

The Unavoidable Confrontation with Wisdom

By Jeff Noblit

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Anchored in Truth Ministries
1915 Avalon Ave.
Muscle Shoals, AL 35661

Website: www.anchoredintruth.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/anchoredintruth

Open your Bibles and let's go to Proverbs 1. As I was thinking about our graduates, I thought, "What would be better than an exhortation, an exposition from the Proverbs." Proverbs is a book written by Solomon to his son and in many ways he's exhorting his son – now by the way, it applies to ladies also, the principles certainly apply both ways – but he's exhorting his son based on the failures and the follies that he had committed. He had lived foolishly, he had lived for the flesh, he had lived for the indulgences and the temptations that are common to young people and now he writes to his son, at times seemingly begging and pleading with him, "Son, do not go down that path. Listen to the wisdom I'm giving you."

Proverbs 1, we'll begin in verse 20 and go through verse 33. Proverbs 1, beginning in verse 20. He writes,

20 Wisdom shouts in the street, She lifts her voice in the square; 21 At the head of the noisy streets she cries out; At the entrance of the gates in the city she utters her sayings: 22 "How long, O naive ones, will you love being simple-minded? And scoffers delight themselves in scoffing And fools hate knowledge? 23 Turn to my reproof, Behold, I will pour out my spirit on you; I will make my words known to you. 24 Because I called and you refused, I stretched out my hand and no one paid attention; 25 And you neglected all my counsel And did not want my reproof; 26 I will also laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your dread comes, 27 When your dread comes like a storm And your calamity comes like a whirlwind, When distress and anguish come upon you. 28 Then they will call on me, but I will not answer; They will seek me diligently but they will not find me, 29 Because they hated knowledge And did not choose the fear of the LORD. 30 They would not accept my counsel, They spurned all my reproof. 31 So they shall eat of the fruit of their own way And be satiated with their own devices. 32 For the waywardness of the naive will kill them, And the complacency of fools will destroy them. 33 But he who listens to me [that's wisdom] shall live securely And will be at ease from the dread of evil."

Solomon also said in Proverbs 8, "For wisdom is better than jewels; And all desirable things cannot compare with her." Listen to that, "wisdom is better than jewels; And all desirable things just cannot compare with her." Now, our world is big on intellect, our world is big on education and, of course, that's very important, unfortunately, our world is slam-pack full of educated fools.

Wisdom might be defined this way. Now, there are various aspects and we're going to bring that out in a moment, but wisdom in a general sense could be defined this way: a righteous understanding and use of knowledge. A righteous understanding and use of knowledge. What good does it do if God by heritage, by the natural way he made up your brain matter, enables you to have an incredible memory? Most often when somebody does real well at school and have a high IQ, it means they have a great memory and a capacity to recall. I probably would run about average and probably most of us do. I wish I had that. Charles Haddon Spurgeon was a genius. He had an incredible recall. Spurgeon would say that he could preach a sermon and have eight different thoughts in his mind at one time and could just pull at will what he wanted to say. I have to keep notes just to keep one thought going.

Now, that could happen to a man, whether or not he's a Christian, but that's not wisdom. Wisdom is the capacity to take the intellect, the knowledge, the education, and understand it righteously and use it righteously in a way that pleases and honors God. And by the way, when you use your knowledge with wisdom, not only does it please and honor God, it's by far and away best for you and that's what Solomon is saying to this young man here. "Do what I'm telling you and it's going to turn out good for you in life." And to these graduates, do what the Scriptures are telling you and you will turn out good in the end.

First of all, the title, "The Unavoidable Confrontation with Wisdom." Solomon pictures this as if no one gets around wisdom. You have to deal with wisdom. You may think you don't have to, but you will either embrace it or you will reject it, but it's unavoidable. You have to deal with it.

I. Wisdom reaches out to all. Notice how he words it here. First of all, let's do a subpoint, though, and that is A. It's given through a person, Jesus Christ. It's given through a person, Jesus Christ, and there is a reach to all if they will just receive it.

