

# Proverbs 3:1-12 - The Attitudes of Wisdom

## *The Commands of God that Lead to Salvation*

Monday, September 24, 2012

5:57 PM

### Introduction

- a. Our passage this morning comes with a premade introduction and a premade conclusion, so to introduce the passage this morning, I want to read the first two verses
- b. Read Proverbs 3:1-2
- c. This morning, our passage starts with a call to hear
  - i. This is a common call in Proverbs
  - ii. Solomon wants his son to hear his wisdom, to hear the teaching and commands that he gives
  - iii. That is the call I want to give to you this morning: Do not forget (ignore) this teaching and let your hearts keep these commandments
- d. This morning, our passage starts with a reason to hear
  - i. The first stanza in this Proverb ends with a promise
    - 1) This is how this whole section is organized - we will see a command and then a promise
  - ii. We are promised length of days, years of life and peace
  - iii. I want us to look at this promise as a promise of eternal salvation
    - 1) There are ways in which we may gain these things (long life and peace) temporally by obeying the commands, but this is not guaranteed to us - as Paul says, we are being slaughtered all the day long, and this is not because our brothers and sisters in Christ are ignoring these commands
    - 2) But, the real way we gain these things is in our eternal salvation
- e. Proposition: Having given a call to hear, Solomon is going to give four attitudes that characterize the man or woman of wisdom - that is, that are essential attitudes of salvation
- f. Outline (Four Attitudes):
  - i. Find Identity in Christ
  - ii. Trust God with Your Actions
  - iii. Be Teachable in the Fear of the Lord
  - iv. Honor God with Your Possessions
- g. I've titled the message this morning, "The Attitudes of Wisdom: The Commands of God that Lead to Salvation"
  - i. I want to emphasize that these are not optional commands to someone who wants to be very wise
  - ii. These commands are the very commands that characterize and lead to salvation
  - iii. So, this morning, hear these commands, do not forget this teaching and let your heart keep these commandments

## 1. Find Identity in Christ (3:3-4)

### a. Steadfast love and faithfulness

- i. A quote of Exodus 34:6 (the name of God)
  - 1) Exodus 34:6-7 - The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness,
  - 2) This phrase calls us to remember the merciful nature of God
  - 3) The call is to wear God's mercy on us at all times
- ii. Christ is the source of God's mercy
  - 1) Jude 1:21 - keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life
  - 2) The New Covenantal call here is to wear the mercy of Christ on us at all times
- iii. Equivalent to 'Grace and Truth' in John 1:14, 17
  - 1) John 1:14-18 - And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth... For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.
  - 2) Christ is the one full of steadfast love and faithfulness/grace and truth
  - 3) Both linguistically and logically, this verse is calling us to 'hang Christ' around our necks and to 'write Christ' on our hearts

### b. Bind it around your neck, write them on your heart

- i. Deuteronomy 6:4-9 - "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.
- ii. II Corinthians 3:2-3 - You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all. And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.
- iii. Jeremiah 17:1 - "The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron; with a point of diamond it is engraved on the tablet of their heart, and on the horns of their altars..."
- iv. A call to public covenantal identity
  - 1) Public - we ought to 'wear' Christ in such a way that we testify in all that we do to His grace
    - a) This is why the Old Testament commands are closely associated with commands to teach your children
    - b) The command to write it on your hearts is meant to be something is passed on to others, first our own families and then the whole world
    - c) Conclusion: We wear Christ as our badge to identify us to those around us
  - 2) Covenantal - we ought to 'wear' Christ in a way that is consistent with His covenant
    - a) Notice in the Deuteronomy passages that it is the "words that I command you" and "these words of mine" that are to be written on hearts
    - b) These words refer to the covenant that God has made with the Israelites, so when we are called to write them on our hearts, we write the covenant on our hearts
    - c) Again, in II Corinthians 3, the imagery Paul uses is that the Covenant of God is now written on the Corinthians hearts
    - d) In Jeremiah 17, we see that the opposite of writing these things on your heart is to engrave sin in your heart - to disregard the covenant and the commands of God
    - e) Conclusion: We wear Christ in such a way that we obey and honor His covenant
  - 3) Identity - we ought to 'wear' Christ in such a way that we find our identity in Him
    - a) Notice in all these verses, it is the heart that is being written upon - that is the center of the human nature
    - b) These things affect the very core of our person, what we might call our identity, how we think about ourselves
    - c) Conclusion: We wear Christ as our badge to identify us to ourselves

