

A Light in the Valley

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Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)

Godly Wisdom

by: Doy Moyer

All would likely agree that wisdom is one of the greatest of virtues, and Scripture is clear about where true wisdom originates:

“Make your ear attentive to wisdom, incline your heart to understanding; For if you cry for discernment, lift your voice for understanding; if you seek her as silver and search for her as for hidden treasures, then you will discern the fear of the Lord and discover the knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding.” (Prov. 2:2-6).

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding” (Prov. 9:10).

“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” (James 1:5).

“Every good thing given and ever perfect gift is from above, coming down

from the father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow” (1:17).

Trials, temptations, riches, poverty, pure religion, proper listening, how to treat others, partiality, faith, the tongue -- all of these have in common the need to apply godly wisdom.

Wisdom Tied to Behavior

James, in his epistle, tied wisdom to prayer, faith, and God’s gift. Now he adds the element of behavior: “Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom” (James 3:13).

James tied wisdom to faith, but he has also tied faith to action (2:14-16); he further ties wisdom to action. Just as a person shows faith through what he does, a person shows wisdom by those same deeds. In Scripture, wisdom is connected to skill (see, for example,

Exodus 31 where those who were skilled in craftsmanship were called wise and understanding). Through wisdom, we can show skill at doing good deeds, for godly wisdom demonstrates skill at making right choices and acting upon them.

Contrary to the godly deeds are those attitudes that take us from the truth: “But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but earthly, natural, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing.” (3:14-16)

If our actions are based upon jealousy and selfishness, then we are not showing the wisdom of God, but the wisdom of this world. The world acts out of selfish ambition. The world acts out of jealousy and strife. God’s people are to show His wisdom, which is grounded in a relationship with God (faith) and godly behavior.

What will Godly Wisdom Demonstrate?

“But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.” (vv. 17-18)

First, godly wisdom is pure. It is holy. There are no evil motives underlying the behavior. It is genuine and selfless, based upon holiness and the fear of the Lord (Prov 9:10). If something cannot be described as pure or encouraging purity, then it cannot be described as wise.

Further, godly wisdom is peaceable. Purity comes first, but wisdom is about doing the will of God, making peace, showing mercy, and bearing good fruit. God’s wisdom is not about strife and division. This is important, for the next section of James deals with that very problem -- quarrels and conflicts among God’s people (James 4). Those who are sharp with the tongue (3:1-12) are often bitter, angry, selfish, and quick to hurl ugly remarks against others. Such is not the wisdom of God. Biting and devouring one another is what the world does. God’s people are to know better and demonstrate this through wisdom as they work together in the Lord.

God’s wisdom contrasts the world in purity, peace, gentleness, reasonableness, mercy, goodness, and righteousness. Come to think of it, all of this sounds a bit like the “fruit of the Spirit,” does it not? (Gal 5:22-24) Indeed, the issue is essentially the same.

We cannot serve ourselves and, at the same time, serve God. If we are going to show God's wisdom in this world, then we must start with God. If we are lacking this wisdom, then we must ask Him in faith. Then, with faith, we must show by our behavior that our faith is genuine, and in that action, we will also be showing our understanding and knowledge of God.

"He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk in integrity" (Prov. 2:7).

The "gentleness of wisdom." May God help us show this in our behavior.

Study Opportunities

Sunday Bible Study: 10:00 AM
Sunday Worship Assembly: 11:00 AM

Meeting At

Homewood Suites of Bozeman
1023 E Baxter Ln.
Bozeman, MT 59715

Everyone Welcome!

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28). "He who covers a transgression seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates friends" (Proverbs 17:9). Exhortations to neighborly and brotherly love abound in Scripture. Harmony and unity within the local body are frequent themes of the New Testament and few things are more disruptive to good relationships than gossip, talebearing, and whispering secrets behind the backs of others. Remember, when you have a burning tidbit you intend to tell to only one person, that one person will probably feel justified in repeating it to one person and soon everyone will have heard something that should never have been repeated. We must learn to ask the following four questions: Am I certain this is true? Do others need to know about it? Will people be hurt by my repeating it? Why do I want to tell it?

When it comes to repeating things, let's remember our initial exhortation: "In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is wise"(Proverbs 10:19).

"But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned" (Matthew 12:36, 37).