Notice the words that he uses here. He uses the word "street," wisdom is out in the street; her voice is in the square; she's at the gate of the city. In other words, wisdom is out there. Wisdom is available for every man. Now listen: wisdom is not the exclusive provision of the elitist. No, wisdom is for all. Wisdom is for the man in the street and the man in the ivory tower.

The Bible says of Jesus who was wisdom personified, wisdom Incarnate, the Bible says the common man heard him gladly. Now, in today's world, we have this godless, progressive liberalism. It's hard for me to say "progressive" because it's not really, it's digressive. But in their thinking, generally speaking, they believe that wisdom is birthed

and dispensed from cultural elites. You know, you have your educational elites in our high universities and classrooms who dispense all of their so-called wisdom to the children under them. You have your political elites. You have the media and Hollywood elites. They're supposedly the ones who care for us and can cure the world by dispensing to all of us minions the way we ought to live. Not so, says the Scriptures. Wisdom is not the product of cultural elites, but it is the possession of anyone who will receive it. As a matter of fact, it's been my experience and I've known some 12 year old boys and girls who loved Jesus and knew the truth of the word of God who had more wisdom than some men or women with numerous Ph.D.s. Wisdom, it's available to all if they'll just receive it.

Remember what Paul wrote to the Corinthians. The Corinthians would prize themselves as cultural elitists, as sophisticated people. Notice what Paul said to them in 1 Corinthians 1:26-27, speaking to the church in Corinth he says, "For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble," you guys are not generally of the high up muckety-mucks of the culture, "but God has chosen the foolish things," or things the world would say are foolish, "the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong."

Now, I talked about the fact that wisdom is personified, it comes through a person. As a matter of fact, you cannot have wisdom without Christ. There is no true wisdom without Christ. Now listen: if an unsaved person will follow the precepts of the Bible, they will do better in life but that's not necessarily true wisdom because they're doing better in life but – listen – but not for the glory of God. Are you getting me? You follow the precepts of this book, you follow the moral absolutes of this book and you'll do better, but wisdom is doing better because you love the God who gave the precepts; you want to glorify the God whose truth is revealed in this book and it's good for you and better for you in this life and certainly better for you for all eternity.

But wisdom here is personified. Notice how he uses the personal pronoun, "She lifts her head in the square. She cries out," verse 21, "in the streets." Well, wisdom, indeed, is encapsulated, if you will, in a person and his name is Jesus. In 1 Corinthians 1:30, the apostle writes, "But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God." He's the wisdom from God and the wisdom that comes from Christ, which comes from God the Father, comes to us through the Scriptures. That's how Christ is made known. Listen to 2 Timothy 3:15, "and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." Wisdom is in Christ. It comes through a person.

But now let's go a little further in this, secondly: it's gained through a process. Wisdom is gained through a process. Just knowing that there is a Christ and knowing of Christ and knowing something of what the Bible teaches about Christ is not wisdom. There is a personal – listen now – a personal experiential process by which you are the recipient or there is imparted unto you God's very wisdom through Jesus Christ.

Two things here: first of all, you become a repent. You become a repent. Do you remember the story I told you about going to Romania right after the Communist dictator Ceausescu was assassinated? It hadn't been long at all. As a matter of fact, the hotel, if you could call it that, it was very rough, trust me, the hotel we stayed in was a hotel for Ceausescu's bodyguard and the people had been under incredible, harsh persecution and intimidation and the church had suffered greatly in Romania and when we were talking with the pastors there and preaching to them, they'd ask us to help them structure and set up their small group ministries. They said, "You know, here in Romania, there is the tradition of the Eastern Orthodox Church and everybody is sprinkled as a baby and everybody is called a Christian but we found so many of them were not willing to stand against the evils of Communism, so many of them would really go against the faith when the pressure came on, and we wanted to make sure that we were communicating what true Christianity was and what the true new birth is and what true conversion looks like, and so we realized we can't call each other Christians in this culture. Nobody knows what that means anymore, so we began to just call each other repents." And I thought, "That is a great definition." A repent.

