

“TRUST IN THE LORD WITH ALL YOUR HEART”

I. Introduction

- A. Life presents us with all sorts of challenges, choices, and concerns.
 - 1. And whenever these things arise in our lives, we are confronted with the question of how we are going to tackle them.
 - 2. Will we respond by doing what makes the best sense in our own eyes, or will we look to God and seek his help in discerning what we ought to do?
- B. This is a decision that we face time and time again throughout our lives.
 - 1. It is so easy for us to take the pragmatic route, to do whatever we think will have the best chance of producing the outcome that we want.
 - 2. But in these verses our Lord exposes the folly of that way of living.
 - 3. This passage shows us that the wise person responds to life's challenges by putting his trust in the Lord rather than in his own understanding.
- C. As we study this text tonight, we will consider four things that it has to say to us.
 - 1. First, there is an exhortation to remember sound teaching.
 - 2. Second, it calls us to trust in the Lord rather than ourselves.
 - 3. Third, it teaches us to honor the Lord with our wealth.
 - 4. And fourth, it warns us not to despise the Lord's discipline.

II. Remember Sound Teaching

- A. We begin by looking at the first four verses, where the emphasis is upon the importance of remembering sound teaching.
1. How many times in life do we hear the words 'Don't forget' and 'Remember'?
 2. They are also words that are repeated again and again in the Bible.
 3. The reason why we hear them so often is because it is so easy for us to forget things, even things that are of great importance.
 4. The reason why the Bible places such a strong emphasis upon remembering is because spiritual forgetfulness leads to apostasy.
 5. We should never think that we don't need to hear God's truth repeated to us because we have heard it all before.
 6. That kind of attitude is the first step toward forgetting sound teaching.
 7. We need to realize that the kind of knowledge to which God calls us goes much deeper than just head knowledge.
 8. God wants his teachings to sink down into our hearts and dwell within us.
 9. This is how a person becomes wise.
- B. In verse 3, the father tells his son, "Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you."
1. These two terms -- steadfast love and faithfulness -- frequently appear together in the Old Testament.

2. Oftentimes it is God who is characterized by steadfast love and faithfulness.
 3. The most famous example of this is in Exodus 34:6, where God passes before Moses and proclaims, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness."
 4. The father is saying that the same qualities that God possesses are to be found in his people.
 5. And this takes place as we internalize sound teaching and live in accord with it.
- C. One of the repeated themes in this passage is the promise of a reward if the father's instructions are followed.
1. In fact, all of the even-numbered verses contain promises of blessing.
 2. Verse 2 promises length of days and peace.
 3. Verse 4 promises favor and success in both God's sight and man's.
 4. And we find similar promises in verses 6, 8, 10, and 12.
 5. The basic idea is that obedience results in blessing.
- D. Now of course, we know that no Christian exhibits perfect obedience.
1. And we also know that we could never merit God's acceptance by any level of obedience.
 2. This is not teaching salvation by works, but is saying that those who have been saved by God's grace have been saved so that they may walk in the good path, the path of obedience.

3. But the promises contained in this passage do raise another question.
4. Why does it sometimes seem that God does not hold up his end of the bargain on this?
5. Why are there times when God's people are clearly striving to be faithful but their lives are cut short, or they do not experience success, or their barns are not filled with plenty?
6. To answer this question, we need to understand something about the nature of biblical proverbs and something about the nature of the world.
7. Proverbs set forth general principles that hold true in many situations, but these principles are affected by the chaos and uncertainty that sin has brought into the world.
8. The good news, however, is that God will not allow evil to thwart his good purposes for his world.
9. This means that all of the promises in passages like this will reach fulfillment in the world to come.
10. From the vantage point of glory, faithful saints who died young or endured serious opposition and hardship will be able to look back upon their lives in this world and see that God really did turn every trial that they experienced to their good.

III. Rely upon the Lord

- A. We turn now to the next part of our passage, which tells us to rely upon the Lord rather than ourselves.
 1. Verses 5 and 6 are probably the best-known verses in Proverbs, and they are also at the heart of this passage.

