

## Sermon—Proverbs (#39)

by Ron Banuk

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[3104 Words]

Man has been working out his salvation (Proverbs 3:20, Philippians 2:12) on this orb called Earth for 6000 years. As such, the Earth has been a spawning ground for eternal salvation or eternal damnation. But have the criteria for salvation and damnation changed with time? There are a number of ways of looking at man's allotted 7000 years on this planet:

<b>People</b>	<b>Time (yrs)</b>	<b>Covenants</b>	<b>Dispensations</b>	<b>Messiah</b>
Adam to Moses	2500	Edenic Adamic Noahic Abrahamic	Innocence Conscience Civil Government Patriarchs	in Mazzaroth (12 constellations) (and 36 decans)
Moses	1500		Law of Moses	Angel of the Lord
Jesus & You	2000		Law of Christ	in Flesh & Spirit
Jesus & Believers	1000		Millennium	on Throne of David
<b>Total</b>	<b>7000</b>			

Regardless of how you group the periods of man's 7000-year salvation history on Earth, the Book of Proverbs gives a remarkable perspective on this regardless of whether you look at the people, the time periods, the covenants, the dispensations, the laws, or how Messiah interacted with his people. One proverb (24:21b) actually rails against change (Do not associate with progressives [or people given to change]). So we can immediately expect that there is continuity in God's plans.

The proverbs were collated as a book between 900 and 700 BC when Hezekiah's men put the finishing touches on 383 of Solomon's proverbs and 125 they had extracted from the 3000 proverbs recorded in 1 Kings 4:32 that had been written by Solomon and also those written by others such as Amenemope, the wise Egyptian's 27 proverbs, who wrote circa 1300 BC, the Wise Men's four proverbs, and Agur's two proverbs giving us a total of 541 proverbs. What we will see when we analyze the Book of Proverbs is the constancy in God's expectations for the righteous man be it Adam, Moses, you, or a man in the Millennium.

The Book of Proverbs was initiated by Solomon while the Law of Moses was in effect, just like the Sermon on the Plain of the Mount was given by Jesus under the Law of Moses. And yet, the Proverbs do not speak to dietary restrictions or Temple sacrifices, but only the wisdom needed to gain salvation. In a similar manner, Jesus's address from the Mount concerned getting your heart right with God's commands. So then the words of Solomon and Jesus are timeless. And

they will apply during the Millennium when Jesus Christ will reign from the throne of David. So let's analyze the 541 proverbs.

The proverbs say repeatedly that on this spawning ground for the eternal, there are only two paths or ways. One leads to salvation and the other to damnation. Those to be saved are called righteous, upright, wise, and good, while those going to perdition are called wicked, devious, foolish, and bad where the word "fool" takes on the meanings of 1) closed minded [*kesil*], arrogant [*ewil*], and stupid [*nabal*]. As Jesus pointed out in the metaphors of the wide gate and the narrow gate (Mt 7:13), many are on the path to the Pit of Destruction (Ps 40:2), but few to the Fountain of Life (20:6).

### **Assurance of Salvation**

Proverbs states that the wise with their knowledge, understanding, and wisdom know where their path leads, but many of the foolish have no idea where they are going (5:6, 9:18). This shows that the wise man knows that he is on the path to salvation.

Not only do the wise know where they are going, but they have the assurance of salvation in that they know that God will keep them on the proper path as long as they remain righteous (2:7-8). This shows that the concept of the assurance of salvation or knowing that one is saved is not just a New-Testamental concept as found in 1 John 5:13 but always was an inspired self-awareness in the person being saved.

### **Promise of a Long Life**

In the Decalogue in the OT (Ex 20:12 and Dt 5:16) the reward of a long life for those that honor their father and mother can be interpreted to apply to the Jewish nation as a whole. Paul, however, in the NT definitely applies the promise of these verses to the individual Christians in the churches receiving his letter (Eph 6:2). Also Peter in the NT quotes Psalm 34:12-14 regarding God extending one's days for the righteous. This section of the Psalms sounds very much like Proverbs where Lady Wisdom promises seven times to extend our days if we practice her precepts (Pr 3:2, 3:16, 4:10, 9:11, 10:27, 13:23, and 19:18).

### **Sanctification**

Theologically there are three stages to sanctification: 1) the positional sanctification one receives at the moment of conversion (Acts 20:32), 2) the progressive sanctification through life (John 17:17), and 3) the ultimate sanctification one receives along with his crown in Heaven (1 Thes 5:23). Here we are talking only about progressive sanctification where one continually grows in grace, and wisdom, and becomes increasingly set apart for God. New Testament references are 1 Cor 1:2, 1 Cor 6:11, John 17:17, Eph 5:26, Acts 20:32, and 1 Thes 5:23. Of these, John's is the most specific because it points to Scripture and studies have shown that in our present culture, those Christians who read Scripture less than four times a week, do not set themselves apart from

the controlling culture. Proverbs on the other hand, tells us to actively walk and keep on the proper path (2:20), to hold tightly onto wisdom or you will wither on the vine (1:32), and not to grow weary until the task is complete (6:4).

