

“The Value of Wisdom”  
Ecclesiastes 7:11-12  
(Preached at Trinity, September 10, 2023)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As I've pointed out, **Chapter 7** stands at about the halfway point of Ecclesiastes. Solomon pauses to give counsel on how to counter some of his examples of vain living. He makes some short, pithy statements of wisdom.
2. The first part of **Chapter 7** sounds a lot like the Book of Proverbs.  
**Verses 1-4** are proverbs on the meaning of life and death and the importance of a good reputation.  
**Verses 5-6** describe the great contrast between a wise rebuke and foolish laughter.  
**Verses 7-10** describe patiently waiting upon God.  
Now, in **Verses 11-12** Solomon gives a brief summary on the value of wisdom.
3. As we've often seen in Ecclesiastes, Solomon's teaching was full of contrasts that might be taken as contradictions. But rather than contradictions, Solomon is approaching topics from differing perspectives. This is true of the subject of wisdom. The word wise or wisdom occurs over 50 times in Ecclesiastes. I've pointed out that Ecclesiastes is among the wisdom books of the Bible along with Job, Proverbs, and Song of Solomon, along with portions of the Psalms.
4. Solomon explored the subject of wisdom in **Chapter 1**  
**Ecclesiastes 1:13 NAU** - "And I set my mind to seek and explore by wisdom concerning all that has been done under heaven."
  - A. His conclusions uncover weaknesses in the possession of wisdom.
    - a. Solomon concluded that wisdom lacks the power to change anything.
    - b. And he concluded that wisdom will actually increase the sorrow of a man.
  - B. Solomon is writing from a perspective of a life without God. No amount of earthly wisdom will solve the sorrows of this life. No amount of earthly wisdom can change the Providence of God. No amount of human wisdom will give meaning to life.  
**Ecclesiastes 1:14 NAU** - "I have seen all the works which have been done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and striving after wind."
5. But now in **Chapter 7** Solomon reveals the truth about wisdom. It is a treasure to be desired.  
**Ecclesiastes 7:11-12 NAU** - "Wisdom along with an inheritance is good And an advantage to those who see the sun. <sup>12</sup> For wisdom is protection *just as* money is protection, But the advantage of knowledge is that wisdom preserves the lives of its possessors."

6. We know Solomon's story well. God came to Solomon and told him he could have anything he would request from God. This revealed Solomon's heart. Most men would ask for endless wealth or immortality or power. But Solomon, instead, asked for wisdom. **1 Kings 3:11 NAU** - "And God said to him, "Because you have asked this thing and have not asked for yourself long life, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have you asked for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself discernment to understand justice"
7. None possessed the wisdom of Solomon. People came from far and wide just to hear his wisdom. **1 Kings 4:34 NAU** - "Men came from all peoples to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom."
8. Sadly, few recognize the treasure of wisdom.  
We read in Proverbs:  
**Proverbs 3:13-18 NAU** - "How blessed is the man who finds wisdom And the man who gains understanding. <sup>14</sup> For her profit is better than the profit of silver And her gain better than fine gold. <sup>15</sup> She is more precious than jewels; And nothing you desire compares with her. <sup>16</sup> Long life is in her right hand; In her left hand are riches and honor. <sup>17</sup> Her ways are pleasant ways And all her paths are peace. <sup>18</sup> She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her, And happy are all who hold her fast."  
**Proverbs 1:7 NAU** - "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction."  
**Proverbs 4:7-8 NAU** - "The beginning of wisdom *is*: Acquire wisdom; And with all your acquiring, get understanding. <sup>8</sup> "Prize her, and she will exalt you; She will honor you if you embrace her."
9. We are admonished in the NT to pray diligently for wisdom. **James 1:5 NAU** - "But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him."
10. True wisdom is the ability to rightly discern the ways of God. It's the right understanding of God's Word. **Psalms 119:97-100 NAU** - "O how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day. Your commandments make me wiser than my enemies, For they are ever mine. I have more insight than all my teachers, For Your testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the aged, Because I have observed Your precepts."
11. Wisdom must be our high pursuit. It must be our delight; that which we seek with our whole heart. We must make it a constant cry in our prayers. We must be diligent in studying God's Word. Our minds must be taught by God in His Word. **Romans 12:2 NAU** - "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."
12. Of all the things Paul could have prayed regarding the Colossian Church, wisdom was his top priority. **Colossians 1:9-10 NAU** - "For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, <sup>10</sup> so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please *Him* in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God."