**c. The promise: Favor and success with God and man**

- i. Recalls two characters in the Bible - one Solomon would know, the other Solomon was pointing to
  - 1) 1 Samuel 2:26 - Now the young man Samuel continued to grow both in stature and in favor with the LORD and also with man.
  - 2) Luke 2:40, 52 - And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him...And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.
- ii. What does this mean?
  - 1) Regarding God - God does show favor to those who are identified in Christ
  - 2) Regarding man
    - a) This cannot be merely or primarily earthly favor and success
      - i) Christ was not favored by the majority of men - they crucified Him
      - ii) Samuel was also not always a very popular character - he ended his life running from Saul who wanted to kill him along with David
    - b) But Samuel and Christ both show us what this does mean
      - i) Both Samuel and Christ had favor and success from those who followed after God
      - ii) Even though they were rejected by evil men, by those whose hearts loved God they were esteemed
    - c) So, we should be careful to understand that this does not mean we will be loved by the world, but in identifying ourselves with Christ we will have honor and success among Christ's people
      - i) So, this primarily has an eternal sense - we will have honor and success among the eternal gathering of Christ's people
      - ii) But there is also a temporal sense - we will have honor and success among the true people of Christ now in the church

**d. Application - What does this look like in our lives?**

- i. Identity - our inner thoughts
  - 1) In our inner thoughts, we are going to discipline ourselves to identify with Christ
  - 2) For example, when you go home today, you should not ask, "What will I do with the rest of my day?"
  - 3) Instead, you should ask, "What would Christ have me to do with the rest of my day?"
  - 4) You discipline yourself not to think about yourself apart from Christ, Christ is now your identity
- ii. Covenantal - our actions
  - 1) In our actions, we are going to discipline ourselves to identify with Christ
  - 2) This means, we are going to love and obey the commands of Christ because we find our identity in that covenant
  - 3) Our identity in Christ cannot be apart from His covenant with us, apart from the teaching of Scripture
- iii. Public - our interactions
  - 1) When we interact with people, we are going to discipline ourselves to identify with Christ
  - 2) This means we should be eager and ready to identify ourselves as servants of Christ to whoever we are interacting with
  - 3) We should realize, that when Peter tells us to be ready to give a defense for the hope that is in you, he assumes the people around you know you are associated with Christ
  - 4) So, we should publicly proclaim our identification with Christ

## 2. Submit to God in Your Actions (3:5-6)

### a. The call is to trust God and not ourselves with our paths

- i. Two ways of explaining what this means
  - 1) Story about a man that chooses a path and then submits it to God and trusts God for it
    - a) A man has a job, trying to determine what project to work on
    - b) Chooses a project, thinks it is a very good project and will be very successful
    - c) He keeps his boss in the loop on everything he's doing, e-mailing him everyday, even asking questions
    - d) *(Along the way, he finds an instruction book from his boss, he reads it through and his boss doesn't tell him not to do the project he's working on)*
    - e) He's sure that his boss is very pleased with his work
  - 2) Story about a man that submits to God, trusts God and then chooses a path
    - a) A man has a job, trying to determine what project to work on
    - b) He finds an instruction book from his boss detailing what projects, goals, attitudes, priorities his boss wants him to have
    - c) He uses that instruction book to decide what project he should be working on, he keeps his boss informed on everything he's doing and asks him questions when he's unsure about something
- ii. The second one man is much closer to the teaching of these verses
  - 1) The call is not to merely 'acknowledge' God in an abstract way
    - a) The first man 'acknowledged' God, but he leaned on his own understanding (*retell parentheses*)
    - b) The second man acknowledged God and did not lean on his own understanding, but trusted God's Word
  - 2) The call is to acknowledge God as God and therefore submit to Him before you choose a path
    - a) The word 'acknowledge' in Proverbs 3:6 is the Hebrew root 'to know'
      - i) It is the word the serpent uses when he says, "You shall know good and evil"
      - ii) It is the word used when Adam and Eve "knew they were naked"
      - iii) It is the word used when God said "they have become like one of us, knowing good and evil"
      - iv) It is the word used when Adam "knew" his wife
      - v) It is the word used by Solomon to open the book of Proverbs, "To know wisdom and instruction"
    - b) You could say the verse says, "In all your ways, know God"
      - i) The word acknowledge means to act with intimate knowledge of God
      - ii) We must know God's person, God's desires, God's designs, and God's commands before we choose a path
      - iii) Then we must make sure that a path we choose is in line with who God is, what God wants, what God has designed and what God has commanded
  - 3) Acknowledging God while following a path that is not in line with Scripture is not following this command
- iii. We'll call this command intentional submission to God through the knowledge of God

