

Scripture: Proverbs 8:32-36.

Sermon Topic: Wisdom is Common Sense.

Text: Proverbs 8:35 ... "For he who finds me (wisdom) finds life and ~~obtain~~ obtains favor from the Lord;..."

Proposition: Proverbs is an outstanding collection of God-given wisdom which offers common-sense advice for everyday living.

Sources: As indicated in typescript, and pages 767-778, Vol. 4, The Interpreter's Bible, Introduction to Proverbs

Date written: February 27, 1965.

Dates and places used:

2/28/1965 - Montrose, Colo. 8³⁰ & 11⁰⁰

7-7-68 - Arroyo, Colo.

8-10-72 Oakland Park, Fla.

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Introduction:

1. Somebody wrote this little poem about ~~the~~ the problem that parents sometimes have with children in the mornings, on the matter of getting up:

"Each time we call our kids for school

They'll pout, they'll plead, they'll yawn.

But Saturday, without a peep,

They're up at crack of dawn!!!"

(F.G.Kernan, Grit, in Quote, 2/21/1965.)

I'm sure this writer didn't have in mind the teenager who had a date for the game the night before. We have found that our teenagers like to sleep late on Saturdays, if they don't have jobs or aren't going fishing or skiing. But our small children are sort of like that: hard to get up for school, and up for the early cartoons on TV on Saturday.

2. ~~Not just in our own day and age have people put in verse and witty sayings truths that come from observation of everyday life, from common experience. This thing of putting into words in witty, to-the-point sayings commonly-observed truths has been going on for ages. One of the most-widely known collections of such~~

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sayings is the Bible book which we call Proverbs.

3. Because Proverbs can be so helpful to us in finding words to express our everyday conclusions, because it is a source of advice and help, because we think that God used men of long ago to channel to us wisdom which he would have us know, we seek here today to develop a larger understanding of the book of Proverbs, and to get its central outlook for us.

I. Scanning the book of Proverbs reveals its place in literature as a book of wisdom.

1. In fact, wisdom is its chief theme throughout. The first nine chapters are almost an ode to wisdom, and repeat again and again how important wisdom is. That is what the words which we use as our text are talking about. It is as if wisdom is talking itself, and says: "For he who finds me finds life and obtains favor from the Lord;..."

2. The Old Testament has other "wisdom literature", too. There are the books of Job, Ecclesiastes and

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3. Because Proverbs can be so helpful to us in finding words to express our everyday conclusions, because it is a source of advice and help, because we think that God uses men of long ago to channel to us wisdom which he would have us know, we seek here today to develop a further understanding of the book of Proverbs, and to get the central outlook for us.

1. Learning the book of Proverbs reveals its place in literature as a book of wisdom.

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2. The Old Testament has other "wisdom literature", too. There are the books of Job, Ecclesiastes and

parts of Psalms

which belong to this class, which deal with the general subject of wisdom, which are collections of wise sayings. These pieces of "wisdom literature" in the Old Testament are closely associated with similar writings of other cultures, societies and kingdoms of the times and surrounding areas. It seems obvious to scholars that there were numerous contacts with the wisdom literature of these other cultures on the part of the writers of Proverbs and other Old Testament writings of similar vein. A study of some of these other writings indicates that substantial parts of the book of Proverbs were borrowed from Phoenician or Canaanite sources. There is much Egyptian writing similar to Proverbs, much of which ~~we~~^{is} still ~~have~~ available to scholars, and its influence on Hebrew thinkers and writers was strong. The Babylonians, too, had similar things. All of this points up the fact that it was common practice for the thinkers and wise men of any culture to teach orally or to write down the conclusions ~~which~~ to which their thinking led them. The wise sayings which lasted were put into forms of speech easy to remember and dealing with common ordinary subjects. This

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is particularly true of the sayings in our books of Proverbs.

3. The prophets, the priests and the wisemen were the three groups of leaders who molded the cultural life of ancient Israel. The prophets and the priests were by far the more prominent, since Israel's history was written mostly by them. More of our Bible books are prophecy or priestly than of the type of Proverbs. Although the wise men who wrote the type of literature we are thinking about today did not occupy as ~~wise~~ prominent a position in the life of Israel as the other leaders, their popular style and genial manners attracted a large number of followers among the common people. They did not speak with the authority of the prophet, "Thus saith the Lord". They did not have the piety and religious correctness of the priest. They were simply earnest seekers of the good life, and it was their aim to teach their disciples what the good life was.

