

001, Introduction to the Book of Proverbs

Proverbs

By Max Doner

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Sovereign Grace Baptist Church

30375 Fairview Road

Lebanon, OR 97355 USA

Website: www.sgbible.com

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/sovgrace

Each of us has to make thousands of decisions each day. These decisions range from the mundane to the monumental, from what brand of Kleenex to buy to how to hold a marriage together. What decisions we make often have far reaching impacts that last all of our lives and which lead us to have to make other decisions, which lead us to have to make other decisions and so on.

Where we are today and what we are today is a result of the decisions that we have made in the past. Where we shall be and what we shall be will be the result of decisions we are making right now.

At this time we are, by our decisions, sowing the seeds that we will reap the fruit of in the years ahead. Clearly, then, decision making is no small matter. It is no unimportant matter.

Now the trouble is that we have often given little or no thought as to how to make those decisions which are going to affect our future so much. Most of the time most people make decisions on the basis of impulse, impression, personal desire or human reason. They make decisions based on what is expedient, what is comfortable or they take the path of least resistance. These things are often the determining factor as to the decisions that we make.

You go up to someone and you ask them the question: Why did you make that decision that you made? And the answer is usually: Well, it just seemed like the right decision.

And this is why so many decisions that people make are the wrong ones because they are made on the basis of a defective reasoning process, one that will lead to the wrong answer most of the time. And so we need to completely rethink how we need to make decisions. And it is my conviction that if we are to make right decisions, they must be made not on the basis of impulse, not on the basis of impression, not on the basis of feelings, not on the basis of human reason, not on the basis of what is most self gratifying, but our decisions must be made on the basis of biblical principle and biblical principle alone.

Biblical principle must be the basic bedrock foundation upon which all of our decisions are to be made if we are to make decisions that we can be content with both for time and also for eternity.

In Psalm 119 and in verse 105 we read, “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”¹

How shall we know what course of action to take, what road to travel done? The Word of God will illuminate for us the proper path. Psalm 119 and verse 24 says, “Thy testimonies also are my delight and my counsellors.”²

To whom shall we go for counsel in making decisions? The psalmist went to the Word of God.

And so these passages tell us that when a direction is to be considered or a decision is to be made, it is to be made with this question. What does God’s Word have to say about it? How does God’s Word counsel me? What path does God’s Word call me to follow? What light does God’s Word shed upon my path?

You see, everything we do in life and every decision we make touches upon a principle or sometimes several principles. And we must ask ourselves what those principles are and how they relate to our situation and what those biblical principles direct us to do.

In Psalm 119 and verse 59 it says, “I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.”³

And so when you think about what way you are going to go and God’s testimonies say, “Go this way,” we are to turn our feet into that path where upon the light shines and sheds upon it and it counsels us to go.

When we make decisions on this basis we then make good decisions, biblical decisions, decisions that we will have no regrets for, decisions that will be a blessing both to us and to those around us as well as a glory and an honor to God.

We, when we make decisions based upon the Word of God, will be able to say with the psalmist in Psalm 119 and verse 30, “I have chosen the way of truth.”⁴ And how do I know I have chosen the way of truth? Because, “Thy judgments have I laid before me.”⁵

It was because the psalmist made his decisions in light of God’s truth that he could be confident that he had chosen the way of truth. And, really, we don’t want to choose any

¹ Psalm 119:105.

² Psalm 119:24.

³ Psalm 119:59.

⁴ Psalm 119:30.

⁵ Ibid.

other way, do we? We don't want to choose the way of error. That only leads to destruction and to disappointment.

Now all of this demands that we cease to be independent thinkers. That is, we are no longer to think independently of biblical counsel and of biblical principle.

We now think not out of our own minds. We now think out of Scripture and its principle.

Now if we are to do this, it demands that our thinking be molded and shaped by the Bible and what it says about life so that the first question that pops into our mind is not what do I think about this, not what do I feel about this, not what is everybody else saying about this. The very first question that should pop into our minds is: What does God think about this?

Now, of course, if we are to think in that fashion it requires two things of us. It requires the humility to submit and subordinate our judgment to God's. This should not be too hard when we see how God never makes a mistake and how that we make tons of mistakes, when his judgment is always right and ours is very often wrong. We should be glad to abandon the notion that our judgment is a reliable guide and we should have the humility to submit and subordinate our judgment to God's.