Proverbs and the Tongue

by: John R. Gibson

James described the tongue as “unruly evil, full of deadly poison” capable of defiling the whole body (James 3:8, 6). In the inspired collection of wisdom known as Proverbs the proper use of this “little member” is given great emphasis. The power of the tongue being what it is, we need to give careful thought to our speech so that it is a force for good. While we could pull many more lessons from Proverbs, in this article we will consider three.

Talk Less

Of all the lessons we need to learn about the use of our tongues, the most important may be the hardest one to practice. Simply put, most of us need to talk less! While there are certainly times when we can sin by refusing to speak, consider a few of the admonitions in Proverbs: “In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is wise” (Proverbs 10:19). “He who guards his mouth preserves his life, but he who opens wide his lips shall have destruction” (Proverbs 13:3). “He who has knowledge spares his words, and a man of understanding is of a calm spirit. Even a fool is counted wise when he holds his peace; when he shuts his lips, he is considered perceptive” (Proverbs 17:27, 28). “Do you see a man hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him” (Proverbs 29:20).

If we talked less we would probably be more honest, for those who are always talking tend to pass along information they cannot be certain of, and to put it nicely, often shade the truth or exaggerate things in order to keep their stories interesting. If we can learn to talk less and listen more, we will have more friends and fewer enemies, because we will not be as prone to hurt the feelings of others, and will be appreciated for our ability to listen.

Though the thought may be a little different, closely related to the general concept of talking less is the counsel to resist the temptation to allow your anger to be immediately known. Heed the counsel of Solomon. “A fool’s wrath is known at once...” (Proverbs 12:16). “He who answers a matter before he hears it, it is folly and shame to him” (Proverbs 18:13). “A fool vents all his feelings, but a wise man holds them back” (Proverbs 29:11). Before saying anything in anger we need to take the necessary time to make certain we have the facts straight; be certain we

have thought about what we will say and how we will say it; and be sure we will not regret it later. We may have good reason to be angry with our employer, neighbor, spouse, or brother in Christ, but is there a compelling reason to say anything? It may be that something needs to be said, but they should not be angry words. Instead, let us “bless those who curse [us]” (Matthew 5:44).

Sticks and Stones...

“Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” Though taught this rhyme as children, we know better—words are capable of inflicting pain and leaving scars. “There is one who speaks like the piercings of a sword...” (Proverbs 12:16). Words can hurt or they can heal; they can edify and encourage or they discourage or even enrage. “A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger” (Proverbs 15:1). “Pleasant words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the bones” (Proverbs 16:24).

Now, these words of wisdom are not intended to suggest we should never question or criticize the beliefs, teachings, and actions of others, for Solomon also counseled, “He who rebukes a man will find more favor afterward than he who flatters with the tongue” (Proverbs 28:23). Firm, unyielding words of correction are sometimes necessary, but we must learn to think carefully about how we are going to say things, especially when our words must be words of rebuke. “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver. Like an earring of gold and an ornament of fine gold is a wise rebuker to an obedient ear” (Proverbs 25:11, 12). Let us all strive to imitate that virtuous wife who “opens her mouth with wisdom, and on her tongue is the law of kindness” (Proverbs 31:10). “Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers” (Ephesians 4:29).

*He who answers
a matter before
he hears it, It is
folly and shame
to him.*

(Proverbs 18:13)

“Have You Heard...?”

“An ungodly man digs up evil, and it is on his lips like a burning fire. A perverse man sows strife, and a whisperer separates the best of friends” (Proverbs 16:27,

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The Silversmith

Ladies

Corner

by: Amy Drake

Some time ago, a few ladies met to study the scriptures. While reading the third chapter of Malachi, they came upon a remarkable expression in the third verse:

“And He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver” (Malachi 3:3).

One lady decided to visit a silversmith, and report to the others on what he said about the subject.

She went accordingly, and without telling him the reason for her visit, begged the silversmith to tell her about the process of refining silver. After he had fully described it to her, she asked, “Sir, do you sit while the work of refining is going on?”

“Oh, yes ma’am,” replied the silversmith; “I must sit and watch the furnace constantly, for, if the time necessary for refining is exceeded in the slightest degree, the silver will be injured.”

The lady at once saw the beauty and comfort of the expression, “He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver.”

