

The Bible From 20,000 Feet Part 43

The Book of Proverbs

Tuesday Night Bible Study, February 16, 2010

OUTLINE

- I. INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF PROVERBS
- II. MORAL LAWS OF NATURE IN THE WORDS OF PROVERBS
- III. THE GOSPEL IN THE WORDS OF PROVERBS

I. INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

--The book of Proverbs is a collection of wise sayings from King Solomon who was gifted with extraordinary wisdom...

--1 Kings 4:29-34: "And God gave Solomon wisdom and exceedingly great understanding, and largeness of heart like the sand on the seashore. 30 Thus Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the men of the East and all the wisdom of Egypt. 31 For he was wiser than all men... and his fame was in all the surrounding nations. 32 He spoke three thousand proverbs, and his songs were one thousand and five. 33 Also he spoke of trees, from the cedar tree of Lebanon even to the hyssop that springs out of the wall; he spoke also of animals, of birds, of creeping things, and of fish. 34 And men of all nations, from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom, came to hear the wisdom of Solomon."

--wisdom is a priceless commodity...

--knowledge is abundant but wisdom is scarce, yet wisdom is freely available to everybody, regardless of your finances, intelligence, resume, or any other thing that we are often judged by.

--the relative value of wisdom is increasing while the value of knowledge is decreasing...

--when you invest in gaining wisdom through Scripture, that investment is guaranteed to pay large dividends!

--Isaiah 55:10-11: "For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and do not return there, but water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, **so shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void**, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it."

--loss of wisdom...

--speaking of the end times, Jesus said, "because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold." (Matthew 24:12)

--exponential growth of knowledge...

--numerous studies have been done that show how there is an exponential increase of knowledge in the world; one such study compared the sum of all knowledge at different points in history... from beginning of recorded history to 1845 = 1", 1845 – 1945 = 3", 1945 – 1975 = 500 feet, 1975 – 2008 = several thousand miles!

--according to the book of Daniel, the increase of knowledge in the world is a prophetic sign-post that we are nearing the end times where wisdom will be more important than ever!

--**This prophetic sign was given to Daniel at a time when he exemplified the principle of investing in wisdom rather than material things...** An angelic messenger spoke to him, "Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set

your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard; and I have come because of your words... Now I have come to make you understand what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision refers to many days yet to come.... [*and then at the end of the prophecy the angelic messenger told Daniel*] And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake [*people who are dead will be resurrected*], some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt. **Those who are wise** shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever. But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; **many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.**"

--in the last century world travel and knowledge have increased dramatically!

--Proverbs 8:1-11: "Does not wisdom call out? Does not understanding raise her voice? On the heights along the way, where the paths meet, she takes her stand; besides the gates leading into the city, at the entrances, she cries aloud; 'To you, O men, I call out; I raise my voice to all mankind. You who are simple, gain prudence; you who are foolish, gain understanding. Listen, for I have worthy things to say; I open my lips to speak what is right... 9 To the discerning all of them are right; they are faultless to those who have knowledge. **Choose my instruction instead of silver, knowledge rather than choice gold, for wisdom is more precious than rubies, and nothing you desire can compare with her.**"

II. MORAL LAWS OF NATURE IN THE WORDS OF PROVERBS

--There is no single outline that fits the book of proverbs as it contains numerous themes that are intermixed throughout the book.

--One outline that could be used to organize the themes in Proverbs is based on relationships... relationship to God, relationship to country, relationship to work, relationship to friends, relationship to family, and relationship to self.

--This outline highlights an important law of nature that helps us better understand the world that we live in... anybody in the world (whether atheist, muslim, mormon, agnostic, Hindu, Christian, or any other religion) can follow **moral laws of nature** in all the categories of human relationship except the category of relationship to God and experience a higher quality of life.

--**the moral laws of nature could be called "the way of life."** (in the words of Proverbs 5:6)

--**However, the natural benefits of following moral laws of nature can be very misleading and mask a deeper problem, as we'll see in this study.** Many false religions excell at following select moral laws of nature and then feel justified in their false religion by the natural benefits of following those moral laws.

--Proverbs 14:34: "Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people."

--One reason the United States has been so exalted is because it was founded on moral principles that are a law of nature – as the introduction to the Declaration of Independence states, "When in the course of human events it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which **the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them...**"

--example of moral laws in Proverbs that have clear benefits for anybody...

--Proverbs 15:1: "A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger."

--Proverbs 26:20: "Without wood a fire goes out; without gossip a quarrel dies down."

