

The Fear of the Lord

TEXT: Proverbs 1:1–7; 3:1–8, especially 1:7

THESIS: May we always choose the way of the wise.

INTRODUCTION:

1. It was Abraham Lincoln who said, "You can fool all of the people some of the time; you can even fool some of the people all of the time; but you cannot fool all of the people all of the time..."
2. But there is one person you can fool pretty readily, whenever we like.
 - a. He is gullible, swallow it hook-line-and-sinker naive.
 - b. He will buy that bridge in Brooklyn, if you tell him it's for sale.
 - i. He will believe in flying saucers.
 - ii. He'll even accept that the World Federation Wrestling is real ... if you will just tell him.
 - c. And who is this unsuspecting, unvarnished person whom you can get to believe anything you say?
 - i. It's you!
 - ii. We can fool ourselves.
 - d. Humans seem to have an infinite capacity for self-deception.
 - i. How easy it is for us to convince ourselves that our actions were taken with the best of intentions.
 - ii. Blinded by our own pride, we accept the most ridiculous explanations for our motives... if we are the ones explaining them away.
 - (1) Or as God said, "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately sick."
 - (2) So, our Maker reminds us. 'Who can understand it?'" (Jer. 17:9).
3. When we look at the opening paragraph of the book of Proverbs, Solomon summarizes the message of the whole book by stating, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction" (Prov. 1:7).
 - a. And, this is where I want to spend some time by contrasting the different ways to live so that we are not deceiving ourselves.
 - b. And, there are only two:
 - i. The way of the wise.
 - ii. The way of the fool.

DISCUSSION:

I. THE WAY OF THE WISE

- A. The wise person, the one who is really in the know, lives his or her life in relationship with God.
 1. However, we need to know that we can still believe in God yet, still be a

fool.

- B. In Prov. 1:7, Solomon tells us that, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.”
1. This has been called the motto of Proverbs and certainly shows the great truth lying beneath real knowledge.
 2. For, if one seeks to grasp the great truths of the Bible, he must first, have fear, that is, exceeding or deep reverence for the Almighty.
 - a. You see, this fear is not in reference to feeling anxious or an emotion experienced because of some specific pain or danger.
 - (1) It is a feeling of profound respect for God and His word.
 - (2) It is a holy and humble fear of God; a reverential affection for him, and devotion to him both internally and externally.
 - (3) It is knowing that we would never want to do anything that would displease God.
 - b. And so, because Christians are to fear or have this deep reverence for God, we give God our best.
 - (1) For, one who lightly respects the God of heaven is not going to have the dedication needed and they will not have an understanding of knowledge because of a lack of studying.
 - (2) But, one who fears stands in awe of his majesty and holiness, that we abhor or find offensive, even the thought of contradicting his will in any way or leaving something undone that he has commanded.
 - c. So, we are to keep his commandments (Eccl. 12:13-14).
 - (1) Not because our God is a consuming fire (Heb. 12:28-29) or that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Heb. 10:23-31).
 - (2) But, because we respect God and love him.
 3. One who refuses to put God in his rightful place of honor cannot come to know him or anything about him.
 - a. And, that is truly sad for a Christian to be in that situation.
 - (1) To have little reverence for God because they did not study his word and were not profited by his instructions.
 - (2) These individuals are called "fools" because they reject the wisdom and instruction offered in God's will.
 - (a) They are the opposite of what God wants.
 - b. But the more we know of God, the more insight to life, both physically and spiritually, he cultivates.
 - c. So, we should fear the Lord in a relational sense being drawn by the beauty of the Lord (Jn. 12:32).
- C. Yet, we should also fear the Lord in a universal sense.
1. In Prov. 3:19-20, Solomon said, “The LORD by wisdom hath founded the

earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens. By his knowledge the depths are broken up, and the clouds drop down the dew.”

- a. This fear of the Lord extends to every part of life, not just to some religious study or worship.
 - b. Why?
 - (1) Because the Lord is the Creator and Governor of all things which reflect and display His purpose and design.
2. When one observes and studies the material creation and life on earth, one cannot but be greatly impressed by the marvelous wisdom with which they operate.
- a. Countless books have been written to describe the works of wisdom in nature, which is only but a scratch.
 - b. The interaction of the stars, the sun, the moon, and the earth: there is a precision that does God justice.
 - c. The atmosphere is precisely adjusted to permit life to exist.
 - d. The composition of the earth reveals the wise design and the great Architect.
 - e. The myriads of life forms; their interdependence on each other—the cases are innumerable which detail the infinite wisdom of God in the material creation.
3. And so, Solomon cites here examples of God's wisdom in creation.
- a. He said, the depths are broken up referring to deposits of water, the rivers and streams which are underground within the earth and can be drawn out for the good of man and animal.
 - b. Solomon also mentions the clouds drop down the dew which is in reference to the evaporate cycle.
 - (1) Science had not yet discovered this, but the all wise and powerful God revealed it and set it in motion.
- D. So, the wise person who lives in the fear of the Lord lives in harmony with God and the world God has created.
1. You could say that our very lives belong to God and therefore, we must live in obedience to God and be dependent on him.