13. This must be our constant, unending prayer. How different would Solomon's life had turned out if his lifelong prayer was for the wisdom of God. Solomon neglected his life before God with devastating consequences. He was given over to carnal reasoning and was swallowed up in idolatry. It should serve as a warning to us all.  
**1 Kings 11:1 NAU** - "Now King Solomon loved many foreign women"  
**1 Kings 11:4 NAU** - "when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods; and his heart was not wholly devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father *had been*."
14. What is the outcome of a wise and discerning heart? Solomon describes wisdom as good, a great advantage, giving protection, and preservation to those who have it.
- I. It protects and preserves us from sin
- A. This is the heart of regeneration – the transformation of our nature – the renewing of our mind.
1. Paul prayed in **Colossians 1:9** that they might be filled with the knowledge of God's will. This has the result of walking in a manner worthy of Christ, pleasing Him in all respects.  
 that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, <sup>10</sup> so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please *Him* in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God."
  2. The substance of this knowledge is the Word of God.  
 As we grow in spiritual wisdom and understanding we are enabled to rightly understand the Word of God. This enables us to discern good from evil and thus live a life well-pleasing to Christ.
  3. This was Paul's meaning in **Romans 12**  
 The transformation of the mind gives us spiritual wisdom to rightly discern the will of God.  
**Romans 12:2 NAU** - "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect." - δοκιμάζω – this word means to try or test. It is the essence of discernment—spiritual wisdom.
  4. How do we learn right from wrong? How do we learn how to please Christ? Through rightly understanding the Word of God.  
**2 Timothy 2:15 NAU** - "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth."  
**Psalms 119:9-11 NAU** - "How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping *it* according to Your word. <sup>10</sup> With all my heart I have sought You; Do not let me wander from Your commandments. <sup>11</sup> Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You."
- B. Spiritual wisdom enables us to comprehend what is well-pleasing to Christ.
1. Pleasing Christ demands that we have right thinking. We have to learn how to please Christ. Paul stressed this in his letter to the Ephesians.  
**Ephesians 5:9-10 NAU** - "(for the fruit of the Light *consists* in all goodness and righteousness and truth), <sup>10</sup> trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord."

2. The Bible instructs us. It gives us the standard by which to judge all things. It defines good and evil for us. It tells us what sin is and tells us what to flee from.

**1 Thessalonians 5:22 NAU** - "abstain from every form of evil."

3. Spiritual understanding affects everything in our lives. It affects our decisions, shapes our actions.

It controls how we talk, what we say.

**1 Corinthians 2:13 NAU** - "which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual *thoughts* with spiritual *words*."

C. Christian conversion carries a high responsibility.

1. We are to shine in this world demonstrating the greatness of our God and the excellence of the Gospel.

2. Jesus Christ is worthy of all things. He purchased the right to all things. Having accomplished the redemption of His people God has highly exalted Him. He reigns over all things as Lord of lords and King of kings.

3. Christ is worthy of all exaltation. As His people we are to seek in

4. Jesus is worthy of first place in our life. He is to be preeminent over everything in our life.

Paul describes it in **Verse 18**

**Colossians 1:18 NAU** - "He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything."

II. This spiritual wisdom enables us to think rightly about God

Again, Paul's words in Colossians:

"that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, <sup>10</sup> so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please *Him* in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God."

A. From the negative perspective spiritual wisdom and understanding protects us from false doctrine – from thinking wrong thoughts about God.

1. One of the terrible consequences of the fall was depraved thinking

**Romans 1:21-22 NAU** - "For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. <sup>22</sup> Professing to be wise, they became fools,"

2. The lost man is unable to comprehend God. Paul described their plight to Timothy.

**2 Timothy 3:7 NAU** - "always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth."

3. They cannot fathom the infinite greatness of God. They cannot comprehend His holiness. They cannot imagine that they are subject to God's wrath and condemnation.

4. Fallen humanity refashions God to fit his own needs.

- B. From the positive perspective, spiritual thinking enables us to think right thoughts about God.
1. Spiritual wisdom enables us to examine what we hear and read and then develop right conclusions about God.
  2. How can we rightly comprehend God? By measuring what we hear according to the Word of God. This is only possible as the Holy Spirit opens our understanding.
  3. Christian conversion enables us to rightly comprehend God. Not perfectly, for God can ultimately be comprehended by none but Himself, but regeneration enables us to progressively increase in our knowledge of God
  4. Rightly knowing God is essential. You cannot love Christ unless you know Him and you cannot know Him apart from His Word and illuminating wisdom from the Holy Spirit. Loving Christ is not simply a sentimental feeling. True love demands spiritual discernment.

#### Conclusion:

1. We must see wisdom as a great treasure. More to be desired than silver and gold. Wisdom will enable us to think rightly about God and it will preserve us from sin and all the miseries it brings.
2. God's Word is the source of our wisdom and discernment  
We must study it diligently. It must be the object of our delight.  
**2 Timothy 3:16-17 NAU** - "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; <sup>17</sup> so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."
3. Paul made this one of the qualifications for office bearers in the church  
**Acts 6:3 NAU** - "select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom"
  - a. This was simply another way of saying that they are to be mighty in the Word.
  - b. He is able to rightly apply God's Word to the various situations that arise in his life and in the church  
This can only come through continual, disciplined study
  - c. Too often people declare they want to be leaders in Christ's church but they have little understanding of God's Word. They know little because they study little. They have little spiritual discernment because they haven't had the meat of God's Word pressed upon their minds.  
**Hebrews 5:13 NAU** – "For everyone who partakes *only* of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. <sup>14</sup> But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil."
  - d. In order to discern the will of God and apply it rightly in all the thousands of complex situations in life we must have our minds shaped by the Word of God.