It also requires of us, of course, if we are to ask ourselves, what does God think, not only the humility to subordinate our thinking to God's thinking, but it also requires of us a knowledge of what the Scriptures teach about a wide variety of issues because if we are going to function according to biblical principle we have got to know what biblical principles are and what and how they apply to the situation that we find ourselves in.

To that end—that is, that we would know what the biblical principles are that apply to our situation to which we are going to subordinate our judgment in making our decisions—to that end God has ordained that we hear the Word of God preached and have its principles opened up to us and applied to real life issues so that we might think biblically. And according to biblical principle God has ordained that we engage in personal Bible reading and meditation. So that we might think biblically, God has instructed us to seek counsel of pastors and fellow believers.

Proverbs 11 and verse 14 says, “Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety.”⁶

Safety from what? Safety from making foolish, stupid decisions that wind up producing bad outcomes in our lives.

And so if we are then not to lean upon our own understanding, if we are to function on the basis of what does God think about this, we have to humble and subordinate our judgment to God's. We have to gain a knowledge of what the Scriptures teach about all of the issues regarding which we have to make decisions. And so as we hear the Word

⁶ Proverbs 11:14.

preached, as we read the Scriptures ourselves, as we ask counsel from our fellow believers, we begin to gain an inventory of wisdom and biblical principles that then help us make right decisions.

And if you run into a situation and you say, “Well, I am not sure what principle applies to this,” then ask your pastor. According to 1 Corinthians four and verse one, they are the stewards of the mysteries of God. They don’t own the principles. They didn’t invent the principles, but they do know about them. And they are able to distribute them and apply them as necessary.

Or it may be a situation where you have a decision to make and you say, “I think I do know what principles apply,” but it is still wise to check with a person who is well versed in biblical principle to make sure you are not missing something or leaving out a perspective that you should consider.

Now this is not to say that you seek counsel every time before you wash the dishes, but the bigger the decision and the more momentous its impact and the longer its consequences are going to bear upon you, the more cautious you should be in making that decision.

But the point that I want to make is simply this. We need to be well acquainted with biblical principles and how they apply to the daily decisions we have to make and we have to ask ourselves the question: How does what I am doing relate to God’s Word and its principles and what do those principles and that Word tell me to do in this situation or in that situation?

Now it is because we need this large inventory of biblical principles to be resident within our mind and lives, to impart wisdom to us so that we know what to do in each situation that I have decided to enter into a study of the book of Proverbs.

Perhaps no other book in the Bible contains so many clearly stated principles that directly apply to our daily decisions as does this book, because there is virtually no issue in life which the book of Proverbs does not address. And to know this book is to have a vast storehouse of principles that will safely guide you through any decision that you have to make.

And so this evening what I want to do is introduce us to this book and help us to understand something of the structure of the book and of the value of the book. So turn please in your Bibles to the book of Proverbs chapter one.

We want to consider together in the first place this evening the author of the book. We want to ask ourselves the question: Who wrote the book of Proverbs?

Well, the answer is: Three people wrote the book. Notice Proverbs one and verse one. “The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel.”⁷

⁷ Proverbs 1:1.

So who wrote the book of Proverbs? Answer: Solomon wrote the vast majority of it.

We see this stated again in chapter 10 and verse one. We see it stated again in chapter 25 and verse one.

Now if you will turn to chapter 30 we will see that there is a second author and that is Agur.

Now we don't know anything about Agur, but chapter 30 and verse one says, "The words of Agur the son of Jakeh, even the prophecy: the man spake unto Ithiel, even unto Ithiel and Ucal."⁸

The third author of the book of Proverbs is King Lemuel, chapter 31 verse one. "The words of king Lemuel, the prophecy that his mother taught him."⁹ And not much is known about him either.

But even though we don't know much about Agur and King Lemuel, we know that God is the author of the book and that is sufficient for us.

Now, regarding the authorship of Solomon for the book of Proverbs, turn please to the book of 1 Kings chapter four verse 29. Here we find a declaration and a description of the prolific nature of Solomon's writings and expression of his wisdom. In 1 Kings chapter four and in verse 29 it says:

And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore. And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men; than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol: and his fame was in all nations round about. And he spake three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five. And he spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes. And there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom.¹⁰

Now it is interesting to me to note that God preserved most if not all of King Solomon's proverbs. He preserved only one of his sons, the Song of Solomon and he preserved none of his discourses on natural science.

⁸ Proverbs 30:1.

⁹ Proverbs 31:1

¹⁰ 1 Kings 4:30-34.

