

Ecclesiastes 12: 9-11; “The Words of the Wise”, Message # 83 in the series – “Remember Your Creator”, Conducted by Pastor Paul Rendall on the Evening of December 12th, 2012, at the church.

Solomon does not call himself the king in these final words of his book. He calls himself “the Preacher”. In verse 1 of the 1st Chapter he calls himself, “the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem”. But now, in the peroration (that is, the conclusion) of his sermon to us, he would give us a summary of the wisdom of what he had gathered from living his life under the sun; a life which he had come to see as vanity. He will also give us a summary of the wisdom gathered from living his life unto God, which he came to see as the wisest, most profitable course a man could take. A preacher, according to these verses, has certain duties which he should not fail in. If he is wise, his teaching will consist of certain regular activities in relation to the people whom he is called to instruct. According to these verses a wise preacher is to be regularly engaged in 2 activities in his preaching. 1st – He is to teach the people knowledge, or words of truth. And 2nd – He is to apply those words as goads and nails as those truths which are given from Christ Himself.

1st – A Preacher is to teach the people knowledge, or words of truth.

Verse 9 – “And moreover, because the Preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yes, he pondered and sought out and set in order many proverbs.” Turn with me over to 1 Kings Chapter 4: 29. “And God gave Solomon wisdom and exceedingly great understanding, and largeness of heart like the sand on the seashore.” “Thus Solomon’s wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the men of the East and all the wisdom of Egypt.” “For he was wiser than all men - than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol; and his fame was in all the surrounding nations.” “He spoke three thousand proverbs, and his songs were one thousand and five.” “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.” “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.” We can see here that truly, Solomon was very wise in many areas of knowledge. He was wise because God gave him wisdom and exceedingly great understanding, and largeness of heart. He gave him an interest in instructing others in righteous behavior. And so God enabled him to compose, by the power of the Holy Spirit three thousand proverbs and one thousand and five songs. Only one of his songs remains today, and was included in the canon of Scripture; the Song of Songs. God gave Solomon knowledge and insight into birds, creeping things, and fish; in regard to all kinds of creatures, he had knowledge, because God gave him an interest to look carefully and deeply into these subjects. Ask yourself what it is that God has caused you to look carefully and deeply into in regard to

what you should do with your life? I trust that if you would be wise, that one of the greatest of the things that you will look into is His Word. What do you do with the mind that God has given to you?

Look with me over at 1 Corinthians 4: 6. “Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written, that no one of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other.” “For who makes you differ from another and what do you have that you did not receive?” “Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?” You can see here, very plainly taught, that all the gifts, and talents, and abilities that we have we have received, we have received from God. And all spiritual gifts and abilities likewise. Therefore, we ought not to boast, as if somehow these things came from ourselves. They come from God. Therefore, we should humbly attempt to use what we have to promote the glory of God, and more specifically, the glory of Christ. We should attempt to take all that God has given us ability to do, and to do it with all our might. We should not boast in ourselves and our own sufficiency, but rather in God and His grace. Look at 1 Corinthians 15: 9. “For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.” But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God within me.” Preachers should study to have some amount of variety of knowledge in their preaching. They should stick with the word of God, but they should read widely and their knowledge should take in, in a general and sometimes even a specific way, other fields of knowledge; The study of animals, the study of anthropology and history, the study of mathematics and physics; all of the things which God has created, which will supplement and build together with the knowledge of the Word of God. What can be said of preachers, can be said of all Christians. Take what you have, dear Christian, and use it. Do not compare yourself with others around you. Seek to be everything that God, according to His Word, is instructing you to be, according to who you are as a new creature in Christ. Fulfill your respective roles as the godly men and women that God would have you to be. God has not called women to be public preachers in the church, but he has called them to be godly wives and mothers; to teach their children the Bible with all of its godly precepts. The greatest preachers, and the greatest men have often had mothers who taught them the Bible well when they were young. But, beyond this, study God’s providential ordering of things in your life as well; the parents he has given you, the opportunities to learn and put into practice what you have learned, which He will set before you.

When it says that Solomon still taught the people knowledge, I think that it means that he continued to teach them even after he had fallen into years of vanity in his old age. In his heart, for a time, he was not right with God in the matter of his taking many wives and concubines. He later repented of this gathering of

wives and he instead gathered the wisdom of truth given to him by the Holy Spirit so that he could teach others to avoid this mentality; the mentality that more is better. No; one wife is enough. And one wife is what the Bible enjoins. Genuine repentance from sin is the basis of your being able to instruct others about the meaning of life. If you have received and lived out the wisdom which is from above, there is every reason to share it with others. This is the occupation of a Preacher; the Koheleth as it is in the Hebrew. It is to gather spiritual truth into his mind, and to learn to live it out in consistency, so that he might share it with others, so that they might be saved and pursue righteousness. Solomon taught the people this through his book of Proverbs. He not only taught them repentance but he taught them what was right; how to think right things, and do right things for God. He taught people right from wrong. This is something that not only fathers and mothers should do, but it is something that all Christians should do. He pondered, he searched and arranged many principles of truth and righteous living. Turn over to Proverbs Chapter 1 with me. “The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, the king of Israel: To know wisdom and instruction to perceive the words of understanding, to receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, judgment, and equity; to give prudence to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion—a wise man will hear and increase learning, and a man of understanding will attain wise counsel, to understand a proverb and an enigma., the words of the wise and their riddles.” “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.”