Being a repent means – now, you graduates, listen to me, you young people listen – it means you have a deeply humble estimate of your natural self. A deeply humble estimate of your natural self. Here's what you're saying: young people, it means you look at yourself and you say, "What I can come up with naturally as far as what is good or what is best or what is wise, I just naturally am skeptical of me. I naturally have a low view of my own assumptions because I know only God's truth is wise." And that's what a repent is.

Notice what he says here. He's talking to his son and he begins there, if you will, let's see, in verse 22, "How long, O naive ones, will you love being simple-minded? And scoffers delight themselves in scoffing And fools hate knowledge?" Now, he's rebuking the young person for being a naive one. A naive one is one who is open to everything. "Hey, what's going on? What's the new thing? What's the new thing out there that everybody thinks is the coolest thing? We're just open to whatever." Solomon says, "You're being so foolish, you naive one." Open to everything.

Then he called them simple-minded. The simple-minded would basically say, "If it feels right to me, then it's right." You fool. Nothing is ever right because you feel like it's right. It's only right if God says it's right and then you command your feelings to get in line with God. That's a simple one and that's the culture you and I live in today. Every man does what is right in his own eyes. "If I feel it, that's what I am." What was it, Harvard University that just recently developed a policy that said every man can decide his own gender and your gender can change from day-to-day. That's one of our highest educational institutions in the land. Because some educational elitist has decided, "Aha, we are the dispensers of wisdom and here's what we say: you can be any gender you want to be and any day you want to change your gender, shazam, you're a different gender!" No wonder the Psalmist said, "God sits in the heavens and laughs." What foolishness. Simple ones, naive ones.

Then he says, "You hate knowledge and you're scoffing and you're mocking." The scoffing and mocking has the idea of sneering at the traditions of your forefathers; taking the great truths and foundational truths and the moral absolutes that built Western civilization and you scoff at those and say, "We're gonna throw all that away and reinvent culture according to what we feel is right and best." Hate knowledge, that just means hates the truth as God reveals it. Now, what's really happening here when people do these things, here's what they're doing: in reality the other side of the coin is they love self and they love sin. Men do these things and propose these things and come up with these pseudo-intellectual philosophies and viewpoints because they love self and they love sin and it's foolish. It's not the repenter.

So notice what he says in verse 23 to all of those kinds of people, the naive ones, the simple-minded, the scoffers and those who hate knowledge. Verse 23, "Turn to my reproof." Turn to my reproof. In other words, Solomon is saying, "Get over yourself and listen to my argument. Listen to what I'm telling you, son. Understand what I'm telling you."

You know, think about it just for a moment: when people hear, now just the common person in America today, when they hear biblical wisdom, do they humble themselves and turn to it and embrace it? No, they don't. Not generally speaking and that's why they don't have a good life. Now listen to me: and that's why they do not end well. They're not repenters. Proverbs 15:31 says there is life-giving reproof. Listen, young people: a wise man understands, "I can't trust my heart. I can't trust my viewpoints. I can't trust my ideas. I can't trust what I would come up with as right and wrong and good and bad. I repent of putting any confidence in that and I can only trust what God's word says." That's being a repenter. That's wise and you will never know true wisdom with Jesus Christ unless you're a repenter, unless you can say, "I turn from all other philosophies. I turn from all other teachings or viewpoints to embrace Christ. And wherever Christ contradicts me, I repent of me and I embrace Christ." A repenter.

Turning, he says here, turning from one thing to another thing, verse 23. You turn from your ideas and mankind's ideas and what the Bible would call the wisdom of the world to embrace God's wisdom as revealed in Jesus Christ and through the sacred Scriptures.

Now, a second part of this, not only do you become a repenter of rejecting all the others to turn to Christ, you become one who has faith and fellowship with Christ, and when you have faith in Christ and fellowship with Christ, then you begin walking and understanding true wisdom. Notice how he says it here. What a powerful and clear picture of conversion and salvation right here in the Old Testament book of Proverbs. Look at verse 23 again, "Turn to my reproof," that's repentance and then what happens? "Behold, I will pour out my spirit on you." That's the new birth. That's the new birth. God says, "If I can get you to where you get sick of yourself and sick of the world's way and sick of your own viewpoints, and by the way, that includes all the religious ritual customs and ideas of how men get to God. You've got to repent of all of that and then I will put my spirit within you and you'll be born again and you'll know me in fellowship with me." That's where wisdom comes from.

