist in the face of God, as it were, boldly, braggingly, brazenly, and say "Oh, God, if there be a God, You're not big enough to make me serve You." I don't think there're any like that here today. There may be some unbelievers here. I hope there are none just that arrogant here today. But either through just unbelief or sheer rebellion, there's some who go out and they're not saved. That's one category of persons. I'm going to put those in one category.

There's another category of person that hear the Gospel and go out unsaved. And these are self-righteous people. These are not out-and-out sinners, nor are they unbelievers. They believe in their head the Gospel. They know they need to be saved. But they think they already are saved because of their good works. They're church members. They have nice morals. They have nice manners. They dress nicely. They live in fine homes. They attend the services. They do good deeds. They don't think they need to be saved. They think that the Gospel is for the murderer, the pervert, the drunk, the down-and-out. They think that they are too good to be damned.

Friend, listen. I've said it before; I want to say it again. There is nobody so bad he cannot be saved. There is no one so good he need not be saved. And there're so many, however, who are going to be lost because of their self-righteous attitude. They never repent of their sin. They never receive Christ as their personal Savior. But I'm gonna tell you why I believe most people hear me or any other gospel preacher preach, and then go out and are lost. Not because they rebel against God or disbelieve; not because they're self-righteous. I believe far and away the majority of the people who hear the Gospel message and go out unsaved and remain unsaved are lost because of procrastination. Procrastination. They believe the Gospel, and neither are they self-righteous. They know that they need to be saved, and they say, "One of these days I'm going to get saved," but they keep putting it off. Why? Well, they got by yesterday without Jesus and they got by the day before without Jesus, and the day before that, and the day before that. And so they assume that tomorrow will be like yesterday.

I heard of a man who jumped off a twenty-story building, and as he passed each floor he said, "It's okay so far. It's okay so far. It's okay so far." We assume that because the past has been all right, that the future is going to be all right, when the Bible says, "*Boast not thyself of tomorrow for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.*" And I am convinced that the sin of procrastination has blasted more dreams, blighted more hopes, wrecked more careers, ruined more lives, and damned more souls than perhaps

any other sin in the Word of God. And our text today says, *“Boast not thyself of tomorrow for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.”* Three words come to me as I look at this verse. The very first word is the word “arrogance.” The second is the word “ignorance.” And the third is the word “vigilance.”

I. Arrogance

Now, first of all look at the word “arrogance.” There’s an arrogant attitude here. Here’s a man who’s boasting. He boasts of tomorrow! He has some idea that he’s got everything in control! He’s quite arrogant! He doesn’t see his need of getting right with God. Over in the New Testament in the book of James the 4th chapter, I want you to turn to that because it seems to me as though ole’ Brother James has almost been using the Book of Proverbs for a text for his sermon. Seems like he’s preaching a sermon the same as I am on this text Look in it, in James Chapter 4, and verse 13. James is speaking to the boastful businessman. Actually, ha-ha-ha, James has in mind a first century “wheeler-dealer.” Here’s a real entrepreneur, a boastful businessman. And James says to him, in James chapter 4 and verse 13: *“Go to now, ye that say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that you ought to say ‘If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this or that.’ But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil.”*

“You rejoice in your boastings.” What was this man boasting about? He was boasting about tomorrow! What does our text say? *“Boast not thyself of tomorrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.”* Now, look at this man! He’s like many who are listening to me: some by radio, some by television, some later on by tape, and some in this audience. He was a man who thought he had it all together. I mean, this was a fellow who didn’t leave things to chance. For, you see, look at him, first of all, he has his calendar on his desk. He says, “I’ll continue there a year and buy and sell and get gain.” He’s, he’s marked it out. He knows what the next three hundred and sixty-five days are going to be. You can just see him as he studies the calendar. Not only does he have his calendar on his desk, he has his map on his desk. He’s been looking over the place and he says, “Now, where would be a good place for me to open a new branch outlet?” He says, “I know what I’ll do. I’ll go to such a city. That’s the city.” He puts the pin in the map. He says, “The demographics are perfect. That’s where I can do it.” And not only does he have his calendar there, and not only does he have his map there, he also has his sales charts there. He, he has it all figured out. He says, “I’m going to buy. I’m going to sell. I’m going to get gain.” He knows how he’s going to get his commodities. He knows how he’s going to sell his commodities. He’s been looking at

the profit and the loss. Listen! He has a degree in marketing from the University of Jerusalem. He's got it all figured out! He knows exactly how it's going to happen. He has it all figured out. But James says, "What he ought to say is this, 'If the Lord wills, he'll live and do this or that.'"

Now what was wrong with what this man did? There's nothing wrong with planning. I mean, if you're a businessman, you ought to do everything that he did. This man is not condemned for what he did. He's condemned for what he didn't do. You see, there's no mention of God in this passage. He left God out! I mean, he's planning his life, he's boastful about what he's going to do, and James says that all such boasting is evil. He left God out. The biggest fool is not the man who says there is no God. The biggest fool is the man who says there is a God and then doesn't live like it. Amen? He's a bigger fool. That's what this-, I don't have anything in the Bible that says this man was an infidel, an atheist. He just simply is planning his life without God. He's boasting about what he's going to do. "I'm going to buy and sell; continue there a year. I'm going to get gain." But he doesn't know, for God says, "Listen, sir. What is your life? It's like a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away." It's like your breath on a frosty morning. *Fffftt*, and it's gone."

You see, God doesn't have to take your life. All He has to do is stop giving it. You have to-, what you need to say is, "If the Lord will, I'm going to live or do or that." So the very first word we see is the word "arrogance." *"Boast not thyself of tomorrow."*

II. Ignorance

And then the second word we see is word "ignorance." *"For thou knowest not" "Thou knowest not."* You're ignorant. You don't know what is going to be on the morrow. Now most of us think we know what's going to be on the morrow. But ladies and gentlemen, we do not know what tomorrow holds. Only God knows the future. And how, how ignorant we are to assume upon tomorrow. Now listen, I am convinced that right now literally thousands of unsaved people are listening to me. At this moment. Literally thousands of unsaved people, by radio and television, and I would dare say if this congregation is like the average congregation, at least twenty-five percent in this building are lost: If you died right now, you'd go to Hell. You're lost! Many of you are members of this church, but you've never been saved. Somehow, you've gotten your name on the church roll, but you've never gotten your name in the Lamb's Book of Life. And you know that you know down in the deepest part of your heart that you are lost, and you intend to be saved, but you intend to be saved tomorrow. Tomorrow! You think that somehow that God has promised you tomorrow. What ignorance that is! Not because I say so. God says, *"You know not what shall be on the morrow."*

I want to give you four reasons. Listen to me. I want to give you four reasons why no

one who's unsaved should go past today without Jesus. Are you listening?

A. You Will Lose Today

Number one: You will lose today. You will lose today, if you don't give your heart to Jesus today. Now we say "Get right with God, you may die," friend, get right with God, you may live! And you can live with the Lord Jesus Christ. And a day lived without the Lord Jesus is a day that is lost for all eternity. One of these days, dear friend, not only are we going to be saved by His grace, but we're going to be rewarded according to our works. And if you are saved at your deathbed, you're going to have no life of reward! You're going to have no life to offer to the Lord Jesus Christ! Surely, you can be saved on your deathbed. Some are. Not many. Some! But Billy Sunday said that deathbed repentance is like burning the candle of life for the devil and then blowing the smoke in God's face. Oh, listen, you may live! And, and, and don't go without today because, dear friend, don't fail to give your heart to Jesus today because if you do, you'll lose today. God is my witness. God is my witness. Are you listening? I would not go without Jesus Christ twenty-four hours for one million dollars. Or for that matter, anything you could name. Not twenty-four hours, I would not! I would not. Why would I miss a day of not knowing the Lord Jesus Christ? Why would I betray my Lord for twenty-four hours? Oh, my dear friend, you will lose today if you put it off!

Turn to Acts, chapter 24. Let me show you something here. Acts chapter 24. There's the story of ol' Paul. Now, Paul was before a Roman official. His name was Felix. Acts chapter 24 and verse 24. Let me just give you the setting. Paul had been preaching the Gospel, and he found out that he was thrown in jail for preaching the Gospel. When Paul would go to a revival crusade, he never did check on the hotels. He always checked on the jails 'cause he knew, that's about where he's going to end up. And so Paul was in a, Paul was in jail for preaching the Gospel, and now he comes before a political high muckety-muck. And this guy has the ability to release Paul. Now, if you and I were there to coach Paul, we'd have said, "Now, Paul, stroke him a little bit. Paul, be on your best behavior. Paul, don't do anything to irritate this man. Paul, give him a little philosophy. Tell him about your world travels, Paul. And, Paul, perhaps he'll release you!" But I want you to notice what Paul did beginning in Verse 24. Acts chapter 24 and verse 24: *"And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. And as he,"* that is, Paul, *"reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, 'Go thy way for this time; when have a convenient season, I'll call for thee.'"* Do you see what he said? "Go your way, and when it is convenient, I'm going to be saved. Yes I am, but not now! Just, just for this time. Just put it off a little bit." Paul preached to him a blazing, burning, blistering, sermon. Paul didn't back up. Paul didn't equivocate. Paul spoke to him of righteousness, and showed that

righteousness was in Jesus Christ. Paul spoke to him of temperance. Here was a man covered with the slimy fingerprints of sin, and Drusilla was not his legitimate wife. Paul spoke to him of judgment to come. It's as though no longer is Paul before Felix. Felix is before Paul, and Paul is the prosecuting attorney. And Paul points his finger to the face of this Roman governor, and he tells him that, "One of these days, Sir, you're going to face Almighty God! You'd better get right with God." And when he did, there was such conviction that Felix trembled! He is that close to being saved! But then the devil whispers something in his ear. He says, "Oh, that sounds good. Paul, you go your way. When it's more convenient, I'll call on you."

Well, let me tell you. According to the Bible, he continued to listen to Paul for twenty-four months! But rather than getting closer, he got further and further away, and the story ends with Paul still in chains but with Felix chained in his sin. And let me tell you. Do you know what the name "Felix" means? Means "happy." Do you know how he died? He died a suicide. Now, you see, friend. Not only did he go to hell, but he wasted his life! Here was a man so miserable that he ultimately died a suicide! Why should I not have the joy of knowing Jesus now? Why should I not have the peace of knowing Jesus now? Why should I not have the fulfillment of knowing Jesus now? Why should I not have the love of knowing Jesus now? Why should I not have a God that I can pray to now? Why should I wait to be saved? That's the question you ought to be asking yourself. Friend, why put it off till tomorrow? Being saved is not like taking bad medicine in order to get well. *"The Lord thy God is a sun and a shield. The Lord will give grace and glory. No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly."* If it'll make you healthy, happy, holy, wholesome, God says, "Help yourself." God loves you, and He desires to bless you. I want to say again, I'd be a Christian if there were no heaven, just to know Jesus Christ in this world and in this life.

B. Your Heart Gets Harder

The second reason that you ought not to postpone this thing, those of you who are not saved. You're not to postpone it because every day that you do postpone it, your heart gets harder. And it will be harder for you tomorrow to receive Jesus than it will be today. Tomorrow, if tomorrow comes, you'll only have more sin to repent of, less time to repent in, and it will be harder for you to repent. The Bible says in Hebrews 3 verse 17: *"Today as the Holy Ghost saith, today if you will hear His voice, harden not your heart."* Now, listen. The Holy Spirit is speaking, not Adrian. The Holy Spirit. He's speaking to you. The Holy Spirit is saying to you through the Word of God and through this Baptist preacher: "today if you hear God's voice, don't harden your heart!" Your heart can get hard. It becomes more difficult for you to be saved. Did you know that anything you do, you tend to get better at, the more you do it? The more you play golf, the better you're supposed to get. Of course, I understand that theory's been ruined. Ha. The more you

play tennis, the more you sing. You see, practice makes perfect. The more you refuse Jesus, the better you get at refusing Jesus. Do you understand what I'm saying? The more you deny Christ, the better you get at denying Christ. You become a pro at rejecting Jesus.

I am speaking to some professionals today. Some of you've heard so many sermons, you have become Gospel hardened. The Bible says, "Today, if you'll hear God's voice, don't you harden your heart."

Let me illustrate. Out here in the woods, perhaps a woodsman cuts down a pine tree and there's that pine stump covered with rosin and turpentine. And if a forest fire comes and begins to burn through the forest and all the underbrush, when the, when the fire comes to that stump, that stump will catch fire because it, it, it's just so covered with fat and tar and rosin. And that, that stump will burn. It will blaze brightly, and it will burn for a long time. But then eventually, the fire will go out and the stump will be charred. Now in several years after the brush grows up again and perhaps there's another fire, when the fire comes to that stump, this time the stump may catch fire. But it will not burn as long, nor will it burn as brightly, and then it'll go out. Now there may even come a third time, and if the heat is very intense, and after several years there's another fire, when the fire gets to that ole' stump, it may just flicker. It may just glow. And then the fire will go out. Right? But there'll come a time when the, the, the winds will be driving the flames, and they will be roaring and crackling, and when the fire comes to that ol' stump, it'll just jump over it. That stump will not even glow. It will not even flicker.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, that's a parable of the human soul. Do you remember the first time you heard the Gospel? I'm talking to those of you who are unsaved. Listen to me. Do you remember the first time you heard a Gospel preacher stand up and tear his heart out and beg you to be saved? When he preached about Jesus dying in agony and blood upon the cross? When he talked of the glories of Heaven, the agonies of Hell? When he, with tears coursing down his cheeks, said, "Come to Jesus Christ," and there was a fire that started to burn in your heart? You said, "Oh, I need God. I need to be saved! I need to be right with God!" But somehow, you managed to say "No" to Jesus Christ and the fire went out, and your heart was seared, burned over. The next time you were in a service when God's Holy Spirit was moving like that, perhaps your heart flickered and flamed and it burned, but not so brightly and not so long, and the fire went out more easily when you said "No" to Jesus. It may be that there are some who are listening to me today, and when you hear this Gospel message, all you'll feel this time will be just a glow, just a flicker. That's all. Just an ember. That's all. And I thank God that ember's still there. But some of you are sitting here saying, "Oh, yeah. I've heard this stuff before. I know what he's about to say. Boy, it's a good ballgame last night. I can't wait to get home to dinner today." And your mind is gathering wool

because you've heard this! You've heard this! And your heart is not burning! I feel sorry for you. You're almost in Hell and don't know it. You say, "Preachers don't preach like they used to when I was a boy." Some of them do, you just don't hear like you used to when you were a boy. God's Word says *"Today if you will hear God's voice, harden not your heart."* The Bible speaks in the Gospel of John of some who would not believe, and then the Bible says, *"And therefore, they could not believe."* How tragic that is when your heart gets hard!

You see, that's the reason so many people are saved when they're children, because the children's hearts are so tender. Let me ask you a question. How many of you were saved before the age of fifteen? Let me see your hands. Just look around. Take them down. How many have been saved after the age of fifty? Let me see your hands. Hold it up. Maybe three or four. Maybe three or four. What am I saying? I'm saying, dear friend, that when a person hears the Gospel of Jesus Christ and he says, "No" one time, it makes it easier to say "No" the next and the next, and the devil is very clever.

C. **The Danger of Sudden Death**

Let me give you another reason that you ought to be saved today. Not only because if you're not, if you don't, you'll lose today. Not only because, dear friend there's the danger of hardening your heart. But you ought to be saved today because there's the danger of sudden death. Oh, you say, "There goes another Baptist preacher talkin' 'bout people dying." Well, I'll make a deal with you, okay? Soon as you get people to stop dying, I'll stop preaching about it, all right? Fair enough? Listen, there's the danger of death! And if you don't know the Lord Jesus Christ, you may die today! You may not see tomorrow! Death is only a heartbeat away! That's all! Just a heartbeat away. People talk about being close to death. "Oh, I was in an accident; I was close to death. I was sick; I was close to death. I was on the battlefield; I was close to death." No, you weren't. You didn't die. You're closer to death right now than you've ever been. Right this moment, you're closer to death than you have ever been! Five thousand Americans die everyday; some die by disease, some die by design. That is, they're killed or they kill themselves. Some die by disaster. They're in a wreck, but they die. Death lays his icy hands on older people, and they die. Sometimes a young mother must leave her helpless babies, and she dies. Sometimes the teenager leaves his fun and games and he dies. And sometimes even the little baby must drop his toys and wrestle with the iron grip of death! Because death is a reality! And the Bible says, *"Boast not thyself of tomorrow for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth."* In this world in which we live, one person dies approximately every second. With every tick of the clock, one soul dies. That means, sixty die per minute. That means that three thousand six hundred die per hour. That means that eighty-six thousand souls will die today. That means that thirty million people will die this year with every tick of the clock. People like you and

people like me! And one of those ticks is mine, and one of those ticks is yours.

And I know what you're doing right now. You're doing the same thing I'm doing. You're thinking, "That's right, Preacher. Tell 'em. Tell 'em!" Not "Tell me." You don't believe you're going to die tomorrow. You don't think you're gonna die tomorrow, do you? Probably not. You don't think you are, do you? Do you? 'Course, not I don't think I'm going to. I mean, none of us think we're going to. Is there anybody here who's sure he's not going to? Not a one of us. Not a one of us. In a little while I'm gonna get on an airplane. That airplane may go down. This may be the last sermon I'll ever preach. You say, "I was there when he said that. This may be the last sermon I'll ever preach! It may be the last one you'll ever hear! That's the reason somebody said that every preacher ought to preach as a dying man will preach to dying men. Every time I get on an airplane, I kind of think about that. You know that airplane poison? One drop will kill you. But you don't have to be in an airplane. People die closer to home than people die somewhere else. More people die with their street clothes on than die with their pajamas on. I'm saying the Bible says there is but a step between me and death, and none of us are promised tomorrow! Now, I know what you're thinking! You're saying, "Yep, Preacher. I'm not sick though. I'm feeling good and the statistics say..." Friend, I wouldn't waste my soul on statistics. Remember in the 12th chapter of Luke, that story of that rich man whose crops really came in that day? I understand we've got some good crops this year in the Mid-South. That man's crops really came in. He said, "Boy, what am I gonna do? He said, "I'll tell you what I'll do." He said, "I'll pull down my barns and then I'll build bigger barns." And then he said, "I'll put all my stuff in those barns," and then he said, "I'm gonna get a hammock and a pink lemonade. I'm gonna sit in the shade." Well, he doesn't say it exactly this way. But he said, "I'm gonna say, '*Soul, take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry. Thou hast much goods laid up for many years.*'"

Now, there were two things he was sure of. One was his wealth and the other was his health. "*Much goods and many years.*" Much goods and many years! Jesus said that God said to him that night, "*Thou fool. This night thy soul shall be required of thee.*" I dare say that I'm speaking right now, somewhere, on radio, television or in this audience, a man who's about, thirty-six years old, he's got about fifty thousand in the bank. And brother, he thinks he has it made. He doesn't know God. He doesn't know God. And he's saying, "That Baptist preacher, he's not going to get to me. I have my life all planned out! I have got it made!" And God says, "What a fool you are. What a fool you are!" The Bible says, "*Boast not thyself of tomorrow for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth!*"

This year a little more than forty thousand Americans will get in their automobiles, little dreaming it's the last ride they'll ever take. They'll be taken out [snaps fingers] just like that, Oh, the Bible says don't boast yourself of tomorrow. Don't do it. What

ignorance, what ignorance, what ignorance that is!!

D. **The Soon Coming of Jesus**

Let me give you the fourth reason that you ought not to boast yourself of tomorrow. And that is the certain and perhaps soon coming of the Lord Jesus Christ! Christ is coming again! And if He comes and you're not saved, it'll be too late for you to be saved. You'll not be saved after He comes. The Bible says in Matthew 24 and verse 42: *"Watch therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come."* *"Watch therefore, for ye know not hour your Lord doth come."* Matthew chapter 24 and verse 44: *"Therefore, be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh."*

You say, "Well, Preacher, I really don't think He's going to come today," but you don't know He's not going to come today. I believe we're living in the last generation. I expect to see Christ in my generation. I expect to see Jesus come. He may not, but I expect it. Why? Because of the signs of the times. Now you say, "Preachers have always been talking about the signs of the times." That's right. But you see, Jesus in Matthew chapter 24 talked about the signs of the times: earthquakes and famines and wars and sin and rebellion and all of these things, and then Jesus said, *"These are the beginnings of sorrows."* And that word "sorrows" is a Greek word that means "birth pangs," or "birth pain." Labor pains, if you will. I know what those labor pains are like; not because I felt them, but I sure have sympathized with them. I can remember when our first little boy came, Stephen. You know what they tell you about labor pains; they say, "Now, listen. First of all, when you feel the pain, that's a sign that something is near. But when the pains get closer together and the pains get intensified, that's really a sign." Right? When they get close, and when they get hard. Isn't that the sign, mamas? Okay? Am I right? I'm getting this out of here. I thought I was right. I'm right

Now, listen. When the signs get close and when they get intense. You see, what we're having today is not just signs. There've always been earthquakes and pestilence and all of these things. But what Jesus said is when you see birth pangs, when you see an intensification of the signs, and when you see a convergence of the signs, then you know, it's very close.

I remember that first little boy we had. Joyce gave me an elbow in the middle of the night. Why is it always the middle of the night? "Adrian." Now listen, I want to tell you, here I'm just a kid, just a boy. See, I mean, I've not been through anything like this. Boy, you talk about being apprehensive. I tried to remember, "What was it the doctor told us to do? Wel-, the first thing we were to do was to call him." I said, "Joyce, are you sure that's what it was?" After a while she said, "I believe, Adrian, I am sure.' And so, I got out of bed. We lived in a little house trailer. I was going to college. I said, "Well, now, I've got to call the doctor." So I pulled on my trousers and went out to call the doctor. We didn't have a telephone 'n that little house trailer, but there was a community center

there in the trailer park. And I went to community center and, folks, it was locked. Said, "Oh, Lord, it's locked!" "I've got to get in here. And I mean, time is a'wastin." And I got me a, a bar, a crowbar, and I pried the window open. I said, "Boy, if I'm seen, they, they'll shoot me; they'll think I'm stealing something." And I went into the window on my head and, and got up, and I ran to the phone. And, folks, it was a pay phone. I didn't have a dime. I'd forgotten that. And I went back, and I said, "Lord, let there be a dime in that trailer." And I went back and finally found a dime and put it in there and called the doctor.

Now, why was I so excited? Listen, folks. There's one thing that Adrian Rogers doesn't wanna do, and I'll tell you what it is. I don't wanna deliver any baby. I don't wanna do that! I tell you something else I don't wanna do. I don't wanna be left behind when Jesus comes. I don't want to be left behind when Jesus comes! And the Bible says, "When you see all these things, know that it's nigh." That is, when you see an intensification and a convergence of the signs; and I'm telling you I believe that there're some people who listening to me right now who may die and go to Hell because Jesus will come and you postponed your salvation.

The Bible says, not this preacher, the Bible says, "*Boast not thyself of tomorrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.*" Why get saved today? Well, if you don't, you-, you'll lose today. Why? Your heart may get harder. Why? You may die suddenly. Why? Jesus may come

Somebody told a parable of the devil and his demons who were in the caverns of darkness, and they were planning how to damn the world. And they were having a convocation to see how to damn the world. And one of the demons who was very clever said, "I'll tell you. Let's just tell the people there's no God. Then they won't prepare to meet God." And the devil said, "No, that won't work. Only fools don't believe in God. That'll only damn a few." Someone else said, "Well, I have an idea. Let's tell them the Bible is not the Word of God." The devil sad, "Well, some will believe that. But the Bible has such self-authenticity about it, and the fulfilled prophecy and the truth of the Bible. It'll be hard to get men not to believe the Bible's the Word of God. That'll only get a few. Isn't there a better plan?" Somebody said, "Well, let's deny the deity of Christ. Let's fill the pulpits with liberal preachers who pretend to preach the Bible, but they never preach the blood atonement, the virgin birth, and, and, and that about the Lord Jesus, His full deity." The devil said, "That's a good plan, and I'll see to it that I have some preachers like that. But I need a better plan." Finally, a demon stood. He was known for his wicked wisdom, known for his malevolence. And all the halls of hell got quiet to listen to what he had to say. He said, "Here's my plan." He said, "We will admit there's a God. We will admit that the Bible is the Word of God. And we will tell people that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And, furthermore, we'll tell them they need to be saved. And furthermore,

we'll tell them they will be saved. But not today." And a cheer went up in the halls of hell. And Satan said, "With that tool, I will be able to damn the souls of millions."

III. Vigilance

Here's my last word. First word, arrogance, "Boast not." The second word: ignorance—you don't know. The third word is the word "vigilance." Because, dear friend, in the negative, there is implied a positive and the positive is, therefore, that we ought to watch. We ought to be ready. We ought to be vigilant! Do you know the Lord Jesus Christ? Listen to me. The Holy Spirit says, "Today." The voice of reason says, "Today." The voice of conscience says, "Today." The voice of experience says, "Today." The voice of God's Word says, "Today." The Bible says, "You can know joy now. You can know peace now. You can know Jesus now. You can know forgiveness now!" Be vigilant. Come to Jesus now! Trust Him, and He'll save you. He'll save you. He'll do it today. "Behold now is the accepted time. Behold now is the day of salvation."

Years ago I heard the story of a man who wanted to come to this country. So he translated his wealth into a diamond. He bought a diamond, a very beautiful diamond, and got on a ship in the olden days to come to this country, thinking he would sell the diamond, translate it back to cash. Very beautiful diamond. He stood on the, the decks of that ship and took that diamond out and looked at it and tossed it up in his hand, and it glimmered in the sunlight. A few people watched him, and he liked the idea of people watching him. He threw it up again. Somebody said, "Be careful with that." "He said, "Well," he said, "I know what I'm doing." And he tossed it up again. This time when it came down, it touched the tip of his finger rather than the palm of his hand, and so he reached out this hand to catch it, and like a football player, fumbling a football, it went up and back and bounced out of his hand and over the side of that ship and down into the briny deep it sank. And he said, "My soul, all that I had and I lost it! It's gone! My life is gone"

You say, "Preacher, I don't believe that story. No man would be that foolish as to stand on the deck of a ship with a diamond and toss it so carelessly in the air." Well, I don't know whether the story's true or not. I just heard it. But I tell you, I know people who are more foolish than that. Listen to me. The sea is eternity. The ship is your life. The diamond is your soul. Why play so carelessly with it when Jesus said, "*What should it profit a man if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul, or what should a man give in exchange for his soul.*"

Conclusion

May I have every eye right here? Are you certain that you're saved? If you're not, the wisest thing you can do right this moment is to invite Christ into your heart, to pray and

say, "Lord Jesus, come in and save me." Those of you who are watching by television, listen to me. If you're not absolutely certain that you're saved, I want you right now to pick up the telephone and call the number on the screen: 725-5800, and a friend is standing by who'll pray with you and lead you to Jesus. Those of you on the radio, dial that number; a friend will pray with you and lead you to Jesus. And don't let the devil get you to put it off. *"Boast not thyself of tomorrow for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth."*

Let's bow our heads in prayer. Every head bowed, every eye closed. Now friend, it's never the wrong time to do the right thing. It is never the wrong time to do the right thing. The right thing is now to receive Jesus. I want to ask while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, how many in this building would say, "Brother Rogers, I know that I know right now that I'm saved"? Now, listen to me. Don't lift your hand carelessly. "I know that I know that I'm saved." I believe there're a lot of church members who don't know that they're saved. But you say, "I know that I'm saved. I've repented of my sin. Jesus has saved me. God's Spirit bears witness with my spirit that I'm a child of God. If I were to die this moment or Jesus were to come, I know that I'm saved. I'm ready to meet Him." May I see your hand? Would you lift it? Hold it up. Thank you. God bless you. I thank God for you. Put your hands down.

Now there're precious people who could not lift their hand, and I appreciate your being honest. I want you to know that God loves you very much. And I don't believe that many of you are self-righteous, nor do I believe that you're out and out sinners. I believe you know that you need to be saved. You ought to be saved, and you intend to be saved, but the devil keeps telling you, "Don't be saved today." The Bible says, "Behold, now is the accepted time. Behold, now is the day of salvation." I want to pray for you.

Lord God, I pray now in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior; Lord God, I'm lifting to You these precious people who are not certain that they're saved, that today, now, in this service, not tomorrow, but now, that they'll say an everlasting "yes" to Jesus Christ, and that they will trust Him and Him alone to save them. I pray, dear God, from all over this building people will come and say "yes" to Christ.

Now I want us to stand with our heads bowed. Just stand with our heads bowed. While your heads are bowed, while your heads are bowed, want you to pray. Unsaved friend, listen, while heads are bowed right now, I want you to pray, "Dear God, dear God, help me now to receive Jesus. Give me courage. Lord, help me to do it now. Help me not to be ashamed of Jesus. Help me to do it now."

God's Plan for Prosperity

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: June 24, 1984

Main Scripture Text: Proverbs 28:13–14

“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.”

PROVERBS 28:13

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Introduction

Take your Bibles, and turn, please, to Proverbs chapter 28. Let's look in verse 13. We're preaching through the Book of Proverbs under the general heading of "God's Way to Health, Wealth, and Wisdom." Today, I want to speak to you on this subject: "God's Plan for Prosperity." Are you interested in being prosperous? I hope you are. God is interested in your being prosperous. Did you know that the Bible says that "God takes pleasure in the prosperity of His servants" (Psalm 35:27)—that God is pleased when you're prosperous? "God takes pleasure in the prosperity of his servants" (Psalm 35:27). As a matter of fact, one of the most unqualified promises in all of the Bible is found in Psalm chapter 1. The Bible speaks of a righteous man who's *"like a tree planted by the rivers of water"* (Psalm 1:3). And, the Bible says concerning that type of man *"And whatsoever he doeth shall"*—what?—*"prosper"* (Psalm 1:3)—whatever he does he shall prosper.

Now, what is God's plan for prosperity? And, what is prosperity? Well, that doesn't mean, necessarily, you're going to be wealthy. Many of you, when I said, "It's God's plan for prosperity," you tuned in, because you said, "Boy, that means I'm gonna have a lot a money." You may have more money than God can trust you with right now. We're not talking primarily about money when we're talking about prosperity. If you think that we're talking about that, you really don't understand the intent of the Bible, nor the meaning of the biblical word *prosperity*. Prosperity means that you live a life of general welfare, where God meets your needs, and that you are being fulfilled and enjoying the blessings of God. The Bible teaches that is prosperity.

Now, here is God's plan for prosperity, and I want you to see it here in the Book of Proverbs chapter 28 and verse 13: "*He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy*"—"He that covereth his [sin] shall not prosper" (Proverbs 28:13). Now, let me tell you, ladies and gentlemen, the reason that we don't prosper is very simple: there's un-confessed sin in our hearts and in our lives. It's just as plain as that and just as simple as that. "*He that covereth his [sin] shall not prosper*" (Proverbs 28:13). I could turn it around and read it this way: "He who uncovers his sin shall prosper." "*He that covereth his [sin] shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy*" (Proverbs 28:13).

Now, we have a little saying, "To err is human; to forgive is divine," and that is true. But, I think we could also say, "To err is human, and to try to cover it up is human, also." Isn't that right? We try to cover up our sin when we sin. And, someone else has said, "He who falls into sin is a man. He who grieves over his sin is a saint. He who boasts of his sin is a devil." Now, if you're a saint, you may sin. But, if you are a saint, you will grieve over that sin, and you'll want to do something about that sin. And, therefore, this verse is for you: "*He that covereth his [sin] shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy*" (Proverbs 28:13). Now, here's God's plan for prosperity, and there are three parts to it. I want you to notice it very carefully this morning.