4. It is interesting that the first wise man, of at least the first person to be called "wise" in the Old Testament was a woman, a woman of Tekoa, the home of the prophet Amos. Another

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wise woman is mentioned in the story of a "wise woman" in the city of Abel, who found out why Joab was besieging her home city and persuaded the folks in it to give up the one man he wanted there, thereby saving the city. (II Samuel 20:14-22). ~~King~~

5. King Solomon, of course, is the outstanding wise man among the Israelites. His prayer for an understanding heart, his clever decisions, his know-how in dealing with the ~~king~~ Queen of Sheba, all add up to make him the most conspicuous representative of Israel's wise men. His biographer in I Kings 4:29-34, wrote of him, "And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding beyond measure, and largeness of mind like the sand on the seashore, so that Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the people of the east, and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all other men, wiser than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, Calcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol; and his fame was in all the nations round about. He also uttered three thousand proverbs; and his songs were a thousand and five. He spoke of trees from the cedar that is in Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of the wall;

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he spoke also of beasts, and of birds, and of reptiles, and of fish. And men came from all peoples to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and from all the kings of the earth, who had heard of his wisdom. We know that Solomon made so many foolish mistakes that it is hard to understand how such praises could be heaped upon him. His faults must have been forgotten early, and in the course of time his reputation grew to such an extent that his name became associated with works of wisdom, like Proverbs, for centuries to come. He is considered to have written a great many, but not all, of the present book, and we have reason to think he really did.

6. The wise man of ancient Israel worked and thought individually, giving forth his advice publicly at the town gate, and privately to whoever came to him for instruction. The teaching of the wise men was directed to the youth of the nation much of the time; and thus the term "my son" is used often at the beginning of some saying or teaching.

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Hebrew word translated into our English word "Proverb" very definitely means the same thing. Another Hebrew idea of the word Proverb is that of "parable" or "allegory". The Hebrew word for "Proverb" means poem, essay, the final and peerless product of the wise man's great skill.

8. ~~There~~ are several types of proverbs. There is the wise saying, the riddle, the fable. For the Hebrew, wisdom was always a practical thing, not just speculative or philosophical. Yet, he knew that even this practical wisdom was not something that just he developed, but that it came from the Lord. Thus, in his everyday matters, the Hebrew was always aware of God nearby. Israel did make much use of the pagan wisdom around her, but she made it God-centered. ~~xxx~~ "I have taught you the way of wisdom;

I have led you in the paths of
uprightness".(4:11)

"The fear of the Lord is the sum
of wisdom,

And in all wisdom the Law is fulfilled"

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Proverbs and other wisdom writings.

9. Many of the writings about wisdom, as given in Proverbs and other Bible writings^x, almost give personality to the things around them:

"the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing.

and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands" (Isa.55:12)

Also, often wisdom itself is personified. The first 9 chapters of Proverbs have much that is said as if "wisdom" itself is a person talking. Our Scripture for today is like that. Early in Proverbs we read:

"Wisdom cries aloud in the street;
in the markets she raises her voice;

on the tops of the walls she cries out;

at the entrance to the city gates she speaks;

"How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple?

"How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing
and fools hate knowledge?"

(1:20-22)

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In some cases wisdom is almost identified with God:

"For wisdom is a kindly spirit,
And will not acquit a blasphemer
of what he says,

For God is a witness of his heart,
And a truthful observer of his mind,
And a hearer of his tongue.

For the spirit of the Lord fills the
world,

And that which embraces all things
knows all that is said."

(1:6-7).

Wisdom is considered the key to life eternal, ~~even~~, in at least small parts of Proverbs:

"And love ~~for~~ her is the observance
of the laws,

And adherence to her laws is as-
surance of immortality,

And immortality brings men near
to God". (6:18-19..Amer.Trans.)

10. Scholars point out to us, as you can find out ~~self~~ for yourself by repeated and careful study of Proverbs, that it ~~is~~ is composed of about 7 sections. Section I ~~xxx~~ (1:1-9:18) presents most of the discussion about the merits of wisdom, tells of the dangers of associating with an

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 presents most of the discussion about
 the nature of wisdom, and of the
 dangers of associating with an

adulteress who lures men to their destruction with her enticing words and actions, and presents wisdom as almost a person. Chapters 8 & 9 of this are considered the oldest parts of Proverbs, and almost without doubt as having been written by Solomon. Section II (10:1-22:16), the core of the book, is full of ~~the~~ two-line Proverbs. These couplets may have both lines agreeing, carrying the same thought; or one line may give a thought and the other the opposite of it; or they may present the same thought in different, or synonymous ways.