### b. Every single aspect of our life is subject to intentional submission to God

- i. Verse 6 is very clear - "In all your ways"
- ii. This needs almost no explanation, except we find it easy to dismiss or disregard this fact
  - 1) There is no aspect of your life, no matter how small or insignificant you find it, that is outside of this intentional submission to God
  - 2) In every single action you take, you should know God and submit to God before acting
- iii. The summation of this command is, we must intentionally submit to God through the knowledge of God in every single thing we do

### c. The promise is provision of godly paths

- i. Verse 6 ends with the promise - "and he will make straight your paths."
- ii. In other words, when we trust God to set our paths, He will set our paths
- iii. There is no need to worry about whether it's all going to work out, if we put in the effort to know God before choosing a path, God will bless us with wisdom to choose the right path
- iv. So, like I've titled the sermon, this is not so much about action, but attitude - God promises if your attitude is such that you are seeking to acknowledge Him in your paths He will bless the actions you take
- v. It really is a very gracious promise when you consider how sinful we can be - even when we try to understand Scripture and apply it, we can often be wrong - but God promises, if we approach our paths with this attitude, then He will bless our paths

**d. Application - What does this look like in our lives?**

- i. We find out what God wants our paths to be - we find out what pleases the Lord.
  - 1) Ephesians 5:10, 15-17 - try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord...Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.
  - 2) How do we discern what is pleasing to the Lord, what the will of the Lord is?
    - a) Scripture
    - b) Church (Elders)
- ii. We redeem our time because the days are evil - we only do the things we find that are pleasing to the Lord
  - 1) Ephesians 5:15-16 - Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.
  - 2) Once we find out what pleases the Lord through studying the Scriptures and through the sharpening of the body of Christ, we choose to do those things and we forsake other things, even things that are not specifically commanded against in Scripture
  - 3) Hebrews 12:1 - Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.
- iii. So, again, for example, which question should you ask this afternoon when you get home?
  - 1) What am I going to do with my day?
  - 2) What would please Christ for me to do with my day?

### 3. Be Teachable in the Fear of the Lord (3:7-8)

#### a. Do not be obstinate (be teachable)

- i. Verse 7 says, "Be not wise in your own eyes" - what does that mean?
  - 1) It means that we are often wrong in our thoughts
    - a) Jeremiah 17:9 - The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?
  - 2) It means that we should not put too much confidence in our own wisdom
    - a) Numbers 15:37-41 - The LORD said to Moses, "Speak to the people of Israel, and tell them to make tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and to put a cord of blue on the tassel of each corner. And it shall be a tassel for you to look at and remember all the commandments of the LORD, to do them, not to follow after your own heart and your own eyes, which you are inclined to whore after. So you shall remember and do all my commandments, and be holy to your God. I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God: I am the LORD your God."
  - 3) It means we should forsake our pride that puffs us up with supposed knowledge
    - a) I Corinthians 8:1-3 - Now concerning food offered to idols: we know that "all of us possess knowledge." This "knowledge" puffs up, but love builds up. If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know. But if anyone loves God, he is known by God.
    - b) We are going to listen to a great exposition of these verses in 1 1/2 weeks on Wednesday night, so I'm not going to go into an in depth exposition now
    - c) But notice that prideful knowledge is strongly rebuked by Paul, especially knowledge about our freedoms
  - 4) Instead, on the positive side, we should be teachable
    - a) Proverbs 9:9 - Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; teach a righteous man, and he will increase in learning.
    - b) Hear what that verse says - when you instruct a wise man, he learns - he is teachable
    - c) Again, when you teach a righteous man, he learns - he is teachable
- ii. So, the first call of this section is to be teachable and not put too much confidence in our own thoughts