### **Repent**

Many Christians may relate the word “repent” to the teaching of John the Baptist and think that it is a New Testamental concept. Job repented in dust and ashes (Job 42:6), and the Book of Proverbs teaches us in detail to bare our faults, to confess our faults, and to renounce our faults (28:13). This is the essence of repentance, but the actual word to repent is never used in Proverbs. In the NT, Matthew, Mark, and Luke used the word repeatedly. John used is frequently in Revelation. Peter is quoted using “repent” in Acts, and Paul used its antonym in Romans 2:4-5.

### **Conscience**

There is no Hebrew word for Trinity, and yet the concept is there. There is no Hebrew or Greek word for Rapture, and yet the concept of being caught up and walking with the Lord is there. Finally there is no Hebrew word for conscience, and yet the Book of Proverbs describes the process in detail. Using basic English, the NASB says: The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord, searching all the innermost parts of his being (NASB Pr 20:27). In the book *Proverbs in Clear English*, it reads: Man’s God-given conscience, will shine a light on his inner heart Pr 20:27). This is followed immediately by a note saying: God gives us rulers (v 26) to cull the wicked and a conscience (v 27) to cull sin.

This shows that Solomon did have the understanding of conscience, a word which Paul used frequently where “good conscience” was the antonym to hypocrisy. The hypocrite will feign a good act either to look good or because he is under duress being forced to do it.

### **Falling Away**

The Book of Proverbs speaks of two paths--one leads to salvation and the other to damnation. Proverbs clearly speaks three times (divine completion) of falling off the path to salvation (10:17, 15:10, and 21:16). Paul speaks about falling away in the following thirteen verses: Hebrews 6:4-8, 6:11-12, and 10:26-39, Romans 2:7, 8:17, and 11:22; 1 Corinthians 15:2; Galatians 2:18, 5:2, and 5:21; Philippians 2:12; 2 Timothy 2:10 and 2:12. Thirteen is the number of rebellion. All who rebel against God do so of their own choosing and self destruct.

### **Self Destruction**

How does one fall off the path to salvation? The predominant mechanism is self destruction. Proverbs speaks about this ten times where ten is the number for law and responsibility: 1:17-19, 11:17, 11:27, 12:13, 14:1, 14:9, 14:12, 21:7, 26:27, and 28:10. We Christians are enjoined not to laugh at another’s misfortune (24:17-18), however, Lady Wisdom personifying God Himself,

can laugh at their misfortune (1:26). And the reason why God can laugh, is because of the irony of self destruction as revealed in the very first Solomonic proverb (1:17-19).

### **Saving Grace in the Book of Proverbs**

The saving grace of the Book of Proverbs is not the promise of a long life for which there are exceptions and some good people do die young. But the saving grace is the assurance of salvation as has already been mentioned. You will know when you are on the right path and you will have the assurance that by staying righteous, God will keep you on that path, i.e. He will defend you from Satan's onslaughts. Charles Spurgeon (1834-92) once said in effect that if you do not have the assurance of salvation, you should spend every waking moment until you do.

### **How Does One Obtain Wisdom and Get on the Correct Path?**

Many people think that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (9:10a). This statement is true, but not complete. There is more involved in the process. The following seven steps as found in the Book of Proverbs lead to the pinnacle called wisdom:

- 1) Humility. Pride comes before the fall; humility comes before wisdom (11:2).
- 2) Self-Love. If you love your soul, you will find wisdom (19:8a). He who sins against Me only hurts himself. All who hate Me prefer death to salvation (8:36).
- 3) Motivation to get Wisdom. I reward those with a desire for me. Those who diligently seek me will find me (8:17). The heart both teaches the wise man and adds persuasion to his speech (16:23).
  - a. If you listen to my wisdom, and do this with a good conscience
  - b. If you long for discernment and ask for understanding
  - c. If you regard her as your redemption in silver, and seek her out as you would a treasure,
  - d. Then you will experience the reverential awe of God and turn the key to His knowledge (2:2-5).
- 4) Reverential Awe of God. Righteous awe of the Lord (Yahweh) is the prerequisite for wisdom (9:10a). A reverential awe of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge (leading to wisdom), but fools despise both wisdom and instruction (1:7).
- 5) Knowledge. And knowledge of the Godhead (Elohim) leads to understanding (9:10b).
- 6) Understanding. The man with understanding has wisdom before him, but the fool looks to the ends of the Earth (17:24).
- 7) Wisdom. By wisdom a house is built; by understanding the configuration takes place; and by knowledge its rooms are filled with the finest riches and technology (24:3-4).
  - a. He preserves the wisdom of the righteous and becomes their shield (2:7).
  - b. He guarantees them justice and keeps them on the path to salvation (2:8).

## Commentary on the Seven Points of Wisdom

The fact that Solomon was able to place the seven ingredients to wisdom in the proper order scattered through the pages of Proverbs is a tribute to his genius and God's providence.