--Proverbs 13:17: the benefit of living below your means – "Some rich people are poor, and some poor people have great wealth!"

--Warren Buffet is a great example of modesty... In spite of his 50+ billion net worth, he lives on a \$100,000 salary in the same house he bought in 1958 for \$31,500; and because of this he is probably happier than most wealthy people.

--Proverbs 17:19: "...he who builds a high gate invites destruction."

--Proverbs 12:23: "A prudent man keeps his knowledge to himself, but the heart of fools blurts out folly."

--Proverbs 15:13: "A happy heart makes the face cheerful, but heartache crushes the spirit."

--Proverbs 15:22: "Without counsel, plans go awry, but in the multitude of counselors they are established."

--Principles of sexual purity are another great example of moral laws that anybody can benefit from regardless of their religion... because we are designed to live in sexual purity (no sex outside of marriage and faithfulness inside of marriage). Proverbs 5:3-6: "For the lips of an adulteress drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil; but in the end she is bitter as gall, sharp as a double-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps lead straight to the grave. She gives no thought to the way of life; her paths are crooked, but she knows it not."

--just because a person follows moral laws of nature and enjoys the natural benefits that result doesn't mean that they are on the path to heaven; it's important to recognize this and not let these natural benefits obscure our need for salvation through Christ!

III. THE GOSPEL IN THE WORDS OF PROVERBS

--Robert Bork, the famous legal scholar who was nominated to the Supreme Court by Ronald Regan, wrote, "One must not, of course, discount the great reservoir of self-interest that underlay much of the rhetoric of morality." (pg. 18, Slouching Towards Gomorrah: Modern Liberalism and American Decline)

--the key question for anybody is, deep in your soul is there motivation that stems from love for God?

--nobody is perfect, and everybody's motivation is a mixture, but what sets the person on the path to heaven apart from the person on the path to hell is genuine love for God.

--why do we love God?

--"We love because he first loved us." (1 John 4:19)

--how do we discover God's love for us?

--in the words of Solomon "the fear of the Lord..." ("The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom..." - Proverbs 11:10)

--in other words, realizing our own mortality... the first step to discovering the love of God is seeing the end of ourselves, realizing there is an unsurpassable divide between us and God and then discovering the steps He took to bridge that divide. (Romans 3:23)

--in the words of Solomon, "God is in heaven and you are on earth, so let your words be few." (Ecclesiastes 5:2)

--God saved us from death...

--Proverbs 14:12: "There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death."

--the relative peace and prosperity that anybody can experience by following moral laws of nature become insignificant in light of the reality of death that everyone must face.

--Proverbs 22:2: "**Rich and poor have this in common:** The LORD is the Maker of them all."

--Revelation 20:12-15: "**And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God**, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works... 14 Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. **This is the second death.** 15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire."

--the world often assumes that physical death is the greatest thing to be feared and that people automatically go to a better place after death.

--the startling wake up call in Scripture (God's message to mankind) is that physical death is merely a foreshadow of something far worse – spiritual death or "the second death" as it is called in Revelation 20:14.

--Proverbs 22:3: "A prudent man sees danger and takes refuge, but the simple keep going and suffer for it."

--physical death is a road sign pointing to the danger of "the second death" that is before everyone, and there is only one way to escape the second death...

--Proverbs 11:4: "Wealth is worthless in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death." ...not our own righteousness but the righteousness of Christ that is "credited" (Romans 4:24) to all those who trust in Him.

--"Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him."
(Proverbs 30:5)

--When the righteousness of Christ is credited to our spiritual account our names are "written in the Lamb's book of life" (Revelation 21:27) and we are shielded from the second death.

--Romans 3:21 (NKJV translation): "But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus..."

--here is Romans 3:21 in the TLB translation which phrases the complex theology of this verse in more simple terminology: "But now God has shown us a different way to heaven — not by "being good enough" and trying to keep his laws, but by a new way (though not new, really, for the Scriptures told about it long ago). Now God says he will accept and acquit us — declare us "not guilty" — if we trust Jesus Christ to take away our sins. And we all can be saved in this same way, by coming to Christ, no matter who we are or what we have been like. 23 Yes, all have sinned; all fall short of God's glorious ideal; 24 yet now God declares us "not guilty" of offending him if we trust in Jesus Christ, who in his kindness freely takes away our sins. 25 For God sent Christ Jesus to take the punishment for our sins and to end all God's anger against us. He used Christ's blood and our faith as the means of saving us from his wrath."