I. The Cost of Covered Sin

The very first thing I want you to see is the cost of covered sin—the cost of covered sin. "*He that covereth his [sin] shall not prosper*" (Proverbs 28:13). Now, this is just one sentence in the Book of Proverbs, but we can go all over the Bible to substantiate and illustrate that.

But, I want us to go to one particular passage this morning, and I want you just to turn left. You're in Proverbs chapter 8, verse 28; I want you to turn to Psalm chapter 51. And, in Psalm chapter 51, we have the words of David after David had committed a horrible sin, a transgression against God. Now, David was what we would call today a

“Christian man.” Of course, he lived in the Old Testament. They weren’t called Christians in the Old Testament. But, had they been called “Christians” in the Old Testament, he would’ve been called one. He was a man of God. I confidently expect to meet David in Heaven. He was a man after God’s own heart (1 Samuel 13:14). Yet, David sinned, and he sinned grievously against God.

Now, if you remember your Old Testament history, David committed the sin of adultery with a woman named Bathsheba; and then, in order to try to cover his sin, he had Uriah the Hittite, her husband, slain on the battlefield. He made it look like it was an act of war, but it was really an act of homicide, at the best, or murder, at the worst. They put poor Uriah the Hittite out there in the hot of the battle and then withdrew the troops from him. And, he was slain on the battlefield. You say, “Terrible—horrible.” Yes, it was; and yet, here was a man, who, down in his heart of hearts, loved God. But, David, being the king, tried to cover that sin up. And, I want you to see the cost of covered sin, as it is illustrated here in Psalm 51. I want you to see what his sin did to him. First of all, look, if you will, in verses 1 and 2: David says, *“Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions”*—and then, now, watch verse 2, where he says—*“Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin”* (Psalm 51:1–2). David felt dirty. One of the ways that you can know that you’re saved is this: when you sin, if you’re a Christian, you’re gonna feel dirty.

A. **Sin Dirties the Soul**

Now, David was not dirty physically. I mean, David bathed in his marbled tubs. David had his perfumed soaps. David slept upon his silken sheets. David wore his royal robes. And yet, here’s a king in all of his finery who feels dirty. And, he says, “Wash me; cleanse me.” You see, sin defiles us—sin dirties us. Now, if you can sin and not feel dirty, it’s ‘cause you’ve never been saved.

And, let me tell you something: Did you know that no hog has ever felt dirty? No hog has ever said, “Woe is me. I need a bath.” Why? That’s his nature—that’s his nature. A hog doesn’t feel dirty. He doesn’t notice dirt. As a matter of fact, he loves dirt. Let me tell you the difference between a child of God and a child of the devil: the child of God may sin, and the child of the devil may sin; but there’s a difference—when a child of God sins, he feels dirty.

You see, an unsaved man leaps into sin, and he loves it; a saved man lapses into sin, and he loathes it. And, here was David, who felt so dirty, so unclean. And, if you can sin without it making you feel unclean, it’s because the Holy Spirit does not live in you. I tell you, sin grieves the Holy Spirit of God that lives in you. And, the very cost of covered sin is that it dirties the soul.

B. Sin Dominates the Mind

But, not only does it dirty the soul—it also dominates the mind. Look again in verse 3, if you will: David said, *“For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me”* (Psalm 51:3). Night and day, day and night, the thing that David had done reverberated through his consciousness. It had etched itself upon his soul, and it dominated his mind; he could not forget it. And, by the way, that’s another way that you can know whether you’re truly saved or not—not whether you can sin or not, but whether you can sin and forget it. Now, if you can sin and forget it, you’ve never been saved. The Holy Spirit will not allow you to forget that sin. You see, He is the Holy Spirit. He lives in you. He will be grieved. And so, David said, *“My sin is ever before me”* (Psalm 51:3).

You say, “Do you mean I’m going to be thinking about it consciously all the time?” Not necessarily consciously, but you may put it out of your conscious mind; it’ll go down to your subconscious mind. You kick it out of the front door; it’ll run around the house and come in the basement window. It’ll show up as a migraine headache. It’ll show up as an irritable disposition. It will show up as the inability to concentrate. It will show up as the inability to pray and get through to God. It will show up as no peace with God, no peace with yourself, no peace with any body else. Your sin will be there, and there’s no way that you can get rid of it until it is uncovered and forgiven.

There are two kinds of souls that can come to the human psyche—excuse me, two kinds of wounds that can come to the human psyche and the human soul. One wound is sorrow, and the other wound is guilt. Now, sorrow is a clean wound. Some of you I’m speaking to today, because I know your lives: you have a broken heart. Sorrow—terrible sorrow—has come into your heart. But, I know that your heart will heal—I know because that sorrow is a clean wound. God will heal it. He will pour in the oil of gladness. He will place there the balm of Gilead. And, time and the grace of God will heal that broken heart, because sorrow is a clean wound.

But, guilt is the other kind of wound that can come, and guilt is a dirty wound. And, guilt will never heal. It will fester, and fester, and fester, and fester, and will never be healed and never be cleansed until it is confessed and put away. You see, it must be cleansed by the antiseptic of Calvary before it can be healed. Are you carrying around that load of guilt? Does it dominate your mind? And, you know that you know, consciously or unconsciously, subconsciously, that you’re not right with God. “Trust me, no torture which the poets feign, can match that fierce, the unutterable pain, he feels, who day and night, devoid of rest, carries his own accuser within his breast” (Juvenal).

C. Sin Depresses the Heart

I’ll tell you another thing that sin did to David that cost him the cost of covered sin: not

only did it dominate his mind, but, dear friend, this kind of sin in David's life depressed his heart. Look, if you will, in verse 8: he says, *"Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice"* (Psalm 51:8). Look, if you will, in verse 12: *"Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation"* (Psalm 51:12). David, a man of God, lost his joy, and he was in a state of depression.

You wonder why you don't have joy? There's only one reason if you don't have joy, and that's sin—not two reasons, not three, but one: sin. The only thing that can take the joy out of your life is sin. You say, "Now, wait a minute, Brother Rogers. Nobody is to be happy all the time." I didn't talk to you about happiness; I talked to you about joy. Happiness depends upon what happens, and that's why we call it "happiness." If your "happy" is good, you're happy. If your "happy" is bad, you're unhappy. I'm talking to you about joy.

You finish this sentence if you know the Bible: *"Rejoice in the Lord"*—*"always: and again I say, Rejoice"* (Philippians 4:4). You see, dear friend, the Bible says we are to rejoice evermore! There is to be in your heart and in your life, this very moment, a fountain of joy—*"joy unspeakable, and full of glory"* (1 Peter 1:8). But, sin will send a spirit of depression into your heart. Sin depresses the heart. And, David says, *"Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice"* (Psalm 51:8). Sin depresses the heart.

D. Sin Diseases the Body

But, not only does sin depress the heart; friend, sin diseases the body; it dissipates the body. Look, if you will, in verse 8: he goes on to say, *"Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou...broken may rejoice"* (Psalm 51:8). Now, remember that David was a poet, and David is using poetic language here. He doesn't mean that literally the bones were broken. Well, let me ask you a question: Have you ever said, after you've gone through an excruciating experience, "I was just crushed—just crushed"? Now, did you mean that literally? No, you meant that there was intense pressure upon you that, psychologically, it did crush you.

Now, that's what David is saying: *"Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice"* (Psalm 51:8). That is, David was under intense pressure. He said in another Psalm: *"When I kept silence"*—that is, "when I kept covering my sin"—*"thy hand was heavy upon me"* (Psalm 32:3–4). Now, sometimes people get the idea—those who believe that you can lose your salvation—that when we sin, that God just casts us away. But, to the contrary, God doesn't let us out of His hand; God closes His hand all the tighter. And, the pressure gets greater and greater. And, David said, "God, You are crushing the life out of me. The bones are being broken." God puts the pressure on a child of God. You see, God does not discard His child; God

begins to deal with His child, and God puts the pressure on.

Now listen, a person cannot live under that pressure very long before it will affect him physically, even though the pressure is psychological. Have you ever heard the term “psychosomatic illness”? The word *psycho* refers to the soul; the word *soma* refers to the body. A “psychosomatic illness” is where the soul makes the body sick. Now, what I’m trying to say is this, dear friend: un-confessed, un-repent-ed-of sin—sin that is covered—what is the cost of it? It will dissipate and disease your body.

Sin will do the same thing to your body that sand will do to machinery.

You need to get it out.

Now listen, how can a person be healthy? I’m gonna preach, God willing, in the Book of Proverbs, on how to be healthy physically. And, the Book of Proverbs has a lot to say about it. But, one of the ways—and it’ll just tell you ahead—it says that: “*A merry heart doeth good like a medicine*” (Proverbs 17:22). That’s what the Book of Proverbs says.

Now listen, if you take away your joy, you take away your medicine. Did you know that? And, when the joy goes out, the medicine goes out. There’s something about the joy of the Lord that enables you to go to bed at night and go to sleep. There’s something about the joy of the Lord that enables you to enjoy and digest your food. There’s something about the joy of the Lord that enables you to stand up straight and get your organs and your bones aligned so that you breathe deeply and so that your muscles are toned up. There’s something about the joy of the Lord that makes you want to get out and get exercise and all of these things. You see, the Bible says, “*The joy of the LORD is your*”—what?—“*strength*” (Nehemiah 8:10). Yes, your strength!

Now, dear friend, when your joy is gone, your strength is gone. When your joy is gone, your medicine is gone. And, you see, there’s the cost of covered sin. It takes your joy, and when it takes your joy, then you’re crushed. And, before long, your body is dissipated and your body is diseased.

E. Sin Will Defile Your Spirit

I’ll tell you, not only will it dissipate and disease your body and depress your heart, but I tell you something else it’ll do: it’ll defile your spirit. Look, if you will, in verse 8—excuse me, in verse 10: David prays, “*And...create...a right spirit within me*” (Psalm 51:10). Now, David had a wrong spirit; he had a defiled spirit. What is a “wrong spirit”? A wrong spirit is a critical spirit. Did you know that when a person has covered sin in his life, he’s always trying to undercover sin in somebody else? Did you know it’s just a psychological fact? When a man has covered sin in his own life, he gets very critical of other people.

I have been pastor long enough to watch people go through various stages of

backsliding. And, sometimes you just stand hopelessly and helplessly by and pray for that individual. But, you watch—generally, a Christian will get some sin in his life. It'll be a moral sin, or it'll be some sort of an attitudinal sin. He'll feel that somebody has harmed him, done him wrong, neglected him, misused or abused him. And, they get that sin, that root of bitterness. But, they try to cover it up. And so, they come to church, and they're all peaches and cream; and they just smile, and they glad-hand. And, they sing, and they praise. But, there's covered sin in their heart and in their life. But, that same person with that covered sin in his heart and in his life begins to backslide, and he gets critical of other people. He starts looking around. He looks at the church leadership. He looks at the deacons. He looks at whomever or whatever to try to find fault in somebody else, because he feels that if he can find fault in somebody else, that, somehow, will justify what he or she is doing. And so, they become very critical, and they become increasingly critical. And, after a while, they'll stop coming. They'll say, "That old bunch a' hypocrites down there." And, the problem, the whole time, is that they have a bad spirit; they have a wrong spirit. They have a spirit that has been defiled by covered sin.

Now, let me illustrate what I'm talking about. King David, as you will remember, was the man who wrote this psalm. He knew he had a bad spirit. Let me tell you how it was revealed to him. One day, his pastor (named Nathan) came to call on him—Nathan the prophet. And, he said, "There's a problem in the kingdom, and you need of judge it." The king said, "What is it?" He said, "King, there is, in the kingdom, a very poor man. This man has nothing, really, that he can claim his own." Except he did have one little lamb, a little ewe lamb, that was like one of his children. It was a pet—why, the lamb stayed in the house with him. He loved it as he loved his own child. He said, "King, this poor man lived next door to a very rich man. The rich man had more than heart could desire. He had flocks, and herds, many sheep, a lot of cattle." Now, he said, "King, when the rich man had a stranger that happened in, the rich man went over to the poor man's house, took the poor man's lamb, killed it, and barbecued it, and fed it to a stranger. What should be done to that man, king?" When David heard that, he was livid with rage. He clinched his fist, stood up from the throne, and said, "The man who has done that will pay fourfold!" And, David had just sentenced himself in his own court. For Nathan, the prophet, pointed a boney finger into the face of the king and said, "And, you are the man!" You see, it was all a parable. And, what David was learning was how terrible his own sin was (2 Samuel 12:1–7).

Now, here's what I want you to see in that story: I want you to see David's bad spirit; I want you to see how quick David was to judge this other man, when David had worse sin in his own life. For example, it's bad to steal an animal, but it is worse to steal a woman, right? It is bad to kill an animal, but it is worse to kill a man. And, here was a

man with a log in his own eye, trying to get a speck out of somebody else's eye. Here was a man who had covered sin in his own life, who's trying to uncover sin in somebody else's life. And, he had a bad, bitter, censorious spirit. God deliver us from those kinds of people. I am telling you that sin will defile the spirit.

F. **Sin Will Destroy the Testimony**

And, I'll tell you something else sin will do: sin will destroy the testimony. Look, if you will, as we continue to read here in this 51st Psalm, where David says here in verse 12: *"Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee"*—listen to it—*"Deliver me from blood guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness. O Lord, open thou my lips"* (Psalm 51:12–15). Do you know what had happened? Covered sin had shut his mouth. It kept him from witnessing, and it kept him from singing. David said, "When I get my heart right, then I'll teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will be converted unto thee" (Psalm 51:13).

Some of you are not soul winners, and I'll tell you why you're not soul winners: one of the chief reasons that many Christians are not soul winners is there's covered sin in their life. You see, sin intimidates you. When you start to witness, the devil says, "You hypocrite! How dare you witness about the Lord Jesus when there's sin in your life!" And, that sin seals our lips, and that sin destroys our testimony. Andrew Murray, one of the greatest Christians who ever lived, said, "There are two classes of Christians—soul winners and backsliders." See, sin destroys our testimony. That's the reason some people don't enjoy a worship service. They don't enjoy singing the songs "Victory in Jesus" and the rest of the songs that we sang this morning. Why don't they enjoy singing that? I'll tell you why: because of that covered sin that takes the joy. It takes the song and the praise, withers and dries away, because sin destroys our testimony.

G. **Sin Dishonors Our Lord**

But, I saved the worst thing that it does until last. Look, if you will, in verse 4: David says, *"Against thee, thee only, have I sinned"* (Psalm 51:4). Sin dishonors our lord—sin dishonors our Lord. And, the thing that literally destroyed David and broke his heart was this: "O, my God, my God, I've sinned against You." David did not sin primarily against his own body, not primarily against Bathsheba, not primarily against his wife and family, not primarily against the kingdom of Israel—David sinned against God.

Now, let me tell you something: one of the ways that you can know that you're truly saved is this: if it breaks your heart that you've broken God's heart. You see, an unsaved man doesn't worry about breaking God's heart. All the unsaved man thinks about is that perhaps he's going to get caught for what he's done. He worries about the consequences of his sin. But, a true Christian realizes not only has he broken God's

law—he's broken God's heart. And, it breaks his heart that he has broken God's heart. And, David says, "O, my God, I sinned, and I sinned against You! And, I did this evil in Your sight! O, my God, my Redeemer, my Savior, my Lord, how could I do such a thing?"

Now, ladies and gentlemen, the thing that makes me want to deal with sin in my life is not primarily that I'm afraid of what God might do to me. I love Him; therefore, I do not want to sin against the One who loves me so. And, this is what David was feeling: "O my God, I have sinned against You. I have dishonored my Lord." Now, if you're not saved, this won't have any appeal to you. You see, a slave just fears his master's whip, but a son fears his father's displeasure. "*Against thee, [and] thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight*" (Psalm 51:4).

Now, what I've been talking about today is the cost of covered sin—the cost of covered sin. "*He that covereth his [sin] shall not prosper*" (Proverbs 28:13). And, if ever there was an un-prosperous man, it was the man described here in Psalm 51.

II. The Confession of Committed Sin

But now, the second thing I want you to notice—not only the cost of covered sin, but I want you to notice the confession of committed sin, because look again—if you'll go back to the text in Proverbs chapter 28: "*He that covereth his sins shall not prosper*"—but now, watch it—"*but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy*" (Proverbs 28:13). Do you want to know what a good confession of sin is? Do you want me to tell you how to confess sin? What is the confession of committed sin? It is threefold.

A. Sin Must Be Exposed in the Life

First of all, sin must be exposed in the life—sin must be exposed in the life. And, who is going to expose that sin? "Well," you say, "I guess I have to expose my own sin." You can't do it. You're not qualified to do it. You don't have the tools to do it. You see, the Bible says that your "*heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked*" (Jeremiah 17:9). And, I want to tell you that a wicked heart can never diagnose a wicked heart; a wicked heart is never going to condemn a wicked heart. And, your "*heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked*" (Jeremiah 17:9).

There's One whose job it is to expose sin in your life, and that is the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, "*when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin*" (John 16:8). It is His job to expose sin in your life. And, rather than you trying to probe around in your innards, and analyze, and psychoanalyze yourself, take yourself apart by little pieces, and put yourself back together, you need to let the Holy Spirit of God expose that sin in your life. And, He is quite capable of doing it. You need to pray this prayer: "*Search me, O God,*

and know my heart... And see if there be any wicked way in me" (Psalm 139:23–24). Let the Holy Spirit of God convict you of that sin. He is the One who will expose sin in your life.

Now, right now, I want to say something very important. I want you to pay attention and give me, please, your minds. The Holy Spirit of God will expose sin in the life; the devil will exploit sin in the life. Now, what is the difference between the exposing of sin and the exploiting of sin? Well, when the Holy Spirit exposes sin, the only sin that the Holy Spirit will expose is sin that you've tried to cover. But, sin that you have uncovered the Holy Spirit covers. Now, pay attention: when we cover it, He uncovers it; when we uncover it, He covers it. You see? *"He that covereth his [sin] shall not prosper"* (Proverbs 28:13). The moment I say, "Look, God, I did it. I confess it. I put it under the blood," then the Holy Spirit says, "All right, now I cover it." And, when He covers it, it is gone; it is forgotten forever—never, never to be brought up again. The Bible says in Hebrews chapter 8 and verse 12: *"I [will] remember [their sins] no more"* (Hebrews 8:12).

But now, the devil—the devil—will exploit your sin. And, that sin that has already been uncovered by you and covered by him—the devil will try to uncover it one more time. The devil will try to bring it up one more time. The devil will try to dredge up forgiven-and-should-be-forgotten sin and make you feel guilty. Now, dear friend, if you've put that sin under the blood, and if you've felt the Son of God saying, "Your sins be forgiven," and it comes up again, it is the dirty devil trying to exploit your sin. And, you need to recognize it for what it is. It is not Holy Spirit conviction; it is satanic accusation. The devil is accusing you, and you need to put him in his place. And, you no longer need to be haunted by the ghost of guilt. What God has forgiven don't any man dig up again.

Martin Luther, who led in the Protestant Reformation, had a dream, or a vision, or a nightmare. (He didn't know what it was.) But, he awakened in the middle of the night, and standing at the foot of his bed was a figure that he believed to be the devil himself. And, the devil had a scroll, and on that scroll were the sins that Martin Luther had committed. And, the scroll was very accurate. And, the devil was reading them one after another after another; and pointing a fiery, boney finger into the face of Martin Luther; and condemning him; and accusing him; and saying, "What hope of Heaven do you have?" And, Martin Luther said he felt that his very soul was slipping down into Hell. And then, the Lord spoke to Luther and said, "Tell him to unroll the scroll." Luther said, "Unroll the scroll entirely." He said the devil refused. And, Luther said, "In the name of Jesus, unroll the scroll." And, he unrolled it, and there, printed in crimson ink, were these words across the entire thing: "This entire sin account of Martin Luther—paid in full by the blood of Jesus Christ." Now, the devil didn't want you to see that—the devil

didn't want you to unroll the scroll. I want to tell you that the Holy Spirit will expose your sin, but the devil will exploit your sin. And, when you cover it, the Holy Spirit uncovers it. But, when you uncover it, the Holy Spirit covers it. And, only the devil will try to uncover it again. *"He that covereth his [sin] shall not prosper"* (Proverbs 28:13).

I want to tell you, dear friend, another thing: when the Holy Spirit exposes your sin, he will expose your sin specifically. That is, he will tell you exactly, precisely what you did. Now, the devil—if he can't dredge up some sin that's already been covered and put under the blood of Jesus, what the devil will try to do is this: he'll make you feel bad, mostly all over. He won't name a particular sin; he'll just make you feel unworthy. Have you ever just kind of felt unworthy? Just unacceptable? That's not God the Holy Spirit. That's not the way... The Bible says concerning the Holy Spirit: *"he hath made us accepted in the beloved"* (Ephesians 1:6). He doesn't make us feel unaccepted. He doesn't make us feel unworthy. That's the devil; that's condemnation. You see, when the Holy Spirit is exposing sin in your life, the Holy Spirit will expose a specific sin that has not yet been dealt with. He'll say, "You lied," or, "You were proud," or, "You were selfish," or, "You were dishonest," or, "You exaggerated," or whatever. And, the Holy Spirit will name that particular thing. He'll put his finger on the sore spot and push. But, the devil will just sort of accuse you vaguely and make you feel unworthy.

But, what I'm trying to say is this—that in order for sin to be confessed, that sin must be exposed in the life. And, it is the Holy Spirit of God who puts the searchlight of His holiness there.

B. Sin Must Be Expressed

But, not only must that sin be exposed in the life—that sin must be expressed. That is, you must confess that sin. You must name that sin. You must tell God exactly, precisely, what it is that you did.

Now, the problem with many of us and the reason we never have peace is this: we like to sin retail and confess wholesale. "Now, what do you mean by that, Pastor?" Well, we like to sin all through the day and then come to the end of the day and say, "Father, forgive my sins. Amen." Or, we might pray something like this: "Father, if I have sinned, forgive me." Now folks, that's not gonna get it done. Now, what you're gonna have to do—you see, if the Holy Spirit of God will convict you specifically, then God wants you to express it specifically. Not only must you name it; you need to nail it—I mean, "Thus and thus have I done." And, when you tell God about it and when you name that sin—when you name that jealousy, when you name that envy, when you name that pride, when you name that dishonesty, when you name that bitterness, when you name it—you're about to get victory over it. It must be exposed; it must be expressed.

Now friend, away with this matter of sinning retail and confessing wholesale. We

have a little chorus that we sing:

*Count your [many] blessings, name them one by one,
And it will surprise you what the Lord hath done*

—JOHNSON OATMAN, JR.

I like that chorus. And, I would say:

*Count your many sins, name them one by one,
It'll amaze you what you've done.*

Just name them. Name them and say, "This have I done."

C. Sin Must Be Expelled from the Life

Listen, sin must be exposed in the life; sin must be expressed in the life. And, watch it—sin must be expelled from the life. Now, look at our text; look and see what it says: "*He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and*"—what is the next word? I can't hear you—"forsaketh them shall have mercy" (Proverbs 28:13). Now, you see, it's not enough to confess without forsaking.

Now, here's where many of us fail. The sin is exposed; the sin is expressed, but the sin is not expelled. And, therefore, we do not have mercy, and we do not prosper. Somehow we've gotten the idea that we can come to church, shed a few crocodile tears, mumble a little mumbo jumbo, and go our way, and continue to sin. And, we wonder, therefore, why we do not prosper and why we do not have peace. These are counterfeit confessions, and God will not honor them at the bank of Heaven. Sin must be exposed; sin must be expressed, and sin must be expelled. It must be forsaken. We must be finished with that sin in our hearts and in our minds.

Let me tell what I'm talking about. Turn, if you will... Well, wait a minute, before you turn look here at the next verse in Proverbs 28: "*Happy is the man that feareth always*"—that means he's walking with a reverence toward God and a fear toward sin—"but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief" (Proverbs 28:14). Now, just underscore that phrase: "*he that hardeneth his heart*" (Proverbs 28:14). And then, I want you to turn to Exodus chapter 9. I want to give you an illustration of what I'm talking about in Exodus chapter 9. Here's the story of Pharaoh, and Pharaoh had sinned against God; and judgment was coming upon Pharaoh. And, in Exodus chapter 9, verse 27: "*And Pharaoh sent, and called for Moses and Aaron, and said unto them, I have sinned this time: the LORD is righteous, and I and my people are wicked*" (Exodus 9:27). Now, that sounds like a confession, doesn't it? "*I have sinned...the LORD is righteous...I and my people are wicked*" (Exodus 9:27). Well, you're gonna judge how good this confession was when you see the circumstances in which it came.

I want you to go back. Now, look in verse 22 and understand what made Pharaoh say this: "*And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch forth thine hand toward heaven*"—

“And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch forth thine hand toward heaven, that there may be hail in all the land of Egypt, upon man, and upon beast, and upon every herb of the field, throughout the land of Egypt. And Moses stretched forth his rod toward heaven: and the LORD sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran along upon the ground; and the LORD rained hail upon the land of Egypt. So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous, such as there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation. And the hail smote throughout all the land of Egypt all that was in the field, both man and beast; and the hail smote every herb of the field, and brake every tree of the field. Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel were, was there no hail. And Pharaoh sent, and called for Moses and Aaron, and said unto them, I have sinned this time” (Exodus 9:22–27). When did he say this? I’ll tell you, when the thunder was booming, when the lightning was flashing, when the fire rolled around the ground, and when the hail was coming down. And, in the midst of that storm, he said, “I have sinned; have mercy upon me.”

But now, I want to show you something. The lightning stopped. The thunder ceased. The hail was removed. And, look, if you will, in verse 34: *“And when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunders were ceased, he sinned yet more”*—and what’s the next phrase?—*“and hardened his heart”* (Exodus 9:34) Now, you pay attention, folks. When you confess sin—sin that is exposed, and sin that is expressed, and sin that is not expelled—what that’s going to do is harden your heart. You’re not going to prosper. The same thing is going to happen to you that happened to Pharaoh. Your heart is going to get harder and harder. You see, many people play games with God. You come to church, and you listen to a message like this, and you confess it, but you don’t turn from it. You don’t repent. You don’t... You’re not done with it. And, you think you’re getting right with God; and while you think you’re getting right with God, your heart is getting harder all the time.

Do you remember when your baby was sick, and you said, “O God, O God, forgive me. Cleanse me, and I’ll do thus-and-such”? Your baby got well, and you’re right back in your sin. Remember when you needed that job? Remember when you were in difficulty? Remember those holy vows that you made to God? You’re just like old Pharaoh. And, *the repentance that was born in the storm dies in the calm*. As soon as the hail was gone, you’re right back in the same old way. I’m telling you, friend, that sin must be exposed in the life, sin must be expressed, and it sin must be expelled before you can prosper.

Conclusion

My time is gone. I’ll leave off the third point of this message because this is a good stopping place. I want to say to those of you who are watching by television, if you do

not know the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and Lord, if you're not absolutely certain if you were to die right now, you'd go to Heaven, listen to me: I want you to go to the telephone right now—listen. Everybody listen—you go to the telephone right now and call that number on the screen.

Let's bow our heads in prayer.

Broken Beyond Repair

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: September 3, 1989

Main Scripture Text: Proverbs 29:1

*“He, that being often reprov’d hardeneth his neck,
shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.”*

PROVERBS 29:1

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Conclusion

Introduction

Take your Bibles and turn to the Book of Proverbs chapter 29 and verse 1. If we ever had a solemn text, the text tonight is a solemn and a serious text: *“He, that being often reprov’d hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy”* (Proverbs 29:1). I’ve read this through in a number of different translations. One translation gives it this way: that he will be “suddenly destroyed and broken beyond repair.” That’s the title of my message tonight: “Broken Beyond Repair.”

In front of every unsaved man, woman, boy, and girl there is a deadline. If you cross

that deadline, you will be broken beyond repair.

*There is a time, we know not when,
A point we know not where,
That marks the destiny of men
To glory or despair.*

*There is a line by us unseen,
That crosses every path;
The hidden boundary between
God's patience and His wrath.*

—J. ADDISON ALEXANDER

Now, our verse tells about that line. *“He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed.”* He will be broken beyond repair. He enters into a situation that I would call hopeless. And, the Bible tells us that it is hopeless. To me, *hopelessness* is the saddest word in the English language.

I want you to notice four definite thoughts that come out of this text tonight.

I. Spiritual Conviction

And, the very first thing is I want you to notice is God's merciful conviction, the spiritual conviction that God often gives. *“He, that being often reprov'd...”* Just underscore the word *often*. You see, God, in loving patience, deals with a sinner over and over and over and over and over and over again. We are often reprov'd. What patience God has! What love God has! What mercy God shows!

Now, if God had spoken only one time, it would have been more than justice to man. But, God does strive with us. God's Holy Spirit does knock on our hearts. God does reprove our sins. God does call over and over and over again. How does God reprove us? How does God convict us? How does God speak to us? May I mention several ways.

A. God Speaks Through the Holy Spirit

God speaks through the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, *“And when he”—the Spirit of truth—“is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment”* (John 16:8). I don't know about you, but before I came to Jesus—before I was saved—I know that I know there are times that God's Holy Spirit just came to my heart and said, *“Adrian, you're wrong. You're a sinner. You need to get saved.”* And, I can remember, even as a child, the hand of God in conviction being on my heart as the Holy Spirit of God in His own way, in the inner precincts of my soul, spoke to me.

B. God Speaks Through Sickness

But, not only does God speak through His Spirit; God speaks through sickness. Have you ever been sick? Have you ever been on a bed of affliction, and God spoke to you, and you realized that this mortal frame is not going to last forever; you realized that your body is winding down to the grave? I've found out that many times in a hospital I can witness and bring people to Jesus when I never could before. I know, Dr. Dale, when you go into the hospital, so many times you have a marvelous opportunity. I bring people to Jesus Christ because at that time that sickness is the messenger of God to bring people under conviction.

C. God Speaks Through Sorrow and Heartaches

Not only does God reprove us through His Spirit, and not only does he reprove through sickness, but through sorrow and heartaches. When you went to the funeral of your mother, God spoke to your heart. When that little baby in your family died, God spoke to your heart. When there was anguish, sorrow, and heartbreak, and you said, "I need somebody to give me comfort. I need somebody to give me strength. I need something to make sense out of this," and your heart was broken, God was speaking to you. And, God speaks to sorrow, and through sorrow. I mean to bring us, sometimes, to our senses.

D. God Speaks Through His Servants

Another way that God speaks: He often speaks through His servants. Oh, he speaks through His servants the prophets—through preachers. God speaks to you through me. I have no illusions about being anything in my own right, or having any strength of my own, but I'd be a fool if I thought that I preached without the anointing and the power of God. Of course God speaks through me. I don't have to brag to say that. I'd have no business standing in the pulpit if I didn't think that God speaks through me. And, I can say with Isaiah, "*The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach*" (Isaiah 61:1). And, I try not to preach a sermon until I have soaked it in prayer. And, just as I came into this place tonight, I do so many times. As a matter of fact, to my knowledge, every time, if not practically every time, I bow my head and say, "Oh, my God, please, in the name of Jesus, anoint me and give me a message for the people."

But, not only does God speak through His servants the preachers; God speaks through His servants the singers. So many times you'll hear a song like Tammy just sang, or someone else will sing, and God will put the finger of conviction upon your heart and upon your life. Sometimes it's through the separated life of a brother, sister, or somebody that you'll see that you work with. There is that smile, that victory, that overcoming. And, you see the way that person lives and God speaks to you through

that life. And, that life compared to your life, you know there's something about them you don't have.

E. **God Speaks Through the Scriptures**

Then, God speaks not only through His servants, God speaks not only through sorrows, and God speaks not only through sickness, and God speaks not only through the Spirit, but God speaks through the Scriptures. He speaks through the Bible. Maybe you've heard a word from the Scripture, maybe a gospel tract, or maybe you've been reading the Bible yourself.