So to you graduating seniors, all young people and all people who are under my voice, have you come to have a very humble low estimate of yourself and an extremely high estimate of God and his Son, Jesus Christ? That's where wisdom is. It's in a person and it's gained through a process of repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

Seek him, know him, treasure him above all others. One thing in the providence of God, I was exposed to some teaching early, I mean, right after my conversion, what 38 or so years ago, and one of the things that was impressed upon me was: gain wisdom. Gain wisdom. My first pastor, Charles Dinkins at First Baptist Church of Lawrenceburg, TN, just said that over and over again. "Seek wisdom." And I began as a brand new convert and I can't tell you the hundreds, thousands of times I've implored God, "God, I don't have to be the smartest guy in the world, I do not have to have the greatest intellect but, God, I want wisdom. Give me wisdom." Now listen: early on I thought that would mean I can look at a situation and I can maybe figure it out and understand things and figure out people and understand how stuff works, I'd have a better life, I'd raise kids better, all the stuff. That's what I thought it meant and that's part of it, but do you know what God has done? He's answered that prayer and do you know what he did? He showed me Jesus. I love him more, I know him better and I treasure him more than I ever have and he said, "I answered your prayer. That's where wisdom is." Now, all of those other things flow from that relationship.

So you're not looking for a secret formula or a code book or a system of thinking, you're looking for Christ when you're looking for wisdom. You're not finding some elitist teaching on how life works best and how the culture ought to function, no, you're looking for Christ and everything flows from him and he's gained through a process. You gain Christ and gain wisdom by repenting and placing your faith and in fellowshiping with Jesus Christ.

Wisdom, indeed, is reaching out to all, even those who may live in a place where there is no Bible, no missionary, and no Gospel witness. Wisdom reaches out to them through the revelation of nature and through the revelation of the conscience God has put in their hearts. If they will respond, they will find God. He will get the Gospel to them. I'm confident of that. Wisdom reaches out to all.

II. Solomon writing to a young man says, first of all, "Look, listen to wisdom. It's reaching out, screaming out in the streets. Don't be a fool, listen." Secondly: note the dire consequences of rejecting wisdom. Solomon is like Amos. Solomon does not pull any punches here. He lays it out graphically and coldly, in a way or in a sense, of what the consequences are when a young person goes on in their life pushing away God's wisdom.

Notice what he says in verse 24, "Because I called and you refused, I stretched out my hand and no one paid attention; And you neglected all my counsel And did not want my reproof." So what's the first consequence? Notice A in our outline: terrible tribulations. Not the great tribulation we'll have in the book of Revelation as it's described there but terrible tribulations in your life in this world now if you push away God's wisdom.

Oh, verse 26 he says, "I will also laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your dread comes." Look at verse 27, "When your dread comes like a storm And your calamity comes like a whirlwind, When distress and anguish come upon you." So notice the words here he uses to describe what your life is going to be characterized by if you reject wisdom. The words: calamity, dread, storm, whirlwind, distress and anguish.

Just this morning reading Fox News, the pop star who has been utterly absurd and ridiculous and vile, Miley Cyrus, in an interview she said that she deeply regrets things she's already done. What is she, she's in her lower 20s. The girl is just barely...she hasn't acted like an adult yet but, I mean, she's in her early 20s. She said, "I deeply regret." She said, "I literally," now she's not making a joke, she said, "I stay up at night worrying about what I've done on some of these videos that are already out there in the public domain." Already storms. Already dreads. Already anguish. Why? Because she rejected wisdom. Already. "Yeah, but she's got millions and everybody thinks she's a great star." Yeah, and she can't sleep at night. Already.

Terrible tribulations and these tribulations are both for time and for eternity. Those who spurn God's wisdom just do not end well in this life.

