

Proverbs 3: 18-24; “Retaining Wisdom’s Principles”, A Devotional for the Mid-Week Zoom Fellowship & Prayer Meeting of our church on July 1st, 2020, by Pastor Paul Rendall.

The last time we were together in the book of Proverbs I spoke to you about the pleasantness of wisdom. The person who seeks and finds God’s wisdom will be a happy and blessed person; God’s knowledge will be pleasant to their soul. God will lead that person and guide them through this life with and by the wisdom that He gives them in His word, when they will act upon it. Now, this evening I want to go on to show you that for this happiness to continue on, for you to continue to have this sure direction from God, day by day, throughout your life, that you will need to retain wisdom’s words and principles of truth.

Verse 18b says – “Happy are all those who retain her.” In other words, the person who would truly be happy all the days of their life must keep God’s wisdom close to themselves and not let her go. They must seek her companionship every day. They must hold her fast, as the word “retain” can be translated. There are 3 things that you should remember. You should remember, 1st of all – That wisdom is a fruitful principle that you must take hold of. 2nd – Remember that Wisdom is a grace which teaches you discretion and which you spiritually wear. And 3rd – Remember that wisdom will bring you certain tangible spiritual comforts.

1st – Wisdom is a fruitful principle that you must take hold of. (verse 18)

“Wisdom is a tree of life to those who take hold of her, and happy are all who retain her.” So we see that wisdom is a tree of life here. What does this mean? Well, do you remember where this phrase “the tree of life” is mentioned in other places of the Bible? The first is in Genesis chapter 2, verses 8 and 9 where it says – “The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed.” “And out of the ground the Lord God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” And then look at verses 15-17. “Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it.” “and the Lord God commanded the man, saying, ‘Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.’”

So we see here that when God created the first man and the first woman that he placed them in a garden in which there were many trees. But out of all of those trees there were two trees that had great everlasting significance and meaning. And both of them were fruit trees. There was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which if either Adam or Eve ate from it, they would die. And then there was the tree of life, which if they ate of it, they would live forever. For after they had eaten from this tree God said in Genesis 3, verse 22, – “Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil.” “And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever’ – therefore the Lord God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken.” “So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.”

So, there was no way for Adam and Eve to go back, on their own, and undo all the damage that they had done by eating of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They could not obtain salvation by their own works. They had broken the covenant of works; and thus the tree of life, that is, their eating from the fruit of that tree, and obtaining eternal life, was taken away from them by that means. They had both died spiritually in eating it. They had both showed that they were not wise because they had disobeyed God’s express word to them. The Devil had deceived Eve to believe that she would be wise in eating of it. Genesis 3, verse 6 – “So

when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and the tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and gave to her husband with her, and he ate.” And so, I hope that you can see that the issue in all of this was their not trusting in their own wisdom which they could obtain by their own observations, trusting in their own reasoning and understanding, but rather seeking to eat from the tree of life.

What is the tree of life? Well, in the context of the verses that we are studying, it appears that she is the Scriptures, because it is the Scriptures which have the power to make a person wise unto salvation. They cannot be wise in their own understanding and lean on their own understanding, but must find the Lord Jesus Christ who is the personification of wisdom, both to obtain salvation and then to live wisely. The Scriptures themselves speak to us of Christ as being a tree of life. Jesus said in John 10: 10 – “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” But in John chapter 5, verses 39 and 40 He says – “You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.” “But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.” So, unbelievers are by nature unwilling to come to Christ to find wisdom and salvation. They think that they can figure these things out on their own, and somehow by their own works, please God.

But this is not the case, and it was why Christ had to die upon the cross, and through His sufferings on that tree, make a way for sinners to become truly wise. So if any sinner will take hold of Christ’s sufferings on the tree, and by faith see Him there suffering for their sakes, they will be made wise unto salvation. They are eating, they are partaking, spiritually speaking, from the tree of life. Wisdom becomes pleasant to your soul because you have believed in the finished work of the Perfect One, the One who has suffered for you on the tree so that they might die to sin and live to righteousness. 1st Peter 2: 21-24 – “For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow in His steps: ‘Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth’; who when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we having died to sins, might live for righteousness – by whose stripes you were healed.”