#### b. Fear the Lord and depart from evil

- i. The second half of verse 7 is really the reason for why we should be teachable
  - 1) We should be teachable, because we fear the Lord and because we desire to depart from evil
- ii. When we are obstinate in our own knowledge, it demonstrates that we do not have the proper view of God, we do not fear God as we ought
  - 1) If we fear God correctly, we will be 'scared' to be wrong, so we will take godly counsel thankfully
  - 2) If we refuse godly counsel, then we are the fool who despises instruction
    - a) Proverbs 1:7 - The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.
- iii. When we are obstinate in our own knowledge, it demonstrates that we do not truly desire to depart from evil

#### c. The promise is healing and refreshment

- i. Often associated with repentance and restoration
  - 1) Psalm 32:3-5 - For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," and you forgave the iniquity of my sin.
- ii. So, the promise is, when we humble ourselves and repent of obstinacy, we will be restored by God
  - 1) Again, a joyous promise - even though we are often stubborn and obstinate, if we turn, we will be restored by God
  - 2) It doesn't have to be this way, but God shows His gracious nature to those who are obstinate and unteachable if they choose to submit themselves to His teaching

**d. Application - What does this look like in our lives?**

- i. First, we must acknowledge that we are weak, fallible and prone to be confident in our errors
  - 1) Jeremiah 17:9 - The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?
  - 2) Think about something you are confident in, that you think you know - consider, could you be wrong?
  - 3) How do we protect ourselves from being wrong and correct ourselves when we are?
  
- ii. We submit ourselves to Scripture - we approach Scripture with a humble attitude consciously realizing we think wrongly about many things and letting Scripture correct us
  - 1) II Timothy 3:16-17 - All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.
  - 2) What corrects our wrong thoughts? Scripture, which is profitable for teaching, for reproof and for correction.
    - a) But we must approach it with a teachable attitude
    - b) We must acknowledge that Scripture must correct us because we are wrong
    - c) We cannot approach Scripture to find what we have already decided to find there
    - d) We use two fancy terms to describe these approaches - exegesis and eisegesis
  
- iii. We submit ourselves to the church - we approach the church with a humble attitude so that we can receive corrective counsel from our brothers and sisters
  - 1) Colossians 3:16 - Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.
  - 2) Ephesians 5:19-21 - addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.
  - 3) What corrects our wrong thoughts? Our brothers and sisters who admonish us with the Word of God as we submit to them.
  
- iv. We submit ourselves to the elders who are called to watch over our souls
  - 1) Hebrews 13:7, 17 - Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith...Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.
    - Note Heb 13:17 - better translation - (be convinced by your leaders) or (agree with your leaders) and submit (closely related to obey) to them
  - 2) Ezekiel 3:17-21 - Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. If I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die,' and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, in order to save his life, that wicked person shall die for his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand. But if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, or from his wicked way, he shall die for his iniquity, but you will have delivered your soul. Again, if a righteous person turns from his righteousness and commits injustice, and I lay a stumbling block before him, he shall die. Because you have not warned him, he shall die for his sin, and his righteous deeds that he has done shall not be remembered, but his blood I will require at your hand. But if you warn the righteous person not to sin, and he does not sin, he shall surely live, because he took warning, and you will have delivered your soul."
  - 3) What corrects our wrong thoughts? Our elders who are given to the ministry of the Word and called to watch over our souls - those who are given as watchmen for the house of Israel.
    - a) The elders have been specially gifted by Christ for their task of watching over souls
      - i) Ephesians 4:7, 11-12 - But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift...And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,
      - ii) You should be very careful and very hesitant to disagree with your elders about something
        - The burden of Scripture is that if you disagree with your elders about a matter that they are in agreement on, it is more likely that you are wrong and not them
        - This is not a universal statement of 'always', but we ought to realize that elders are given to the church to watch over souls
      - iii) If we believe that we individually are right more often than the elders, then what in the world does it mean that the elders are watching over your soul