This indicates that the goal of God is not to make men of science so much as it is to make men of sound godliness. Because what we need most is not factual information, but moral instruction. This was the crying need in Solomon's day and it is the crying need in our day because no matter how much you know, if you do not practice righteousness, your knowledge is merely destructive. In the world now we have more scientific information than we have ever had and the people of our day are as foolish, if not more foolish, than they have ever been.

And to gain knowledge without a congruent growth of character is simply to put a sword in the hand of a maniac.

Wisdom is to be found in the area of morality, not in the area of scientific inquiry. The Bible tells us, "Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth."¹¹ And this book, above all else is a discourse on how to love God and how to love your fellow man because love is not a sentimental feeling. It is a pattern of conduct towards another person that God himself has prescribed and defined in his Word. Love is the fulfilling of the law.

And this book describes to us in great detail the pattern of behavior with which we should treat our fellow man and, thus, express our love to them.

So Solomon was largely the author of this book, but even though Solomon was the author, clearly a greater than Solomon was here. God himself is the author of this book.

And that brings us, secondly, having considered the author of the book, to the outline of the book.

Now the book is easily broken into four sections. First of all we have in chapters one through nine the conduct of the life of young people. Now it is interesting to note that 16 times in these first nine chapters we run across the phrase, "My son, my son, my son, my son," 16 times in the first nine chapters. This tells us who the recipient of the book of Proverbs is. It is written for the young and their training. Specifically it was written for the training of the children of the king.

For example, in Proverbs chapter 23 and in verse one it says, "When thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before thee."¹²

And so it is expected that the people to whom this book was written would be sitting with rulers and eating. And so this book was written by Solomon to his sons to guide them in their conduct and in their actions as those who were being trained to be leaders in government in particular and of the people in general. And so this perspective helps us with the interpretation of certain passages when we understand to whom it is written.

And so therefore this book is excellent for instructing children as to how they are to conduct themselves and, of course, it is excellent for the child that is still in each of us

¹¹ 1 Corinthians 8:1.

¹² Proverbs 23:1.

because as one person has said, adults are just children grown large. And often times that is the case.

Now when we look at these first nine chapters, this section is made up of short discourses and it is substantially different from the remainder of the book. In these first nine chapters we have these short discourses and the language that is used is very picturesque, metaphors just abound. And so these first nine chapters really appeal to the imagination with the metaphors that are set forth where wisdom is personified and a lot of things are illustrated with various metaphors.

“Go to the ant, thou sluggard.”¹³

And there is all sorts of various metaphors that appeal to the imagination are used in these short discourses that make up these first nine chapters which are written to the son of the king.

Now the second main division of this book is the first collection of Solomon’s proverbs and this is found in chapters 10 through 24. In chapters 10 through 24 we have the first collection of Solomon’s proverbs.

Now here the form of the book radically changes from that of a narrative discourse to that of simple two line statements that are unrelated to one another. That is, each statement is related to itself, but then you read a proverb verse one and then you go to verse two and it is talking about totally different subject. You go to verse three, completely different subject, verse four, another subject all together.

And so the characteristics of this section in chapters 10 through 24 are those of terseness, brevity, compressed truth and here we have not so much an appeal to the imagination, but an appeal to the judgment.

And then the third major section of this book is the second collection of Solomon’s proverbs. The second collection is in chapters 25 through 29.

Now we read at the beginning of chapter 25 these words, “These are also proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied out.”¹⁴ So this is a different group from the group that is contained in chapters 10 through 24. These were collected and written by the servants of Hezekiah many years after Solomon and so they have the same form as the first collection, but they have a different source.

Then the fourth and final section of the book of Proverbs is the two appendices by Agur and Lemuel in chapters 30 and 31. And, of course, the form, once again, changes and we have a return back to the short narrative form like we had in the first nine chapters in which there are several verses connected together in order to contain and convey a thought.

¹³ Proverbs 6:6.

¹⁴ Proverbs 25:1.

Well, this, then, is the outline of the book. And that brings us, in the third place, to consider the makeup and the form of the book. We have seen the author of the book, the outline of the book and now, thirdly, the make up and form of the book of Proverbs.

Now this book is called the book of Proverbs and you might be sitting there saying, “What is a proverb?”