Years ago, I read about a man who was a deep-sea diver. He had been fighting the Lord. And, he went down to the bottom of the ocean. And, there he found an old encrusted bottle with a cork in it. He brought it to the surface, took the cork out, and somebody had put a verse of Scripture in a bottle and put a cork on it. It said, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son" (John 3:16). That deep-sea diver said, "If God loved me enough to follow me to the bottom of the ocean, I'm going to give my heart to Him."

But, God does speak through His Scriptures. And, I don't know how God has spoken to you, but there's not a mother's child in this building that God has not spoken to. And, God speaks. We're often reproved.

II. **Stubborn Rebellion**

But, I want you to see not only spiritual conviction, but I want you to see stubborn rebellion. Notice what happens: "*He, that being often reproved hardeneth his neck...*" That means a person who stiffens his neck. He refuses to get right after God has spoken. And, I've seen people harden their neck. I've seen people stiffen their necks. I've seen people stubbornly rebel against God.

Let me mention some ways that people rebel against God.

A. **Procrastination**

Sometimes people harden their neck by procrastination, which is a form of disobedience. They say, "Well, I'll get saved, but not now." You're in Proverbs 29:1. Turn to Proverbs 27:1. God's Word says, "*Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.*" You're in this building tonight, and you're saying, "Well, God is speaking to me. God has spoken to me through the songs. God has spoken to me through the Scriptures. God has spoken to me through the sermon. God has spoken to me through His servants. God has spoken, and one of these days I'm going to get right." May I tell you, all you're doing, my dear friend, is hardening your neck. "*Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.*"

Dr. Robert G. Lee, former pastor of this church, said that, "Tomorrow is a period of

time found nowhere except perhaps in the fool's calendar." What he means by that is that tomorrow never comes.

Another former pastor of our church, Dr. Ramsey Pollard, my dear personal friend, Dr. Pollard used to preach a sermon called, "One More Night with the Frogs." And, in that message Dr. Pollard told about Pharaoh. And, Pharaoh had rebelled against God, and God had spoken to Pharaoh, who was keeping the children of Israel in bondage there in the land of Egypt. And, God sent a plague upon Pharaoh. And, the plague was the plague of the frogs. Frogs covered the land of Egypt. I mean, there were frogs everywhere. You'd get in bed, and there would be frogs between the sheets. A woman would open the oven, and there would be frogs in the oven. A man put his hands in his pocket, and there would be frogs in his pocket. Little boys going to school would squish frogs between their toes. There would be piles of dead, smelly, rotten, awful, croaking frogs. The din must have been terrible. There were frogs everywhere.

Finally, Pharaoh had had it up to here with the frogs. And, listen to what the Bible says, in Exodus chapter 8, verses 9 and 10: "And, Moses said to Pharaoh, Accept the honor of saying, When shall I intercede for you, for your servants and for your people, to destroy the frogs from you and your houses, that they may remain in the river only." In plain English, "Pharaoh, do you want me to pray and ask God to take away the frogs? And, when do you want me to do it?" And then, in verse 10, Pharaoh said, "*To morrow*" (Exodus 8:9–10).

Now, here are the frogs everywhere, and here Pharaoh has a chance to have the frogs taken away. "Pharaoh, when do want the frogs taken away?" He said, "*To morrow.*" And, that's where the title of the sermon comes from: "One More Night with the Frogs." I mean, why didn't he just simply say, "Take away the frogs today"? It's amazing. Frogs in his food, frogs in his bed, frogs in his clothes, and yet he says, "One more night with the frogs." What is there about a sinner that makes him want to hold on to his sin? What is there about it? The sinner is plagued because of his sin. He has troubles. He has doubts. He has burdens. He has suffering. He has sickness. He has sorrow. He has fears. He has disappointments. He has heartaches. And yet, when you ask him if he wants to be saved, he says, "No, not tonight; tomorrow. Give me one more night with the frogs." He hardens his neck.

By the way, let me give you three reasons why not to postpone giving your heart to Jesus Christ. If you're in this building tonight, and you're not saved—or you're listening to me by means of radio—let me give you three very wonderful reasons why you ought to be saved tonight.

1. If You Wait Till Tomorrow, You'll Lose Tonight

Number one, dear friend: If you wait till tomorrow, you'll lose tonight. We often hear people say, "Get right with God; you may die." Well, that is true. But, get right with God;

you may live. You see, dear friend, every day that you live without the Lord Jesus Christ is a lost day. Even if you knew that you could live for fifty more years and then get saved, do you realize that would be fifty wasted years, fifty years gone down the tube? Or, do what? Deathbed repentance. Billy Sunday said, “Deathbed repentance is like burning the candle of life in the service of the devil and then blowing the smoke in God’s face.” And so, get right with God; you may live. And, if you don’t get right with God today, you’ll lose today.

2. Something Worse May Come Tomorrow

I’ll tell you another reason that you ought to get saved today is that something worse may come tomorrow. You see, after the plague of the frogs came the plague of the lice. And, after the plague of the lice came the plague of the flies. And, after the plague of the flies came the plague of the locusts. And, after the plague of the locusts came the plague of the boils. And, after that came fire, then darkness, and then deaths. And, it got worse and worse and worse. Those of you who are under conviction, why do you put off giving your heart to Jesus Christ? Why? Tomorrow something worse will come. Tomorrow it will not be better. Tomorrow you will only have more sin to repent of and less time to repent in.

3. Tomorrow May Not Come

A third reason you ought to be saved is this that tomorrow may not come. Our text speaks of sudden destruction. He *“shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.”*

Do you remember when we had that thunderstorm come through this past week? Joyce and I were in our house, and a thunderbolt sounded right near us. It was so loud and so near that everybody in the house just jumped. I didn’t think anything about it till I went out in our front yard. And, if you’ll pass our house, you’ll see the elm tree in our front yard that has the bark stripped from way up in the tree all the way down to the ground where that bolt of lightning hit that elm tree. It just peeled the bark off and blew the bark way across the yard—a mighty bolt of lightning. It’s something awesome to see.

Now, the elm tree already had that blight in it. And, I thought maybe the tree was going to die anyway. So, it’s not all that bad. But, I want to tell you, the bark is worse than the blight. I had to work at that. Dear friend, don’t boo; that’s all right. That bolt of lightning hit that tree. I got to thinking, “Suppose we were standing in the front yard, and that bolt of lightning had hit me.” It’s very possible. It is very possible right in my own front yard. Did you know that four to five hundred people a year in the United States die being hit by lightning? We talk about “like a bolt out of the blue.” Many times a person is hurled into eternity by a bolt of lightning. You never know. You never know. Tomorrow may not come.

I remember Dorothy so well. She was a member of our church at Merritt Island. And, as I was standing at the front door shaking hands with people going out and Dorothy—we only had one service then. I'm looking forward to that—as I was standing there greeting the people as they were going out, one of the sweetest members in our church, she came by. She was a mature and lovely lady. She came by, she took me by the hand, patted my hand, and smiled at me. She always had a twinkle in her eye. She said, "I'll see you tonight, pastor." I said, "All right, Dorothy. So long." That was Sunday morning. That day going home from church, she went over the overpass over the Banana River Bridge going over to Cocoa Beach, and coming over that overpass was another automobile on the wrong side of the road. Dorothy never even really knew, I suppose, what hit her car. Just like that, she was gone. She left church on Sunday morning full well expecting to be back Sunday night. "I'll see you tonight, pastor."

My dear friend, on your way home from church tonight you may meet something like that. You say, "Pastor, are you trying to frighten me?" You've got it. That's right. Dear friend, I would to God I could. *I'd rather frighten you into heaven than lull you into hell.* Listen. The Bible says, "*He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck shall...—what?—'shall suddenly be destroyed.'*" Now, she wasn't destroyed because she'd hardened her neck. I just bring that up as an illustration of how frail that life is. Tomorrow may never come.

B. Pride

I'll tell you another way that people harden their neck: not only by procrastination, but by pride. Did you know the reason that many people will not come down an aisle and make a public decision for the Lord Jesus Christ? They're afraid about what other people will think if they come down and confess the Lord Jesus as their personal Savior. They're going to say, "These folks around here will think that I'm an old sinner if I go down there." That's right, bud. That's what you are. You are an old sinner. But, so is everybody else. "*For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*" (Romans 3:23). An unsaved man sits in an auditorium like this, a preacher preaches a message like I preach, and he looks around, and he says, "I'm just as good as the rest of these folks." What he needs to do is to be honest enough to say, "I'm just as bad as the rest of these folks." "*For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.*" And, *the church is nothing but a society of sinners who've finally realized it and banded themselves together to do something about it. It's the only organization I know of you have to profess to be bad before you can join, unless it's the Hell's Angels.*

Dear friend, listen. You come, saying, "I am a sinner; I am lost." Don't let your foolish pride keep you from coming to Jesus. Some of you are unsaved church members. And, if you were to die tonight, you'd go straight to Hell. But, you've been in this church so

long, you've taught a Sunday School class, you've been a deacon, you've done this or that, and when the invitation is given, the devil says, "Don't you go down there and make a fool of yourself, make a spectacle of yourself." So, you stiffen your knees, you harden your heart, you lift up your head, and you walk right on out to your doom, because pride has kept you from coming to Jesus Christ.

C. Pleasures

I'll tell you another way that people harden their heart: not only through procrastination and pride, but through pleasures. The Bible speaks of these people—2 Timothy chapter 3, verse 4. They are "*lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God*" (2 Timothy 3:4).

There are certain things they say: "Well, if I give my heart to Jesus, then I'm going to have to give this up or give that up. So, I'm not going to give it up." That's so stupid, and that's so foolish, because the only thing God asks you to give up are things that will hurt you. If it will make you good, healthy, holy, wholesome, God says, "Help yourself." And, my dear friend, what you give up is nothing compared to what He gave up for you. And, thirdly, what you give up is nothing compared to what you get. Who wouldn't give up dirt for diamonds? My dear friend, listen. I'm not inviting you to a funeral. I'm inviting you to a feast. I'm not inviting you to death. I'm inviting you to life.

I was on the street one day, and an old derelict came up to me, and he said, "Mister, well, I'm so hungry I haven't eaten at all." He said, "Would you give me some money? Would you give some money? I need some money to eat with." I looked at him and smelled his breath. I thought he wanted to get a little liquid nourishment, so I said, "No, I won't give you any money." "But," he said, "I'm so hungry." I said, "Fine." I said, "Come on in. Let's have a meal together." We were by a restaurant. I said, "Come on. Let's just sit down and eat, and I'll buy you something to eat, and I'll sit here and talk with you while you eat." And so, he kind of reluctantly came in. He was dirty, filthy, disheveled, obviously penniless, and in rags. I sat down there with him, and I bought him a meal. We sat down there and talked for a while. And, in the course of the meal, I of course pushed the claims of the Lord Jesus on him and told him about Christ. I told him how Jesus loved him and how Jesus wanted to save him. And, I asked him, I said, "Now, sir, would you like to give your heart to Jesus Christ? Would you like to be saved?" Do you know what he said to me? He said, "No." I said, "No? Why not?" Do you know what he said? "Oh," he said, "there's so much to give up." That's what he said. I mean, he said, "There's just so much to give up." Can you imagine that? Isn't the devil a deceiver?

My dear friend, "*For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly*" (Psalm 84:11). But, you see, people harden their heart by these silly excuses. And, indeed they are silly excuses.

III. Sudden Destruction

Now, I've talked to you about spiritual conviction. I have talked to you about stubborn rebellion. Let me talk to you about sudden destruction. Notice what our text says: *"He, that being often reproved"*—that's spiritual conviction—*"hardeneth his neck,"*—that is stubborn rebellion—*"shall suddenly be destroyed"*—that is sudden destruction. You see, there's an end to God's patience. God does speak. But, finally, God's patience wears out.

Let me show you how a man may be destroyed. There are three ways that he may be destroyed.

A. The Destruction of the Mind Through Strong Delusion

His mind may suddenly be destroyed by strong delusion. There may be the destruction of his mind through strong delusion. That's the reason that many people are in false cults today like Jehovah's Witnesses and other cults like this today: because when they heard the truth, they refused the truth, and now they believe a lie. Second Thessalonians the second chapter, verses 11 and 12, says this: *"And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness"* (2 Thessalonians 2:11).

Now, what does that verse tell us? It means that when a person hears the truth and he doesn't act upon the truth, God's judgment is that this man will be deceived. And, there are many people who I said this morning that, "No man can believe until God opens his eyes." But, this judgment is worse than that. Not only does God not open his eyes, but God sends him delusion and judgment that he might be damned. And so, many times, the mind is destroyed through strong delusion, and a person gets a lie firmly entrenched in his mind.

B. The Destruction of the Spirit Through Spiritual Desertion

But, not only may the mind be destroyed; often there's the destruction of the spirit through spiritual desertion. What I mean by that is that the Holy Spirit of God can be insulted and sinned against until the Holy Spirit no longer speaks to an unsaved man. The Holy Spirit just withdraws Himself; the Holy Spirit just deserts the sinner and leaves him alone. You say, "Would the Holy Spirit just desert a person?" Yes, He would. Let me give you some Scripture. Genesis chapter 6 and verse 3: *"And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man"* (Genesis 6:3). Romans 1, verse 24: *"Wherefore God also gave them up..."* (Romans 1:24). Romans chapter 1, verse 26: *"For this reason God gave them up to vile passions"* (Romans 1:26). He's talking here. *"And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a*

reprobate mind” (Romans 1:28). “*God...gave them up,*” and, “*God gave them over to a reprobate mind.*”

There’s a verse of Scripture in the Old Testament that says that, “*Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone*” (Hosea 4:17). There may be the destruction of the mind through strong delusion. There may be the destruction of the spirit through spiritual desertion. The Holy Spirit of God just deserts a person. That person is no longer able to come to Christ because he’s no longer convicted.

Let me show you a terrifying passage over here in Hebrews chapter 6. Keep one finger where you are, and turn with me to Hebrews chapter 6. Now, theologians have raced their theological motors about Hebrews chapter 6 and what it says. I’ll tell you what I believe it deals with. I believe it deals with the unpardonable sin. Hebrews chapter 6, verse 4, speaks of an impossibility. Look at it, in verse 4: “*For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame*” (Hebrews 6:4–6).

Now, this verse says there are certain people that it is impossible to renew to repentance. Who are these people? These are people who have been often reprovved. Notice, “*It is impossible for those who were once enlightened,*”—the Holy Spirit enlightens you—“*and have tasted of the heavenly gift,*”—the Holy Spirit gives you samples of Heaven—“*and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost,*”—the word *partaker* means, “have gone along with the Holy Ghost; have been dealt with by the Holy Ghost”—“*and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,*”—that is, God has worked on them—“*if they shall fall away...*”—that is, if they harden their neck, there comes a time when it is impossible to renew them to repentance.

The illustration I can think of is if you go into the back of the supermarket sometime. I went into a supermarket to buy something, and there was a lady there. She had little tidbits of sausage on toothpicks to give to you. She gave them to you to kind of whet your appetite: just a taste, just a morsel. And, the idea is that they do that to show you what’s in the showcase to get you to carry it out and buy it.

Now, suppose you go back there by the meat market and they’re giving away little samples of cheese, and we’ll say that you’re a cheese hound and that you really love cheese, and there’s an exotic and an imported cheese, and you taste that, and you roll it around on your tongue. You say, “That’s just what I want. Get me three pounds of that cheese.” And so, they wrap it up, and you take it out there to the checkout counter, the girl drags it over that thing, and the little thing says *beep beep*. And, you look up there,

and you see that it says 26 dollars. You say, “What?” “It’s 26 dollars.” “What’s 26 dollars for?” “Well, didn’t you buy that cheese? That’s imported cheese.” “That’s 26 dollars for three pounds of cheese?” “That’s right.” “You’ve got to be kidding.” “Put it back.” So, you just leave it there and go out.

Now, that’s exactly, in a way, what this verse is talking about. Here is a person who knows what he’s dealing with. He has tasted the good Word of God. He has been made a partaker of the Holy Ghost. He knows what is happening. But, when it comes to paying the price, he says, “Put it back. I don’t want it.” It is not that he doesn’t know. He does know. He has been enlightened. God has dealt with him. He has been often reproved. But he says, “No.” The Bible says he *“shall suddenly be destroyed.”*

C. The Destruction of the Body Through Sudden Death

There may be the destruction of his mind through strong delusion. There may be the destruction of the spirit through spiritual desertion. Or, there may be the destruction of the body through sudden death. Many times the body dies suddenly because a person says *no* to the Lord. It may be a physical destruction.

I read that in God’s dealing with the Amorites in the Old Testament. The Amorites were a wicked people. But, God spoke to them and spoke to them and spoke to them. They did not repent. In Genesis chapter 15 and verse 16, God said, *“For the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full”* (Genesis 15:16). That is, there’s a time when iniquity is full. That is, there’s a time when people cannot go any further. I’m afraid that America is coming close to that place. And, God said of the Amorites, *“For the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.”* But, if you continue to read through the Bible till you come to Deuteronomy chapter 20 and verse 17, you will notice that God says something else about the Amorites. This time God says, *“But thou shalt utterly destroy them”* (Deuteronomy 20:17). Do you see? At first, the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full. God’s patience dealt with them. And, God spoke, and God warned. And, God spoke and God warned. But, there came a time when their iniquity was full. And, God said, *“Utterly destroy them.”*

I’m wondering if the cup of God’s indignation is filled to the brim with you today? You say, “Well, I’m not a very wicked person.” Friend, let me tell you something. The worst sin is not sodomy. The worst sin is not rape. It is not incest. Do you know what the worst sin is? Do you know what the vilest sin in this world is? It is unbelief. Now, you may not believe that, but Jesus Christ said at Capernaum, one of the most cultured and beautiful cities in his time—I’ve visited the ruins of Capernaum many times, there on the north shores of Galilee—Jesus said, for that city, “It would be easier for Sodom and Gomorrah in the judgment than for the city of Capernaum,” and He explained why. He said, “Because so many wonderful works were done here, and yet you did not repent.”

“You see,” He said, “if these other cities had heard what you heard, they would have repented in sackcloth and ashes” (Matthew 11:20–24).

And, I’m telling you, my dear friend, that you may be sitting here saying, “Well, God’s cup may not be full to the brim with me, because at least I’m not living a vile, wicked life.” Are you hardening your heart against getting saved? Are you taking the knowledge, the truth, that you’ve heard? I’m telling you, there are souls in darkness who would leap for joy to hear what some people have heard in this building tonight. They tell us—when Ralph Bethea was here, he told about being down in Kenya handing out tracts and people almost tearing them out of his hand—wanting the truth all over the world. But, we sit in an air-conditioned, upholstered church and have a preacher tear his heart out and beg us to come to Jesus. We think, “Well, maybe one of these days we might just do God a favor and give our hearts to him.”

I’m telling you, my dear friend, the cup of iniquity is getting fuller and fuller and fuller. You see, *“He, that being often reproveth hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.”* The mind may be destroyed by strong delusion. The spirit may be destroyed by spiritual desertion. And, the body may be destroyed by sudden death.

IV. A Settled Destiny

There’s one other thing in our solemn text that I want you to see, and it’s what I want to call not only sudden destruction, but a settled destiny. Look again: *“He, that being often reproveth”*—that’s spiritual conviction—*“hardeneth his neck,”*—that’s stubborn rebellion—*“shall suddenly be destroyed,”*—that’s sudden destruction. Now watch this—*“and that without remedy.”* That, my friend, is a settled condition. Do you know what the Bible makes clear? The Bible makes it abundantly clear that once you have crossed the deadline, once you have come to this point and judgment begins, there is no turning back. I said that I read this text in a number of different translations. Let me give you the way different translations give this. Ours that we just read is, *“without remedy.”* Another says, “never have another chance.” Another says, “beyond healing.” Another says, “broken beyond repair.” Another says, “he shall suddenly be done for.”

Do you remember the story that Jesus told about the rich man who died and he went to Hell? And, when he got to Hell, then he began to talk about mercy and begging for mercy, said, *“Send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue”* (Luke 16:24). And, what was God’s answer given to this man? It was this. Abraham gave the answer to this man who was—Abraham was in Heaven—*“And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence”* (Luke 16:26). What does it mean? It means, dear friend, that when you’re in

Hell, you'll never get out. There is no remedy. You are broken beyond repair.

Now, I know there are a lot of people who believe in reincarnation. As far as I'm concerned, that just means putting the milk back in the can. There are a lot of people who believe you can be recycled, given another chance. Shirley MacLaine says you'll come back as something else or somebody else. That's all of the devil. The Bible says you will suddenly be destroyed and you'll be broken beyond repair. Hebrews 9:27 says, *"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment."* It doesn't say, "Once to die, and after this a second chance." There is no way out once you're in Hell.

Let me give you Jesus' description of Hell. Matthew chapter 25 and verse 46: *"And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal"* (Matthew 25:46). Now, my friend, if Hell is not everlasting, neither is Heaven. For the same Bible uses the same word to describe the same condition. Hell and Heaven are both described as everlasting. The duration of Heaven and the duration of Hell are the same. At death, when a man is destroyed, whether he is destroyed by the unpardonable sin or whether by sudden death, whenever that happens, his destiny is settled forever and eternally decided.

Let me give you a verse from the Old Testament. Ecclesiastes 11:3 says, *"If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth: and if the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be"* (Ecclesiastes 11:3). And then, God makes that application to the way that a man dies. Someone wrote these words:

*As a tree falls, so must it lie,
As a man lives, so must he die,
As a man, dies so must he be,
All through the years of eternity.*

—JOHN RAY

He's broken beyond repair. Do you know what Hell is spoken of in the Bible? Among the many figures of speech and descriptions of Hell, Hell is also called a bottomless pit.

Now, friend, nobody can climb out of a bottomless pit, because there's no way to climb. Hell is a place where you descend ever lower and lower and lower and lower. Ours is a solemn text tonight. God has spoken to some hearts tonight, and God has told some women, men, children that you need to be saved.

Conclusion

I'd like every head bowed and every eye closed. Listen to the text again. Listen to the Word of God: *"He, that being often reprov'd..."* Hasn't God been good to you? Time and time and time again God has reprov'd you. *"He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck..."* Have you done that? Just by procrastination, pride, or through

the pleasures of this world. Have you put off giving your heart to the Lord Jesus Christ? Have you hardened your neck? Then God says you're going to "*suddenly be destroyed.*" I mean, tonight may be the last call that God will ever give. Oh, you may not die physically; just something inside of you may die. You may cross the deadline; you may cross that place where you are broken beyond repair. And then, the Bible says that there will be no remedy. It will be too late. I just beg you to come to Jesus while you can tonight.

Crossing God's Deadline

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: June 17, 1984

Main Scripture Text: Proverbs 29:1

"He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."

PROVERBS 29:1

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Introduction

We're entitling our entire series "God's Way to Health, Wealth and Wisdom." Today, the title of the message is a very serious and somber title: "Crossing God's Deadline"—"Crossing God's Deadline." Listen to the verse—Proverbs 29 and verse 1: "*He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy*" (Proverbs 29:1). Listen to it again: "*He that, being often reprov'd hardeneth his*

neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy” (Proverbs 29:1). Ladies and gentlemen, the Bible teaches that in front of every unsaved man, there is a deadline. And, if he crosses that deadline, he is just as lost, just as certainly doomed, just as destined for Hell as though he were already there and as though the iron gates of Hell had already clanged shut behind him. It is possible for a man to commit a sin in this life—it is possible for a person to come, in this life, to a point which, if he commits that sin, and transgresses, and goes beyond that point—he can never—no, never; no, never—be saved. He will cross God’s deadline.

*There is a line by us unseen that crosses every path
The hidden boundary between God’s [mercy] and [God’s] wrath*

—WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

So, I want you to pay attention today, because it may be that some who are listening to me by radio, or some who are listening by television, or some later by tape, or some who are in this auditorium may be in danger of crossing the deadline. And so, you need to hear the message. And then, there are others of us today who need a heart of love and compassion and pray, “O God, make me a soul winner.” Now, as I look at this passage of Scripture, there are four things that jump out at me almost immediately.

I. Spiritual Direction

The first is what I want to call “spiritual direction.” God gives us all spiritual direction. That is seen in the fact that He says that we are “*often reproved*”—“*often reproved*” (Proverbs 29:1). Now, what that means is that God speaks to us time and time again. Do you know that it would be more than justice demands if God never...if God only spoke to us one time—if God only spoke one time—because we’re all sinners. God doesn’t owe us anything. But, God has spoken one time, two times, three times, over and over and over again. The Bible says, “[*We are*] *often reproved*” (Proverbs 29:1). How many times in God’s infinite patience and loving mercy has God spoken to those of us who are here today? God does strive. God does knock. God does reprove. God does call over and over again. How does He do it?

A. God Speaks through His Spirit

One way that God may speak to you and God may speak to me is through His Holy Spirit. The Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit is “*a still small voice*” (1 Kings 19:12) that God has given to reprove us, to bring us to Him. That longing to know God, that sensitivity to the things of God, that urge to get right with God—that’s God’s dear Holy Spirit bringing you, drawing you, wooing you to Jesus Christ.

B. God Speaks Through His Servants

But, not only does God speak through His Spirit—God speaks through His servants.

God speaks through His soul winners. God speaks through His preachers. God speaks in sermon. God spoke when Tommy and Johnny just sang. God is speaking in this message right now. I'd be a fool to stand up here and preach if I did not believe that God speaks through me. I believe that He does. I've prayed—and I try never to preach a sermon until I have soaked that sermon in prayer and studied to find out that the message is coming from the Word of God. God speaks through His servants.

C. **God Speaks Through Situations**

God speaks through situations, sometimes sorrow. Is God knocking at your heart's door when you buried your mamma? When you laid that little child away? Sometimes God speaks through sickness. When you were in the hospital? So many ways that God speaks.

D. **God Speaks Through His Scriptures**

We know that God speaks through His scriptures. Why, dear friend, this scripture that I'm reading to you and sharing with you today is the Word of God, as surely and as plainly as though God were standing here in bodily form speaking. This is God's Word.

God often reproveth. There's not a man, not a woman, not a boy, not a girl, not a mother's child in this place who's not had God speak to them. Nobody goes to Hell without having a word from God. All people, everywhere, have a word from God. God speaks! He often reproveth. That's the very first thing we want to notice in our text—what I want to call today “spiritual direction.”

II. **Stubborn Disobedience**

But, I want you to see something else—stubborn disobedience. Listen to what the text says: “*He, that being often reproveth [and] hardeneth his neck*” (Proverbs 29:1). Now, what does it mean to “harden your neck”? Have you ever heard about somebody being “stiff-necked”? Hmm? I'm not talking about having a crick in your neck; I'm just talking about what we say, “bowing your neck up.” It speaks here of stubbornness; it speaks here of rebellion—that God speaks, and man says, “God, I'm not going to hear You—what You say to me.”

Now, sometimes it's open defiance. Sometimes the sinner boldly, braggingly, brazenly shakes his puny fist in the face of God and says, “God, if there be a God, You're not big enough to make me serve you.” I don't think there's any like that here today. If there is, may God pity your poor soul. I don't think there's any body like that here today. But still, we harden our hearts and stiffen our necks in ways that we may not realize.

A. **Procrastination**

For example, some, by procrastination, harden their heart against the Lord.

Procrastination is a terrible sin, a horrible sin. If I were to ask many of you, “Do you intend to be saved?” you’d say, “Yes.” “Do you want to be saved?” “Yes.” “Are you going to be saved?” “Yes.” “Do you want to be saved right now?” “No, I want to be saved, but I want to be saved tomorrow.” Go back and look, if you will, in Proverbs chapter 27 and verse 1: *“Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth”* (Proverbs 27:1). Now, the only time that you have where you can be saved is now.

Dr. R.G. Lee, former pastor of this church, said, “Tomorrow is a time found nowhere except on the fool’s calendar. Today is the day of salvation.” The Bible says, *“To day if [you’ll] hear [God’s] voice, harden not your hearts”* (Hebrews 3:15). *“Boast not thyself of to morrow”* (Proverbs 27:1).

It’s an interesting thing—in the Old Testament, God brought judgment upon the Egyptians, and one of the judgments He brought upon them was almost humorous. God... They worshiped a frog goddess. And so, God said, “Well, if you like frogs so much, I’m gonna give you some.” And so, God sent a plague of frogs in the land. And folks, I want to tell you, there were frogs everywhere—I mean, big frogs and little frogs, slimy frogs and slick frogs, and green frogs and brown frogs. There were frogs in the bedroom, and frogs in the closet, and frogs in the slippers, and frogs between the sheets, and frogs in the kitchen, and frogs in the oven, and frogs in the oatmeal. And, when little boys went to school, they squished frogs between their toes. And, there were mountains of frogs—big frogs, little frogs, smelly frogs piled up in mountains. The din—the roar—must have been deafening.

Now, God was having His way of ridiculing the so-called “frog goddess” of Egypt. And, Pharaoh had had it up to here with frogs—I mean, he’d had enough of frogs. And so, he wanted Moses to take away the frogs. And, in Exodus chapter 8, we read that Moses said to Pharaoh, “When do you want me to intercede for you, and for your servants, and for your people to destroy the frogs, from you and your houses, that they may remain in the river only?” (Exodus 8:9)—“Pharaoh, when are you ready to have me put these frogs put back in the river and get them out of the land?” *“And he said, To morrow”* (Exodus 8:10). Now, can you imagine that? Pharaoh has it up to here with the frogs, and Moses says, “All right. Pharaoh, if you want to get rid of the frogs, we’ll do it. When do you want it done?” “Tomorrow, give me one more night with the frogs.” Isn’t that an amazing thing? An amazing thing! He wants to get rid of them, but yet, somehow, he just wants one more night with those smelly frogs.

Now, you talk to an unsaved man—he has the same problem with his sins that old Pharaoh had with the frogs. I mean, he’s plagued by doubt, by disappointment, by sickness, by sorrow, by fear, by anguish, by disillusionment, by a lack of purpose, and unhappiness, and misery, and all of the things that his sins bring with them. And, you

say, “Do you need to be saved?” “Yes.” “You want to get rid of these things?” “Yes.” “Are you sick of them?” “Yes.” “When do you want to do it?” “Tomorrow”—“tomorrow.” Why is it? Why is it that people postpone salvation? It is the classic trick of the devil; it is a way of hardening your neck.

Now, the Bible puts it in another way: *“To day if [you’ll] hear [God’s] voice, harden not your [heart]”* (Hebrews 3:15; Hebrews 4:7). It’s another way of saying the same thing: the hardened neck, the hardened heart—both of them speak of a stubborn will against God. And, procrastination will stiffen your neck and harden your heart against God. Now, listen—it’s foolish to boast of tomorrow. Proverbs 27, verse 1: *“Boast not [you] of to morrow”* (Proverbs 27:1). It is foolish. Why?

1. Get Right with God Now, Because You May Live

Well, number one—number one: You’ll lose today. Now, you know, we often hear people say, “Well, get right with God. You may die.” Let me change that, folks, and say, “Get right with God. You may live.” And, if you live, you can live with Jesus. Don’t get the idea that being a Christian is paying some penalty in order to get to Heaven—it’s like taking bad medicine in order to get well: you don’t like the way it tastes, but you choke it down. Why, I’d be a Christian if there were no Heaven, if there were no Hell, just to serve the Lord Jesus Christ in this life. Now, there is a Heaven and there is a Hell, and I don’t want you to think that I’m putting any doubts there. But, I’m just saying that being a Christian is wonderful. Jesus said, *“[I’ve] come that [you] might have life, and...have it...abundantly”* (John 10:10).