II. THE WAY OF THE FOOL

- A. When we look back at Prov. 1:7, Solomon tells us that, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.”
1. The way of the fool does not care even to begin to know.
 2. He despises the very elements of instruction.
 3. He will not take the first step in the path of wisdom.
 4. He wanders off at his own will and goes in the direction of darkness.
 5. He turns from him who is the Light of life and walks into the darkness, away from God, from instruction, from holiness, and from love.
- B. Now in Prov. 3:1-8, we find the phrase, “Fear the Lord.”

1. However, here Solomon pens many more things.
2. He wrote, “My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments: For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee. Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart: So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man. 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.”
 - a. The way of the fool is already obvious, for it is at opposite ends to the way of the wise.
 - b. It is to live in rebellion or opposition to God: passively, by trying to ignore Him, and actively, by directly disobeying Him.
3. Solomon says that the fool forgets God’s law, letting it be neglected and slip from his mind.
4. He tells the fool to not let mercy and truth forsake thee meaning not to forget about them.
 - a. Christians are suppose to sympathize with others in their troubles, to bring compassion to them, being tenderhearted.
 - b. But, those in foolish ways will not seek meekness, will not restore those who have fallen away because they have no mercy.
5. Solomon tells the foolish to lean not on their own understandings because it stands opposed to trusting in the Lord.
 - a. Men should not depend upon their own wisdom and understanding, in the conduct of civil life, but should seek the direction and blessing of God.
 - b. Otherwise, the foolish will be met with disappointments.
6. Solomon further tells the fool that he is only wise in his own eyes.
 - a. Too many times do we see individuals who act independently of God.
 - b. They do not trust in him, nor seek him for help and direction.
 - c. Thus, the way of the foolish is conceited, self-sufficient and thinking that they are wise enough to conduct all affairs in life by thy own discretion and in matters of religion.
 - d. Sadly, the way of the fool is to please themselves and give little to nothing to God.
 - (1) They forget to “fear the Lord” that is, be in awe of him.
 - (2) The way of the fool does not humble himself before God and reverence him, nor is he careful not to offend him.
7. And because of this, Solomon says that the way of the foolish does not depart from evil.
 - a. You see, the way of the wise would be to let God influence their

lives and avoid sin.

- b. But, the way of the fool hangs around with the appearances of evil and then cannot understand why he becomes evil himself.
 - (1) He has not exercised the right to forsake evil, to keep at a distance from it.

III. THERE ARE SOME THINGS WE MUST RECOGNIZE ABOUT MANKIND

- A. First, all humans have chosen the fool's way.
 - 1. Now, that may upset some, but look at what David penned in Psa. 14:1-3, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good. The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one."
 - a. Human history is full of foolish rebellion against God.
 - b. It began with our first parents, who, in Gen. 3, chose to disobey the Creator's instructions and eat the forbidden fruit.
 - (1) The woman forgot to be subject to the husband, the husband allowed his wife to wear the pants in the family.
 - (2) Then, they believed the serpent and that in eating it, they would become all wise like God (Gen. 3).
 - (a) Of course, we know that the promise was a lie, and the harmony of God's perfect creation was disrupted as sin and death entered the world.
 - 2. The relationship with God, for which human beings were made, was broken.
 - a. In Rom. 3:12, we hear that echo made again that all people sin when they reach accountable age.
 - b. We rebel against God's authority and thereby sin from our own transgressions of God's word (1 Jn. 3:4).
 - c. Thus, we become unprofitable and go out of the way God wants us to travel (Rom. 3:23).
- B. Second, Humans are without excuse for choosing the fool's way.
 - 1. In Rom. 1:18-23, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an

image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.

- a. We are without excuse because God has given us sufficient information to believe in him.
 - b. We are not blind and have no excuse for unbelief.
2. Yet, from this passage, we can also see that being religious does not make us wise; we can be religious fools.
 - a. You see, the Gentiles originally knew God (vs. 20), but because of their persistent rebellion, they consciously rejected Jehovah.
 - b. Although they knew God, they glorified him not as God, but placed their loyalty and love in themselves.
- C. Thus, all mankind is without excuse because we were created to know God and to follow him.
1. The problem is that mankind often wants a religion where we are in control, a god who will make legal how we want to live, and a god whom we can manipulate to do what we want him to do.
 2. So, people make and worship idols and dethrone the true God from His rightful place in our lives and in our societies.

CONCLUSION

1. There are only these two ways to live:
 - a. The way of the wise.
 - b. The way of the fool.
2. And, when we chose the wrong option, the result is tragic consequences of pain and death, which is bad news.
 - a. But, the New Testament gives us the good news, the “gospel” which means “good news.”
 - b. So, rather than God leaving us to suffer the consequences of foolish rebellion, Christ stepped into our fallen world (Jn. 1:14)
 - i. And, for the first time in human history since Adam and Eve fell, Jesus perfectly lived the way of the wise.
 - ii. He was in perfect harmony with the Creator’s design, in perfect obedience to the Father’s will.
3. He became our example.
 - a. And, God spoke through him to us.
 - b. And when Jesus died on the cross, he paid the price for our rebellion and made a way to be reconciled to God.
4. We are asked to lay down our arms and submit to his authority.
5. We are commanded to believe and be baptized if we desire to be saved (Mk. 16:16).
 - a. I hope that this is your decision today.
 - b. It will be the wisest decision you will ever make.
6. Or if you desire to live wisely by living Godly, but are living foolishly, come and ask God for forgiveness.