Well, the best definition I have found is this. A proverb is a large amount of wisdom wrapped up in the fewest possible words. A proverb is kind of like a gold coin. A gold coin contains a lot of value in a very small space. And so these compressed statements of a large amount of truth in a very small compass demand a great deal of meditation and thought to understand what they convey. The Proverbs are kind of like dehydrated food, you know, very small package. You add water and it expands to a large volume. And in the same way when you add the water of meditation to a proverb it expands to its full meaning and to its full application. Often times the meaning and the application of the proverbs are not all together clear unless we do the hard work of investigating, digging, meditating, reflecting and researching the meaning of those passages.

For example, in chapter two we are told about some of the work we have to do if we are going to rightly understand the book of Proverbs. Notice Proverbs two verses one through five.

He says:

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.¹⁵

Notice what we have to do. We have to receive. We have to hide. We have to incline. We have to apply. We have to cry. We have to lift up the voice. We have to seek and we have to search. All of those verbs are used to describe the degree of intensity and focus and effort that is necessary to gain the full benefit of the wisdom that is contained in this book.

Gold and diamonds are not found laying all over the surface of the ground, are they? They have to be worked for and so it is with wisdom.

Jesus said in John five and verse 39, “Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.”¹⁶

¹⁵ Proverbs 2:1-6.

¹⁶ John 5:39.

The word “search” means to thoroughly investigate. The word is used several times of God searching the heart. And so we cannot take a casual approach to this study. We have to work hard. We have to think hard to follow the line of reasoning out to its ultimate conclusion that this book contains for us.

So the genius of a Proverb lies in its concentration of a large amount of truth into a small amount of words in a very striking way so that it fastens itself to our mind and urges us on to righteousness. That is the genius of the Proverbs.

Notice, if you will, Ecclesiastes chapter 12. Ecclesiastes is right after the book of Proverbs. In chapter 12 verses nine through 11 we read these words about Solomon.

Now here Solomon is called the preacher. In Ecclesiastes 12 and verse nine it says:

And moreover, because the preacher was wise [speaking of Solomon], he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs. The preacher sought to find out acceptable words: and that which was written was upright, even words of truth. The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies, which are given from one shepherd.¹⁷

And so the words of Solomon are as goads. They prod us into right behavior and they are as nails. That is, they fasten us to truth and to wisdom. But all of these things that Solomon gave it says are given from one shepherd. And that, of course, is none other than our Lord Jesus Christ.

And so this, then, is the makeup and the form of the book.

Now most of the proverbs are in the form known as a distich. You just needed to hear that word, didn't you? A distich, D I S T I C H, is a couplet of two lines that are related to each other. And so we have line one and you have line two and line two is related to line one and this is what is called a distich.

Now there are several types of these couplets in the book of Proverbs. When we go through and interpret them you will see me referring to those so here is the head's up on the language we are going to be using.

There are couplets that are synonymous. That is, when you read the two lines, the second line simply repeats the truth in the first line, usually in different words. So a synonymous proverb, the second line repeats the truth in the first line, usually in different words. And if you can't figure out what the first line is saying, usually the second line because it says the same thing in different words will illuminate the first line or vice versa.

¹⁷ Ecclesiastes 12:9-11.

So, for example, if you look at Proverbs chapter 11 and in verse 25 it says, “The liberal soul shall be made fat.”¹⁸ And then the same truth is restated in other words, “And he that watereth shall be watered also himself.”¹⁹

So the person who gives, gets and he just says that truth in two different ways in the same couplet.

And so when we are looking at synonymous proverbs the key word is usually “and” where it will state a truth and then it will restate that exact same truth just with different words.

And then there are antithetic proverbs like chapter 10 and verse one. It says, “The proverbs of Solomon. A wise son maketh a glad father: but...”²⁰ Here is the contrast. “A foolish son is the heaviness of his mother.”²¹

And so an antithetic proverb is one where the second line is a contrast to the first line. The first line says this, but in contrast to that, the second line states its opposite. So an antithetic proverb is one in which the second line is a contrast to the first line and the key word that we look for is the word “but.” And lots and lots and lots of the Proverbs are antithetic proverbs.

Then there are synthetic proverbs. A synthetic proverb is where the second line completes or develops the thought of the first one. So you have thought and then development of thought or you have thought and completion of the thought.

So if you look at chapter 10 and verse 26 it says, “As vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes...”²² Here is the development of the thought, “So is the sluggard to them that send him.”²³

If you look at verse 18 it says, “He that hideth hatred with lying lips...”²⁴ And here is the development of the thought. “And he that uttereth a slander, is a fool.”²⁵

And so a synthetic proverb often the key word is “so is” or sometimes it is “and.” In a synthetic proverb the second line completes or develops the thought in the first line.