Oh, there are sorrows. Yes, there are troubles that Christians have—persecutions, sure, certainly. Unsaved people have them, too. But, I tell you, the Christian has someone to bring his sorrows to, and the Christian has a hope and a strength. And, the Christian looks forward to a day when there’ll be no more sorrows, no more suffering. And, Jesus takes every tear and turns it to a pearl and every hurt and turns it to a hallelujah, because, dear friend, we have a dear, loving Savior. How wonderful to know the Lord Jesus Christ in this life! And, every day with Jesus is sweeter than the day before. Get right with God now, because you may live.

2. Get Right with God Now, Because Something Worse Will Come Tomorrow if You Don’t

I’ll tell you another reason that you ought to get right with God: something worse is going to come tomorrow if you don’t. Now, if you’ll study this passage, you’re gonna find out that after the frogs came the lice, and after the lice came the flies, and after the flies came the locusts, and after the locust came the boils, and after the boils came the fire, and after the fire came the darkness, and after the darkness came the death. Now, you see, God loves you too much to let you just go on in your sin. And, if the frogs won’t do it, God will send some lice. And, if the lice won’t do it, God will send some boils. And, if

the boils won't do it, God will send some hail. I don't know what He's gonna send in your life. It won't be literal frogs, and lice, and hail, and fire. But, I'll tell you what, I believe God loves you so much that He may, if it's necessary, bring a tragedy in your life to open your eyes. Why wait 'till tragedy strikes? God loves you. Precious friend, He loves you so much He'd rather see you suffer in this life than suffer eternity in Hell, in that He might open your eyes. Sometimes we never see so clearly as through eyes that are washed with tears.

3. Get Right with God Now, Because Tomorrow May Not Come

I'll tell you another reason you ought not procrastinate. Number one: You lose today. Number two: Something worse may come tomorrow. Number three: Tomorrow may not come—tomorrow may not come. The Bible says, *“For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that”* (James 4:14–15). Did you know some four to five hundred are blasted into eternity every year, in America, by bolts of lightning? If you were hit by a lightning bolt today, would you go to Heaven or Hell? Did you know that this year some 50,000 Americans will get in their automobiles, little dreaming it's the last ride that they'll ever take, because their lives will be snuffed out in an automobile accident? Did you know that? Friend, listen—tomorrow may not come. And, some harden their necks by procrastination.

B. Pride

I'll tell you another way that some harden their necks: they harden their necks through pride. I've seen it happen many a' time. A man will sit in a service like this. He will hear the Word of God. The finger of God will touch his heart. He will feel under conviction. The pastor will stand in the pulpit and say, “Give your heart to Christ.” And, pride sets in the seat with that man, that woman, and pride says, “Look around. You see all of those people—you're just as good as they are. Don't you go down to the front in that church service. Why, you'll make a spectacle of yourself! People will be watching you. Besides that, you can just do it privately right here in your heart. After all, no one needs to know that you're giving your heart to Jesus.” I want to tell you something, friend: Jesus said, “If you're ashamed of Me and My Word before this sinful and adulterous generation, I will be ashamed of you when I come to the glory of the Father with the holy angels” (Mark 8:38). The Bible says, *“Whosoever believeth [in] him shall not be ashamed”* (Romans 9:33). But, pride, pride, pride—rotten, dirty pride—keeps people from coming to Jesus. They'll harden their hearts. And, when the invitation is given, they stiffen their neck, they lift up their heads, they lock their knees, they stalk out of the church to their doom, bound in the chains—the cold, steely chains—of pride that have been forged on the anvil of a hard heart. And, they harden their neck.

C. Pleasures and Possessions

Some harden their neck through pleasures and possessions. When I give an invitation, there will be some who will say, “Now look, if I go down there and give my heart to Jesus Christ, if I say ‘yes’ to God, that’ll mean that I’ll have to cease from this thing and no longer do that thing. And, perhaps they’ll call upon me to give up something.” And so, they say, “Well, I just have a choice to make. And, I have a certain lifestyle, and I want to live that lifestyle.” And so, when God often reproves, they harden their neck, because the Bible describes them as *“lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God”* (2 Timothy 3:4). That’s such a foolish thing to do—such a foolish thing to do! And, I’ll tell you why—three reasons.

1. God Only Asks You to Give Up Things That Hurt You

Number one, dear friend: The only thing God will ever ask you to give up are the things that hurt you. You understand that? *“For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly”* (Psalm 84:11). Isn’t that beautiful? If it’ll make you healthy, happy, holy, wholesome, God says, “Help yourself.” Amen. *“No good thing will he withhold from them that [love Him and follow Him]”* (Psalm 84:11).

2. What You Give Up Is Nothing Compared to What You Get

I’ll tell you another reason why it’s foolish to talk about that there’s too much to give up: what you give up is nothing compared to what you get. Hmm? I mean, who wouldn’t give up dirt for diamonds? You see, listen—He wants to load you with His love, His benefits.

3. What You Give Up Is Nothing Compared to What He Gave Up for You

And, I’ll tell you a third reason why it’s foolish to talk that way: what you give up is nothing compared to what He gave up for you. He suffered, bled, and died for you upon the cross.

But, many times, people harden their hearts through pleasures and possessions, and they say “no” to the Lord Jesus Christ. So, notice what we’re saying. First of all, there is spiritual direction. We are often reproved. In many ways and in many days, God speaks to us. And then, there is stubborn disobedience. The heart is hardened. The will rejects the Lord Jesus. A person says, “No, I will not come to Jesus.”

III. Sudden Destruction

Now, I want you to notice a third thing that happens: the third thing is sudden destruction. Listen to the verse again: *“He, that being often reprov[ed] hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed”*—*“suddenly be destroyed”* (Proverbs 29:1). That’s the third step in this drama of damnation: he is suddenly destroyed. Destruction generally takes three forms.

A. The Destruction of the Mind Through Strong Delusion

First of all, there is the destruction of the mind through strong delusion—the destruction of the mind through strong delusion. Look, if you will, please, in 2 Thessalonians, the second chapter, and verses 11 and 12—2 Thessalonians, second chapter, and verses 11 and 12. Now, here's what God's Word says; listen—one of the most amazing verses in all the Bible: *“And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned”* (2 Thessalonians 2:11–12).

“Now, wait a minute, Pastor. Read that again. You must have misread it. God doesn't send anybody delusion, does He?” Yes, He does. “Well,” you say, “I thought it was the devil that deceives people. I thought it was the devil that deluded people. But, this verse says that *‘for this [reason] God shall send them strong delusion, that they [shall] believe a lie’* (2 Thessalonians 2:11). Well, why would God send anybody strong delusion?” Well, He tells us *“that they should believe a lie”* (2 Thessalonians 2:11). Well, why would God want them to *“believe a lie: That they all might be damned”* (2 Thessalonians 2:11–12)? Or, as another translation—“that they all might be condemned”? Well, it seems to get worse, doesn't it? God sends delusion so that people will believe a lie so that they'll be condemned.

Well, why would God want them to be condemned? Well, continue to read: *“who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness”* (2 Thessalonians 2:12). Now, pay attention. When a person is presented with the truth, and when a person, on the other hand, has his unrighteousness and his sin, then he has a choice. And, the opposite of truth is not error, but it is sin. Over here is truth, and over here is unrighteousness. And, the man must make a choice. He knows what God's truth says, because that man has been often reprov'd. But, over here is his unrighteousness, and he says, “I choose my sin. I choose this lifestyle. I choose against God.” But, when he chooses this package, this package of unrighteousness is wrapped up in delusion. And, when he chooses this, God says, “You take the package—you're going to get the wrapping, which is delusion and deception.” And, God will see to it that he believes a lie. God Himself... It is a part of God's righteous judgment, part of God's poetic judgment. It is ironic that God sees to it that this man, who does not want the truth but has pleasure in unrighteousness, with that unrighteousness the man is deceived; he is deluded. God sees to it that he is.

Now, how does that work? Let me illustrate what happens. Some Sunday, I may decide to preach a sermon on stewardship. Many of my friends and deacons tell me, “Pastor, you don't preach enough on stewardship,” and they're probably right. I'm always so anxious to preach the gospel. I'm an evangelist by nature. And, many times I do not preach just what the Bible has to say about giving. And, by the way, I'm working on a message on that right now out of the Book of Proverbs. But, suppose I preach a

message on stewardship, on giving, and the devil sees to it that a man who was here two years ago when I preached on that subject comes back two years later. And, I'm preaching this message on stewardship, and that man begins to mutter, and sputter, and fume, and fuss. And, he says, "Money, money, money—that's all they ever talk about down there at that church is money. A bunch of money grabbin' so-and-so's!" And, he's just muttering there under his breath; he never stops to ask, "Is it true?" He never stops... "Does it come out of the Word of God?" He never asked the mind of God about the matter. He goes out of church, and he says to his wife, "I'm never going back there." And so, he says... He just begins to fume, you know, and he's just all hot under the collar about it. So, he's just made up his mind—he's not going to church any more, and especially Bellevue Baptist.

Now, he knows what is right—I mean, he heard the truth. But, he "*had pleasure in unrighteousness*" (2 Thessalonians 2:12). And, what is his unrighteousness? It is covetousness. His creed is greed; his god is gold. His motto is "Get all you can. Can all you get. Poison the rest, and sit on the lid." That's the way he's wired. And, it's just rotten sin. Well, is he going to have that sin—yes—but with that sin he'll also have the delusion that comes with that sin.

So, he's sitting at home on Sunday morning, whiskers grown out. He's watching the sports channel on television. He's got a six-pack of embalming fluid there by his right hand, a carton of cancer there by his left hand, and he's just sitting there enjoying his Sunday morning. And, about that time, somebody knocks at the door, and it's two members from a well-known cult who've said, "We've come to tell you there's no Hell." He says, "Come in—come in." And, they come in and tell him a lie. And, he believes a lie. Why? Because he "*received not the love of the truth...but had pleasure in unrighteousness*" (2 Thessalonians 2:10–12). And, God has sent him strong delusion. Now, he's suddenly destroyed—his mind is destroyed; his mental faculties are destroyed. You say, "He's sincere." He may be sincere, but he's sincerely wrong.

B. The Destruction of the Spirit by Spiritual Desertion

Ah. Now, wait a minute—not only is there the destruction of the mind through strong delusion; there's also the destruction of the spirit by spiritual desertion. You say, "What do you mean 'spiritual desertion'?" I mean that the Holy Spirit will desert such a man when he crosses the deadline. Did you know that it is possible for God to give up on a man? Did you know that God will not always send His Holy Spirit to talk to a man, a woman, a boy, a girl? The Bible says in Genesis chapter 6 and verse 3, in a solemn warning (God speaking): "*My spirit shall not always strive with man*"—"My Spirit shall not always strive with man" (Genesis 6:3). Now, God's Spirit does strive; God is infinitely patient. "*He, that being often reprov'd...*" (Proverbs 29:1). Time, and time, and

time, and time again, God speaks, and God woos, and God warns, and God pleads, and God instructs, and God reproves. But, there comes a time when the Holy Spirit can be so insulted—so sinned against—that you cross a deadline, and God’s gentle precious Holy Spirit no longer speaks to your heart.

Did you know that you cannot be saved unless the Holy Spirit of God draws you to Jesus Christ? Did you know that my preaching can never save anybody? Did you know that even the truth of the Word of God cannot save you unless the Holy Spirit of God makes that truth real to your heart? Did you know that I can preach truth, but only the Holy Spirit can impart truth? Jesus said, *“No man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father”* (John 6:65). The Spirit of God must draw you to Jesus Christ. You must be brought by the Holy Spirit to Jesus Christ. But, there comes a time when the dear Holy Spirit of God may be so blasphemed that the Spirit of God will no longer speak to your heart.

Listen to these scriptures. Romans chapter 1 and verse 24: *“Wherefore God also gave them up”* (Romans 1:24). Romans chapter 1, verse 26: *“For this cause God gave them up”* (Romans 1:26). Romans 1, verse 28: *“even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over”* (Romans 1:28). Twice it says, “God gave them up.” Once it says that “God gave them over.” How does that work? How does it really work? Well, number one, you see, God must have spoken to you clearly and plainly, and you must have deliberately and willingly rejected Jesus for this to happen.

Let me illustrate what I’m talking about. There’s an interesting passage in Hebrews chapter 6, beginning in verse 4. Listen to it; it talks about something that is impossible. Hebrews... As a matter of fact, let’s just all turn to that. That’s worth looking at; let’s just turn to it—Hebrews chapter 6, and beginning in verse 4. Now, if there’s an impossibility, let’s find out what it is. The Bible says here, *“For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened”*—and that’s the key, “people who’ve been enlightened,” “people that God’s Holy Spirit has spoken to”—*“For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened”*—underscore the word “enlightened”—*“and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost”*—underscore that word “partakers of the Holy Ghost,” or “Holy Spirit”—*“And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come”*—literally, “of the and the power of the ages to come”—*“If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame”* (Hebrews 6:4–6).

Now, the Bible says, “It is impossible to renew some people to repentance” (Hebrews 6:4). It is absolutely, totally, one hundred percent impossible that these people could ever repent and get right with God. Who are they? These are people who were enlightened; their eyes were opened. These are people who have tasted the power of the Word of God. These are people who have been made partakers of the

Holy Ghost. Now, He's not talking about people who have been saved and then lose their salvation. He's talking about people who come up to the very brink of salvation, who, with their eyes wide open, crucified Jesus, as it were, again. They refused Christ; they trampled beneath their feet the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. And, they know what they're doing—I mean, they do it after they know the truth.

It's very similar to this: Have you ever been to the supermarket and gone back there, to the back by the dairy counter, and seen where they're giving away—in some supermarkets—little samples of cheese? You know, they have little toothpicks and little bits of cheese, and that's just simply to whet your appetite. And, you go back there and say, "Hey, mister, would you like a little sample of cheese?" And, I go back there and taste that—and boy, it tastes so good—and you taste it. Suppose you're a cheese hound, and you really like cheese. And, you say, "I just really like that; give me three pounds of that." So, they wrap up three pounds, and you carry it to the front check-out counter. And, when you get there, you look at the register, and it says, "Thirty dollars for three pounds of cheese." You say, "Whoa, wait a minute—is that for the cheese or the whole bill?" "No that's for the cheese." "Thirty dollars?" "That's right. You know, that came from lower Mongolia somewhere. That's imported cheese; that's very rare cheese. And, if that's what you want, it's going to cost you thirty dollars." You say, "Well, now, wait a minute. Just put it back—put it back. I know what it is, and I know how it tastes, but I am not going to pay that kind of price for it."

Now, here's a person who knows exactly what it is that he's refusing—he's already tasted it. And, that's what the scripture is talking about: He's tasted the power of the world to come. His eyes are open; he knows what it is. And with his eyes wide open, he says to God, "No."

And, when he does that, he may step over the deadline. He may so sin against the Holy Spirit that his eyes, being open, cause him to commit a sin that is more horrible—are you listening?—more terrible and more tragic than those who took those searing nails and pounded them into His quivering flesh. I am telling you that they commit a greater sin than those who nailed Him to the cross at Calvary.

Jesus said... The writer of Hebrews says that "*they crucify the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame*" (Hebrews 6:6). Here's the difference. You say, "What could be the difference in crucifying Him the first time or crucifying Him in our hearts the second time?" When Jesus was crucified the first time, remember what He prayed? He prayed what? "*Father forgive them, for they know not what they do*" (Luke 23:34). Right? But, when you crucify Him after being enlightened, He can't pray that for you, because you know what you're doing—you know exactly what you're doing. You have tasted the power of the Word of God. You have been made a partaker of the Holy Spirit. You have been brought under conviction, and you crucify Christ with your eyes wide

open; you “*crucify [Him] afresh, and put him to an open shame*” (Hebrews 6:6). The Holy Spirit of God can be so wounded, so grieved, that He no longer speaks to your heart. The old time theologians used to call that “when the lights go out on the road to Hell.” Oh, it’s a tragic thing when a man not only has strong delusion, but he has spiritual desertion! The Holy Spirit of God just deserts him. God gives him up. God leaves him alone.

There’s a passage in the Old Testament that says that “*Ephraim is joined to [his] idols: let him alone*”—“*[just] let him alone*” (Hosea 4:17). John, Mary, Susie, Bill, Ralph—joined to his idols; just leave him alone. And, God gave them up!

C. The Destruction of the Body by Sudden Death

Strong delusion, spiritual desertion, and then sudden death. Clap! Just like that, you’re gone. Remember about those people hit by the lightning bolts? Remember the heart seizures? Remember the automobile accident? You see, when a man crosses the deadline, many times, right after that, he dies suddenly.

There’s an interesting passage in the Book of Exodus that speaks of the ancient Amorites, and God said of them, “*The iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full*” (Genesis 15:16). That’s in Genesis, rather—16 or 15—and verse 16. “*The iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full*” (Genesis 15:16). Now, the Amorites lived in Canaan. God knew who the Amorites were. And, there was a measuring cup, and God was measuring their sin. And, their sin had not yet come to the brim; it was not yet full. And so, God did not command that they be destroyed. But then, there came another time in Deuteronomy chapter 7 and verse 2, where God said: “*Thou shalt...destroy them [utterly]*” (Deuteronomy 7:2).

Now, God has a measuring cup with you. And, one day your sin may fill that cup to the brim, and God will say, “It’s time for her to be destroyed. It’s time for him to be destroyed.” Now, you say, “Well, I certainly have not committed the sins of the Amorites.” Ladies and gentlemen, listen to me—when God judges your sin, God does not judge your sin primarily by the outward sin committed but by the inward light rejected. You understand that? And, the Bible teaches that the greatest sin is the rejection of spiritual truth: it is greater than adultery; it is greater than fornication; it is greater than arson, rape, murder. The greatest sin is the sin of unbelief. And, God will not allow you to disbelieve His Son and trample beneath your feet His blood, but only so long. And, there comes a time when God’s cup of patience and mercy is filled to the brim; and then, it’ll be too late—it’ll be too late. Sudden death, sudden destruction—and there will be no remedy.

IV. Settled Destiny

Now, there's one last thing, and I'll be finished. Notice what I've said—there's spiritual direction: God speaks; He warns; He pleads; He speaks in many ways. I've mentioned that. There's stubborn disobedience: people harden their necks. There is sudden destruction: first of all, mentally—there's strong delusion; spiritually, the Holy Spirit deserts them; physically, many times, there's a sudden death. But now, notice one other thing, and I'll be finished: there's also a settled destiny.

Listen to the verse: *“He, that being often reprov'd [and] hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy”* (Proverbs 29:1). Is there a chance after death? Absolutely, totally not. Now, there are some people who teach and preach that we have a second chance after we die to get right with God. That is false; that is heresy, and I do not want to leave that hope to you. Dear friend, if you want to be saved, you may be saved. If you need to be saved, Christ can save you. And, “whosoever will may come.” But, I want to tell you with all of the urgency, emergency, function, and unction of my soul, you will not come to the judgment of God and be able to throw yourself on the mercy of the court and say, “God, I now believe. Have mercy, O God, and save me.” If you want mercy, you may have it. If you want grace, you may have it. If you want forgiveness, you may have it. But, you must have it in this life. The Bible says, *“Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation”* (2 Corinthians 6:2). The Bible says, *“It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment”* (Hebrews 9:27).

The Lord Jesus, in the 16th chapter of Luke, told about two men who died—a rich man and a poor man, a beggar and a rich man. The rich man's name we don't know; the beggar's name was Lazarus. The rich man died, the Bible says. *“And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom”* (Luke 16:23). And, this man in Hell cried out this way: *“Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame”* (Luke 16:24). And, God spoke to him through Abraham and said, “It is impossible. Between you and us there is a great gulf that is fixed, and those who would pass from where you are to where we are cannot come, and those of us who would come from where we are to comfort you cannot come” (Luke 16:26). There is a great gulf fixed, and as a soul dies, so shall it be.

In the Bible, we read in Matthew chapter 25 and verse 46: *“And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.”* (Matthew 25:46) And, the same word that is translated “everlasting” is the word that is translated “eternal.” And, if the life in Heaven is eternal, then life in Hell is eternal. And, God uses the same word to describe both. In the Book of Ecclesiastes, the Bible says in verse 3: *“in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be”* (Ecclesiastes 11:3). Now, someone has

written these words:

*As the tree falls, so must it lie;
As a man lives, so will he die;
As a man dies, so will he be
all through the years of eternity.*

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

The Bible teaches that there's no remedy. Listen, don't die without Christ. Don't cross the deadline!

I did some Bible study, and I looked up this phrase in a number of different translations. Listen to them. One says, "And he shall be without remedy." The other says, "Never have another chance." Another says, "He's beyond healing." Another says, "He's broken beyond repair." Another translation says, "He is suddenly done." For all of them say the same thing: there is a settled destiny. I beg you; I plead with you—come to the Lord Jesus.

One of the greatest preachers of our past generation was Dr. Joe Henry Hankins from Arkansas. Dr. Hankins was in a church preaching—I believe it was his own church. He was preaching an evangelistic message. And, when he finished the message, he gave the invitation, as I will do in just a moment, and he looked up in the balcony, where some of you are sitting—in that first balcony. And, he saw a young man there, right about in the middle part of the balcony. And, the young man seemed to be under conviction. And, by the way, do you know that I look at each of you when I preach? Did you know that? You know, some people, especially some of you who sit on the back row, you have the idea I can't see you. I want to ask you a question: Can you see me? 'Course I see you. I even see when you talk to one another. I know what's going on. And, I look in your faces, and I'm concerned about every one of you, because that helps me to preach, as I look at you.

And, this preacher, when he was giving the invitation, looked into the face of that young man, and he could see conviction written on the face of that young man. And, during the invitation, he watched him as he looked like he was going to start out and give heart to Christ. And then, he stepped back in. And then, he looked again as if he were going to start out, and then he stepped back in. He had a songbook in his hand, and the preacher stood and pleaded—as I plead sometimes—and said, "Come to Jesus." And, the young man took the songbook, and closed it, and put it down, and wheeled around, and strutted out. Dr. Hankins said, "Thank God—thank God—he's coming" But, as he went down those stairs, rather than coming through the doors and down to the front, he went into the foyer and on out into the street, and left the revival meeting.

In a few weeks, Dr. Joe Henry Hankins was called to the bedside of that young man

who'd been diagnosed with a fatal disease and who was dying. The young man did not know he had the disease at that time. Dr. Hankins thought he recognized him and said, "Son, I want to ask you a question: Were you in our services on thus-and-such a night?" "Yes, sir." "Were you sitting in the balcony?" "Yes, sir." "When I gave the invitation, did you have a desire to come and give your heart to Jesus Christ?" "Yes, sir." "Tell me about it, son." He said, "Preacher, when you preached that message and gave that invitation, I wanted to get down there where you were and confess Christ as my Savior so strongly that I felt like I could jump over that balcony rail to get to where you were." "Well, son, you didn't come. I saw you leave, but you went outside. What happened?" He said, "Each time I started to come forward I thought of my favorite sin, and I knew that if I came forward, I'd have to give up that sin. And, there was a struggle in my heart. Finally, I made up my mind I would have my sin, and I closed the Bible, and I closed my hymnal, and I left and went outside. I made up my mind that I would choose my sin."

The pastor began to weep. He said, "Well now, son, has the doctor told you how sick you are?" "Yes, sir. You don't have to beat around the bush with me. I know I'm going to die." "Well, son, I'm going to ask you to give your heart to Jesus right now, because if you're going to die, you can't have your sin anyway. Won't you give your heart to Jesus and ask Him to save you?" And, that young man said, "No, I will not give my heart to Jesus." He said, "Son, I don't understand it—you said you wanted to be saved." He said, "Preacher, there's something you do not understand." He said, "When I closed that songbook and walked out of that church, something died within me." He said, "I can't give my heart to Christ."

Hankins said he pleaded with tears and begged the young man to come to Christ. But, he said, "I cannot, and I will not." He had hardened his neck against God. He had chosen his sin. He had stepped over God's deadline. And, there was nothing waiting for that young man but certain judgment.

Listen to the Word of God. These are not the rantings of some of backwoods preacher. Thank God for the backwoods preachers. But, listen: *"He, that being often reproved [and hardens] his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy"* (Proverbs 29:1). And, this message today may be God's final call to someone in this building today.

Conclusion

I want us to bow our heads in prayer. And, while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, I want you to pray for those round about you who may not know the Lord Jesus. Father, I pray in the name of Jesus that many in this building today will say "yes" to Christ—O God, that they will be saved today. Father, help these who've been reproved to say "yes" to Jesus.

Crossing God's Deadline

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: December 28, 1997

Main Scripture Text: Proverbs 29:1

*"He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck,
shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."*

PROVERBS 29:1

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Introduction

Would you take your Bibles and turn, please, to Proverbs chapter 29, and we're going to look at one verse. Sometimes when a pastor preaches from the Word of God, he will take a chapter. As a matter of fact, I believe the chapter headings were put there to keep preachers from preaching too long. And, sometimes he'll take a paragraph. But, today we're going to take just one verse, and we're going to look at that one verse, because it is so rich, it is so strong, it is so powerful, it is so pertinent.

A few moments ago, I asked this question: Can a man spiritually pass the point of no return? Can he so stubbornly and arrogantly sin against God? Can he be so willfully rebellious that God will give up on him? The answer to that question is yes, and that's a frightening thing. There is a deadline, and if a man, woman, boy, or girl crosses that

deadline, his doom is sealed, and he has no hope. You say, “But, pastor, God is a God of love—infinite love.” Yes, He is, but He is also a God of wrath and a God of judgment. And, when you say that God is a God of love, that is truth, but it’s not all of the truth. It is part of the truth, and *when you try to take part of the truth and make part of the truth all of the truth, that part of the truth becomes an* untruth. So, we need to see all of God’s Word.

I want you to look at this verse of Scripture, because it is terrifying in some ways. Proverbs chapter 29 and verse 1: *“He, that being often reprov’d hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy”*—*“He, that being often reprov’d hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy”* (Proverbs 29:1).

*There is a time we know not when,
A place we know not where;
Which marks the destiny of men,
To glory or despair.*

*There is a line, by us unseen,
Which crosses every path;
Which marks the boundary between
God’s mercy and His wrath.*

—JOSEPH ADDISON ALEXANDER

And, to cross that line means that there’s no hope for you. I’ve been told that in the Niagara River—I’ve never seen it, but in the Niagara River—that rushes down to Niagara Falls, at first the Niagara River is very placid and very slow, but it reaches a point where it rises and picks up speed, and there is a sign there, I’m told, on the riverbank which says, “The point of no return.” Now, you can be in that river for a long time, but when you come to that place, you’re not going to turn around and go back. That is the point of no return, and you are going over the falls if you pass that point. It is the point of no return.

Now, there are four definite truths that are in this one verse. And so, I want you to take Proverbs chapter 29 and verse 1 and keep it open in your hand, and if you don’t have a Bible with you, listen to it again: *“He, that being often reprov’d hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.”* Four thoughts I want to lay on your heart today, and I pray God the Holy Spirit will etch them upon your consciousness and rivet them into your mind.

I. Spiritual Conviction

The very first is spiritual conviction. God does convict us. We are often reprov’d. Now, nobody goes to Hell unloved, unwarned, unconvicted—not a one. *“He, that being often*

reproved...” God strives with us. God knocks on our heart’s door. God reproves us. God calls us over and over and over again. The Bible says, “*He, that being often reproved...*”—many times reproved. It would have been glorious mercy if God had just warned us again and again and again. God reproves. God speaks to us.

A. God Speaks Through His Spirit

Now, how does God speak? How does God reprove? Well, by His Holy Spirit. There have been times when you’ve been driving along in your automobile, doing dishes, maybe you’ve been out on the football field, maybe you are just about to go to sleep, and you feel the Spirit of God speaking to you, and you know that you’re a sinner, you know that you’re doing wrong, you know that you need to be saved, and God’s Holy Spirit is gently but strongly speaking to your heart. I know He did to mine when I was a teenage boy before I came to the Lord Jesus Christ. There’s no way to describe it except the dear precious Holy Spirit of God was speaking. And, if God’s Holy Spirit is speaking to you today, I beg you, I plead with you, listen to the Spirit of God.

B. God Speaks Through Sickness

But, not only does He speak through His Spirit; He speaks through sickness. Have you been sick? Have you been in trouble? Have you been to the doctor and gotten a bad report? Well, God speaks through that. You know, the Bible says, “*Before I was afflicted I went astray*” (Psalm 119:67). What does sickness do? It’s a messenger from God to tell us that we are going to die, and every one of us here has some kind of a sickness. And, for some it’s going to get worse and worse. You say, “I’m not sick.” Well, you might be using glasses like I am. That means your eyes are sick. You might be getting gray hair, or it’s falling out. That means your scalp is a little sick. Dear friend, your posture’s not what it used to be, and your muscles are not what they used to be. You are dying. And, God speaks to us that way, and says, “You’re not going to be here upon this earth forever.” We’re winding down to the grave.

C. God Speaks Through Sorrows

Not only does God speak through His Spirit, and not only does God speak and reprove through sickness, but also through sorrows. I just put my arms around a man a few minutes ago and prayed for him, whose precious mother has stepped over into Heaven. And, I’m sure through all of that God has spoken to his heart. This is one of the godliest men I know, however. Maybe when you went to the graveside of your mother, you didn’t know the Lord, and you thought to yourself, “I’ll never see my godly mother again, unless I get saved.” Maybe God has spoken to you through the death of a child. Maybe God has spoken to you through some financial reverse.

D. God Speaks Through Sweetness

God speaks through His Spirit. God speaks through sickness. God speaks through sorrows. God speaks through sweetness. My wife and I sat at our breakfast table this morning, held hands, and praised God for His goodness to us. We named out loud the blessings of our God, our great God, and gave Him glory. How good God has been! And, if you're saved, thank God for His goodness. But, if you're lost, thank God for His goodness. The Bible says, "*The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance*" (Romans 2:4). And, God will reprove just by simply the smile of a baby, the beauty of a flower, a sunset like we saw last night. God speaks through these things.

E. God Speaks Through His Servants

God speaks to you through His servants. The songs that we had today—Victory in Jesus; I've Been Crucified with Christ; The Greatest Song of All; O God, Our Help In Ages Past—God speaks to you through those songs. That's the reason that we're a singing church. God speaks through His servants. I'm not the best preacher in the world, and *there are others who can* preach *the* gospel better *than I can, but nobody can preach a better gospel than I can*. And, I never preach a sermon till I've soaked it in prayer. And, God brought you here today to hear this message, and God speaks through His servants to you. Maybe somebody has shared a gospel tract with you. Maybe you took it and crumpled it up. Maybe you threw it on the floor. Maybe you scoffed. Maybe you laughed. God sent a special messenger of love to you.

A young man was getting ready to go out on a night of sin. His precious mother loved him so much that there by his cap she put out a gospel tract. She knew he'd see it. He picked it up. He looked at it. He said, "Mother, would you stop doing this?" He said, "Today when I got off the bus, somebody gave me one of these. I wish you wouldn't do that. Where can I go where people won't give me these things?" She said with tears, "My son, you can go to Hell. Nobody will give you one there."

God speaks, and there's not a mother's child in this building today that has not been spoken to by the Holy Spirit. Listen to this text: "*He, that being often reprov'd...*" God has spoken to you, precious friend. I don't know all of your names, but I know this much about you: Over and over and over and over and over and over again, God has reprov'd you. If you're not saved, He loves you too much to let you go to Hell without being warned, without being reprov'd. Every time I open this book to preach, God is speaking to you.

II. Stubborn Rebellion

That's the first thought: spiritual conviction. Here's the second thought: stubborn rebellion—stubborn rebellion. "*He, that being often reprov'd and hardeneth his neck...*"

Now, what we say today is “bowing up the neck,” or, “jutting out the chin,” saying, “I will not do what God would have me to do.” How do you harden your neck?