I thought I was blessed this week meditating on this and I thought about some of the deathbeds that I've been to and let me tell you, Jesus Christ, God's wisdom makes a difference in death. I remember Bo S. Some of you remember Bo S. He was dying with cancer in his lungs and, you know, my last memory of Bo S. is he was propped up on a pillow in his hospital bed and had his hand raised toward heaven praising God. Atheists don't die like that. Fools who spurn God's wisdom do not die like that. Rusty Jackson, what a temperament, what a spirit, what a sweetness and a confidence in God. Yeah, they had their moments of struggle but there is a difference. Listen: if you'll seek wisdom young, you will end better in this life. Shaky S. Jennie Thomas. So many I could just keep going. It makes a difference.

I read this this week: an atheist wrote to a friend who had just lost a loved one in order to comfort the friend. Here's what the atheist wrote to comfort her friend. "As a part of this huge reservoir of terrestrial carbon, we die and become a part of the earth which gives rise to new life as it gave rise to us." Are you encouraged? You're just a blob of terrestrial carbon and you'll die and let worms live and, hallelujah, we're all excited now! Do you know what that is? Listen to me: that's utter hopelessness. Utter hopelessness. Listen to me: and those who live a life of hopelessness, live in a terrible tribulation.

That's what Solomon is saying. You're going to have it if you spurn wisdom and push it aside. You see, the greatest evil is to turn away from God out of your love for sin and out of your love for self.

Look at verse 29, he said, "Because they hated knowledge And did not choose the fear of the LORD." You be for certain, friend, I don't care where your theology is on the sovereignty of God, it can't be any stronger than mine, but every man that faces

tribulation and ultimately faces God in wrath is responsible for his own fate. He chose, "I will not look to God. I will look to myself."

What a love and what a grace God has shown to mankind that he who spoke the worlds into being and he who wrought out man's redemption, placing the wrath of man on his own Son on the cross, plunging holy wrath upon him in the place of the fallen, the same God who will also one day create a new heaven and a new earth where righteousness dwells, this high and holy one that would stoop to give us his own divine wisdom, yet we're going to ignore it? Reject it? Procrastinate about the importance of it? Laugh and mock at it? I'm telling you, to do this is the greatest sin and the greatest evil. Think about it: it is blasphemy, detestable, inestimable evil that the moment you hear of God's wisdom in Jesus Christ you do not fully humble yourself in repentance and receive him as Lord and Savior. Think about it. He would do that.

So terrible tribulation is the proper response to that kind of evil. Storm. Whirlwind. Distress. Anguish. Calamity. Dread. Solomon says it will last for all eternity. Matthew 11:20-24, I'll not read it but in Matthew 11, Jesus is talking about the cities that rejected him and would not receive him and then he gets down to the point here in the text where he says, "And it will be more tolerable for Sodom in the judgment than for you that rejected me." Now the reason he said that was because everyone agreed that Sodom was worthy of the worst of judgments. But he said, "That's not as bad as entertaining me, the wisdom of God, and setting me aside." And listen, friend, just as bad as rejecting it is procrastinating about it. Saying, "Well, I'm busy. Maybe I'll get to God later." You fool! Solomon says terrible tribulations will be your lot for spurning God's wisdom.

Secondly, Solomon says here not only will terrible tribulation be yours for time and eternity but wisdom will have the last word. B. Wisdom will have the last word. Look at verse 26, he says, "I will also laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your dread comes." I will laugh at your calamity and I will mock when your dread comes. Sometimes people will say, "Pastor, so many in today's world, they reject God and so many in today's world, they reject God's wisdom but they seem to do okay." Do you remember the story I told you about the farmer, the atheist farmer? The atheist farmer would mock and ridicule the Christian farmers in his community because the atheist farmer would work every Sunday and bring in his crops. You know, when the harvest is in, you've got to get them in. The Christian farmers would stop and go to church because they knew the Lord God had given them the harvest. And the atheist farmer wrote a scathing article mocking and ridiculing the Christians, put it in the newspaper, "Look at me, I'm harvesting on Sunday and I had an abundant crop, better than many of them." One of the Christian farmers wrote back and said, "Yes, you did have a better crop than I did this year but you must remember God does not settle all of his accounts in October." You trust me, wisdom is going to have the last word over your life. Listen to me: you may think, Mr. Bigshot, you're getting by with it now, you listen, wisdom will have the last word. He said, "I'll mock and I'll laugh when your calamity comes for choosing to spurn wisdom."