- b) What do you gain if you submit to your elders in something that is not directly commanded against in Scripture?
- i) The loving oversight of your elders
    - 1- Hebrews 3:17 - Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.
    - 2- Acts 20:28 - Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.
    - 3- Your leaders are given in order to care for you and as long as they are following the Word, they are teaching you things not because they want to make your life harder or because they want gain from you (they have been warned against this), but because they love and care for you and believe that their teaching will guard and protect you
  - ii) A heart of submission
    - 1- We would all agree that we are to submit ourselves to Christ
    - 2- But how do we practically work this out, where does submission happen
    - 3- Consider the command for a wife to submit to her husband as unto the Lord (Ephesians 5:22), where does the wife learn submission to Christ - in submitting to her husband
    - 4- In the same way, all of us learn submission to Christ in submission to the church and our elders
    - 5- If you refuse submission to your elders, I would challenge you to consider whether you are submitting to Christ
      - Men, especially, how can you expect your wife to submit to you as unto the Lord if you refuse to submit yourself to the elders as you have been commanded
    - 6- But, if you do submit to your elders, then you are demonstrating and learning a heart of submission to Christ
- c) What harm does it do you if you submit to your elders in something that is not directly commanded against in Scripture, even if they may be wrong and are being too strict?
- i) I am not talking about a situation in which the elders are teaching directly against the Scripture or are asking you to sin, rather, grey areas where Scriptural principles have to be applied to determine what rights we might have
  - ii) Imagine you are standing before God, would you rather say to Him on the last day:
    - There was a grey area in my life, so I stood on my rights and ignored the counsel of my elders, because I was sure of my knowledge
    - Or - There was a grey area in my life, so I submitted to the elders' teaching, because I thought I had a right, but I was sure I should submit to my elders
- d) Why am I teaching this?
- i) Because I believe this is what Scripture teaches
  - ii) Because America glorifies the opposite of this and despises this - even most of the church
    - 1- The American way is an independent spirit
    - 2- You should be your own man
    - 3- You should not bow to the will of others
    - 4- So, this needs to be taught clearly in our churches so that we do not fall into the worlds thinking, we should not be marked by independence, but by submission
  - iii) Because this teaching applies to me as well

#### 4. Honor God with Worldly Possessions (3:9-10)

**a. A recap of Deuteronomy 26**

- i. Deuteronomy 26 was instructions to the people once they entered the promised land
- ii. When they entered the land and harvested their first crop, they were to give the firstfruits of that crop to God
- iii. When they brought the firstfruits before God, they were to recite a statement reminding them of what God had done for them

**b. A call to recognize God as the provider of all our possessions**

- i. Why were the Israelites supposed to bring the firstfruits to God?
- ii. The first statement the offerer was to make was: 'I declare today to the LORD your God that I have come into the land that the LORD swore to our fathers to give us.'
- iii. The firstfruits were to be a reminder the God had provided them with everything they have

**c. A call to give back to God the firstfruits of our possessions**

- i. Not going to make this a sermon about tithing (how much, how often, etc.)
- ii. But, it is a Scriptural principal that it is good to give out of the things God has provided to you back to God
- iii. II Corinthians 9:7 - Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

**d. A call to honor God with all of our possessions**

- i. Notice that the command is first, "Honor God with your wealth" and only second "and with the firstfruits"
- ii. When we give back to God out of His provision, this does not release the rest of our possessions to be used as we please
- iii. Instead, we ought to be intentionally honoring God with all of our possessions, even the possessions that we do not explicitly give to God

**e. A call to recognize God as more valuable than any earthly possession**

- i. Matthew 13:44-46 - "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it."
- ii. Why can we give back to God from His provision and honor God with all of His provision? Because God Himself is more valuable than any earthly possession. We can sell all these things we have because we know we have a better and lasting provision.

**f. The promise is eternal provision**

- i. Verse 10 promises us filled barns and filled vats - this cannot be earthly possessions
  - 1) Think about Christ - He must have been the ultimate example of honoring God with His wealth
  - 2) But Christ was not provided with earthly possessions
  - 3) Matthew 8:20 - And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head."
- ii. Instead, this promises an eternal provision that will be infinitely satisfying
  - 1) Hebrews 10:34 - For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one.
  - 2) In fact, this is what I just said a minute ago, we can honor God with our possessions, because He Himself is more valuable than all earthly possessions