A. By Procrastination

Well, you’re in Proverbs 29; just go back to 27, and look, if you will, in verse 1. Some harden their neck by procrastination. *“Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth”* (Proverbs 27:1). You have the idea, “Well, yes, God has spoken over and over again. One of these days—one of these days—I’m going to give my heart to the Lord—tomorrow.” But, God’s Word says, “Don’t boast about tomorrow.” Former pastor of this church, Dr. Lee, said, “Tomorrow’s a time only found on the fool’s clock. It never gets here.”

You know, there’s an interesting story. I was just talking to these pastors—this pastor and his associates—in my conference room just a few moments ago, and we were talking about Moses leading the children of Israel out of Egypt. Now, Egypt had a king, the pharaoh, and he was a vile and a wicked, lascivious, an arrogant man, and so, God, in order to touch Pharaoh and allow God’s people to go, God began to send plagues into the land of Egypt.

And, one of the plagues that God sent to the land of Egypt to get Pharaoh to let God’s chosen people go that they might go to the Promised Land, one of the plagues that God sent was the plague of frogs. I don’t mean one frog. I don’t mean two frogs. I don’t mean thousands of frogs. I mean millions of frogs came up out of the Nile River and covered the land of Egypt. There were frogs everywhere. The din must have been thunderous as these frogs were croaking all over. You’d put on your shoe, there would be a frog. A woman would open a kettle to cook, and there’d be a frog in the kettle. You would get down between the sheets, there would be frogs under the sheets. Little boys would be squishing frogs between their toes when they went to school. There were frogs everywhere. They covered the land. I mean, you might think it’s funny, and it sounds funny, but if you were living in Egypt, I guarantee you, it would not be funny. They’re killing frogs, dead piles of frogs, smelly frogs, everywhere; the stench unbearable, the noise cacophonous. It was horrible and terrible. Pharaoh had had enough. He said, “Moses, ask God to take away the frogs.”

And, I’m going to read from Exodus chapter 8, verses 9 and 10: “And Moses said to Pharaoh, Accept the honor of saying when I shall intercede for you, for your servants, and for your people, to destroy the frogs from you and your houses, that they may remain in the river only.” Now, Moses said, “Okay, Pharaoh, you just ask me, and I’ll ask God to stop the frogs. When do you want me to do it?” Now, here’s something. You won’t believe this. “So he said,”—that is, Pharaoh said—“Tomorrow”—“Tomorrow” (Exodus 8:9–10). Now, there are frogs everywhere. He’s up to his ears in frogs. “Now,

Pharaoh, would you like me to take away the frogs?" "Yes, I would." "All right, Pharaoh, when?" "Tomorrow." "Give me one more night with the frogs."

Isn't that an amazing thing? Isn't that an amazing thing? And, there are some of you with sickness, sorrow, pain, discomfort, all of these things, and I say, "Do you want to come to Jesus?" "Oh, yes, I do, pastor." "When?" "Tomorrow. Just give me one more night with the frogs. I don't want to be saved today."

There's an old story about a convocation of demons that got together to try to damn mankind, and they were trying to cook up some schemes and plans, and one demon said, "Let's tell them there's no God." The other demon said, "Oh, the fact of God is so obvious only a few would believe that." "Well then, let's tell them that God is not a God of love." "Oh, no, no, no! God's handiwork, God's love, is shown everywhere." "Well, let's just tell them there's no hope." "Oh, no! The gospel has been preached around the world." Then one demon, malevolent, known for his craftiness and cunningness, according to this fable, stood up and said, "I know what to do. Let's tell them there is a God, that He's a God of love, that He has made provision for people, that they need to be saved, they ought to be saved, but tell them just simply to postpone it." An applause broke out in that convocation of demons, and they said, "Yes, that's the plan. We'll get more people by procrastination than by any other way, people who intend to be saved, but they, when they're reproved, they harden their neck by procrastination."

B. By Pride

I'll tell you another way that people harden their neck: not only by procrastination, but they harden their neck by pride. You know, I'll give an invitation at the close of this service. I'll say, "Come, accept the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, and make it public." And, the devil will come and sit right next to you, and he'll say to you, "Hey, don't go down there. You're going to make a fool of yourself. Everybody will be watching you. Don't humiliate yourself. Don't admit your need." And, pride will escort you to Hell in chains forged on the anvil of a hard heart. So many of the people in America are egomaniacs, strutting to Hell, and when the gospel is preached, that pride comes up in them, and the Bible says, "Pride goes before destruction" (Proverbs 16:18). *"He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed."*

I'll tell you another way that people harden their neck: some through pride, some through procrastination, but in others, just the pleasures of this world. I mean they're having a big time. And, the Bible speaks of these, in 2 Timothy, as *"lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God"* (2 Timothy 3:4). And, there are those sitting in this building, and God has spoken to you time and time and time again, but you think of your sin, you think of the pleasures of this world. It may be vile sin. It may be homosexuality. It may be adultery. It may be fornication. It may be drunkenness. It may be thievery. It may be

violence. Or, it may not be those things. It may just be your lifestyle. And, you get the idea, you know, “If I come to Jesus, look what I will give up.” And so, the Holy Spirit of God is speaking to you over and over and over again, but you harden your neck to the pleasures of this world. The Bible speaks of those who are *“lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.”*

Now, let me say this. I would not for a moment tell you there’s no pleasure in sin. The Bible speaks of the pleasures of sin, but the Bible says they are for a season. The Bible also speaks of the pleasures of righteousness, and the Bible speaks of our God, and says, *“At thy right hand...are pleasures for evermore”* (Psalm 16:11). Don’t get the idea that when you come to Jesus you give up something. The Bible says, *“The LORD God is a sun and shield...no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly”* (Psalm 84:11). If it will make you happy, if it will make you holy, if it will make you healthy, God says, “Help yourself.” God is a good God—God is a good God. The Bible says, “God gives us richly all things to enjoy” (1 Timothy 6:17). And, *every time God says, “Thou shalt not,” God is just simply saying, “Don’t hurt yourself.” And, every time that God says, “Thou shalt,” God is saying, “Help yourself to happiness.”* Remember that.

But, friend, I know people who are so wrapped up with the pleasures of this world. I’ve met people, I believe, who would give up coming to church before they’d give up getting a new television or a new refrigerator. There are people, when I give the invitation, the devil will whisper to them, “Now, wait a minute. Don’t turn your back on this. Don’t turn your back on that. Don’t you go down there and make a commitment to be one of those old Christians.”

III. Sudden Destruction

So, you may harden your neck by procrastination. You say, “Well, I’ll do it, but later.” Or, you may harden your heart by pride, and say, “I’m not going to go down there and make a fool of myself.” Or, you may harden your neck to the pleasures of this world, and say, “I’m a lover of pleasure more than a lover of God.” But now, there’s a third thing I want you to see in this text. Look at it: *“He, that being often reproved”*—that’s spiritual conviction; and, *“hardeneth his neck,”*—that’s stubborn rebellion. Then, notice there comes also sudden destruction—sudden destruction. Look at it: *“He, that being often reproved”*—spiritual conviction—and, *“hardeneth his neck,”*—stubborn rebellion, *“shall suddenly be destroyed”*—sudden destruction. That’s what God’s Word says. There comes a time when you cross the deadline.

Now, God will bring judgment. God is a God of love, but He’s also a God of wrath. Now, how may that sudden destruction come to you?

A. The Destruction of the Mind Through Delusion

It may come to your mind, not merely to your body; it may come to your mind, not merely to your soul. The destruction may be in your head. God will destroy your ability to think right. You say, “Pastor, where is that found in the Bible?” Well, I want to give you a passage of Scripture. If you want to turn to it, you can turn to it; or, if you just want to listen to it, it’s found in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2, verses 11 and 12. The Bible says, *“For this cause God shall send them strong delusion...”*—God sending delusion. “Well, pastor, I thought God was here to teach us the truth. Do you think God would delude a person?” Do you know what *delude* means? It means, “to be deceived.”—*“For this cause God shall send them strong delusion...”*—well, why would God send people strong delusion? Well, he goes on to say—*“that they should believe [the] lie.”*—you mean God wants people to believe the lie? That’s what it says. “Well,” you say, “I don’t understand that.” Well, it gets worse—*“that they all might be [condemned]”*—*“damned”*—“now, wait a minute, pastor. Are you telling me that God sends delusion, that people will believe lies, that they might be damned?” That’s what it says—black print on white paper. “Well, why would God do that?” He goes on to say these are the ones—*“who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness”* (2 Thessalonians 2:11–12). God spoke to them. God gave them truth over and over and over again.

Now, in this passage—and, listen very carefully—the opposite of truth is not error; it is sin. You see, you’re faced with the truth, and you know that if you receive that truth, you’ll have to turn from your sin. So, here’s a man. Over here he has truth; over here he has sin. And so, when he’s faced with the truth, he refuses the truth. He embraces his sin. The opposite of truth here is unrighteousness in this passage of Scripture. And, when that man turns from his truth, being often reprov’d, he hardens his neck, he turns toward his sin, then the baggage that he has is strong delusion. You see, that is the baggage that is the just judgment.

When a man says, “I had rather have my sin than God’s truth,” God says, “All right, with your sin you will be given strong delusion.” And, that’s the reason so many people are in false cults today.

A man may come to this church and hear the gospel preached and get all bent out of shape, and say, “I didn’t go to Sunday morning to hear that kind of garbage.” He doesn’t ask whether it’s true or not. Three weeks later, he’s at home, his kids are in Sunday School, his wife is out shopping, he’s staying there reading the papers with his whiskers grown out, got a six-pack of embalming fluid by his side. Somebody knocks at the door. He goes to the door. Who is it? Two of Jehovah’s false witnesses. And, he says, “What do you want?” They say, “We’re here to tell you there’s no hell.” He says, “Come on in,” and he believes a lie.

You say, “Well, he may be sincere.” He’s sincerely wrong. But, when he knew the truth—when he knew the truth—he loved not the truth, but he had pleasure in unrighteousness, and for this reason *“God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they . . . might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”* *“He, that being often reprov’d and hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed.”*

B. The Destruction of the Spirit Through Desertion

There may be the destruction of the mind through delusion. There may be the destruction of the spirit through desertion. Did you know that you can’t be saved just anytime you get ready to be saved? Don’t get the idea that one day you’ll just whistle and say, “God, come save me.” Jesus said, *“No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him”* (John 6:44). Did you know that? Did you know that unless the Holy Spirit of God brings you under conviction, you’ll never be saved. *It’s not my preaching that puts you under conviction. I’m just the Western Union boy. The message is His, and He is the one who has to put you under conviction.* But, the Bible teaches that you can so insult God, you can say *no* to the Holy Spirit of God so many times, that God’s Holy Spirit of God will cease to work in your heart. Three times in the first chapter of Romans God speaks of giving up on people: “and God gave them up,” “and God gave them up,” “and God gave them over” (Romans 1:24, 26, 28). The old-time preachers used to call that “when the lights go out on the road to Hell.” The Holy Spirit of God no longer speaks to a man. Genesis chapter 6 and verse 3—God said before the flood, *“My spirit shall not always strive with man”* (Genesis 6:3). Don’t get the idea that Holy Spirit conviction is going to stay in your heart and in your life. You may come to a place of sudden destruction in your spirit as well as in your mind, when the Holy Spirit of God no longer speaks to you and God no longer draws you.

There was a pastor who used to pastor in Arkansas, Joe Henry Hankins. Any of you ever hear Joe Henry Hankins preach? Lift your hands. Some of you. He was a Jeremiah kind of guy, would weep when he preached. Joe Henry Hankins told this story. I shall never forget it, Brother Bobby. He said he was preaching in his church, and God was there that morning. He gave the invitation. He said he saw a young man in the balcony. You know, people get the idea up in the balcony that I can’t see you. Can you see me? And, he was preaching, and he said, “During the invitation, that young man in the balcony was under conviction; it was obvious he was under conviction.” He said, “Come and give your heart to Jesus.” He said, “I saw that man as he closed his hymnal and started out, and then he stepped back and opened it and started to sing again; sang another stanza—he stepped out, and then he stepped back. Finally, he closed the book and started out.” And, Dr. Hankins said, “Thank God, he’s coming to Jesus!” “But,” he

said, “he turned and walked out of the church and never came back.”

Dr. Hankins said, “A few weeks after that,” he said, “this boy was stricken with a disease, and the doctors said he would not survive.” Hankins found his name, went to visit the boy at his bedside. He said, “Son, I want to ask you a question.” He said, “Were you in church on thus and such a time?” “Yes sir.” “Son, I was watching you in the balcony. It seemed to me that you were under conviction and that you wanted to be saved. Was that right?” “Yes sir, that was right.” “Well, son, I saw you step out and step back several times. Why was that?” He said, “Preacher, when you gave that invitation, I wanted to get down there where you were so bad I thought I could jump over the balcony to get down there.” “Well, son, why didn’t you come?” He said, “I remembered my sin, my favorite sin.” His sin, I believe, was the sin of immorality. “And,” he said, “I knew that if I went down there I’d have to give up my sin.” He said, “I was in a battle. And,” he said, “I made up my mind I would keep my sin. And, I left the church.”

Dr. Hankins said, “Son, have they told you how sick you are?” He said, “Yes sir, I know I’m going to die. You don’t have to beat around the bush.” He said, “Well, son, if you’re going to die, you can’t have that sin anyway. Why don’t you give your heart to Jesus?” And, Dr. Hankins said, “That boy said something that sent a chill over him.” He said, “Preacher, there’s something that you don’t understand.” He said, “When I closed that book and stepped out of that church, something died within me. I can’t give my heart to Jesus.” Hankins said he wept and pled for that boy’s soul, but he died without saying yes to the Lord Jesus Christ, because in his spirit there was something that was destroyed.

C. The Destruction of the Body Through Death

God says, “My spirit will not always strive with a man.” *“He, that being often reprov’d hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed.”* There may be the destruction of the mind, strong delusion. There may be the desertion of the spirit, where the Holy Spirit of God no longer speaks to your spirit. There may be the sudden death of the body. You say, “Well, pastor, I’ve got plenty of days to live.” How do you know? How do you know? This may be the last sermon I’ll ever preach. It may be the last sermon you’ll ever hear. *“He, that being often reprov’d hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed.”* It just takes one bad incident at an intersection for you to be out in eternity. Don’t get the idea, friend, that eternity is way out yonder. It’s only a heartbeat away. Put your hand up there, can you? Where’s mine? Is there a heartbeat? All right, that’s all you’ll find, that little heartbeat. I can feel mine right now. You know, that’s the only thing between me and Heaven. It’s the only thing between some people here and Hell, is that heartbeat, that little heartbeat; that’s all there is between you and Hell. The Bible says there is but a step between me and death.

IV. Settled Destiny

Now, look. Notice what he says: *“He, that being often reprov’d”—that’s spiritual conviction—and, “hardeneth his neck,”—that’s stubborn rebellion—“shall suddenly be destroyed,”—that’s sudden destruction.* But, listen to the next part, and I’m finished—*“and that without remedy”*—that is settled destiny—settled destiny. Don’t get the idea that you’re going to die and stand before God and ask God for a second chance. There will be no second chance. The Bible says, *“It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment”* (Hebrews 9:27). It doesn’t say there’s a second chance. In Luke chapter 16, the Bible tells of a rich man who died, and the Bible says, *“In hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments,”* and he said, *“Father Abraham...send Lazarus, that he [might] dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame”* (Luke 16:23–24). And, he looked for some alleviation, looked for some alleviation of the pain, the suffering in Hell. Whatever Hell is, I don’t want you to go there.

You say, “Is that literal or figurative?” For your sake, I hope it’s literal, because if it’s figurative, the figure is never as strong as the reality. Whether it’s literal or physical, it makes no difference to me. God took the lexicon of Heaven, and He described the place called Hell as hellfire, talked about a man there in Hell wanting a drop of water to cool his tongue, and then Abraham spoke to him and said, “Son, just remember in your lifetime all of the things that happened, how good I was to you, and you didn’t repent, and now there’s a great gulf fixed. Lazarus can’t come where you are. Lazarus was in Heaven, and you can’t go to where he is” (Luke 16:25–26). God didn’t say there’s a second chance.

Think about it. Hell is a bottomless pit. How could you use a bottomless pit as a steppingstone? How could you ever get out of a bottomless pit? God brought me here to tell you today that He loves you with an infinite love and that He has spoken to you over and over again and He’s speaking to you today. But, God says, “If you continue to harden your neck, you’ll be destroyed, and when you are, there will be no second chance. It will be without remedy, without hope.” I looked this up in a number of different translations, but they all mean the same thing: “no hope; without a second chance; without a remedy; without a cure.” *“He, that being often reprov’d hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.”*

Conclusion

But, why would God reprove you? Because He loves you so much and He wants to save you today. “But, Pastor Rogers, will Jesus save me today?” Yes. “Pastor Rogers, are you sure?” Yes, I’m sure, if you’ll call upon Him. You say, “What if I’ve crossed the deadline?” If you’ll call upon Him, you haven’t. Let me give you good news. Anybody who wants to be saved can. The man who crosses the deadline, he has no desire to be

saved. But, if you have a desire to be saved, that's because the Holy Spirit of God is working in you. And, if you want to be saved, you can be saved. And, I thank God that the Bible says, "*For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved*" (Romans 10:13). And, *if you were to show me one time, one place, where anybody—anybody—were to ask Jesus to save them, and He didn't save them, I'd close my Bible and never preach again.* I promise you on the authority of the Word of God He'll save you today if you trust Him. Would you like to do that?

The Leadership Crisis in America

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: August 11, 1996

Main Scripture Text: Proverbs 29:2

*“When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice:
but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn.”*

PROVERBS 29:2

Outline

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Introduction

Would you be finding in the Word of God Proverbs chapter 29, and in a moment we're going to look at verse 2—Proverbs chapter 29 and verse 2. I want to say that we are in a crisis in America. And, the crisis is a moral crisis. But, the crisis is also a crisis of leadership. And, it goes, perhaps, without saying, though we've said it often, that a nation gets the kind of leadership that that nation deserves. May I say clearly and plainly that leadership is crucial.

There's an old proverb—not a Bible proverb, but a wonderful proverb—that says this: “If the gold rust, what shall the iron do?” And, the import of that proverb is if leadership, those at the top, those at the helm, if they're not right, what's going to happen to the rest of us? “If the gold rust, what shall the iron do?”

Now, what does the Bible have to say about national leadership? Well, I want you to look, if you will, please, in Proverbs chapter 29, verse 2. The Bible says, *“When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the*

people mourn” (Proverbs 29:2). So, we’re going to be talking today about the leadership crisis in America.

In a few days, not too many days hence, we will go to the polls and vote. And, I hope you vote. If you don’t vote, I believe that you have disobeyed your Lord. For Jesus said, “We are to render to God the things that are God’s.” But, He also said, “We are to render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s” (Matthew 22:21; Mark 12:17; Luke 20:25). Our Caesar is a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. The very genius of our government is that the people participate. It was none other than Jesus, therefore, who teaches us to participate in government. It’s unthinkable that God Almighty would have ordained government and then told His people to stay out of it. Then, who would that leave to influence and to lead? And so, friend, Jesus said we are to render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s. We’re to render to God the things that are God’s.

Now, there are four basic things I want to lay on your heart today. And, I pray God that the Holy Spirit will lay them on your heart—not just this preacher.

I. The Character God Requires of Leaders

But, as we think about leadership today, I want you to think about the character that God requires in leadership. There’s something frightening that is happening in America today. There are those who are saying today that character makes no difference. It’s ability that counts. Now, friend, that’s absolutely, totally foolish to say that character makes no difference in national leadership.

Here’s the illustration that they might use. They say, “What difference does it make if the character of the airplane pilot is bad, so long as he knows how to fly the airplane?” But, you know what you’re saying when you say that character’s not important? Think about it. What you’re saying when you say that character is not important, only ability, you’re saying that God is not important, because, you see, it is God that blesses good character. It is God that blesses a leader who has character, who has more than ability, but character. So, when you’re saying that character is not important, what you’re really saying is that God is not important, because righteousness is not important. What you’re saying is, “God, we can handle this by ourselves, and skill is all that we need.” But, you see, to say that skill is important, but character is not, it’s like saying that a skilled surgeon doesn’t need to scrub before he performs surgery. Now, if a surgeon, no matter how skilled he is, does not scrub before he performs surgery, he’s going to contaminate everything that he touches. And, so will a national leader, if that national leader does not have character.

Now, in this message today, I’m not going to mention any names. And, in this message today, I’m not talking about political parties. Now, after I finish preaching, there

are some who are going to accuse me of being partisan. But, what I'm going to do is preach the Bible. And, if anything is partisan, the Bible will be partisan. And, I want you to listen very carefully.

I was preaching a message one time in another state, and a lady called me after the service and said, "Preacher, were you preaching to me?" And, I said, "Bert,"—her name was Bertha, and I called her Bert. I said—"Bert, I was shooting down in a hole. If you were down in it, I can't help it."

Now, there are some today who are going to think that I have called names. There are some today who are going to think that I have talked about parties, but I am not. I am going to give you some principles straight out of the Word of God, and you can apply them as you wish. The names will be withheld to protect the guilty.

All right now, let me give you some leadership characteristics, some leadership qualities that God requires of leaders. Now, you may be surprised to know that the Bible has much to say about political leaders. Sometimes the Bible calls them kings, or princes, or governors, or authorities, but these scriptures are as applicable today as they were when they were written centuries ago.

A. Godliness

First characteristic is godliness. Now, you won't have time to turn to all these scriptures, so get out a piece of paper and jot them down. Psalm 148, verses 11 through 13: *"Kings of the earth, and all people; princes, and all judges of the earth: both young men, and maidens; old men, and children: let them praise the name of the LORD: for his name alone is excellent; his glory is above the earth and heaven"* (Psalm 148:11). Now, in plain English, that verse says that leaders over all of the earth, whether they be kings, princes, or judges, are to praise God. Americans understand this. There for a while, they believed in the separation of church and state rightly understood. They never have believed the separation of God from government. Leadership is really stewardship, because the leader acts for God. The Bible calls him, over in Romans chapter 13, a *"minister of God"* (Romans 13:4). An ungodly man or woman is unfit for leadership.

Now, you say, what about a man who carries a big black Bible and attends church? If he's ungodly, he's not fit for leadership, no matter what he does on Sunday. Nobody is fit for leadership who is ungodly or unrighteous. Proverbs 16, verse 12: *"It is an abomination to kings to commit wickedness: for the throne is established by righteousness"* (Proverbs 16:12). Don't tell me that character doesn't make any difference. What you're saying is that God's Word is not true. *"It is an abomination for kings to commit wickedness: for the throne is established by righteousness."*

B. Wisdom

Now, here's the second characteristic that a godly leader will need. Not only will he

need godliness, but he will need wisdom. Put these scriptures down. Proverbs chapter 8, verses 12 through 16: *“I wisdom dwell with prudence, and find out knowledge of witty inventions. The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way,”*—and the evil way—*“and the froward mouth, do I hate. Counsel is mine...”*—wisdom is speaking now—*“Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom: I am understanding; I have strength. By me kings reign, and princes decree justice. By me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth”* (Proverbs 8:12–16). Now, this is wisdom speaking. It is far, far better for a leader to be wise than it is for a leader to be intelligent, smart, and gifted.

King Solomon was coming to the throne of Israel. And, he was meditating. I read this scripture last week on a train—2 Chronicles chapter 1, verses 7 through 12. Here’s what it says. This is Solomon’s encounter with God: *“In that night did God appear unto Solomon, and said unto him, Ask what I shall give thee...”*—what if God were to come to you and say, “What do you want? Here it is, *carte blanche*. What do you want?—*“Ask what I shall give thee. And Solomon said unto God, Thou hast shewed great mercy unto David my father, and hast made me to reign in his stead. Now, O LORD God, let thy promise unto David my father be established: for thou hast made me king over a people like the dust of the earth in multitude. Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people: for who can judge this thy people, that is so great?”* (2 Chronicles 1:7–10). “And God answered him and said, ‘Solomon, because you’ve asked for wisdom, I’m going to give it to you. But, beyond wisdom, I’m going to establish your kingdom, and I’m going to give you riches and honor and prosperity’” (2 Chronicles 1:11–12).

Now, when I go to vote, I’m going to look for a man that is a godly man or woman, and I’m going to look for a person who has real wisdom. I’m not going to look for a person who leads according to the polls. I’m not going to look for a person who goes out and leads by the chapped finger to see which way the wind is blowing. I’m going to vote for a person that I believe has godly wisdom.

Harry Truman said this. He was talking about polls and leadership—*p-o-l-l-s* and leadership. He said, “I wonder how far Moses would have gone if he had taken a poll in Egypt? What would Jesus Christ have preached if He had taken a poll in the land of Israel? Where would the Reformation have gone if Martin Luther had taken a poll? It isn’t polls or public opinion alone of the moment that counts. It is right and wrong, and leadership—men with fortitude, honesty, and a belief in the right that make epochs in the history of the world.” Leadership comes from godliness. Leadership comes from righteousness. Leadership comes from wisdom.

C. Honesty

I'll tell you what else I'm going to look for when I vote. Here's another characteristic. It is honesty—honesty. Put it down. Here's the scripture. Now, remember, I'm giving you Scripture that deals with national leaders and the character that God requires. Proverbs chapter 17 and verse 7: *“Excellent speech becometh not a fool: much less do lying lips a prince”* (Proverbs 17:7). Proverbs 20, verse 28: *“Mercy and truth preserve the king”*—*“Mercy and truth preserve the king”* (Proverbs 20:28). Leaders and liars are not the same. If a man is a liar, he has a basic character flaw. If you cannot trust a man to tell the truth, you cannot trust him for anything. I know some politicians you can tell when they're lying: that's when their lips are moving. As a matter of fact, we hear a lot about dirty tricks in campaigns. One of the dirtiest tricks I've heard of is an enemy slipped into a campaign office and let all the hot air out of the opposition's speech.

A little girl asked her mother, “Mother, do all fairy tales begin with these words: “Once upon a time...”? The mother said, “No, sometimes they begin this way: “If I am elected...””

Listen to it again, friend. The Bible says that. It is, *“Excellent speech becometh not a fool: much less lying lips a prince.”*

Abraham Lincoln was a great American. Abraham Lincoln said, “You can fool all of the people some of the time, and you can fool some of the people all of the time, but you cannot fool all of the people all of the time.” If a man is not a truth teller, he cannot lead with God's approval. And, the Bible says, in John chapter 8 and verse 44, Jesus speaking to the unsaved Pharisees, *“Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He”*—the devil—*“was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it”* (John 8:44). And, every liar is acting like the devil. Every truth speaker is acting like the Lord Jesus Christ.

D. Discrimination

Now, not only am I going to look for a godly man, and not only am I going to look for a wise man, and not only am I going to look for an honest man, but I'm going to look for a man with discrimination—a man who has discrimination. Now, discrimination is bad if it is discrimination against a person because of characteristics over which they have no control, such as race, national origin, or whatever. But, discrimination, if choosing between good and bad, wise and unwise, if that is not present, then the person cannot lead. Listen to Proverbs 25, verses 4 and 5: *“Take away the dross from the silver, and there shall come forth a vessel for the finer.”* That is, in order for the jeweler or the refiner to make a silver vessel, first of all, he has to take the scum, the dross, out of the silver ore. And then, God says, in verse 5—listen to it: *“Take away the wicked from*

before the king, and his throne shall be established in righteousness” (Proverbs 25:4–5). The national leader does not need to be surrounded by potheads. He doesn’t need to be surrounded by wicked people. God help us when homosexuals have come out of the closet and gone into the Cabinet. Listen to what God’s Word says: *“Take away the wicked from before the king, and his throne shall be established in righteousness.”* A wise king will purge out from among his administration wicked advisors and associates. Proverbs 29, verse 12, says, *“If a ruler hearken to lies, all his servants are wicked”* (Proverbs 29:12). If you want to know what a ruler is like, see the kinds of people he surrounds himself with. *“If a ruler hearken to lies, all his servants are wicked.”* That is, if the man himself is not a truth teller, he’s going to surround himself with wicked people.

E. Sexual Morality

Now, I’ll tell you another characteristic. This is kind of a biblical voter’s guide. We’re not mentioning names; we’re not calling parties. Sexual morality: if the leader does not have sexual morality—if the leader does not have sexual morality—he’s unfit to lead. Listen to Proverbs 31, verses 1 through 3: *“The words of king Lemuel, the prophecy that his mother taught him. What, my son? and what, the son of my womb? and what, the son of vows? Give not thy strength unto women, nor thy ways to that which destroyeth kings”* (Proverbs 31:1–3). God says here in this verse that immorality destroys a leader. Now, if a person is sexually immoral, he is unfit to be a leader. If he has no sexual morals, if he will not keep his word concerning the most sacred vow, which is the marriage vow, how is he going to keep his word concerning any other vow? If a man cannot control his sexual desires, how can he lead a nation in a time of crisis? If a man has no moral standard of his own, how can he set a moral standard for the nation? How can he speak to the young people? If a man is sexually immoral, according to the Word of God, he cannot be the kind of a leader that God desires him to be.

F. Sobriety

Now, here’s another characteristic that I look for in a leader. He must be sober—he must be sober. I just read from Proverbs 31. Continue to read: *“The words of king Lemuel, the prophecy that his mother taught him. What, my son? and what, the son of my womb? and what, the son of my vows? Give not thy strength unto women, nor thy ways to that which destroyeth kings.”* And then, listen to this verse: *“It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink: lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted”* (Proverbs 31:4–5).

It grieves me to see people lift these cocktail glasses and seal covenants by taking a drink of beverage alcohol. If anybody else can drink it, God’s Word says that the king is not to. I think we all ought to be teetotalers. But, God’s Word says here clearly and plainly, *“It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes*

strong drink.” And, while drugs are not mentioned here, certainly they are implied—anything that takes away your right of discrimination. You know what the three biggest parties in Washington are? The Democrat, Republican, and cocktail. We have a nation that is led by people, many of them, who are addicted to drugs and alcohol. I’m going to look for a leader who is sober; not just sober-minded, but sober.

G. Protectiveness

Then, here’s another characteristic in my voter’s guide that I’m going to look for. I’m going to look for someone who is protective—not of himself, but who has a spirit of protecting the weak. Why does God give us leaders? God gives us leaders, primarily, to protect the weak and to defend those who cannot defend themselves. Now, remember where God says that the king is not to be a drunkard? And, he says in verse 5, *“lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted.”* The national leader is to watch out for the afflicted.

Now, I want you to look down in Proverbs 31, verses 8 and 9 of this same chapter. The Bible says, *“Open thy mouth for the dumb”—*that is, for those who cannot speak—*“in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction.”* Now, he’s talking to the king. And, he says, “King, you are to speak for those who cannot speak, who are about to be destroyed.” It’s very important that you see this, ladies and gentlemen. Look, if you will, in verse 9: *“Open thy mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy”* (Proverbs 31:8–9). God says that the king is to speak for those who cannot speak for themselves. He is to be a defender. He is to be a protector.

I was in Washington testifying before a Senate committee on the subject of abortion. And I told Congressman Senator Orrin Hatch what I felt that the Bible had to say about this matter. And, when I went out of that room, a woman met me in the hall. She put her hands on her hips and looked in my eyes. And, she was a lawyer. She said, “Mr. Rogers, I want to tell you something. See, you don’t understand what it is like for a woman to have an unwanted pregnancy. You don’t understand that trauma.” I said, “Now, let me get you straight, lady. What you’re saying is this: that if somebody causes you trauma, you have the right to eliminate them.” I said, “Because you’re causing me trauma right now.” Then, I said to her, “Suppose I were to put both of my thumbs in your wind pipe”—and I put my hands out here like this a little bit—“and began to throttle you.” I said, “At least you could scream. At least you could run. At least you could cry for help.”