You had your time and you had your season and you said no to God and no to God's wisdom and he is patient and he is longsuffering, but trust me, he will have the last word. One way of saying this is that Solomon is saying to this young man, "If you push God aside and God's wisdom aside, God's wisdom will be fully vindicated by the end of your life."

You know, even among believers, God's wisdom that was once mocked and laughed at in their foolish younger years is finally vindicated in their latter years. Now listen: Christ forgives all sin and he often gives a measure of restoration even in this life, however, it's also true that though fully forgiven, the years of unbelief often leave a scar and the die is cast and even the child of God's latter years can have a degree of tribulation that it would not have had had they looked to God and God's wisdom in their younger years. How many broken marriages would have not been broken if you'd turned to God sooner? How many health problems would have been alleviated had you turned to God and God's wisdom sooner? How many financial difficulties could have been averted if you had turned to God and God's wisdom sooner? How many rebel children may not have become rebel children if you, dad, had turned to God and God's wisdom sooner? You see, wisdom is vindicated. He will have the last word even in the lives of God's elect who played loose and acted the fool until their latter years.

Terrible tribulation for this life, Solomon says, if you spurn God's wisdom. Wisdom will have the last word about your life. And thirdly: God's wisdom will not be available in your timing. God's wisdom will not be available in your timing.

Look what he says in verses 27 and 28, "When your dread comes like a storm And your calamity comes like a whirlwind, When distress and anguish come upon you." The point here is: you're going along, you're doing good, you had the world by the tail, you didn't humble yourself as a repentor and receive God's wisdom, Jesus Christ, you didn't order your life by the word of God, you didn't devote yourself to a sound biblical local church, you just did it your way, like Frank Sinatra said, "I did it my way." He said, but then quickly calamity. Quickly the whirlwind comes. Quickly the storm strikes.

Verse 28, "Then they will call on me, but I will not answer; They will seek me diligently but they will not find me." God will shut off the availability of grace and mercy. The old time preachers used to preach about sinning away your day of grace. Do you know why they would preach about sinning away your day of grace? Because according to the Bible, you can sin away the day of grace. You can go too far and God shuts off the grace valve to your life. "Pastor, when is that?" I have no idea. I have no idea. Solomon says to this young man, "Don't live that way. Don't risk it. Don't gamble with that."

Look at verse 32, "For the waywardness of the naive will kill them, And the complacency of fools will destroy them." God says, "You desired a God-less life and you desired a God-less eternity and such you shall receive." There was a time, there was a season when you said no to God and there will be a time and there will be a season when God will say no to you. You despise wisdom's cry and he will one day despise your cry. You mocked and laughed at the notion that this was an urgent call and that you might seek it one day

and God says, "I will mock and laugh at you in your time of need." "Pastor, when will that time come?" I have no idea. Solomon is warning, "Young man, young woman, young person, don't spurn God and God's wisdom." It will not be available to you in your timing.

III. And I'll be brief. The reward of safety and security for those who find wisdom. The reward of safety and security for those who find wisdom.

Look at verse 33 there, "But he who listens to me shall live securely And will be at ease from the dread of evil." Now listen: he's not saying no trials or difficulties or heartaches come to the life of the believer – listen to me – but you will have a supernatural safety and security through the trial and through the heartache and through the difficulty and Lord knows how many he may even deliver you out of that you'll have no idea about and may not in heaven but perhaps in heaven you will be able to see all the things we were delivered from that we didn't even know were around the corner.

For several days now, I've asked God, "God, give me an example. Give me an illustration of how you just do better down the road if you seek God and seek God's wisdom early on." And I just was blank. I was blank. I was blank. I was blank. And it was as if God's Spirit spoke to me even last night and this morning and said, "What about your life? What about your life?" If you knew where I came from, if you knew what I came from, to where I am today, there is only one explanation for that: God's grace that enabled me to seek God's wisdom as a young man.