2. "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths."
3. The picture here is one of deep reliance upon God.
4. It is the kind of trust that does not hold anything back.
5. It is a summons to put all of our weight on the Lord.
6. As A.W. Tozer explains, this is one of the things that distinguishes true faith from false faith: "Pseudo-faith always arranges a way out... in case God fails... For true faith, it is either God or total collapse. And [God has never] failed a single man or woman who trusted him." [cited in Ortlund, 69]

B. What does this kind of trust look like?

1. It is seen when people submit to what God says in his Word even though it is in conflict with what they want.
2. It is seen when people regard their best works as rubbish when it comes to what makes them acceptable to God and cling to Jesus alone as their only hope for salvation.
3. It is seen when people obey God even when doing so places them at considerable risk.
4. I do not gamble, nor do I think that any Christian should gamble, but I think that the picture being given here is similar to what gamblers mean when they say that they are "all in."
5. That is the kind of trust to which the Lord summons us.
6. He wants us to be "all in" with him.

C. The opposite of this kind of trust is self-confidence, which the father urges his son to renounce.

1. We must not lean on our own understanding or be wise in our own eyes.
 2. This confronts a tendency that dwells within each and every one of us, the tendency to think that we know better than anyone else.
 3. This tendency asserts itself in our earliest years, as any parent can tell you.
 4. But if we do not learn how to renounce it, this tendency will be the one thing that dominates our lives.
 5. We need to forsake our high opinion of ourselves and ask God to work humility in our hearts.
- D. As difficult as this is, it in our best interest, because our understanding is not what we think it is.
1. As Old Testament scholar Bruce Waltke puts it: "One is a fool to rely on his thimble of knowledge... or on his own understanding, which is often governed by irrational urges that he cannot control." [244]
 2. Think of Frank Sinatra's famous song "I Did It My Way," and then think of the glamorous but ultimately empty life that Sinatra lived.
 3. Think of what is described repeatedly in the book of Judges, where the people of Israel did what seemed right in their own eyes.
 4. If we fail to keep a constant watch on our hearts, we too will do it our way.
 5. This is especially the case in our highly individualistic culture, a culture that encourages us to make our understanding supreme.

- E. Verse 6 tells us that those who trust in the Lord rather than in their own understanding will receive the blessing of God's guidance.
1. God will make our paths straight.
 2. Our Lord does provide guidance for his people, but he does not do so in the way that many Christians seem to think.
 3. A lot of the decisions that we have to make in life are ones that we have to make on our own.
 4. What kind of career will you pursue?
 5. Who will you marry?
 6. Where will you live?
 7. How should you spend your leisure time or your disposable income?
 8. The Bible does not give us specific answers to these kinds of questions, and God does not speak to us apart from his Word.
 9. This is why it is not a good idea to use phrases like, 'The Lord told me to do this,' or 'God led me to do this,' or 'The Lord laid it on my heart to do this.'
 10. God does guide his people, but he does not do so by speaking to us directly.
 11. Instead, he guides us by instilling wisdom within us.
 12. And the way to gain wisdom is to study and meditate upon God's Word, to pray, to listen to wise counselors, and to cultivate the kind of character that delights in the things that God delights in.

IV. Faith and Our Finances

- A. This brings us to verses 9 and 10, where the father applies what he has said about trusting the Lord with all our heart to the realm of our finances.
1. We need to honor the Lord with our wealth.
 2. The use of the term “wealth” here does not mean that this teaching only applies to those who are wealthy.
 3. Every believer should use their money in a manner that glorifies God.
 4. The idea of bringing the firstfruits of one’s produce to the Lord is something that is emphasized throughout the Old Testament.
 5. This practice still applies today, even though we do not live in an agrarian economy.
 6. The basic principle is that we should not give God the leftovers that we can spare after we have used our resources to meet our own needs and desires.
 7. Instead, we should give to God first, making our financial support of the church and its mission the top priority in our budgets.
 8. By doing this, we remind ourselves that all that we have belongs to God.
 9. It is also a highly practical way to express our trust in the Lord to provide for us.
 10. Honor the Lord with your finances, even when logic tells you that it may lead to hardship.
 11. This is what it means to trust in the Lord with all your heart and not lean on your own understanding.