So Christ by His hanging on the tree purchased the grace by which we could become wise unto salvation. And He also then gave us an example by His sufferings, of how we should grow in wisdom and retain wisdom after we have found it through Him. By His grace and the holy example of His words and life, if we will seek for this every day from His hand, spiritually speaking, we will have wisdom become our close companion. which is the retaining of wisdom. It is for you not to see anything anything of spiritual wisdom and strength coming from yourself, but rather you see it all coming from God through the grace of Christ and His Spirit illumining your mind to the truth of the word of God as to how you can glorify God in all that you do and say.

How do we obtain the fruit of righteousness; how will we see more of it in our lives? Look at Philippians 1, verses 9-11. “And this I pray, that you love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. This is what I mean which I say that wisdom is a fruitful principle. When we pray, and others pray for us that we may abound in real knowledge and all discernment so that we may approve of the things that are excellent, that we might be sincere and without offense, what are we asking for? We are asking for wisdom. How does this holy way of living develop in our lives? We take hold of Christ the tree of life, and eat of His fruit, so that we are filled with it in relation to our obedience to His word.

Turn with me over to Song of Solomon chapter 2, verse 3 – “Like an apple tree among the trees of the woods, so is my beloved among the sons.” “I sat down in his shade with great

delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.” “He brought me into his banqueting house, and his banner over me was love.” “Sustain me with cakes of raisins, refresh me with apples, for I am love sick. Where we begin to retain wisdom is when we see Him as the tree of life and we sit down under the shade of all that He has done for us, and then take of His fruit; that is, you take the fruit of what He has done for you on the cross, and all the good spiritual influences of the Holy Spirit that He has given to you, and you taste of this fruit, and delight in all that He is doing for you by His grace, in your heart, and in your life, day by day. Seeking wisdom from Christ on all that you do and say, becomes your delight.

When you find yourself down, or lovesick as it is called in verse 5, you remember that He has brought you into the banqueting house of His Church, and His banner over you is love. He is lovingly teaching you how to be wise in all of your behavior. That is the purpose of His grace. Look at Proverbs 11, verse 30 – “The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he who wins souls is wise.” Think of this verse this way: You are not made righteous simply by your own efforts to do so, but by the righteousness of Christ imputed to you, and imparted to you. The fruit of His righteous life is yours by faith and it is a tree of life to you. He has merited your salvation. He is giving you grace, abundantly now. He lavishes His grace upon you, and so it is the fruit of His righteousness that becomes your tree of life. By His wisdom He won your soul, and now you want to become righteous and holy like He is, and win others to faith in Christ.

2nd - Remember that Wisdom is a grace from Christ which teaches you discretion and which you spiritually wear.

Verses 19-22 – “The Lord by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding He established the heavens; by His knowledge the depths were broken up, and clouds drop down the dew.” “My son, let them not depart from your eyes – Keep sound wisdom and discretion; so they will be life to your soul and grace to your neck.” So, let us always keep in mind the fact that God is the author of all created things, and that it was by His wisdom that He made the earth. It was by His wisdom that He established the heavens. It was by His knowledge that the depths were broken up. And it was by His wisdom that the clouds bring forth dew and rain.

Why is this inserted in here in this section about your practically coming to know the wisdom of God and living it out? It is to show you that the Lord, since He created all things, and brought order out of chaos, and brought everything into being which sustains life, sustains your soul and gives you the practical wisdom that you will need each and every day. If we will acknowledge this great principle, we will make progress in being able to rightly apply all of the truth of the Scriptures to our particular situations of material and spiritual concern, each and every day. Think together with me about how closely wisdom and Christ are linked.