R. G. Lee was the pastor of the so-called famed Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, TN, the largest Southern Baptist Church for many many decades. Dr. Lee was growing old but he was doing well. A man asked Dr. Lee one day, "To what do you attribute doing so well in your latter years?" Dr. Lee said, "I'm living on the dividends of a well-spent youth."

On one occasions, Dr. Adrian Rogers, who took Dr. Lee's place, they were talking and Dr. Rogers said to Dr. Lee, he said, "Dr. Lee, before you die or maybe after you die, could they open up your head and take your brain out and open up my head and put your brain in my head?" Dr. Lee looked at Dr. Rogers and said, "Son, that would be like putting a grand piano in a broom closet." So not only did he grow old well and die well, he grew old with a sense of humor and a spring in his step and a glint in his eye. Listen: there is going to be safety and security in this life and for eternity to those who do not spurn God and his wisdom.

I was thinking about my wife, I love my wife, she's so good to me. That's God's goodness. I didn't earn that or deserve that. My children, they genuinely love Christ and love the church. You know, Pam comes to church here because she loves you. She's not just married to the pastor. Do you know how many pastors at my place, their wives are just counting the days until they can get out from under the burden of being a pastor's wife? Look, I know pastors and I know churches. Don't challenge me on that. I know what I'm talking about. And yet my wife loves the church because you're a wonderful

people and you really are. You're wonderful to your pastor and you're wonderful to the pastor's wife. And I thought what a blessing that is because I've talked to pastor after pastor who get where I am... now, in defense of those dear pastor's wives, you have to understand what so many of them went through by mean, ornery, ungodly church members through the years. I can understand what they're saying but what a blessing. The church family called Grace Life Church, God is my witness, I have no desire to ever leave here until I die. I'm not looking for retirement. I love it here. That's a blessing, the goodness of God. If you will seek God and God's wisdom as a young man or a young woman, listen to me, you will do better than those who spurn God.

You know, five of my classmates, I mean my running buddies, five of my high school classmates and running buddies, do you know where they are today? They're dead. I should have been one of them. And they died as young men. I'm not talking about they just died in the last few years, they died as young men. As a matter of fact, I believe I'm accurate, they all five died before I got out of college, at least my Master's work. That should have been me.

It's all grace but the Bible says you're responsible to seek God and God's wisdom so that you might end well. You'll end up well. And I always want to put this disclaimer in because it's the truth: I do not believe I'm the model Christian or the model man of God or the model man of faith and I do not believe my family is the model Christian family. Trust me. If I had a tape recorder on my house, y'all would probably call me into the elders next week. We struggle. We have to repent. We have to humble ourselves. But I'm telling you, Solomon said it, what, approaching 3,000 years ago and it's still true today. And I love the way he pictures it there in verse 33, "But he who listens to me," that's to wisdom, "shall live securely And will be at ease from the dread of evil." It's a precious and beautiful picture of God just taking care of you all the way through. All the way through.

It made me think of this song.

"I feel the touch of hands so kind and gentle.
They're leading me in the paths that I must trod.
I'll have no fear for Jesus walks beside me
For I'm sheltered in the arms of God.

"Soon I shall hear the call from heaven's portals
Come home my child,
It's the last mile you must trod
I'll fall asleep
And wake in God's new heaven
For I'm sheltered in the arms of God.

"So let the storm clouds rage high,
The dark clouds rise,
They won't worry me;

For I'm sheltered safe within the arms of God.
He walks with me,
And naught of earth shall harm me,
For I'm sheltered in the arms of God."

Solomon says, the word of God says, that's the way you want to live and that's the way you want to die. Wisdom, it's better than the finest jewels and nothing else can compare to it.

For you graduating seniors, I plead with you, I prayed for you by name, I covet your life for the glory of God, I exhort you, I beg you, seek God and his wisdom and all these other things, God knows all you need, all these other things shall be added to you as well. And all of you agree with me on that this morning, would you say a great, big, hearty amen?