She backed away, and I’m sure she went back somewhere and said, “That Baptist preacher threatened to throttle me.” But, you see, these little ones, these babies in the womb, cannot speak for themselves. And, it is the king who must speak for them.

Take your Bible and turn to Proverbs 31 and verse 8, and look at it: *“Open thy mouth*

for the dumb in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction.” God is speaking to the leader, and God says to the leader, “You speak up for these.” Now, let me give you another verse. This is Psalm 94, verses 20 and 21: *“Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law? They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous, and condemn the innocent blood”* (Psalm 94:20–21). Somebody says, “Well, what if it’s legal?” Just because it’s legal doesn’t make it right. Listen to this again—Psalm 94, verses 20 and 21. The Psalmist is speaking to God. And he speaks about the earthly throne as a throne of iniquity. And he says, *“Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee?”*—a throne that frames mischief by a law. When Supreme Court justices decree that little preborn babies are no longer individuals, what they have done is they frame mischief by a law. *“They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous, and condemn the innocent blood.”*

Now, that’s an abomination to God. I think that it’s so clearly and graphically illustrated now by this thing of a partial birth abortion, what Steve Gaines talked to you about last week. And, I want to say again that you hate to describe it. But, they take a little baby in the birth canal, and the doctor arranges for a breach birth, so the little feet will come up first, and the hips, and the chest, and the arms. And, the baby is all born, except the head. And then, the doctor takes a pair of sharp scissors and inserts those scissors at the base of the skull, and then it takes a tube and sucks the brains out of that little child. Somebody says, “Well, it’s legal.” Friend, learn this. Everything that is legal is not right. It is not right. *“Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law? They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous, and condemn the innocent blood.”*

Now, friend, listen to what God said through Jeremiah. Jeremiah 22, verses 2 through 5: *“And say, Hear the word of the LORD, O king of Judah, that sittest upon the throne of David, thou, and thy servants, and thy people that enter in by these gates: Thus saith the LORD; Execute ye judgment and righteousness, and deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor: and do no wrong, do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, nor the widow, neither shed innocent blood in this place. For if ye do this thing indeed, then shall there enter in by the gates of this house kings sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, he, and his servants, and his people. But if ye will not hear these words, I swear by myself, saith the LORD, that this house shall become a desolation”* (Jeremiah 22:2–5). That’s what God says. God says to the king, “If you do not protect these innocents—if you do not do it,” God says, “I swear by myself this house shall become a desolation.”

When the wicked rule, the people mourn (Proverbs 29:2). Wicked people make wicked laws. But, *nothing is* politically right *that is* morally wrong. I get so sick and tired of watching television to see which candidate is going to get the most votes, as to

whether or not he votes for the killing of the unborn. Habakkuk 2, verse 12: *“Woe unto him that buildeth a town with blood, and stablisheth a city by iniquity!”* (Habakkuk 2:12). When I come to vote, if that man will not stand up, or that woman will not stand up, for the unborn, they shall not have my vote—period!

II. The Choice God Respects

These are the character that God requires—the character that God requires. Now, here’s the second thing I want you to see—and I’m going to have to move quickly: the choice that God respects. Did you know that God will allow you to choose against His will? Listen to Hosea chapter 8 and verse 4: *“They have set up kings, but not by me: they have made princes, and I knew it not”* (Hosea 8:4). They set up kings, but they didn’t do it by me. God gave the people of Hosea’s time that ability to choose against God’s will. That’s the reason we say that we as Americans get the kind of leadership we deserve. Wicked rulers are God’s reward for wicked people.

There was a time when the people of Israel wanted a king. Samuel the prophet said, “You don’t need a king right now.” They said, “Oh, we want a king.” First Samuel chapter 8, verses 18 through 21—here’s what Samuel said to these people: *“And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you...”*—God says you’re going to cry out because of the very choice that you’ve made—*“ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye have chosen you; and the LORD will not hear you in that day. Nevertheless, the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king [to rule] over us; that we also may be like all the nations;”—*they wanted this globalism—*“and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles. And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he rehearsed them in the ears of the LORD”* (1 Samuel 8:18–21). Now, these people said, “We don’t want God’s will. We’re going to choose.” And, God allowed them to choose.

III. The Consequences God Reveals

Now, I’ve talked to you about the character that God requires. I’ve talked to you about the choice that God respects: God allows people to choose the kind of leaders they wish. The third thing I want you to see is the consequences that God reveals. What happens when people, wicked people, choose wicked leaders? Well, we come back to our text, Proverbs chapter 29 and verse 2: *“When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn”* (Proverbs 29:2). The choice is ours to rejoice or to weep. I wonder if we realize what desperate trouble we’re in. I wonder if we as a nation cannot understand that God has taken down the hedge, and He’s no longer protecting America. I wonder if rivers of tears, and buckets of blood, and oceans of sweat will be the price that America will pay for choosing wrong

leadership. Oh, that there might be a mighty spiritual awakening in America! Oh, that we might repent! Oh, that we might choose righteously, and take the Word of God, and see what God's Word says is the standard for leadership!

IV. The Control God Reserves

Now, here's the fourth and final thing I want you to see. Not only do I want you to see the character that God requires, the choice that God's respects, the consequences that God reveals, but here's the blessed part now: the control that God reserves. Don't ever think for one moment that because wicked men make wicked choices and wicked rulers lead God has forsaken control. He has not. These scriptures are important, so put them down. Isaiah 40, verses 23 and 24—it speaks of God that bringeth the princes to nothing: *“He maketh the judges of the earth as vanity. Yea, they shall be planted; yea, they shall not be sown: yea, their stock shall not take root in the earth: and he shall also blow upon them, and they shall wither, and the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble”* (Isaiah 40:23–24).

Now, folks, God is still the King of kings. Psalm 47, verses 7 and 8: *“For God is the King of all the earth.”* Verse 8: *“[He] reigneth over the heathen”* (Psalm 47:7–8). And, not only is He King of all the earth, but He is King forever. Psalm 29, verse 10: *“The LORD sitteth king for ever”* (Psalm 29:10). *I'll tell you this much about Almighty God. You didn't vote Him in, and you won't vote Him out.* You'll never impeach Him. Now, here's the important thing. Where God does not rule, if we do not allow God to rule in America, God will still overrule.

Listen to these verses. Psalm 33, verses 10 through 12: *“The LORD bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: he maketh the devices of the people of none effect. The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations. Blessed is that nation whose God is the LORD; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance”* (Psalm 33:10–12).

One day I had lunch with that saint who is now in Heaven, Corrie Ten Boom. I decided I'd talk very little and listen a lot. One thing that Corrie Ten Boom said, who suffered such persecution under the Nazis in World War II—Corrie Ten Boom said, “There is no panic in Heaven, only plans.” Now, I hope that gets into your heart, because there is the control that God reserves. Jesus is King. He is King over all of the earth. He is King forever. And, soon, one of these days, He will be sitting upon the throne of David, when He comes again.

Now, listen to Isaiah 14, verses 26 and 27: *“This is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth: and this is the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations. For the LORD of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?”* (Isaiah 14:26–27). Even the ungodly people of this

world, even ungodly presidents and kings and Supreme Court justices, they cannot stop the hand of God any more than Pharaoh could stand against Moses in the Exodus, wicked as he was. God uses even ungodly kings.

The Bible teaches very clearly that He is over even these who don't know Him. Proverbs 21, verse 1: *"The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will"* (Proverbs 21:1). And so, folks, you ask me, "Pastor Rogers, are you discouraged or encouraged? Are you an optimist or a pessimist?" I'm neither one. I'm a Bible-believer. And, brother, I want to tell you, I know that I know we're in desperate trouble, but I know this also: that *the* Holy Trinity *never meets in* emergency session. And, I know this: that God is still in control. And, I know this: that with Jesus Christ as my king, no matter who gets elected in November, I have a hope and a future that's steadfast and sure in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

Now, having said this, what should we do? What should we do? Well, number one, the very first thing that we need to do is to pray for revival. The second thing we need to do is prepare for suffering. We need to teach our children, we need to teach our boys and girls, that it may not be like we had it. We need to be building character into these boys and girls. And then, the third thing we need to do, we need to look; not only prepare for revival, and prepare for survival, but we need to prepare for His arrival. I mean, He is coming. Jesus is coming. Don't you believe the signs of the times are saying that Jesus is near? Don't you believe that? I believe it.

I had a seminary president, Dr. R. Q. Leavell, an old gentleman. He told a story when I was in seminary I'll never forget. He said, "I was in a foreign country, and it was announced that the king of that country was to come through the streets of that city riding in an automobile. And, they said when the king was going to pass through. Everybody was very excited about that. It was announced. And," he said, "I made up my mind I would be there to see the king." He said, "The people crowded, and they got there, crowds of people, but," he said, "I got right on the curb where nobody could be in front of me. I wanted to see a king. I'd never seen a real live king before. And," he said, "after a while," he said, "I heard a tumult, and the people were shouting, and I could see the people waving and clapping, and I could see the automobile coming, and I could see in the back there was a man sitting there. I said, 'That must be the king,' and," he said, "he got closer and closer, and I was filled with anticipation, because the king was coming. And then," he said, "he passed by, and I looked at him, and," he said, "it was so anticlimactic." He said, "He was just a man wearing a suit, a necktie, sitting there: two eyes, two ears, a nose, a mouth. He just went by. And, I thought, 'There's something wrong here.' I mean, I stood here on this curb to see a king. He puts on his trousers just

like I do, just a man.” He said, “I tried to figure that out. Why was it so disappointing to me? And,” he said, “I saw it in an instant. He wasn’t my king. And,” he said, “he didn’t even know my name.”

Friend, our King is coming! Our King is coming! I don’t know who’s going to get elected in November. I know how I’m going to vote, but I’ll tell you, I look beyond that. My King is coming! His name is Jesus. I know my heart. I would willingly die for Him. I love Him with all of my heart. His name is Jesus. And, I want you to know it. I want you to receive Him. I want you to believe on Him, because He, and He alone, is worthy.

The Leadership Crisis in America

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: August 11, 1996

Main Scripture Text: Proverbs 29:2

*“When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice:
but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn.”*

PROVERBS 29:2

Outline

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Introduction

Be finding in God’s Word, if you will, please, Proverbs chapter 29 and verse 2. The message today is a critical message, because it deals with a crisis, and the title of the message: “The Leadership Crisis in America.” And, very frankly, in this message I’m going to tell you how to vote. I’m not going to tell you who to vote for—you’ll make up your mind about that—but I’m going to tell you out of the Word of God how to vote. God is very interested in the political life of any nation. The Bible makes it clear in this verse, in Proverbs chapter 29, verse 2. And, here’s what God’s Word declares: *“When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn”* (Proverbs 29:2). Now, people have the idea that God ought to stay out of government, but the truth of the matter is that government must always look to Almighty God. In this nation or in any nation, leadership is crucial.

We have a proverb, not a biblical proverb, but a wonderful proverb that asks this question: “If the gold rusts, what shall the iron do?” The import of that proverb is this: If leadership is not what it ought to be, what will the constituency be? Now, as a general rule in America and in other nations, we get the kind of leadership we deserve. So, we’re going to look at the Bible today, and we’re going to see what the Bible has to say about leadership, and then come November, we’re going to vote. Now, let me say this: that to be able to vote as a freeborn American is a privilege, but as a born-again Christian, it is a duty; and, if you fail to vote, you will disobey God; that is, if you willingly fail to vote, because the Lord Jesus said, “Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and unto God the things that are God’s” (Matthew 22:21; Mark 12:17; Luke 20:25). Now, *Caesar* is a word that means, “government,” “unto the government.” Render unto the government the things that are due to the government. Our Caesar, our government, here in America, is the government of the people by the people and for the people. And, it is implied that if we are supporting our government, we will do it not only with our taxes, but with our vote. And, to fail to participate is to sin against Almighty God. It’s unthinkable that God would have ordained government, then told His people to stay out of it. So, we’re to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and unto God the things that are God’s.

Now, I want you to pay a lot of attention today, and I want you to get out some paper and a pen and jot some scriptures down, because I’m going to give you a Christian voter’s guide. Now, I’m not going to mention names, I’m not going to mention parties, but I’m going to give you some principles straight out of the Word of God, and I want you to use these principles as you go to the poll to vote. It is very, very important that you get these principles down in your heart and in your mind.

I. The Character God Requires of Leaders

Now, the message today centers around four basic thoughts concerning leadership. And, the first thought is this: the character that God requires of leaders—the character that God requires of leaders. One of the most frightening things that I’ve heard is that people in America are saying, “What difference does a man’s character make, so long as he can lead?” They say it’s like this: “What difference does the character of an airplane pilot make, so long as he can fly the airplane?” Friend, there is a fatal flaw in that, because when you say that character does not count, it makes no difference, what you’re really saying is that God does not count, because all character is based and rooted in God. What you’re saying is, “God, we can get along quite well without your blessing; we’re going to do it ourselves.”

Now, to say that character does not count, only skill, what would you think of a surgeon who performed surgery on you, but failed to scrub up before he performed

surgery? He might be a skilled surgeon, but he will contaminate whatever he touches. And so, a man who is an ungodly man, a man without character, will contaminate all that he touches.

Now, let me give you some characteristics that a godly leader ought to have. Now, I want you to jot these scriptures down. These characteristics deal with kings, princes, judges, nobles, authorities that God has appointed, or that men have elected, and I want you to see the characteristics that God says that a king, a prince, a noble, a leader, a judge ought to have. Keep this in mind as we go to elect a national leader.

A. Godliness

Characteristic number one: He ought to be a godly and righteous man. Put this scripture down—Psalm 148, verses 11 and following: *“Kings of the earth, and all people; princes, and all judges of the earth: both young men, and maidens; old men and children: let them praise the name of the LORD: for his name alone is excellent; his glory is above the earth and heaven”* (Psalm 148:11–13). Now, God says to every earthly ruler he is to worship God. And then, Proverbs 16, verse 12: *“It is an abomination to kings to commit wickedness: for the throne is established by righteousness”* (Proverbs 16:12). The throne is established by righteousness. An ungodly, unrighteous, immoral man is unfit for leadership. He may carry a big black Bible, he may show up at church, but if he is unrighteous, ungodly, he is unfit for leadership.

B. Wisdom

Second characteristic: Not only must he be godly; he must be wise. And, true wisdom comes from godliness. Put these scriptures down. Proverbs 8, verses 12 through 16—God speaks of wisdom and lets wisdom speak for itself when wisdom says, *“I wisdom dwell with prudence, and find out knowledge of witty inventions. The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate.”* Then, wisdom continues to speak, and says, *“Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom: I am understanding; I have strength.”* And now, notice this next statement: *“By me”—that is, by wisdom—“kings reign, and princes decree justice. By me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth”* (Proverbs 8:12–16).

Which is more important: for a leader to be smart, or for a leader to be wise? How much better to have a man at the helm of this country who is a wise man than a smart man! Solomon was to lead Judah, and this is what God said to Solomon, who was to lead really all Israel. Second Chronicles chapter 1, verses 7 and following: *“In that night did God appear unto Solomon, and said unto him, Ask what I shall give thee.”* What if God were to appear to you, and God were to say to you, “Ask me. What do you want? Ask me what would you like for Me to give you?” *“And Solomon said unto God, Thou hast shewed great mercy unto David my father, and hast made me to reign in his stead.*

Now, O LORD God, let thy promise unto David my father be established: for thou hast made me king over a people like the dust of the earth in multitude. Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people: for who can judge this thy people, that is so great?" (2 Chronicles 1:7–10). And, Solomon was wise enough to ask for wisdom. The wise man asks for wisdom. The asking man gets wisdom. Wisdom is the gift of God. And, I pray that God will give to America a wise leader.

Do you know what is wrong with many politicians today? They're not statesmen; they're politicians. They make their decision upon the polls, because they take polls, and they find out what people want, and then they say, "If I give the people what the people want, the people will vote for me." So therefore, they're not leading according to godly wisdom; they're leading only according to human opinion. Former President Harry Truman commented on the importance of polls and leadership one time, and this is what he said: "I wonder how far Moses would have gone if he had taken a poll in Egypt? What would Jesus Christ have preached if He had taken a poll in the land of Israel? Where would the Reformation have gone if Martin Luther had taken a poll? It isn't polls or public opinion alone of the moment that counts. It is right and wrong, and leadership—men with fortitude, honesty and a belief in the right that make epochs in the history of the world."

We have leaders today who have their pollsters out all over the land and they lead by what I call the chapped finger, find out which way the wind is blowing. And, that is the way that they go. But, friend, I want a person who has wisdom from Almighty God, and he cannot have wisdom from Almighty God if he is not under Almighty God in service and worship.

C. Honesty

Now, here's the third characteristic. The person that I vote for must be an honest man—an honest man. Proverbs 17, verse 7: *"Excellent speech becometh not a fool: much less do lying lips a prince"* (Proverbs 17:7). Proverbs 20, verse 28: *"Mercy and truth preserve the king"* (Proverbs 20:28). Liars and leaders are not the same. If a man will not tell the truth, he has a basic character flaw, and he is absolutely unfit for leadership. I know some politicians, you can always tell when they're lying: that is, when their lips are moving. But, I want you to understand that when a man tells lies, it tells something about the man that's in his heart. A man is not a liar because he tells lies; he tells lies because he's a liar. And, any man that is a liar has a heart that is like the devil. Jesus said that. John 8, verse 44: *"Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he"*—the devil—*"speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own:*

for he is a liar, and the father of it” (John 8:44). You’re never more like the devil than when you are telling a lie. You’re never more like the Lord Jesus Christ than when you are telling the truth, for Jesus is the Truth.

A little girl asked her mother, “Do all fairy tales begin with these words: ‘Once upon a time...’?” She said, “Not necessarily. Sometimes they begin with these words: ‘Now, when I am elected...’” If a man is a liar, he is not a godly leader and should not be elected.

D. Discrimination

Now, next, I’m going to look for a man that is discriminating in his choice of helpers. If a man does not surround himself with good and godly people, that man is unfit to lead. Listen to these verses. Proverbs 25, verses 4 and 5: “*Take away the dross from the silver, and there shall come forth a vessel for the finer.*” That means before you can make a vessel out of silver, you’ve got to take the dross out of it, the impurity, the scum out of the silver ore. And then, in verse 5, God says, “*Take away the wicked from before the king, and his throne shall be established in righteousness*” (Proverbs 25:4–5).

Now, a leader is known by others that he chooses, that he surrounds himself with. And, if a king surrounds himself with wicked people, his throne will not be established in righteousness. He cannot have a group of potheads around him and expect to lead in righteousness. And, he cannot be a person who listens to lies, for the Bible says, in Proverbs 29, verse 12, “*If a ruler hearken to lies, all his servants are wicked*” (Proverbs 29:12). And, if this man is not discriminating enough to choose the right people to help him, leaders who will lead along with him, he’s unfit for national leadership. *It is a sad day when* homosexuals *have come out of the closet and gone into the* Cabinet.

E. Sexual Morality

Another characteristic that we would expect in national leadership is sexual morality—sexual morality. Turn to Proverbs chapter 31 and listen: “*The words of king Lemuel,*”—now, notice this is a king—“*the prophecy that his mother taught him.*” Thank God he was a king that had a godly mother. “*What, my son? and what, the son of my womb? and what, the son of my vows? Give not thy strength unto women, nor thy ways to that which destroyeth kings*” (Proverbs 31:1–3). Underscore that. Now, folks, that’s the Word of God. Before I’m finished, somebody’s going to accuse me of being partisan; somebody’s going to accuse me of being political. But, I am not going to mention a political party, and I’m not going to mention a name.

I had a lady one time when I was preaching in Florida, she called me after a service, and she said, “Pastor, were you preaching to me?” Her name was Bertha; I called her Bert. I said, “Bert, I was shooting down in a hole. If you were down in it, I can’t help it.” And, that’s what I’m doing this morning.

And, I am telling you, friend, that a man who is sexually immoral and does not keep his marriage vow is unfit for leadership. It's very clear. That Bible says that destroys kings—the Word of God: *“Give not thy strength unto women, nor thy ways to that which destroyeth kings.”*

Now, if a man cannot keep Earth's most sacred vow, that is, to his wife, how will he keep his other promises? If a man cannot control his sexual urges, how shall he react in a time of national crisis? If a man cannot set a moral tone for himself, how is he going to set a moral tone for the boys and girls of this nation? I am looking for someone, therefore, who is not sexually immoral.

F. Sobriety

Another characteristic that I look for in a national leader is a person who's sober. Proverbs 31, verses 4 and 5: *“It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink: lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted”* (Proverbs 31:4–5). A man who's given to wine, or for that matter, any intoxicant, whether it be some kind of a dope, is unfit for national leadership. Shakespeare said, “What fools men are to take that in their mouths that steals their brains away.”

G. Protectiveness

Another characteristic that I am going to look for is a man who is willing and able to protect the weak. If he does not protect the weak, if he does not have a protective spirit, he's missed the reason for being a leader. Why does God give us leaders? Why does God give us civil magistrates? To protect us from evil people. Leaders are primarily defenders of those who cannot defend themselves. Now, I want to give you a verse, and I want you to look at it very carefully. This time you turn to it. I've been asking you to jot these down, but this is a very important verse—Proverbs 31, we've already been there. Now, remember that God is speaking to the king, King Lemuel. And, this is what God says: *“Open thy mouth for the dumb...”*—now, the word *dumb* here does not mean a person who is ignorant; it means a person who cannot speak, the person who does not have the ability to articulate for himself—*“Open thy mouth for the dumb in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction”* (Proverbs 31:8). When someone is about to be killed and cannot speak for themselves, the king is to speak for them. Verse 9 says, *“Open thy mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy”* (Proverbs 31:9).

Now, I'm looking for a person to lead who has a heart of compassion, and he has especially a heart of compassion for the poor, the needy, and the innocent who are about to be destroyed who cannot speak for themselves. The Bible calls them the dumb, the inarticulate.

I was in Washington, D.C., testifying before a Senate committee about the subject of abortion before Senator Orrin Hatch. And, after I finished giving a testimony, a woman followed me out into the corridor. She was a lawyer. She put her hands on her hips, looked me in the face, and then pointed her finger at me and said, “Mr. Rogers, you don’t understand, being a male; you don’t understand the trauma for a woman to have an unwanted pregnancy. You just don’t understand that.” I said, “Well, help me to understand. Are you saying that if a person traumatizes another person, the person being traumatized has a right to destroy the person who is giving them that trauma? Because if that’s what you’re saying, you are traumatizing me right now.” Then, I said “Suppose…”—and I put out my hands like this, I said—“Suppose I put both these thumbs in your wind pipe and throttle you right here.” She backed away a little bit. And, I said, “That’s right. You can back away. You’ve got legs. You can run. You can scream. You can cry for help.” I said, “What about a little baby who cannot scream, who cannot cry, who cannot run? Who’s going to speak up for that child?” I’m sure she went back and said, “That Baptist preacher threatened to strangle me.”

But, listen to what God’s Word says, dear friend. The Bible says, “*Open thy mouth for the dumb in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction.*” That says the king is to speak up for these kinds of people—not endorse their destruction.

Last week you heard about, and I’ll tell you again about, some awful thing called *partial birth abortion*. The abortionists are never quite satisfied. So, now they have contrived a scheme where a baby that has come to full term, ready to be delivered in the birth canal, the doctor arranges that that birth be a breach birth, where the legs come out first, then the knees, then the hips, and the shoulders and the arms up to the neck, and at that point they say it’s still not a human being, because the head is still in the birth canal. And then, the doctor, with a pair of sharp scissors, inserts those scissors in the base of that skull, and then puts in a tube and sucks the brains. You say, “Pastor, that’s not beautiful.” No, that’s not. Sucks the brains out of that little child. And, that, in America, is legal. I tell you, America is sick unto death if we allow such a thing to happen.

“Well,” you say, “it’s legal.” I want to give you a verse. Psalm 94, verses 20 and 21: “*Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee,*”—the Psalmist is speaking to God, and God says, “Can an iniquitous throne fellowship with thee”—“*which frameth mischief by law?*” Underscore that phrase: “a throne of iniquity that frames mischief by law.” “*They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous, and condemn the innocent blood*” (Psalm 94:20–21). “*Mischief by law*”: it may be legal, but it is not right before Almighty God. And, *there is nothing* politically right *that is* morally wrong.

God says, in Jeremiah 22, verse 17, “*But thine eyes and thine heart are not but for thy covetousness, and for to shed innocent blood, and for oppression, and for violence,*

to do it" (Jeremiah 22:17). And, God says, "Because of this, I'm going to destroy your nation." But, let me read that whole passage, Jeremiah 22, verses 2 through 5. Here's what God told Jeremiah to say to the king and to the leaders: "*And say, Hear the word of the LORD, O king of Judah, that sittest upon the throne of David, thou, and thy servants, and thy people that enter in by these gates:*"—God, give us more Jeremiahs who will speak to the king like this—"*Thus saith the LORD; Execute ye judgment and righteousness, and deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor: and do no wrong, do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, nor the widow, neither shed innocent blood in this place. For if ye do this thing indeed, then shall there enter in by the gates of this house kings sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, he, and his servants, and his people.*" That is, "If you do this, I'm going to turn you over to strange kings." And then, verse 5: "*But if ye will not hear these words...*"—now, listen to this— "*But if ye will not hear these words, I swear by myself, saith the LORD, that this house shall become a desolation*" (Jeremiah 22:2–5). God said, through Jeremiah, "King, if you shed innocent blood, God has sent me to tell you that God swears by Himself that your nation is coming down." And then, he says, in verse 17, "*But thine eyes and thine heart are not but for thy covetousness, and for to shed innocent blood, and for oppression, and for violence, to do it*" (Jeremiah 22:17). Wicked people may make wicked laws but that does not make it right.

I'm sick and tired of these politicians—and I hear them now; I listened to them yesterday—they're talking about which politician should be elected, according to his view on abortion. And, somebody says, "Well, I think thus and such a person could get more votes if he lined up with the pro-abortion crowd." That's wicked. Habakkuk 2, verse 12: "*Woe unto him that buildeth a town with blood, and stablisheth a city by iniquity!*" (Habakkuk 2:12). I want somebody who's going to stand up for the innocent, stand up for the defenseless, and defend them.

Now, that's just a checklist. That's the character that God requires. Don't ever be so ignorant as to say that character does not make a difference. What you're saying is that God doesn't make a difference. Or, you're expecting God to bless iniquity. He cannot; He will not. "*Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD*" (Psalm 33:12).

II. The Choice God Respects

Now, the second thing I want you to see, very quickly: not only the character that God requires, but the choice that God respects. Did you know that God allows us to choose wicked leaders? He gives us that choice. God sets His standards, but God allows people to choose wicked leaders contrary to God's own will. Put this verse down—Hosea chapter 8 and verse 4: "*They have set up kings, but not by me*" (Hosea 8:4). That's what God says: "They set up kings, but it wasn't My will." That's the reason we

say, “We get the kind of leadership we deserve.” Wicked rulers are God’s reward for wicked people. Samuel said to Israel, 1 Samuel chapter 8, verse 18, “*And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the LORD will not hear you in that day*” (1 Samuel 8:18). God says, “You’re going to choose a king, you’re going to choose the wrong king, and then you’re going to come to me, and you’re going to say, ‘God, have mercy.’ You will cry out to me.” But, God says, “I will not hear you, because of the king that you have chosen.” I must leave that point because of time and move on to the next point.

III. The Consequences God Reveals

First point: the character that God requires. Second point: the choice that God respects—God allows people to choose even wicked leaders. Third point: the consequences that God reveals. What are the consequences when we choose wicked leaders? Proverbs 29, verse 2—I’ve already read it to you: “*When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn*” (Proverbs 29:2). By our choice, by our vote, we’re going to have righteous or wicked leaders; and, we’re either going to rejoice, or we’re going to weep.

May I tell you with a broken heart that America is in desperate trouble. God has taken down the protective hedge from this nation. I have to ask myself, Will oceans of tears, rivers of blood, and seas of sweat be the price that we will pay for turning our back on Almighty God? Oh, that there might be a spiritual revival in America! Oh, that there might be an awakening to God!

IV. The Control God Reserves

But, here’s the fourth and final thing, lest we run out of time: not only the consequences that God reveals, but the control that God reserves. Lest you think that God has lost control, because we choose wicked leaders, because we have people who are out of control, I want to disabuse you of that. God is still in control. And, wherever man rules, God still overrules. Isaiah 40, verses 23 and 24, speaks of God “*that bringeth the princes to nothing; he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity. Yea, they shall not be planted; yea, they shall not be sown: yea, their stock shall not take root in the earth: and he shall also blow upon them, and they shall wither, and the whirlwind shall take them away as the stubble*” (Isaiah 40:23–24). Politicians come, and politicians go, but God endures.

God is the King of kings. Psalm 47, verse 7: “*For God is the King of all the earth*” (Psalm 47:7). That includes the heathen; that includes all of the nations, not just Israel. He is King forever. Psalm 29, verse 10, says, “*The LORD sitteth King for ever*” (Psalm 29:10). We didn’t vote Him in, and we’ll certainly not impeach Him and vote Him out. He

is King forever. And, where He does not rule—if Americans turn their backs on God, if Americans adopt slogans like, “It’s the economy, stupid,” which is stupid in itself to say such a thing, if we do this, if we vote our pocketbooks rather than our consciences, and we do not let God’s will be done, even where God does not rule—God will overrule.

Psalm 33, verses 10 through 12: *“The LORD bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: he maketh the devices of the people of none effect. The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations. Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance”* (Psalm 33:10–12).

One day I had lunch with Corrie Ten Boom, that gracious, great lady who suffered so much under Nazi persecution. I decided I would not talk much, but just listen. One thing she said was like a barb in my soul. She said, “There is no panic in Heaven, only plans.” I love that. Friend, *the Holy Trinity never meets in* emergency session. And, where man may rule, God still overrules. Put this verse down—Isaiah 14, verses 26 and 27: *“This is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth: and this is the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations. For the LORD of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?”* (Isaiah 14:26–27). Even ungodly rulers become instruments in the hand of Almighty God.

The Bible says, in Proverbs 21, verse 1, *“The king’s heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will”* (Proverbs 21:1). And, even when men with wicked machinations stand on their own big feet, and stick out their chests, and shake their fists in the face of Almighty God, and make wicked decrees, God still rules from Heaven. He still reigns. He is King of kings and Lord of lords. And, just as He used Pharaoh in the Old Testament, just as He used the Persian king Cyrus, just as He used Pilate when Jesus was condemned, and Jesus said to Pilate, “You don’t have any power but that which is given you of above,” wherever man rules, God still overrules. The character that God requires. The choice that God respects. The consequences that God reveals. But, the control that God retains.

This is my Father’s world. And, God has sworn by Himself that He will put His king upon the holy hill of Zion. And, friend, *our hope is not in* Washington; *it is in* Heaven. We need to understand that. We need to understand that kingdoms come and kingdoms go, but our Lord rules over all.

What should we do? What should we do? We should pray for revival. What should we do? We should plan for survival. What should we do? We should look for His arrival. That’s what we should do. Pray for revival. Pray, “God, bless us.” The answer is not in the schoolhouse. It is not in the state house. It is not in the White House. It is in the church house. It is still with God’s people. We need to pray for revival. We need to prepare for survival. You need to teach your boys and girls that it may not be like it was

when you grew up. You need to build into them the truth of God's Word. Get them down, get serious, get an open Bible, and teach them. But, above all, look for His arrival—when Jesus is coming. You say, "Pastor, is that escapism?" You can call it what you want, but I'm looking for Jesus to come—I'm looking for Jesus to come.