Look over at Proverbs 8, verses 22-31. “The Lord possessed me at the beginning of His way, before His works of old.” “I have been established from everlasting, from the beginning, before there was every an earth.” “When there were no depths I was brought forth, when there were no fountains abounding with water.” “Before the mountains were settled, before the hills, I was brought forth; while as yet He had not made the earth or the fields, or the primal dust of the world.” “When He prepared the heavens, I will there, when He drew a circle on the face of the deep when He established the clouds above, when He strengthened the fountains of the deep, when He assigned assigned to the sea its limit, so that the waters would not transgress His command, when He marked out the foundations of the earth, then I was beside Him as a mater craftsman; and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him, rejoicing in His inhabited world, and my delight was with the sons of men.”

Now, even though Wisdom is expressly being talked about here in this chapter as a woman who calls to men to listen to her and to walk closely with her, in verses 1-11, it ought to be apparent to us that our thoughts are meant to be directed to think of wisdom as being personified in Christ in verses 12-36. And from verses 22 to the end of the chapter it becomes

even more apparent yet. God the Father possessed Christ at the beginning of His way; that is, at the Beginning of the creation He was there with Him as the 2nd Person of the Divine Trinity; established from everlasting, and a participant in the Divine Counsels as an equal with the Father, yet begotten of the Father. He was not created, but He was begotten; brought forth when there were no depths of water or fountains abounding with water, before the mountains were made and settled, before and of the earth or fields were made. When the God prepared the heavens, God the Son was there. He was there when the Father, as it were, drew a circle for the terrestrial globe of the world, and then executed His design in the creation; strengthening the fountain of the deep, and assigning to the sea its limit, so that the waters would only go so far, and have boundaries which He would define.

God the Son as it says in John 1: 2, was in the beginning with God, and all things were made through Him, even as He was a Master Craftsman, helping the Father in every way execute the design that they had determined upon. All things were made through Him, and nothing was made that was made. And in Him was life, and His life would be the light of men. He was, even then, rejoicing in the inhabited world that would be, and His delight was always and forever going to be, in the sons of men. You see, the beauty of our text in Proverbs 3 is that if the Father and the Son knew how to establish the heavens and the earth in executing every aspect of their design to bring about order and beauty and useful to man in the creation, then most certainly He can do so, also, in relation to your becoming wise as a Christian.

The things which He commands of you, dear Christian, are the very things that He is going to be giving you grace to be able to learn to do, better and better, as you live your life before God. You are commanded to keep sound wisdom and discretion; to store up the truth of God's word in your heart and mind, and pray to be able to do it. He commands you to keep sound wisdom and discretion because they will be the very life of your soul; that is, learning how to do and keep God's commandments in the right way from right motives, out of love to God and love to men, seeking God's glory and the welfare of people around you. You will over time learn how to do the right thing in a way that will glorify God because Christ will be giving you grace to do so. You will learn to see sound wisdom as the life of your soul, and you will wear the ornaments of the spiritual graces of the Holy Spirit around your neck, spiritually speaking.

3rd - Remember that wisdom will bring you certain tangible spiritual comforts.

Verses 23 and 24 – “Then you will walk safely in your way, and your foot will not stumble.” “When you lie down, you will not be afraid; yes you will lie down and your sleep will be sweet.” What precious promises these are. They are the side benefits of making wisdom the principal thing, as it says in Proverbs 4: 7. Verse 23 says that you will then walk safely in your way, and your foot will not stumble. In other words, when you are seeking to be wise as your main object in living to the glory of God, then God will protect you from all evil and keep your soul. The reason that your sleep will be sweet is not because you will not have any trouble from the people of the world. It will be because you will have a clear conscience in relation to all that you are doing in your life; nothing that will bother you, and keep you up at night.

Proverbs 4: 11 says – “I have taught you in the way wisdom; I have led you in right paths.” “When you walk, your steps will not be hindered, and when you run, you will not stumble.” “Take firm hold of instruction, do not let go; keep her, for she is your life.” So it is through heeding the instruction of the Lord's word, accompanied by prayer for the instruction of His Spirit to your heart and mind, which will give you all the real confidence that you will need to do God's will as it is found in the Bible, and thus glorify Him in the way that you live your life. Jude 24 and 25 – “Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to God our Savior, who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever.” “Amen”.