And then there is a parabolic or illustrative proverb. And here the first line is a word picture or an illustration of the truth in the second line. The first line is a word picture or an illustration of the truth in the second line.

¹⁸ Proverbs 11:25.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Proverbs 10:1.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Proverbs 10:26.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Proverbs 10:18.

²⁵ Ibid.

So if you look at chapter 27 and verse 15 it says, “A continual dropping in a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike.”²⁶

And so here is a parabolic or illustrative proverb where you have the word picture in the first line, the illustration of the truth in the second line.

Verse 17 of chapter 27. “Iron sharpeneth iron.”²⁷ There is the illustration. Here is the application. “So a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.”²⁸

And so these are four basic types of these distichs or couplets a parabolic form, the synonymous, the antithetic, the synthetic and the parabolic.

Now there are several other types that could be mentioned, but understanding these will help us interpret the proverbs when we come to them. And that brings us, in the fourth and final place this evening to the value of the book.

Now why is this book so valuable? Why is it so important? Why would I choose it as a book to preach through?

Well, the value of the book lies, first of all, in its practical instruction. It lies in its practical instruction.

Now the book of Proverbs is to our practical life what the book of Psalms is to our devotional life. The book of Psalms, of course, deals with the attitude of the heart before God in worship. The book of Proverbs deals with the conduct of the hands before God in service.

Other parts of Scripture show us the glory of our high calling, but this book shows us how we are to walk worthy of that high calling. No book like this book addresses the nuts and bolts of Christian attitude and conduct. Any area of conduct from friendships to child discipline to avoiding temptation to marriage relationships to business dealings to the use of the tongue and anything else you might think of is contained here in straightforward terms.

It shows us how extensively Christianity is to affect our lives because it impacts us at every point in every circumstance and in every relationship.

Charles Bridges in his wonderful commentary on Proverbs—and if you don’t have this, sell everything you have got except your Bible and the wife and kids and buy a copy. Every father ought to take his sons through this book.

Now, I have taken my children through the book of Proverbs a couple of times. I didn’t specifically use this book, but if you don’t know what something means there, this is the

²⁶ Proverbs 27:15.

²⁷ Proverbs 27:17.

²⁸ Ibid.

book to get on the book of Proverbs. It just doesn't get any better than that. I have a wide variety of commentaries and I would give them all up in exchange for this one.

Charles Bridges, it is published by Banner of Truth and it is entitled *Proverbs*.

Charles Bridges says in his introduction on page 13 these words regarding the book of Proverbs. He says:

All ranks and classes have their word in season. The sovereign on the throne is instructed as from God. The principles of national prosperity or decay are laid open. The rich are warned of their besetting temptations. The poor are cheered in their worldly humiliation. Wise rules are given for self-government. It bridles the injurious tongue. It corrects the wanton eye, and ties the unjust hand in chains. It prevents sloth; chastises all absurd desires. It teaches prudence. It raises man's courage and represents temperance and chastity after such a fashion that we cannot but have them in veneration. To come to important matters so often mismanaged the blessing or curse of the marriage ordinance is vividly portrayed. Sound principles of family order and discipline are inculcated. Domestic economy is displayed in its adorning consistency. Nay even the minute courtesies of daily life are regulated. Self-denying consideration of others, liberal distribution are enforced. All this diversified instruction is based upon the principles of true godliness. Thus, the book of Psalms brings the glow upon the heart. The book of Proverbs makes the face to shine.

And what Charles Bridges is trying to say in his introduction is that there is no person, no matter what their state in life and that there is no circumstance whatever it may be that is not addressed by this book. And so it addresses us from the greatest of issues all the way down to the most minute, all the way down to how you look at somebody.

In Proverbs 21 and verse it says, "An high look... is sin."²⁹

Of course, it is extremely valuable in the instruction of children. He goes on to say on page 14 in his introduction, he says:

This book was written for the heeding of youth. It takes young people, as it were, by the hand and sets up way marks to warn against coming danger and immanent temptations and allures them into the bright ways of God by the most engaging motives. And never surely was the object so momentous as at the present day. Our young people are growing up at a period when the foundations of the earth are out of course and when subtle and restless efforts are making to poison their hearts and pervert their ways.

What would he say about today? This was written a long time ago, 1827.

²⁹ Proverbs 21:4.