"Does not wisdom call,
does not understanding raise her
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is a synonymous verse or Proverb.

"A son who gathers in summer is
prudent,

but a son who sleeps in harvest brings
shame" (10:5)

is an antithetical type proverb.

"My son, if sinners entice you,
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"If one gives answer before he hears,
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Proverbs

Hate

"He who conceals hatred has lying lips,
and he who utters slander is a fool".
(10:18)

Advice

"The way of a fool is right in his own eyes,
but a wise man listens to advice".
(12:15)

Wealth

"One man pretends to be rich, yet has nothing;
another pretends to be poor, yet has great wealth." (13:7).

Anger

"A soft answer turns away wrath,
but a harsh word stirs up anger."
(15:1).

Self-Esteem

"All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes,
but the Lord weighs the spirit."
(16:2)

Gossip:

"A perverse man spreads strife,
and a whisperer separates close friends". (16:28).

Understanding

"A fool takes no pleasure in understanding,
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"A fool takes no pleasure in under-

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but only in expressing his opinion".
(18:2).

Quarreling

"It is an honor for a man to keep
aloof from strife
but every fool will be quarreling".
(20:3).

Buying

"It is bad, it is bad," says the
buyer;
but when he goes away, he boasts.
(20:14)

Borrowing & wealth

"The rich rules over the poor,
and the borrower is the slave of
the lender". (22:7)

Women

"A continual dripping on a rainy day
and a contentious woman are alike;
to restrain her is to restrain the
wind or to grasp oil in his right
hand". (27:15-16)

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Quarreling

"It is an honor for a man to keep about him, and about his quarreling", but every fool will be quarreling" (20:3)

Boying

"It is bad, it is bad," says the boy; but when he goes away, he says (20:11)

Borrowing & wealth

"The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is the slave of the lender" (22:7)

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"A continual arguing on a rainy day and a contentious woman are alike; to restrain her is to restrain the wind or to erase oil in his right hand" (27:15-16)

11. Anyone who reads Proverbs is impressed with the high ethical standard of its teachings. The highest type of family life is held up; monogamy is taken for granted; the respect for mother and wife is emphasized; chastity and marital fidelity are taught; The glutton, drunkard, and sluggard, the robber and oppressor of the poor, are all roundly condemned. Those who live in accordance with wisdom's laws are prosperous and happy. A belief in the one true and living God who rewards the righteous and punishes the wicked is strong throughout the book.

In spite of its high standard of ethics, Proverbs presents goodness as being caused almost always by an interest in personal success.

12. Proverbs has little to say ~~xxx~~ about life eternal, but something. "Sheol" is the dismal abode of the departed. Yet Sheol is before the Lord, indicating that he is in some way concerned with the world hereafter and its inhabitants.

II. The significance of Proverbs for us:

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13. The significance of Proverbs for

1. Anyone who is a Christian wonders how much ~~and they~~ ^{Proverbs} meant to Christ and the early Christians. Such information can be a clue to how much they should mean to us. The quotations ~~in Proverbs~~ from Proverbs in the New Testament are few, and hard to identify, but there are some.

"Be not wise in thine own eyes" (Prov. 3:7a) in the New Testament is "Be not wise in your own conceits" (Rom 12:16b).

"For love covereth all transgressions" (Prov. 10:12b), is in the N.T.:

"For love covereth a multitude of sins" (I Peter 4:8b), Jas. 5:20).

There are others. There are many proverbs which are the basis of ~~New~~ Testament passages but which are not actually quoted. Christ links himself with the wisdom of the Old Testament when he says "The queen of the South will arise at the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them; for she came from the ends of the earth to hear ~~Solomon~~ the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here" (Luke 11:36, Matt. 12:42).

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 Solomon is here" (Luke 11:31, Matt. 12:42).

2. All of this added together tells us that wisdom is the revelation of God's orderly plan in the universe and lives of men, rather than the accumulation of intelligent observations on life down through the ages. That is, the wisest sayings and actions of life are those which put God at the center, which ~~orderly~~ give life an order and dependability, and which help one adapt well to others and to the circumstances of life.

Conclusion:

1. Our study shows us that Proverbs is an outstanding collection of God-given wisdom which offers common sense advice for everyday living.

2. Perhaps you heard about the doctor who told his patient, "Let me know if this prescription works. I'm having the same trouble myself".
(Scandal Sheet, Graham, Tex., Rotary).

3. The reason the book of Proverbs has been preserved is because most of the ~~orderly~~ lessons in it are easy to remember and they work well. They prove that wisdom is simply common sense; and that the best common sense is God-centered.

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