This was what Solomon, the Preacher, sought to find – delightful words, and then to write words of truth correctly.” Having prepared himself in this wise way, he was then able to publicly instruct the people in his spiritual knowledge. What a blessing this must have been, to those who had ears to hear. Similarly, Fathers and mothers, and all who would be godly, need to study the Bible and to declare its truths to their children, their loved ones, and everyone around them as they have been given the responsibility and the providential opportunity to do so. This is not giving them sermons, but inculcating nuggets of truth to them that will impact their mind, their conscience, and their heart. Those whom you are seeking to speak with, need to have the truth of the Word of God presented to them; they need to be spoon-fed the words of God from the Bible. If you do this, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus. The Holy Spirit will attend your efforts. This is one of the great ways that people come to saving faith and usefulness to God, and to Christ. This is the way to the furtherance of His glorious kingdom; if you will ponder, search out, and arrange small portions of the truth of the Bible to give to others around you.

Now, 2^{ndly} – A Preacher is to apply those words as goads and nails; as those truths which are given from Christ Himself.

“The words of the wise are like goads, and masters of these collections are like well-driven nails; they are given by one Shepherd.” Solomon, by inspiration of

God, knew where His wisdom came from. It came from God; but more specifically He knew that it came from the Shepherd of Israel. It came from Christ, Who was, and Who is, the Shepherd of Israel. The revelation of the Son of God was known in Old Testament times. We find this truth revealed in the words of another writer of the book of Proverbs, Agur, in Chapter 30, verse 4 – “Who has ascended into heaven, or descended?” “Who has gathered the wind in His fists?” “Who has bound the waters in a garment?” “Who has established all the ends of the earth?” “What is His name, and what is His Son’s name, if you know.” The NAS says, “Surely you know.” Solomon knew that the words of the wise were like goads. A goad is a stick with a sharp pointed end which is used by the herdsman to direct the sheep or cattle in the way that they should go. The words of the wise; that is the inspired words of the Old Testament Scriptures, in Old Testament times were not only to be received as informative, but as words which were given to direct the life. There was, and there is, the authority of God behind them. The Spirit of God attends them. The same is true in New Testament times. The Scriptures are given to direct us into the right paths of obedience to God.

Psalm 19, verses 7-11 show us that these words; the words of the Bible should be used by preachers like goads in a the firm but friendly way of good will toward both sinners and saints. “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.” “More to be desired are they than gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.” “Moreover by them Your servant is warned, and in keeping them there is great reward.” Even Christians need to be warned. Here in our text we find that the preacher’s preaching God’s law will sometimes prick our conscience in order to attempt to move us into the right way. Sometimes we need prodding to do what is right, or to move in the direction which God would have us to go in. This is what God did with Saul, before he became the Apostle Paul. Look at Acts 9: 1-5. “Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem” “As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven.” “Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?’” “And he said, ‘Who are You, Lord?’” “Then the Lord said, ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.’” “It is hard, (or is it hard) for you to kick against the goads.”

We see here, that not only was it the truth of the Scriptures that Saul was fighting against; He was also fighting against Christ Himself. In the immediate sense of his experience he was also fighting against the godly example of Christian people who were witnessing to the wonderful truth and the powerful reality of

knowing Christ as their Lord; His changing their sinful hearts away from self-righteousness, and bringing them into the paths of righteousness by faith in Jesus Christ. The preachers are the well-driven nails whom Christ uses to bring sinners into connection with Christ. They are joined together by faith in the gospel. Preachers should be masters of these “collections” of the 66 books of the Bible; the words of wisdom. They should be able to make application of the truth of the Scriptures just like the carpenter drives the nail through the board and clinches it on the other side. Both sinners and saints should not be able to escape the implications to themselves of what the Bible is saying, or what God expects. “Masters” of Bible words are like “well-driven nails” which are given, all of them, by Christ who is the Author behind the authors of the Bible. If the preacher will take the all-important truths of the Bible related to the salvation of the souls of men, and drive them home to the mind and the conscience of the people whom he preaches to; they will ultimately have the good effect which God desires them to have. Even if his preaching does not bring a good initial response, nevertheless God’s purpose will be accomplished. Sure it is, that we want to see men and women, young people and children saved and become holy. But we also know that God works sovereignly in the way that pleases him to address the needs and problems of people’s hearts.

Before people can come to Christ they need to feel the goads and hear gospel preachers putting down nails, hammering on the great truths of the gospel and the Word of God. They need to hear a preacher who is willing to use the sharp prodding of the law which will bring conviction of sin, in order that they would see their need of Christ. They need to feel the urgency and necessity of trusting in Christ now, and not sometime later. This is why preachers are needed. Romans 10: 14 – How shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed?” “And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?” “And how shall they hear without a preacher?” Therefore pray for the Lord to raise up and send forth more gospel preachers into his harvest. In Luke 10: 2 Jesus says, “The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.” These are the well-driven nails given by the One Shepherd – Jesus Christ.