Nothing, therefore, can be more important than to fortify our young people with sound principles that when withdrawn from the parental wing into the world of temptation they may be manifestly under a divine covering as the children of a special providence. What this invaluable book impresses upon their minds is the importance of deep seated principles in the heart, the responsibility of conduct in every step of life, the danger of trifling deviations for expediency sake, the value of self discipline, the habit of bringing everything to the Word of God, the duty of weighing in just balances, a worldly and a heavenly portion and, thus, deciding the momentous choice of an everlasting good before following after the toys of this earth. These lessons thoroughly [?] will prove the best security against all attempts to loosen the hold of principles and to entice our young people to upon that evil enchanted ground.

This practical godliness so far from wearing a forbidding look or being associated with gloom or sadness, casts a smile over a world of sorrow and is a sunbeam of comfort and suffering and ever a principle of peace and steadfastness.

“Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.”³⁰

And so what Bridges is really saying is that it doesn't matter what your status is. It doesn't matter what circumstance you find yourself in. This book has a message for you and especially for young people it is critical in establishing in their lives those principles that will then preserve them and protect them and guide them throughout all the rest of their lives so they don't wind up making the same dumb mistakes we made because we didn't have the wisdom of Proverbs beat into us when we were kids.

And so this, then, is the first value of the book. Its value lies in its practical instruction. But, secondly, the value of the book lies in its protective warnings. It lies in its protective warnings.

This book is the expression of a man who has both seen and made a lot of mistakes. It is a guide from someone who has been down the road of life and can save us from a multitude of heartaches if we will only heed the warnings that it contains.

You know, a wise man is one who learns from other people's mistakes. A fool is the person who has to make all of his own. Fools will despise this book and be punished, but the wise will hear and avoid all of the hurtful follies that it warns us against because you know what? There are no new dangers. There are just the old ones in new clothes. And the great warnings of this book will save us from a world of grief if we will just follow them.

And, you know, of all the warnings in the book of Proverbs, the greatest warning of this

³⁰ Psalm 119:165.

book is the warning of the life of the man who wrote it. And it is this. All the wisdom and all the knowledge in the world will not deliver us or protect us from sin if we don't act on it and put it into practice.

Because, after all, what happened to the man who had all this wisdom and wrote this book? Do you remember what happened to him?

Turn in your Bible to 1 Kings chapter 11 beginning at verse one. This fellow who was wiser than anybody it says of him, 1 Kings 11:1:

But king Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites; Of the nations concerning which the LORD said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love. And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart. For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father. For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. And Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and went not fully after the LORD, as did David his father. Then did Solomon build an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon. And likewise did he for all his strange wives, which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods.

And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the LORD God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice, And had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he kept not that which the LORD commanded. Wherefore the LORD said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant.³¹

And so what we see is that this man who in the book of Proverbs gave all the warnings against strange women and against foolish companions wound up getting hooked up with strange women and foolish companions.

And this is why Paul says in 1 Corinthians nine and verse 27, "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."³²

³¹ 1 Kings 11:1-11.

³² 1 Corinthians 9:27.

Solomon preached to us, but he didn't even follow his own advice. And so the great warning of this book is that all the wisdom and all the knowledge in the world doesn't do you any good if you don't follow it. And, you see, the problem is often times not so much that we don't know what to do. The problem is we know very well what to do, we just flat don't want to do it. And we think that we can get away with it.

"Everybody else got caught, but I can do this and I can get away with it."

No, you won't.

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.³³

It says of Solomon in Nehemiah 13 and verse 26, "Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? yet among many nations was there no king like him, who was beloved of his God, and God made him king over all Israel: nevertheless even him did outlandish women cause to sin."³⁴

And so we need to recognize that, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."³⁵

And this is why Jesus said every day we have to, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."³⁶

May God spare us from our own foolishness and the sin and the misery that it brings by helping us to take heed to this book and to its teachings.

Let us pray together.

Our Father, we thank you for your goodness in giving us this book of such rich and valuable wisdom, more valuable than rubies and diamonds and gold, more valuable than all the power and position in the world is the value of wisdom. Help us, then, Father, to seek it and having learned it, Father, help us to do it. Lord, we pray that we might not gain knowledge in vain, but, Father, may we be doers of the Word and not hearers only deceiving our own selves. Lord, we pray for your wisdom and guidance that as we go through this book in the months ahead that you might guide us into a right understanding and interpretation of each of these passages and then, Father, may you grant to us the motivation to actually carry them out. Lord, we ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

³³ Galatians 6:7-8.

³⁴ Nehemiah 13:26.

³⁵ 1 Corinthians 10:12.

³⁶ Matthew 26:41.