When I was in seminary, we had a grand old seminary president. His name was R. Q. Leavell. R. Q. Leavell said—Dr. Leavell said, "I was overseas one time, and I learned that the king of that country was going to come down the streets of that city. And," he said, "Everybody was saying the king was coming. I had never seen a real king, not in the flesh. I decided I wanted to see a king, so I got out there early before the crowds came. I established my place on the curb so I would be near the automobile when the king came with his entourage." He said, "I stood there for hours. The crowds got bigger and bigger, and I waited. And, anticipation was growing in my heart." He said, "After a while, I heard a tumult. I heard the people shouting. There were crowds, and they were shouting, and I could tell the king was coming. 'The king is coming!' And, they were shouting, 'Long live the king!' And," he said, "my heart began to beat with anticipation. I was going to see the king. And," he said, "when the car got closer, there I saw him. He said, he was a man dressed in a suit, a necktie, two ears, a nose, two eyes, just like me—just flesh and blood. I looked at him for a moment, and he went by. And," he said, "I felt so empty." He said, "I wanted to see a king, and it was so anticlimactic. I tried to figure it out. Then," he said, "I saw it in an instant. He wasn't my king. He didn't even know my name." Friend, one day our King is coming. Our King is coming.

Conclusion

I want to tell you, I love Jesus Christ. I'm not ashamed to call Him King. If I know my heart, I would lay down my life for my King. And, I want you to know that the time is coming, no matter what happens in November, the day will come when the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ (Revelation 11:15). Amen.

Maximum Mom

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: May 14, 1989

Main Scripture Text: Proverbs 31:10–31

“Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies.”

PROVERBS 31:10

Outline

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Introduction

I want you to take God’s Word please and turn to Proverbs chapter 31, the last chapter in the book of Proverbs, and we’re going to begin in verse 10 in just a moment. May I tell you that this is a very interesting passage of Scripture? Beginning in verse 10, for twenty-two verses, you have what could be called an acrostic. That is, each of these verses in the Hebrew language begins with a letter in the Hebrew alphabet in sequence. Now if it were done in English, verse 10 would begin with A, and the last verse would be, end or begin with Z.

So what’s he saying? He’s saying that this woman that we’re about to describe here in this passage of Scripture is the complete woman. That is, she is the complete woman from A to Z. She’s what I want to call “The Maximum Mom, The Maximum Mom.” Now I want to say this right away: I want to put in this disclaimer. What God gives us here in Proverbs chapter 31 is an ideal. That is, it’s a goal to reach toward. Now if you don’t understand this is an ideal, if you’re a woman, you’re going to be very discouraged. And if you’re a husband, you’re going to be very dissatisfied. It’s the ideal. You see, the Bible never holds an ideal other than absolute perfection for us all. The Bible teaches, and we

realize by experience, that we're all imperfect. But what does the Bible say? "Be ye therefore perfect..." God never holds anything less than the ideal, the standard. And sometimes when women would read Proverbs, some women just close their Bible at Proverbs chapter 30 and don't even read 31 because they say, "How discouraging! Who could live up to this bionic woman that is described here?" as you're going to see in Proverbs chapter 31. I mean, she seems absolutely incredible.

I'm reminded of the two cows who were grazing in the field when a milk truck went past. And on the side of that milk truck was a big sign that said, "Thus and such a dairy," and it described the milk as being sanitized, pasteurized, homogenized, and vitamin enriched. And one cow said to the other one, "It really makes you feel inadequate, doesn't it?"

And I, I think that sometimes if a lady were to read this without understanding that it is God's ideal, it's...you don't find this kind of lady in every home. As a matter of fact, the writer of Proverbs says, "Who can find her? Who can find a virtuous woman?" Look at it, verse 10: "For her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all of the days of her life." Now let me tell you several things about "The Maximum Mom" that ought to cause some of us to appreciate our wives and mothers more and that ought to encourage all of the wives and mothers who are listening.

I. Her Great Worth

First of all, I want to talk to you about what I'm going to call the worth of the maximum mom. Her great worth. And if you're making notes, write that down – her great worth. Verse 10 through 12 tell us of her great worth. "Who can find a virtuous woman?..." Now when the Bible uses the word virtuous, it means good. But the word virtue has in it more than the idea of goodness. It has in the idea of strength, and strength that can achieve the good things that it wants to find. Now she's very valuable, more valuable. A virtuous woman is more valuable than rubies. Now if your wife weighs 120 pounds, why, my dear friend, she's worth more than 120 pounds of rubies. Think about it. She's very valuable. The reason that many of those of us who are men are such klutzes is that we don't recognize the value of the mate that God has given us, and, therefore, we do not render to her the paycheck of appreciation that is due to her. As a matter of fact, this proverb ends with a command. Look at it in verse 31: "Give her the fruit of her hands..." Give it to her. Pay her because she is extremely valuable. Mister, did you ever get the idea that since you're the breadwinner, that you're the one who controls the money; that it's yours and you might give her some of it? Hey, buddy, she earned as much or more of it that you did, you're going to find out here. And you're going to find out the great, great value. You see, it is mutually earned. When she stays home and

takes care of the home, if she does, and God bless her if she does, and takes care of the children, if she does, and God bless her if she does, and you go out and you get a paycheck, then you're both adding to the welfare of the home. Your boss gives you a paycheck that says you're worth thus and such. What does she get? She's dependent upon you for that paycheck of appreciation. Why, you say, "Well, if I, if I were to tell her that she owns as much of the money as I do, why, I'd be in bankruptcy." Oh no, you wouldn't, not if she's this kind of a woman. For the Bible goes on to say, "The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her." You won't owe your soul to the company store. She won't have to have plastic surgery; that is, tear up her credit cards. No, no. No, no.

Incidentally, Lou Holtz, the former coach over in Arkansas, when he was at the Gator Bowl, said he went to the beach. He was, his team was playing at the Gator Bowl down in Florida. He said, "I stripped down to go in swimming, and she made fun of my skinny body," talking of his wife. I said, "Well, I want you to know it's this body that kept me from getting a better wife." And then he said, "While we were swimming, somebody stole her purse. We left it on the beach." But he said, "I never reported it because whoever got it was spending less money than she was whenever they got the credit cards in there." Never reported the missing credit cards. Well, the Bible says that the heart of her husband doth safely trust in her. So he'll have no need of spoil. What that means is he's not going to be bankrupt. Now she is of great worth. Her price is far above rubies.

II. Her Good Works

Second thing I want you to notice. Not only her great worth, but her good works. Look with me in verse 13. "She seeketh wool and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands." Now look at the word willingly. It means that she has great joy. New American Standard gives it, "She does it in great delight." She doesn't feel that she's being put upon. Other women are out achieving things and she's not achieving something. She says, "This is the highest calling I can have, being a mother, being a homemaker." "...she worketh willingly with her hands." And notice, she's a nutritionist and a very wise shopper. Notice in verse 14: "She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar." That is, she reads the newspaper. She sees what supermarkets are having sales. She gets in her car and she goes to this one, and she goes to that one. She gets her coupons and she figures the thing out. She figures what will go the best. She read the labels. She is a woman who is a hard-working, wise woman.

III. Her Godly Worship

So you see her great worth. Then you see her good works. But now, wait a minute. You see her godly worship. Look, if you will, in verse 15: "She riseth also while it is yet night,

and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens.” Her godly worship. I used to wonder about this verse because as you read this, it seems like, evidently, this woman comes from pretty well-off family. I mean, she, as you’re going to see, she’s a business woman. In her own way, she’s a business woman. And it seems like she’s got a houseful of servants. But I never could quite figure that out. Why, if she has all of these servants, is she getting up so early in the morning and fixing them breakfast? That’s what it looks like. And also, if she has so many servants, why does she have to do all this work? And some ladies say, “Yeah, if I had as many servants as she has, I could get it all done just like she did. If my husband give me about six maids, yeah, I’d show him something.”

Well, first place, dear lady, you’ve got more servants than you realize, did you know that? None of these women back in Bible times, I don’t care how wealthy they are, would have traded places with you and have a washer and a dryer, an electric stove and a vacuum cleaner, an air conditioner and a microwave, running water. You can get tired of going down to the well. I’ll tell you, listen. But that’s not what he’s talking about. Let me give it to you in the Amplified Bible. Here’s what it says. “She riseth (this is verse 15 in the Amplified Bible), she riseth while it is yet night and gets, through communion with her God, spiritual food for her household.” That’s what it’s talking about. For her children, her maidens. She gets up early in the morning. She has a quiet time with God, worshipping God. The last part of this chapter tells us that she’s a woman who fears the Lord. She has communion with God. And early in the morning she’s gathering spiritual food for her household. I know in my own home, Joyce always rises before I do, almost always. My alarm clock is set generally at 6:30, but she’s up before then. And I awaken to hear her singing and praising the Lord. And that’s the secret, I think of her life is that, that, that getting up early and having that time alone with God. So, you see, first of all, this maximum mom, her great worth. She’s worth more than rubies. Her good works. She works willingly with her hands, but she’s glad to do it. She does it in delight. Her godly worship. She gets up in the morning and has that quiet time with God so that she has something to give to her maidens, to her children.

IV. Here Genuine Wisdom

Ah, but, something else. Not only her godly worship, but her genuine wisdom. Notice what a wise woman this woman is; I mean, in every area. Look in verse 16: “She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard.” Why, this lady makes real estate investments. This woman owns a vineyard. “She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms. She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night. She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff.”

Now what does that mean? Well, here's a woman who has such business sense that she's able to look at a field and say, "Yes, that's a good investment. I'll buy that field. I think I can make a vineyard out of that field." That brings up a question of the working wife, doesn't it? Well, if you read this passage, you're going to find out that here's a woman who had outside interests outside the home. Here's a woman who had a very fine mind. Here's a woman who was obviously gifted. But as you read this passage of Scripture, you're going to find out that anything she did and everything she did was not at the expense of her major responsibility, which was taking care of her home and being a homemaker. Now if you want to have some extra work or some outside work, you have to ask yourself this question: does that outside job enhance my home or does it take away from it? Does it give me an independent spirit from my husband? If it does, and if it takes away from my home, then it's wrong. But a woman, many times, may be wiser than her husband in the ability to make investments and to handle business. If she can, sir, you ought to encourage her to do it. Now, but remember that her chief responsibility while she has children is raising those children. So she is a woman of genuine wisdom. Look how this wisdom extends not only to business matter but physical matters. Look in verse 17: "She girdeth her loins with strength. She strengtheneth her arms." Do you know what that means? She keeps her body physically fit. She's a nutritionist. She knows how to exercise. She keeps herself in shape. She knows economics also. Look in verse 18: "She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night." She is there balancing her books, studying, reading, looking at labels, ah, examining this and examining that. She is a woman who is an extremely wise woman. And she's a woman who knows how to take care of all of these very important items. The Bible says she, look in verse 27: "She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness." You know what the bread of idleness is? That's TV dinners. And some women are the best cook you ever thaw. Now what's he saying? He's saying here's a woman whose mind is what she's doing. Ah, keeping house to her is not something she tries to get out of the way so she can do something else. She is not a housewife; she is a homemaker. She's a good economist. Somebody has said that a man will pay \$2.00 for a \$1.00 item that he wants and needs, but a woman will pay \$1.00 for a \$2.00 item that she doesn't need. This woman was a good seamstress. Look in verse 19: "She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff." That is, she, she knows the practical things. Today, you're going to make a, a big mistake if you see, if you don't see to it that your daughter learns how to cook and sew and do the practical things. Did you know that girls can get a college education today and not be able to cook a meal or balance a bank book or sew a seam? We, we call that progress, because these things in the eyes of the world seem to be unimportant. But here in, in God's holy Word, when God is describing a virtuous

woman, God takes time to say, “Here’s a woman who perceives that merchandise is good. Here’s a woman who can take wool and flax. Here’s a woman who can sew and take care of these other things.”

V. Her Generous Welfare

What am I saying? Great worth, good works, godly worship, genuine, genuine wisdom. But, oh, it doesn’t mean that she’s just all inward. Look, if you will, in verse 20 and you’re going to find out she’s also a woman of generous welfare. “She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she stretcheth forth her hands to the needy.” Now you can be poor and you can be rich and be needy. Maybe you work in the church clothes closet and help sort the clothes for the poor. Maybe you cook a meal and bring it to a family who’s hungry. Or maybe those folks next door to you who live in a fine home and have a big automobile are the needy people because they don’t know Jesus. But, you see, the, the maximum mom is the mom who not only takes care of her family, but she is a woman who has a heart of welfare. She’s, she’s a woman whose love just goes out to everybody who is in need. Oh, how we need those kind of homes today. Now this, she doesn’t do this, as we’re going to see again, at the neglect of her own household. I know some women who are very interested in social work, but their homes are a wreck. I mean, a, a moral wreck, spiritual wreck.

I heard about one woman who got into politics, and she was very excited. She was neglecting the children and neglecting her husband. But she told her husband as she was looking at the poll, she said, “We’re going to sweep the state.” He said, “Why don’t you start at the back door?”

Oh friend, listen, listen. Here is a woman whose heart goes out to the poor and the needy, a woman of generous welfare.

VI. Her Grand Wardrobe

But now, notice next, not only her generous welfare, but her grand wardrobe. Oh, she’s a beautiful lady, the way she dresses. Verse 21: “She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for her children are clothed with scarlet.” Now what does that mean, she’s not afraid of the snow because her children are clothed with scarlet?” That means her children are clothed with wool. Ah, wool can be dyed red. And so her children have warm clothing. Here’s a woman who has seen to it that her, her children are warmly, safely, beautifully dressed. And now look at herself. “She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple.” This is an elegant lady. She’s so wise. You see, she’s the maximum mom. Here’s this woman. She’s been up early in the morning. Quiet time with God. Here she’s doing these real estate investments. Here she’s supervising her vineyard. Here she is taking care of the poor and the needy. Over here

she's balancing the books. Over here she's reading the newspapers for the best deals. She's doing all of this. And then right in the middle of it, when he comes home, there she is dressed in scarlet and purple, beautiful. I told you, ladies, it's only an ideal. I mean, ah, ah, the writer of Proverbs says, "And who can find a gal like this?" But there's the ideal. And some of our ladies would be so wise to understand what God is saying here. You know, some women have the idea, well, you know, you don't chase a streetcar after you've caught it. So what they do is, you know, when they're dating, boy, I mean, when he comes to pick her up, man, when she steps out that door, wow! By the way, fellows, that can be deceptive packaging. Best thing to do is just to come a half an hour early. Get a good look. I mean. But, but, you know, what happens so often is this: that here's the homemaker. She stays home, and she ought to stay home if she's got children at home and if she possibly can.

And I want to say again. I am not criticizing the woman who has to work to put food on the table. You understand? I'm not criticizing who has to work to put a roof over their head, clothes on the back of the children. God bless her! I'm just talking about this woman who thinks that homemaking is less than a high calling. And so, she's out here and there trying to fulfill herself rather than doing what God has called her primarily to do, to be that maximum mom. Well, so she's at home and he's out there in the office and all these girls are clicking around in their high heels and their work clothes, beautiful clothes. And, and he comes home and she meets him at the door in a faded housecoat, different colored slipper on each foot, and her hair, you know, done up in coat hangers, meringue on her face. Have you ever notice the things they put in their head? I mean, when, when they, you know, they're cooking their hair. They put all kinds of stuff. Like orange juice cans and little sticks. It's weird. And we're glad they do it, aren't we, guys, really?

But one fellow said to his wife, said, "What did you do to your hair?" She said, "I set it." He said, "What time does it go off?"

But here, here's a woman, here's a woman who has, listen, listen. She clothes herself with scarlet and purple and silk. She has a grand wardrobe. The truth of the matter is, she made it with her hands. That's what the Bible says. "She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; and clothing is of silk and purple." Now that's what I call a grand wardrobe.

VII. Her Gifted Wifhood

And then I want you to notice her gifted wifhood, because she is a wife who encourages her husband. Look in verse 23 and, ah, through 25: "Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land. She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant. Strength and honor are her clothing;

and she shall rejoice in time to come.” Now she’s such a gifted wife, such a gifted wife. Why is she a gifted wife? Because she has done what God commanded her to do – she has encouraged her husband. Her husband (verse 25) says, “...is known in the gates...” The gates are the place of business and commerce. And her husband was a success. And there’s Mr. Maximum Mom. Now why is he such a success? Because of her. Listen. That’s why it is put here. The clear inference is that he has succeeded because of her. When he’s in the gates, his collar is starched. When he’s in the gates, all the buttons are on his shirt. He’s sitting there in the gates. He’s already had a good breakfast. She’s sent him off with a hug and a kiss. And the children are well taken care of. He doesn’t have to worry about what’s going to happen. His heart safely trusts in her. Boy, he goes off to work. And this guy is a success because of her. I tell these young preacher boys around here that a woman is to a man what a wind is to a fire. She can fan it up or blow it out, amen. Her husband is known in the gates. See, she has this wonderful, what I want to call, gifted wifeness.

VIII. Her Gracious Words

Now I want you to see something else. Look, if you will, in verse 25: “Strength and honor are in, are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come. She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness.” Her gracious words. Her gracious words. Here’s a woman who has such a calm and gentle spirit. Again, look in verse: “Strength and honor are her clothing...”

Now she is clothed with scarlet and purple, yes, but oh, wait a minute. There’s something else about this lady. When she walks into a room, she’s serene. She’s clothed with strength and honor. People, when they see her, they say, “Now there is a lady.” I mean, they, they want to rise when this woman comes in. She has such a gentle and a strong spirit. The Bible says, “She shall rejoice in time to come.” What does that mean? It means that under stress she can smile at the future. How did she get this way? Well, go all the way back to when she woke up early and got alone with God, when she, she, she got that spiritual food for her household. That’s the way she got this calmness and this gentle spirit. And how does it show? Look in verse 26: “She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness.” Well, she got an early start. She has a well-ordered life. She’s not running around, carping and criticizing and gossiping. When she opens her mouth, wisdom comes out, and when she opens her mouth, kindness comes out. Do you know, when we lash out at others, when we scream at the kids, chide with our husbands or wives, hey, folks, it shows a lot about us. It just shows that we’re frustrated. It shows that we are, we, we fail to get that quiet time with Almighty God. So she’s a woman of gracious words.

IX. Her Glowing Witness

And now, what is the sum total of all of this? Put them all together and I would say she is a woman of glowing witness, of glowing witness. Look in verse 27: “She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children arise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her.” Do you want to know what you’re made of, mom? If those people who know you best and live most intimately with you say you’re real, then it doesn’t make any difference really what anybody else says. If you have that kind of a witness to your children, if you have that kind of a witness to your husband, that it doesn’t just end with the, the child and the husband...The Bible says in verse 31: “Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates.” To her children, to her husband, and to her neighbors she’s known as a godly woman, a woman who fears the Lord. That’s what I want to call her glowing witness. I am convinced as I stand here that virtually all of the major problems that we have in America would change overnight if we just had some more maximum moms. Don’t you really believe that? I believe that with all of my heart. Now, again, I want to say that I’m not trying to put a burden on someone and make you suffer in comparison and say, “Well, my mom failed here and my wife fails there.” Oh no. Or to make you feel incriminated. No, not at all. But I am saying, dear friend, that the only way to be this kind of a woman, this kind of a man is to fear the Lord. Look again in verse 31. It’s all possible because of Jesus. Verse 30: “...a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised.”

Conclusion

I think I have time just to share this with you. What is a mother? Webster defines a mother as a female parent. This is the understatement of all time. And I would like to tell Mr. Webster why this description should be revised. A mother is a walking encyclopedia who is expected to know the batting averages of the major leagues, how to tie a half hitch, where someone left last Sunday’s comics. She must understand unhesitatingly such questions as where the sun goes at night, how jet propulsion works, what are the principle exports of Thailand, and where baby kittens come from. But not only is she a walking encyclopedia. A mother is a master mechanic who can get a trouser leg out of a bicycle chain, who can fix anything with cellophane tape and a hairpin. She is a plumber who knows that the water will not run out of the bathtub because of the tissue paper sails that have come off the children’s boats. She is an electrician who can make the electric train back up without blowing a fuse. A mother is a practical nurse. She knows how to make a splint for a bird’s broken wing. She must also be able to remove splinters and loose teeth painlessly, stop an earache in the middle of the night, and cure a case of measles before the fourth grade picnic. A mother is a detective who finds the missing

mate to every sock. Not around our house! That is incredible, isn't it, where they go? When her scissors and flashlight disappear, she can recover them long before the culprits plead guilty. A mother is an untiring seamstress who sews on scout badges, designs tricky patches for jeans, replaces lost buttons, and lets down and takes up dozens of hems. She must also be able to make such a beautiful halo and pair of wings that the school play audience will never notice that the angel's two front teeth are missing. She is a sage who is wise enough to know when her son has reached the stage when he'd rather die than be kissed in public. And when her daughter's best friend has won the admiration of the only boy in the world, yet she is also an innocent who never ceases to wonder at the miracle of life when the first crocus peeks through the snow and the first blue egg appears in a robin's nest. A mother is an heiress. Although she may not feel wealthy when she's trying to stretch the family budget to include braces on teeth, she's rich in reward. She's rich in the pride that engulfs her when her teenager offers to mow the neighbor's lawn while they're away on vacation, or her Little Leaguer insists on pitching with a sprained finger rather than let his teammates down. She's rich in investments. As she watches her small daughter tenderly tucking her doll into bed, she hopes her child will grow up to know the happiness of being a mother. It is then that she knows, Mr. Webster, that a mother deserves the longest definition in the world. And the Bible says, "Give her the fruit of her hands..."

It's well that we honor mothers today. Let's pray. Father, I pray that You'll help me to be a maximum daddy and grand-daddy. And, Lord, that You would help the girls and the ladies in our church to understand one more time the dignity, respectability, honor, and challenge of motherhood. God, in a home where the devil has caused us to think that being a mother and being a homemaker is less than the best, bring us back, I pray, dear God, to dead center and help us to see the things that count for eternity. In Jesus' precious name I pray, amen.

The Maximum Mom

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: May 12, 1991

Main Scripture Text: Proverbs 31:10–31

“Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies.”

PROVERBS 31:10

Outline

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Introduction

Turn to Proverbs chapter 31—Proverbs chapter 31. In just a moment, we'll begin our Bible study in verse 10 right on through the end of the chapter. What you have here in Proverbs chapter 31 is God's picture of an ideal wife and mother, what I want to call "The Maximum Mom." Now, listen, ladies. If you don't understand that this is an ideal, you're going to get very discouraged. A lot of ladies like to stop reading Proverbs in chapter 30; they don't want to go right into chapter 31, because this is an ideal. And, I don't think there is a one of us who can reach the ideal, whether we be male or female.

Now, thank God, God has given us a standard. I heard about some cows who were out grazing in a field and they saw a milk truck go by, and on the side of that milk truck it said something about the name of the dairy and then it began to advertise the milk. And, it said that the milk was pasteurized, homogenized, sanitized, vitamin-enriched. One of

the cows said to the other one, “It makes you feel inadequate, doesn’t it?” I think that as you read this, you may say, “I feel so inadequate.” But, what a wonderful, wonderful picture it is!

Listen, folks. *It is better to reach for an ideal and miss it than to aim for mediocrity and hit it squarely.*

So, here’s what God says now in Proverbs chapter 31, verse 10: “*Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies*” (Proverbs 31:10). And then, from there on, the writer of Proverbs gives us what we would call today an acrostic. These 22 verses that follow, each one of them begins in order with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet. And, what he is doing, he has arranged a poem, which is a tribute to a virtuous woman, and indeed a tribute, I believe, to every virtuous mother that’s in this congregation today. And, I’m so glad. You’re going to find out that this maximum mom, this mom from A to Z, if we were to use English letters rather than Hebrew letters, the mom from A to Z, we would find out that she is a homemaker.

Now, I certainly don’t agree with everything that Ann Landers has to say, but I found something that she said that I agree with 101 percent. Here’s what Ann Landers said. She said, “It’s high time someone took on the free-swinging feminists who have decided for everyone that the married woman who stays home is a brass plate dummy, a lazy three-toed sloth, or a traitor to her Radcliffe graduating class.” Then, she goes on to say, “Why has the American woman been made to feel ashamed because she is at home cleaning, washing, and ironing, and taking care of her own children? This was once considered noble and gratifying work. We’re told that the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world.” And, I’m going to skip some of her material, but she says, “The nesting instinct is a normal and lovely thing, and most women marry because they want more than anything in the world to be wives, homemakers, and mothers. This is not adolescent hogwash or sloppy sentimentalism. It is real. It is what being a woman is all about.” And, she says, “There’s no special magic about a paid job. A great many women who have left jobs, good jobs, insist that the business world is dull and confining compared with running a home and raising a family.” And then, skipping again, she says, “So much has been written about the educated woman’s obligation to society, to do something with her education, that one gets the impression that the college graduate who stays home is copping out. I believe that the reverse is closer to the truth. In my opinion, life’s classic cop-outs are the women who have advocated their responsibilities to their husbands and children, and to society, because they lack the maturity to stay at home and do the job they bargained for. To be a successful housewife and mother demands infinitely more emotional balance and moral fiber than is required to hold down a job. Chauffeur, maid, cook, referee, philosopher, rescue squad, hostess, tutor, and psychiatrist: put them all together, and they all spell mother. She must be equal to

every crisis imaginable. She must expect the unexpected: the child who falls down stairs and cracks his head open, the flooded basement, the busted oil heater, the minor and major battles among her children. Coping with these emergencies is the real challenge. How much easier to wiggle into a girdle and beat it out the house in the morning! That's what millions of American women are doing, and the kids show it." There's so much more in that article, but I think that's a good article. I want you to see that when God just takes a woman that surpasses them all, He idealizes that woman as a mother and a homemaker.

Now, with that in mind, get out your Bible, open it in your lap, and let's just take this passage apart verse by verse.

I. Her Great Worth

As we talk about "The Maximum Mom," the first thing I want you to see is her great worth. Look, if you will, in verses 10 through 12: "*Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life*" (Proverbs 31:10–12).

My dear sir, if you are married to a good and godly woman, as I am, happily so and for many years, and as I have been reflecting upon this message, I can tell you that I do not have words in my vocabulary to express to you how much I value my precious wife. And, may I tell you also, sir, that the real value, the real worth, of a wife is not in her outward charm—though I thank God for outward charm; not in the beauty of her face—though I thank God for that; but the real value of a wife is her virtue. "Who can find a virtuous wife? Her price is far above rubies."

Now, God does not compare her with a diamond. A diamond catches and reflects light, but a ruby has that inner glow. It is the beauty of a ruby that is on the inside. And, that's what God is talking about when He speaks of the value of a wife. Go down to verse 30, and you'll see what He's talking about: "*Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised*" (Proverbs 30:31). Now, there's nothing wrong with beauty, my dear friend, but let me tell you that virtue far exceeds beauty. *Many a man has made the mistake of falling in love with a dimple and then marrying the whole woman.* He found out later that he married someone who did not have that inner beauty. And, the word *virtue* here really means, "moral strength."

And then, the Bible says that because of this, her husband can trust her. Look in verse 11 of this chapter: "*The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her*" (Proverbs 30:11). What does that mean? Well, it means, my dear friend, that she's going to be honest; she's going to be wise; she's going to be loyal; she's going to be prudent. You can trust her with the bank account. You don't have to worry about foolish expenditures

and selfish demands. Someone wrote these words:

*Theirs was a perfect marriage,
But for one feminine flaw.
He was quick on the deposit,
But she was faster on the draw.*

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

II. Her Good Works

Now, the Bible says here that, *“The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her,”* and, *“She will do him good and not evil all of the days of her life”* (Proverbs 31:12). That is, she will do him good in all ways, and she will do him good always. And so, you think here of her great worth, and then you think of her good works. Begin to read now in verses 13 and 14: *“She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. She is like the merchants’ ships; she bringeth her food from afar”* (Proverbs 31:13–14). And, as Ann Landers has told us, “Her work is not all glamour, chauffeur, maid, cook, referee, philosopher, rescue squad, hostess, tutor, psychiatrist. Put them all together,” she said, “and they spell mother.” It’s work, a lot of work, but it is worth it, if the Lord Jesus Christ is in it.

Now, the New American Standard translates it this way; not only does she do it willingly, but the New American Standard says she does it “in delight.” It is her delight to do it, because she is doing it as unto the Lord.

I think that I read somewhere that Mrs. Billy Graham has written above her kitchen sink, “Divine services held here three times a day.” She’s taking about when she’s washing dishes.

And, look, if you will, in verse 14. Convenience is not her most important factor. The Bible says that she’s like the merchant ships: *“she bringeth her food from afar.”* That is, she’s a wise shopper; she is a nutritionist; she goes extra miles to get the best and to get a bargain. She’s not sold over to junk foods and fast foods.

I heard about one of these working women whose husband complained he wanted a hot breakfast. She gave him a match and said, “Set your cornflakes on fire.” Now, that’s not the kind of mama that we’re talking about here. She’s one who knows how to make everything work.

You know, really, sincerely, a lot of women who think that they’re adding to the family finances by working, if you were to add up everything that you spend on clothes and gasoline, the extra insurance, the babysitting, the fast foods, the eating out, all of these things, you may not be putting as much in the bank as you really think you are.

III. Her Godly Worship

But, here God speaks of her great worth, and then God speaks of her good works, and then God speaks of her godly worship. Look, if you will, in verse 15: *“She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens”* (Proverbs 31:15). I used to wonder about this verse, because she has some maids who help her in this house, and this verse says she gets up early to prepare them food. I always thought that the maids were the ones who helped prepare, and yet she’s waiting on the maidens. And, I read this in The Amplified Bible, and it’s very interesting. This is what The Amplified Bible says: “She rises while it is yet night, and gets, through communion with her God, spiritual food for her household.” The idea is—and I really believe it is true—she is getting up to have a quiet time with the Lord. And, the Bible goes on to say, in verse 30, that she is one who fears the Lord (Proverbs 31:30).

I cannot tell you the times that I have awakened to find my wife already awake singing hymns to our Lord, or to walk in and find her on her knees studying and preparing her heart for the day. And, I think that’s the exact picture that our Lord has here.

Well, you say, “If I had all these maids that this gal must have had, I could have done the same thing, preacher.” Well, let me tell you something, friend. In this day, when this was written, servants were not a luxury. The modern woman, who has no maid at all, has more luxuries than the woman of this day. I mean, we’re talking about washers and dryers and stoves and refrigerators, and you wouldn’t want to trade places for anything. But, here is a woman of godly worship, who is getting up early to have her quiet time with the Lord.

IV. Her Genuine Wisdom

Now, I want you to notice the next thing. Fourthly, I want you to notice her genuine wisdom—her genuine wisdom. Notice in verses 16 through 18: *“She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard. She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms. She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night”* (Proverbs 31:16–18).

A. Financial Wisdom

This speaks of her wisdom. This was indeed a wise woman. Did you know she knew how to make investments? Look, if you will, in verse 16: “She considers a field and buys it.” She dabbled in real estate. Can a woman do that and be a good woman? Of course! But, her business investments were not at the expense of her homemaking duties. As you read this, they were not at the expense of the home; they were an extension of the home. And, if you are a lady and have to work outside your home, I congratulate you.

And, if you have to work to put food on the table, I take off my hat to you and I admire you. That's all fine and good, and that is well, but you need to ask yourself this question: Does what you do enhance your home, or does it take away from it? Does it give you an independent spirit from your husband, or does it put you in competition with your husband? If it does, then it is contrary to the spirit of the Word of God.