- B. In verse 10 we see that a promise is attached to this instruction about honoring the Lord with our wealth.
1. The father says that those who do this will find that their barns are filled to overflowing.
 2. Now, as you probably know, this is a teaching that is often abused, as if it were a strategy for how to get rich.
 3. But people who read the Bible's promises of prosperity in that way fail to see that God does not want us to use him to get what we want.
 4. We should not see these promises as guarantees of worldly health and wealth.
 5. Instead, we need to understand them in light of the bigger picture of our salvation.
 6. Faithfulness always results in blessing, but the blessing is not always immediate.
 7. As we noted earlier, the fallenness of the age in which we live means that the ultimate orientation of Proverbs is future.
 8. Proverbs emphasizes the way the world is supposed to be, not the way that it always is.
 9. Nevertheless, because of God's common grace, the principles that are set forth in Proverbs often do prove to be true even in this present age.
- C. The Bible's promises of prosperity are real promises.
1. They are not simply idealistic.
 2. One day, God is going to set things right and the world will be remade.

3. But until then, we need to remember that we are pilgrims in this world.
4. God is careful not to make us so comfortable in this world that we lose sight of the fact that it is not our home.
5. God blesses us in many ways in this life, but even the best material blessings eventually fade away.
6. In the words of C.S. Lewis: "Our Father refreshes us on the journey with some pleasant inns, but will not encourage us to mistake them for home." [cited in Ortlund, 60]

V. The Lord's Discipline

- A. This brings us to the last two verses of our passage, where the father talks to his son about those times in life when we experience hardship instead of prosperity.
 1. The category that the father uses to explain this to his son is that of discipline.
 2. Now it needs to be said that the Old Testament Wisdom literature stops short of saying that every trial that comes into a believer's life is a matter of corrective discipline for something that he or she has done wrong.
 3. That is one of the lessons that we learn from the book of Job.
 4. Yet we should never forget that even when our trials are not a matter of discipline, God is still at work in them, testing and purifying our faith.
- B. We may not always be able to discern whether or not the trials that we experience are a matter of discipline, but the basic principle that is taught in these verses always applies.
 1. We always need to be humbled under our trials.

2. Don't cultivate an attitude of resentment when you are going through times of hardship.
 3. Realize that it may be discipline.
 4. God may be correcting you in some way.
 5. And even if that is not the case, God is using your trials to train you in godliness and to strengthen your faith in him.
- C. The last verse of our passage contains one last word to encourage us to trust in the Lord with all our heart at all times.
1. It reminds us that God's work of disciplining us and training us in the way of faith assures us that he loves us as his children.
 2. As any parent who is committed to faithfully and lovingly disciplining his or her child will tell you, it takes a lot of work to do so.
 3. It is a lot easier to let things slide, to be permissive and indulgent, and to blame other people or other factors when your children do wrong.
 4. It is easier, but it is not loving.
 5. God takes the time to discipline us because he really loves us.
 6. As the writer of Hebrews tells us in his reflections on this proverb, discipline seems painful rather than pleasant when it is being administered, but in the end it will yield the fruit of righteousness for those who are trained by it. (see Heb. 12:11)
 7. That is God's purpose for you, for me, and for all who have been adopted as his children through Jesus Christ.

VI. Conclusion

- A. As you make your way through life, you will inevitably put your trust in something.
- B. The wise person is the one who has learned to put his or her trust in the right place.
- C. Don't trust in your own understanding.
- D. It will always let you down in the end.
- E. Trust in the Lord with all your heart.
- F. He will never fail you.
- G. "Those who trust in the LORD are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides forever." (Ps. 125:1)