Before she left, the lady asked one final question, “How do you know when the process is complete?”

“That’s quite simple,” replied the silversmith. “When I can see my own image in the silver, the refining process is finished.”

-Author Unknown

The bible is full of beautiful illustrations of God’s relationship with His children. Perhaps the trade, process, and analogy of refining precious metal is lost in our society, but we still put immense value on gold and silver and hold them as special. Such is God’s love for us. We are God’s precious treasure and He tells us so multiple times in the scriptures. In Exodus 19:5-6 God tells the people, “Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine, and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” We can see in this passage that we are treasured possessions to our Lord. There are, however, conditions we must meet to be considered precious silver by our Lord.

God, in His infinite wisdom, is able to put us into the refining fire and purify and strengthen our faith. Job was put to the test and said, “when He has tried me, I will come out as gold.” (Job 23:10) The nation of Israel was tested over and over (Ex 16:4, Ex 20:20, Deut. 8:2). We are told plainly that the Lord will test us. Proverbs 17:3 states, “The refining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold, but the Lord tests the hearts.”

Precious metals in their primitive state are full of impurities and dross. God has created us with freewill. As such, He desires for us to love and obey Him out of our own freewill. Unfortunately, our free will has also brought sin into the world. Sin is what separates us from God. It makes us filthy and detestable in His sight. We all have sinned and brought impurities into our lives (Romans 3:23). God does not force us to serve Him, but rather tests us and allows us to choose to love and serve Him or choose our own self and become rejected silver. Jeremiah 6:29-30 says, "The bellows blow fiercely, the lead is consumed by the fire; The smelter refines in vain for the wicked are not drawn off. People will call them rejected silver, because the Lord has rejected them."

So what is the dross that the Lord is trying to drive from our lives? For the Israelites, he was purifying them from idolatry. Are we so different from His physical nation? We may not have golden statues we bow down to, but how often is our spirit bent to something other than our Lord? Our dross is our self and the sin we serve. We can worship entertainment, sports, family, jobs, beauty, money, material possessions and anything else we desire for ourselves. All of this we can put before our Lord - thus becoming our idols. 2 Corinthians 6:16-7:1 says, "And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: 'I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people.' Therefore 'Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you.' 'I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the Lord Almighty.' Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

Are we to consider the trials of this life punishment from a wrathful God? Certainly not. Consider the fine craftsman as he meticulously works, patiently perfecting his creation until he deems it complete. Such is our heavenly Creator. We are told in Ephesians 2:10 that we are His workmanship: "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." While our refining may not be pleasant in the moment, it produces a precious treasure. 1 Peter 1:6-7 says, "In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ..." There is an incredible reward when we withstand the refining fires; we come through the flames with a faith that is solid and pure, incapable of fracture.

So what is the image reflected on that shiny silvery surface? It is an image of holiness. We have been created in His image (Genesis 1:27). Our God is holy and commands us to be holy also. 1 Peter 1:14-15 says, "as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, 'Be holy, for I am holy.'" We become holy by separating ourselves from the dross in our lives. Holiness is the absence of evil. We no longer conform ourselves to impurities, but to God and His pure, holy image.

It's a comforting thought to know that God is sitting, patiently watching us as we go through the refining fires of life. It is a necessity and His eye is ever on us, watching the purifying process and He will not let us be tested beyond what we can endure. Sin has brought impurities into our lives and our Lord removes the dross and waits for His holy reflection.

Daily Bible Reading

December 2016

December 1	Psalms 142-145	December 16	Proverbs 19-20
December 2	Psalms 146-150	December 19	Proverbs 21:1-22:16
December 5	Proverbs 1-2	December 20	Proverbs 22:17-23:35
December 6	Proverbs 3-4	December 21	Proverbs 24-25
December 7	Proverbs 5-6	December 22	Proverbs 26-27
December 8	Proverbs 7-8	December 23	Proverbs 28-29
December 9	Proverbs 9-10	December 26	Proverbs 30-31
December 12	Proverbs 11-12	December 27	Ecclesiastes 1-2
December 13	Proverbs 13-14	December 28	Ecclesiastes 3-6
December 14	Proverbs 15-16	December 29	Ecclesiastes 7-8
December 15	Proverbs 17-18	December 30	Ecclesiastes 9-12

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