B. Physical Wisdom

Now, look in verse 17, and you're going to see in her genuine wisdom that not only does she have financial wisdom; she has physical wisdom. She knows how to take care of her body. The Bible says that, "*She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms.*" She's into aerobics. She knows how to eat right. She knows how to exercise. She knows how to take care of herself. She doesn't let herself go. You know, some women say, "Well, you know, I'm already married. So, why chase a streetcar after you've caught it?" Well, I want to tell you, lady, you'd be very wise if you keep yourself physically right.

Notice verse 18. She knows economics. She studies; she's able to stretch a dollar. The Bible says, "*She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her lamp goeth not out by night.*" This woman is a scholar. What he's talking about here is her genuine wisdom.

V. Her Generous Welfare

Then, I want you to see something else. I want you see what I'm going to call her generous welfare. Look in verses 19 and 20: "*She layeth her hands to the spindle,*"—now, boys and girls, the spindle is what they made thread with in that day, because they couldn't go down and buy thread in the store and clothes in the store—"*and her hands hold the distaff. She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy*" (Proverbs 31:19–20).

Now, it's obvious, as you read this, that this woman—this wise woman, this maximum mom—has learned some real skills. We've already seen she's a nutritionist. She's a shopper. She knows economics. She knows investments. And now, she can work with her hands; she knows how to make things with her hands. We're going to see later on they're so great that she can sell them and make money. And, when she makes money with these things, then she knows how to go next door to a poor neighbor and take care of that neighbor. She's a philanthropist. She is reaching out to people in need. She's not just selfish, taking care of her own. Here's a woman who knows how to minister to people who are hurting. And, what an impact that must have made on her children! Her generous welfare: "*She stretcheth out her hand to the poor.*"

VI. Her Grand Wardrobe

And then, I want you to notice something else, ladies: her grand wardrobe. Look, if you

will, in verses 21 and 22. The Bible says, *“She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with scarlet. She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple”* (Proverbs 31:21–22). Now, don’t get the idea that this is just a washerwoman. Friend, this is an elegant lady. Now, why does the Bible speak, in verse 21, of scarlet? You see that; and then, it speaks of the snow. “She’s not afraid of the snow, for her household are all clothed with scarlet.” Wool is about the only thing that could be died with scarlet. What he’s saying is that here is a woman who has dressed her children warmly. She’s not sending them out half-dressed. They are well taken care of.

But, not only is she taking care of her children; she’s taking care of herself. She is fashion-conscious. I mean, she looks good when she steps out of the house. Tapestry and silk are on her. She knows what she’s doing. Again, ladies, the Bible never ever says that because you’re saved that you ought to be plain and dowdy. Not at all—not at all. As a matter of fact, the Bible puts a premium on looking good.

You know, sometimes a woman will come to me and say, “You know, pastor, I’m afraid my husband is running around on me.” Well, if he is, God will judge him. But, you know, sometimes you’ll look, and you don’t have the courage to say what you want to say. You know, he’s been out there in the working world all day long, and these women are all dressed, you know, as they do, hair all piled up on their head, clicking around on high heels, and he comes home, and she meets him in a faded housecoat and a different colored slipper on each foot, hair done up in coat hangers, and she said, “Well, I’m just afraid he’s running around.”

This, lady—listen—now, I’m going to tell you something. That’s no excuse for any man, but, oh, this woman was so wise—so wise. She seemed to find time for all of these things. Her children are all well dressed. She’s well dressed.

VII. Her Gifted Wifhood

But not only notice her grand wardrobe; notice her gifted wifhood. Notice her relationship to her husband. Verses 23 through 25: *“Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land. She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant. Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come”* (Proverbs 31:23–25).

Now, she is to her husband, a helpmeet. She is a completer, an enhancer, to her husband. The Bible says that her husband is *“known in the gates.”* Now, the gates were the place of commerce in this day. It’s like her husband being known in city hall, or in the courthouse square. That’s what He’s talking about. Her husband is a well-known citizen. But, because God here is extolling the wife and not the husband, the implication is very clear that he is what he is because she is what she is. And, I can say that without

equivocation, stutter, or stammer, and know that I'm standing in the pulpit, and know that thousands of ears are listening, and know that God above is listening. I know I am what I am today, not only because of God, but because of my precious wife. I know that beyond any shadow of a doubt or peradventure.

And, that's what He's saying here. *"Her husband is known in the gates."* She is a woman who is behind her husband, encouraging her husband. Somebody has well said, "Behind every good man there is a good woman, and a surprised mother-in-law." And, I believe that is definitely true. A woman is to a man—listen, ladies—a woman is to a man what a wind is to a fire. She can fan it up, or blow it out.

Now, look again, if you will, in verse 24. She's a businesswoman. She makes fine linen. She sells it; she delivers girdles unto the merchant. This seamstress woman, she knows how to make money. Earlier, it said that she bought a field; then, she planted a vineyard. Where'd she get the money to buy that field? Well, evidently, she knows how to make things and make things work. She is a very wise, a very astute, woman. But, again, I want you to notice, all that she does is not in competition, but to enhance what they do. It does not take away from the home; it lends to the home.

And, I like especially verse 25: *"Strength and honour are her clothing."* Now, she's not just clothed with silk and tapestry, but with strength and honor. And, the Bible says, *"She shall rejoice in time to come."* Now, what does that mean? It means that her clothing is dignity. I mean, when this woman walks into the room, you're aware of her presence. She has a calm and a gentle spirit. And, bad news does not cause her to stampede. Under stress, she can smile at the future. *"She shall rejoice in time to come."*

I was reading about a businessman whose business just caved in. I mean, he just lost it all. And, he came home to his wife and told her, "Honey, we're having to move out of our beautiful home." They went into bankruptcy. Everything was gone. They came to a little apartment, and they sat down, these people who had so much. And, he looked at her, and his shoulders just went over. And, he looked around at that little apartment, and he said, "Well, here we are." And, she looked at him and smiled, and she said, "No, here we are." I like that: "Here we are"—a husband and a wife together.

That's what this verse is talking about. *"Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come."*

VIII. Her Gracious Words

Yes, I thank God for her godly wifeship, but I want you to notice her gracious words. Look, if you will now, in verse 26 and verse 27: *"She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness"* (Proverbs 31:26–27). Now, here's a woman who has control of her tongue. Look: "She opens her mouth with wisdom; in her tongue is

the law of kindness.” Do you know why this is? Do you know why she’s not screeching at her kids? Do you know why she’s not whining at her husband? Do you know why she can talk, why she has such dignity and poise and grace? Because she’s already been up early in the morning; she’s had her quiet time with God. Her life is well ordered. And, that’s the reason that she has this well-ordered life: her heart is at peace with God.

When you, dear lady, or sir, lash out at others, it tells more about you than almost anything else. If you’re one who just simply is lashing out, lashing out, lashing out, you’re a person who’s not at peace with yourself. And, if you’re not at peace with yourself, it’s because you’re not at peace with God. And, if you’re not at peace with God, it is because you have not had this quality time, this priority time, with Almighty God. Notice her gracious words.

IX. Her Glowing Witness

And then, last of all, notice what I want to call her glowing witness—her glowing witness. Look, if you will now, in verses 28 through 31: *“Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all. Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates”* (Proverbs 31:28–31).

A. Her Witness to Her Children

Now, what He’s talking about here is her glowing witness—her witness to her children. “Her children rise up and call her blessed.” And, I don’t think that there can be any greater reward. The Apostle John said, *“I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth”* (3 John 1:4). “Her children rise up and call her blessed.” What a warped sense of value some mothers have today! Could there be any greater reward than to just to say, “Thank you, Mama, for those precious memories,” that Betty Stalnecker sang about a little while back. Kate Wiggins said this: “Most of the good and beautiful things in life come by twos and by threes, and by dozens and hundreds. There are plenty of roses, stars, sunsets, rainbows, brothers, sisters, aunts and cousins, but there’s only one mother in the whole world.” Nobody can take your place. Oh, her witness to her children.

B. Her Witness to Her Husband

And then, there’s the witness to her husband: her husband will praise her. And, by the way sir, if God has given you a good wife, her price is far above rubies. You need to give her the paycheck of praise and admiration. You need to tell her over and over and over and over again, and you can never tell her enough how much you love her, how much you praise God for her, how much you thank God for her. And, by the way, this

illustration here of this virtuous woman, I think it probably says more about her husband than it says about her, because, evidently, he is somebody who has loved her and prayed for her and freed her to be the kind of a woman that she could be.

C. Her Witness to Her Community

But, there's not only her witness to her children, not only her witness to her husband, but there's her witness to her community. Look in verse 31: "*Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates.*" Do you know what America desperately needs? Some good old-fashioned homes. I'm telling you, mom, you'll do more by raising godly children as a testimony.

I'm for community involvement, and I thank God for all of the different clubs, but I heard about one woman who was a member of this thing and that thing. You know, she was the second vice-president for the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty for Orphan Grandmothers with Athlete's Foot. And, she was this and this and this. And, finally, when she died, they put on her tombstone, "Here lies Mary Smith. She was clubbed to death." Now, she was a member of this and this and this.

But now, listen—listen. I mean, really, to me, when you get to the bottom line—I mean, the bottom line—what could be better than to have children say, "I love you, Mama. Thank you for being that kind of a mama"? Her children rise up and call her blessed, her husband to praise her, and the community to say she was a godly and a good woman.

Conclusion

My dear friend, we have been sold a bill of goods in this day and age in which we live. All that this dear woman did she did because Jesus enabled her. And, she was beautiful. She may have been outwardly—the Bible doesn't say—but I know she was inwardly, because she was a woman of virtue.

Now, if that's made you feel inadequate, ladies, I'm going to tell you again, that's a guide, that's a goal, that's an idea, but it's one that we can aim for. Amen?

The Bionic Woman

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: May 12, 1985

Main Scripture Text: Proverbs 31:10–31

“Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies.”

PROVERBS 31:10

Outline

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Conclusion

Introduction

All right, take God’s Holy Word, please, and turn to Proverbs chapter 31. We’re going to begin reading in verse 10, read all the way through the end of the chapter. It begins with a question: *“Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life. She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. She is like the merchants’ ships; she bringeth her food from afar. She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a*

portion to her maidens. She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard. She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms. She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night. She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff. She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy. She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with scarlet. She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple. Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land. She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant. Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come. She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all. Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates” (Proverbs 31:10–31).

Sometimes when you ask a woman what she does, she'll say, “Oh, I'm just a housewife.” I hope she'll never say that again after this message here tonight, because you're going to find out that perhaps the most difficult, most demanding, job in all of the world is being what some call a *housewife*. I'd rather call it a *homemaker*. She's not married to a house. I don't like the phrase *housewife*, but indeed, she is a *homemaker*.

And, ladies, I'm going to tell you something. When you read what's here, you're going to feel like those two cows when they were out in the pasture and they saw a milk truck go by, and on the side, it said, “Such and such a dairy,” and underneath it said the milk was grade-A pasteurized, sanitized, vitamin-enriched, homogenized, and from contented cows.” One of the cows said to the other one, “It really makes you feel inadequate, doesn't it?”

Well, I want you to know, dear friend, that when you read this, if you are a housewife or a homemaker, you may tend at first to feel so inadequate. And, if your husband reads it, he's liable to feel dissatisfied. He's going to say, “Honey, you just don't measure up.” Now, the truth of the matter is there is no one that measures up to this—not one. This is not meant to do something to beat you down. It is not something that you read and then say, “Oh, how terrible I am, because I fail at this point, or fail at that point!” This is written to encourage you. This is God's standard of an ideal wife, of a perfect wife.

Now, I've never heard of anybody who had a perfect wife. I did hear of a woman who had a perfect husband. As a matter of fact, in the testimony meeting, somebody asked, “Has anybody ever heard of a perfect man?” And, one man stood up and said, “Yes, I have. My wife's first husband, but she was the only one who had anybody that was

perfect.”

None of us are perfect. This is the *ideal* wife. This is what Jill Briscoe has called the bionic woman. There’s no one really like her, I don’t believe, in all of the world. But, indeed here is a standard, a goal for wives.

Now, I want you to know that being a homemaker is a queenly duty, and it is more than drudgery, and it’s going to take the very best that you have. It’s going to take so much creativity, it’s going to take so much dedication, and so much energy, that, if you understand what God is saying here, you will never ever again say, “I am just a housewife.”

Now, what we have here in these verses, chapter 31, verses 10 through verse 31, is an acrostic. Now, we can’t tell it when we read it here in the English, but if we were to read it in the Hebrew, we would find out that these verses start in sequence with the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet and go right on through to the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet. There is a poetic form here. It is an acrostic. It would be like one verse if we were to translate that in the English, one verse would start with *A*, the next one with *B*, and the next one with *C*, and the next one with *D*. It is an acrostic.

Now, why does he do that? Because, you see, what he is saying is, “This is the complete woman, from alpha to omega.” We would say today, not “the total woman”: “the complete woman from *A* to *Z*; a woman that is the perfect ideal.” So, I want you to look with me tonight in this study. And, I want you husbands to know that, as I said this morning, it is your responsibility from God to set your goal to make your wife this kind of a woman, to make her a radiantly beautiful Christian. And, wives, here is the idea that God has given for every Christian wife.

I. Her Principles

The first thing I want you to notice is what I’m going to call her principles. Look, if you will, in verse 10: “*Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies.*” I’m glad he said rubies and not diamonds, because a diamond only reflects light, but a ruby has an inner beauty all of its own. And, I believe that this word, it has been chosen right here. She is a woman of virtue. “*Who can find a virtuous woman?*” Now, the word *virtue*, as it is used here, means more than moral purity. It means, “moral purity,” but actually, it means, someone who has chosen “godly principles.”

Now, if you are married to a woman who has chosen godly principles, you are wealthy indeed. Her value, her price, is far above rubies. And, I want to tell you, dear friend, that you need to give her a weekly paycheck. Now, you as a man, when you work, you go out to work, your employer pays you, and that check is the employer’s estimation of your value to him. And, in a sense, it is a fulfillment to your ego to get that check, to say, “I am worth something.”

Now, every wife deserves a paycheck. It doesn't have to be written out on a piece of a paper, but somehow you ought to communicate to your wife that you value her. You must tell her in the coin of your words, and in your deeds, "Honey, I really, truly appreciate you. I know that you are very, very valuable." And, I want to tell you that many women, especially those who have little children, work harder at home than the husband does on the job. Ladies, say *amen*. Now, that is true; that is definitely true. And, I've always been amazed at some men who think that what they own is theirs to keep or to give to the wife as they feel that they might give.

Did you know that there are women, and, doubtless, some in this congregation, who don't even know how much money their husbands make, or how much money is in the bank? And, he has the idea, "That's mine; I made that." Oh, no, dear friend. Listen. That money is jointly owned and jointly earned, as she stays home to care of the family and to run the household. You had better learn, if she is a woman of principle, that she is a valuable, valuable asset.

II. Her Prudence

Now, not only do I want you to notice her principles, but I want you to notice her prudence. Look in verse 11: "*The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil.*" That is, he's not going to go bankrupt. He can trust his wife to use good judgment. Because of her, he does not owe his soul to the company store. I think that somebody needs to print on some of these credit cards something like what they print on a package of cigarettes. But, it ought to say, "Warning: Excessive use of this card may be dangerous to your marriage."

As a matter of fact, some men have had to do plastic surgery on their wives and take away those cards. But, if you are married to this kind of a woman, you could give her the entire bank account and say, "Honey, spend what you need, as you need it, and you never have to worry." The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her so that he shall have no need of spoil. And, a wife, if she's a godly wife, ought to have this principle. We can get along with anything except one another. We need one another.

III. Her Persistence

Third thing I want you to notice: her persistence. Look, if you will, in verse 12: "*She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life.*" She's not a little lady who starts well and does not end well. She's very persistent. She is a perpetual source of good. She will do him good always, and she will do him good in all ways. Not until problems come, for the Bible says, love "*endureth all things*" (1 Corinthians 13:7). And so, she's a woman of persistence.

IV. Her Positive Attitude

And, next, I want you to notice her positive attitude. Look, if you will, in verse 13: “*She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands.*” Now, look at the word *willingly*. That is, she doesn’t have to be drug to the work. As a matter of fact, the New American Standard translates it this way: “She works in delight.” That is, she’s happy in what she does. She doesn’t feel that she’s staying home while all of the other women are getting their jollies by going out to work. She doesn’t feel put upon. She doesn’t feel let down. She doesn’t feel neglected. As a matter of fact, it is her delight. She doesn’t feel that her job is not glamorous. She feels that she has the most important work in all of the world, and therefore she has a positive attitude about it. She is delighted. She is willing—glad—to do what she does.

The next thing I want you to notice is not only her positive attitude, in verse 13, but her provisions, in verse 14: “*She is like the merchants’ ships; she bringeth her food from afar.*” To her, convenience is not the most important factor. She’s a good shopper. She can drive all the way across town for just the right merchandise. She’s a nutritionist. She knows the nutritional value of food. She knows the value of all of her merchandise, and she provides for her family so very well. I am convinced that when you see what some have called *women’s liberation*, and so many women going into the job market, that is the reason we’ve had such an increase in junk food and fast food restaurants, because we don’t have this kind of a woman who is listed here in verse 14. She’s like the merchant ships. She bringeth her food from afar.

V. Her Preparation

Now, the next thing I want you to notice is what I want to call her preparation. Look in verse 15: “*She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens.*” Now, she’s an early starter. She gets up before the sun and she gives meat to her maidens. Well, you say right away, “Preacher, no wonder she does so much: she has all these maids there that help her.” Now, wait a minute—wait a minute. For a woman in this time, servants were not a luxury like they are today. You see, today the average woman who can never have a maid has more luxuries than a woman in the Bible times. For example, if you have a clothes washer, if you have a dryer, if you have a stove, if you have a refrigerator, or if you have a vacuum cleaner, I want to tell you that this woman would gladly have let go of these maidens in order to have those electrical servants and other things that we have in our home today.

She gets up early; she prepares herself. Now, I ran across something very interesting as I was studying this. It is not that she gets up and fixes breakfast for everybody, although she may do that. Here’s what The Amplified Bible says. It translates it this way: “She rises while it is yet night and gets”—through her communion

with God—“[spiritual] food for her household.” And, The Amplified Bible says that what she’s doing when she’s getting up early is she is getting right with God. She is communing with God. She’s having something to share with others. She is a woman who will go through the day prepared.

VI. Her Purchasing

Now, the next thing I want you to notice, in verse 16, is what I want to call her purchasing: “*She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard.*” Now, this woman is no dumb bunny. She is a businesswoman. She knows something about real estate. She knows how to make a good investment. She didn’t buy just any field. She considers the field, and then she buys it. And then, she utilizes what she’s bought, because she turns it into a vineyard that will bring her yet more profit.

Now, I want to say this. So many people say, “Pastor, is it all right for a woman to work, if she has children in the home? Or, is it all right for a woman to work, period?” Well, I want you to notice, as you study this woman, and what she did, and her business investments, that they were not at the expense of her household duties. You’re going to find out that here is a woman, number one, who performed all of her household duties.

Now, you can ask yourself this question, “Should I have a job? Should I work outside the home?” Well, let me ask it this way. Does your outside job enhance your home, or does it take from it? Now, if it takes from your home, then you ought not to do it. Let me ask you another question. Does it give you an independent spirit from your husband, or does it put you in competition with your husband? If it doesn’t enhance your home, if it gives you an independent spirit, if it puts you in competition with your husband, then leave it alone. But, here was a woman who knew how to make a business venture.

VII. Her Physical Strength

Verse 16 speaks of her purchasing. Verse 17 speaks of her physical strength. Look in verse 17: “*She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms.*” Now, here was a woman who took care of her physical frame. She ate right. She exercises to keep her self physically fit. She’s not run down. She is a physical specimen, and “*she girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms.*” She is physically fit.

VIII. Her Perception

Notice not only her physical fitness, but her perception. Verse 18: “*She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night.*” What does that mean? It means she studies and she knows economics. She’s able to stretch a dollar. She’s able to spend so wisely that she can make that money go a long way. “*She perceiveth that*

her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night.” She will study these things very carefully. That is her perception.

IX. Her Practicality

And then, notice, in verse 19, her practicality. Look in verse 19: *“She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff.”* That is, these are the implements that a person would use in spinning yarn, making cloth. She’s learned some skills. We’re going to find out that she’s so practical, that she is an excellent seamstress. Do you know Joyce and I have often talked about the fact that one of the things that seems to be so lacking in today’s modern education is the practicality of things like sewing, and cooking, and balancing a bank book, and shopping, and merchandising?

Many girls will get a complete education and still never learn how to do the basic things of homemaking. There’s no real practicality there. I believe these things have to be taught in high school. I believe they ought to be taught in college. And, I believe they surely ought to be taught by every mother to a daughter in the home. Where did she learn these things? How did she learn them? Hopefully, she had a godly mother who taught her these things.

X. Her Philanthropy

Now, next, I want you to notice her philanthropy. Look, if you will, in verse 20: *“She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy.”* Here’s a woman that not only takes care of her own children, not only takes care of her own household, but she has a ministry in the neighborhood. Now, today perhaps she would be the kind of a woman who would work in the WMU clothes closet. Or, she would be a woman who would be down at a rescue mission, perhaps preparing a meal, or perhaps she’d work through the Red Cross. Or, she’d work through practical ministries here at the church. But, she is the kind of a woman who has a heart of compassion for the poor and the needy.

Now, she’s not so active in social work that she neglects her own family. Now, if you can read this, it’s just like the business aspect. She does have a business deal on the side, but she doesn’t neglect her family. She does do social work, but she doesn’t neglect her family.

Now, some mothers are running all over town doing all of these things in this club and that club, but they neglect their family. I heard of a mother named Mary Jones, and she finally died from all that activity. Someone put this epitaph on her tombstone: *“Here lies the body of Mary Jones. She was clubbed to death.”* She was in so many clubs.

Now, she is to be a woman who has a heart of philanthropy, to care for others.

XI. Her Precautions

Now, notice in verse 21 her precautions: “*She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with scarlet.*” What does that mean: “*clothed with scarlet*”? Well, most commentators say it means, “They were clothed with wool, because wool is easily dyed a scarlet color.” Now, what is this? See, the idea is that she has prepared for the cold weather. And, when the snow comes, she’s not afraid of the snow, because she knows that all of the children are going to have warm, woolen things to wear in that cold weather, because she’s a woman who looks to the future and makes precaution.

Years ago, I was reading about Mrs. Stewart Udall, whose husband was the Secretary of the Interior. And, somehow men expect—if they are pastor’s wives, or executive’s wives, or politician’s wives—they expect these wives somehow not to just be interested in homemaking. And, one day, Mrs. Stewart Udall was being interviewed by a newspaper, and they were interviewing her almost as if she was Mrs. Secretary of the Interior. And, they asked her what she was responsible for. And, she said this: that “she was responsible for six of our nation’s most valuable resources.” And, they said, “Well, what are those?” She said, “My six children.” And, I like that real well. Here’s a mother who just simply, in spite of all of the glamour and all of the business of Washington, just simply said, “I am going to take care of my children.”

The precautions of this woman. When the cold weather came, her children were dressed warmly.

XII. Her Physical Appearance

And then, not only notice their precautions, but notice her physical appearance. Look, if you will, at her personal appearance, in verse 22: “*She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple.*” Remember that I told you this morning that God wants you to be beautiful. And, there’s nothing wrong with being beautiful for this woman, because she was a seamstress, and because she knew how to stretch a dollar, and because she knew how to make an investment, and because her husband could trust her with the resources, she was a knockout.

I mean, she knew how to dress. She didn’t look like something Frazer made when Kaiser wasn’t looking. Now, I want to tell you something, folks. God expects Christian women to keep up their physical and personal appearance. Here God mentions this, in a sense, that she’s done well. Some women sometimes believe—they come to me, and they say, “Well, you know, pastor, I’ve just got a problem. I believe my husband is running around me.” I never do have the courage to say what sometimes I feel like I ought to say to some of them. I mean, their philosophy is, “Why chase a streetcar, if you’ve already caught it?” And, they always let themselves go. He’ll be off at work, and

he'll be seeing all these girls at work walking around on their high heels, their hair all done up in the clothes all just so. And then, he comes home, and she meets him at the door in a faded housecoat, a different colored slipper on each foot, coat hangers, and orange cans in her hair, meringue on her face. She says, "I just don't know why; he's just running around me." Hey, lady, you'd better wise up a little bit. Look at this here—look at this: "*She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple.*" I'm not trying to make you feel bad, but I'm trying to say that there's a lot of practicality here. Here is woman who takes care of her personal appearance.

XIII. Her Partnership

Now, I told you this is the ideal woman. Nobody can do all of this perfectly, as she's done it, but here's a standard. Notice her partnership. Look, if you will, in verse 23: "*Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land.*" You see, her husband is successful. Do you know why her husband is successful? Because this woman is the kind of a woman that we were talking about this morning. She is a helpmeet to him. When a woman does all of these other things, you can almost say, "Her husband is going to be a success." She is a completer to him, not a competitor to him.

The inference is that her husband is known in the gates. And, by the way, *to be known in the gates* is to be known in the place where business takes place. We're so grateful we're going to Israel this week on a Bible study tour and vacation. We'll be leaving in a few days. And, those of you who will be going with me, when we go into the city of Jerusalem, one of the things we'll do when we go through the great, great gates that lead into the city, we'll walk in, and you'll see in the gates all kinds of businesses and stores and so forth. That's where the transactions and the banking and the clothing and all of that took place: in the gates. And, her husband was known in the gates. Now, she had a partner. She was a partner. Somebody has said, "Behind every good man there is a good woman, and a surprised mother-in-law."

Now, here was a woman who took care of her husband. When I was a young preacher, my pastor said to Joyce, "Joyce, a pastor's wife is to a pastor what a wind is to a fire. She can fan it up or blow it out." And, I thank God for the kind of a wife that God has given me, and very frankly, I do not feel like the pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church without Joyce. I mean that. I thank God that you may know more about me than you may know about her. But, one reason that Adrian is known in the pulpit is because of the homemaker there has been in our home to keep the home fires burning. Her partnership.

XIV. Her Profit

Then, I want you to notice her profit. Look, if you will, in verse 24: *“She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant.”* Now, she’s a busy gal, wasn’t she? Where do you think she got the money to buy that field? Well, I think perhaps that’s where she got the money to buy the field with: because she was a businesswoman. Now, she had a part-time job; she was making things on the side and had a little manufacturing business there. And, a part-time job is fine; that’s good, if it enhances the home, if it gives you fulfillment, if it is not done at the expense of the home. If you read about this woman, you’re going to find out that her business did not make her independent of her husband. Really, it was simply a way to supplement what her husband was already doing.

XV. Her Poise

But, I want you to notice not only her profit, but I want you to notice her poise. Look, if you will, in verse 25: *“Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come.”* Now, *“strength and honour”* literally means, “strength and dignity.” When she walked into a room, everybody turned to look at this woman. There was a quality to her presence, and she could walk into a room, and there would be that quiet calm and gentle strength that this woman had. Listen to it again: *“Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come.”*

Now, what does that mean: *“She shall rejoice in time to come”*? That means she’s not worried about the future. You see, so many people do not have this poise; they do not have this serenity, because they’re so concerned about what the future is going to bring. But, here is a woman who has already gotten up and been quiet with God early in the morning. She’s a woman who spent that quality time with God, and with her children, and with her husband, and she’s not going around neurotic, fanatic, with some sort of a guilt complex. She’s right with God, and right with her family, and she knows it’s a future with God. And, she’s the kind of woman that has great poise.

XVI. Her Pleasantness

I want you to notice, in verse 26, what I want to call her pleasantness: *“She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness.”* Now, the control that she has, that has been spoken of in verse 25, is shown in the way that she uses her tongue. And, the reason that she opens her mouth with this kindness, and the reason that she can speak the way she does with wisdom and kindness, is that she’s been alone with God, and she has that gentle and that quiet spirit. She had an early start in the morning. She has a well-ordered life.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, I want to tell you something. When we lash out at other

people, that really tells us more about ourselves than it does the people that we lash out at. I want to give you a personal illustration. My daughter is here tonight. She's staying here with us because she's going with us to Israel. Janice is sleeping in the bedroom next to us with our granddaughter Angela. This morning at 2 a.m., Angela woke up, and for some reason—I don't know why—she started to cry. And, she cried vehemently and did not seem to want to be calmed. I was awakened. I listened to my daughter, and I listened to the kindness and the sweetness and the gentleness and the poise with which she dealt with that precious little girl.

And, I wondered, did I myself have that kind of poise and that kind of gentleness? This is the mark of a great, great woman. Look at it again: "*She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness.*" Now, folks, you can't have that unless you've been alone with God. If you want to know what you're full of, just see what spills out when you get jostled. Now, here's a woman who is indeed a great, great woman.

XVII. Her Planning

Now, the next thing I want you to notice, in verse 27: her planning. "*She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness.*" Her household is well run, because she is an administrator. And, it takes as much administrative business to run a household as it does a business, and she looks well to it. And, that household is just humming along. And, she's not eating the bread of idleness.

Do you know what that is? *Lean Cuisine* and all that kind of stuff. It's all right to eat that if you're on a diet, but if you're addicted to these T.V. trays and all that kind of stuff, that's the bread of idleness. And, these biscuits that come in a can—*plop*—that's the bread of idleness. Boy, I'm in trouble now. Tell you what. You pay a lot more for that kind of stuff than that good ole honest food. You know why we have all that kind of stuff? Because women don't have time to go to the grocery store anymore—or have time to walk through the fresh fruits and vegetable and shop, and sniff, and buy, and pinch, and weigh, and measure, and evaluate—and "bringeth her merchandise from afar," and know what is good and what is not good.

Here's a woman who runs her household. Listen. There's the myth of the working mother. In most cases, when a mother works and puts her children in some daycare institution, and so forth, when you get to the bottom line, it has not paid; it has cost you. You'd be better off if you were at home. You, literally, when you get to the end of the trail, will have more money in the bank, and you'll be better off. Here's a woman with her planning.

XVIII. Her Praise

Now, here's a woman—as a result of all of that, you're going to see her praised. Look, if you will, in verses 28 and 29: *“Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all.”* Here's a woman who is being praised. Not being praised by somebody else—you listen to me—she is being praised by those who know her best, and she's being praised for the things that really count. Her praise—her praise. There's no greater reward that a woman can have than for her husband and her children to praise her.

Oh, what a warped sense of values we have today: mothers wanting to get outside the home and have some sort of what they call a career. What could be a greater career than to raise some boys and girls for the Lord Jesus Christ and to have a happy home? You say, “Well, I have gifts and talents and abilities.” Lady, you have about 25 years after your children are up and raised to exercise some of those other gifts and talents and abilities. And, those gifts and talents and abilities that God has given you, God has given you that you might pour them into that family. “Well,” you say, “preacher, I'd like to be able to stay home and raise my children. I'd like to put everything I have into it. But, honestly, preacher, I can't. I mean, I have to work to pay the rent. I have to work to put food on the table. I just have to do it.”

Lady, my hat is off to you, and my prayers are for you, and God bless you, and I admire you for what you're doing, but I'm going to tell you one thing. You are making a terrible mistake, if for the sake of your ego, or a better car, or a more beautiful home, or a bigger vacation, you let somebody else take care of your precious children and you waste those years. What a tragedy! What a tragedy! What a tragedy! The highest, the best, the holiest, happiest, thing that you can do, the farthest thing that you can be, is the kind of a mama where your children will rise up and call you blessed and your husband will praise you.

XIX. Her Piety

Let me come to the last thing about the bionic woman: not only her praise, but her piety. Read verses 30 and 31, and you'll find out how this woman is wired. You'll find out what makes you the woman that she is. Listen: *“Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates”*—*“a woman that feareth the LORD.”*

Conclusion

It is all possible because of Jesus. I want to tell you, dear lady, there's one kind of beauty that you can have, and it's the beauty that Jesus gives, and it's the beauty that will last and last.