- 1) Humility is the most difficult of virtues to obtain. Jesus made humility the first of the beatitudes on the Sermon on the Plain of the Mount (Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the Earth (Mt 5:3). Humility is even needed as the first step for salvation. In order to come to the Lord, you first have to admit that you have sinned and need a savior. If you are too proud to admit this, then salvation will elude you.
- 2) Self-Love means love of your soul and its human container here on Earth—your body. The five senses of your body feed your soul with information. Without this quality you cannot love your neighbor as yourself. If you have humility, but not self-love, then your humility will be turned into a fawning, groveling obsequiousness. And if humility is replaced by pride, then self-love turns into ego and narcissism. And if one ever begins to fall away, it will start with pride leading to ego, and that to misdirected motivation with false hopes and subsequent self destruction. That is why humility is the base of the pyramid.
- 3) Motivation is another word for the three infused virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity. They are called infused because theologians do not know how they enter our personalities, but they are also fused in that all three rise and fall together. Faith, Hope, and Charity is the engine that drives the word “do”. To Paul the word “do” was initially to persecute the followers of the new way, but after his conversion, he used that same engine to propagate his newfound faith. Faith, Hope, and Charity is as much a secular as it is a religious virtue. It is used in everything we do. The reason there are three are because faith corresponds to the intellect, hope to the will, and love to our emotions. These three make up the mind and all three must be in gear for any activity otherwise the person will be psychotic. Despite their importance, Proverbs goes on to say that motivation or zeal does not supersede knowledge (Zeal will not replace knowledge, and haste makes waste [19:2].)
- 4) Reverential Awe of God. Fearing God is not the same as revering Him in awe.
- 5) Knowledge. These are the facts or what of the matter—the individual parts of a vacuum cleaner or the Biblical facts spouted by children in Sunday school.
- 6) Understanding. These are the how of the matter—how the current you draw powers the motor that creates the suction for your vacuum or how the covenants and dispensations show God's interaction with His creation.
- 7) Wisdom. This is the why of the matter—why God needs covenants and dispensations to deal with his at times faithless creation or why you may not need a vacuum cleaner at all because a brush and dustpan would be more efficient. A corollary to wisdom is prudence. Prudence is economy of action in material affairs while wisdom is economy of action in both spiritual and material affairs. As an example, a steward could plan tasks A,

B, and C for three consecutive days, while the prudent steward would see that B followed by A could be done the first day and C on the second, this saving one day. A good detective could interview all ten witnesses in a case, inspect all CCTV cameras, and have the results to all forensic data and then properly charge the person responsible. The detective with wisdom, however, could upon stepping into witness pool and without access to any of the aforesaid information upon seeing that the wife was holding hands with a suspect make the proper determination.

Antonyms help understanding the word. The opposite of prudent is prodigal or profligate while the opposite of wisdom is foolishness (close minded, arrogant, and stupid).

### **Satan**

Why at this point should we be speaking about Satan? Ezekiel says that Satan was 1) unlike Jesus Christ, a created being, 2) perfect and flawless, 3) created as cherub of the highest order of angels, 4) the **sum of wisdom** and beauty, and 5) the anointed or messiahed cherub over all created beings [Ref: Arnold Fruchtenbaum]. The point here is that Satan has more wisdom than any angel or man including Solomon. So what went wrong?

First of all, Satan replaced humility with pride. That led to a self-love based on ego. And from there a motivation developed that led to his five “I Wills” (Isaiah 14:13-14). These were Satan’s five motivational hopes. With these hopes, his faith would be in himself, and his love for power seen in the five I Wills. The “do” became eternally corrupted. Satan used the engine of faith, hope, and love to be motivated into doing the wrong thing. Ultimately Satan feared God, but did not revere him in awe. Hitler with his highly developed faith, hope, and love was motivated to build a thousand-year Reich for Magna Germania and to suppress the Jews and all resistance to his plan. Paul before his conversion hoped to become a member of the Sanhedrin by suppressing those affiliated with the new way. Only by the direct intervention of God, was Paul able to change his “do”.

Lou Holtz (1937-) former football coach of Notre Dame and now a motivational speaker once gave a commencement speech on the four ingredients to success in life. The first ingredient was to find a job or something to “do”. After that the motivational engine of faith, hope, and love was to be engaged.

### **Conclusion**

One can find wisdom, but not the wisdom leading to salvation. To attain wisdom leading to salvation, all seven steps must be mastered each without being corrupted. Humility cannot be replaced by pride. Self-love (love of soul and body) cannot be replaced by ego. Motivation must contain God-aligned hopes. Only then will a reverential awe of God arise leading to a righteously vectored acquisition of knowledge, understanding, and wisdom.

So, by mastering wisdom there is instruction that can put Job, Moses, the present-day Christian, and the Millennial believer onto the path to salvation. These four classes of people believed God's revelation of the day: the Mazzaroth (Messiah in the constellations), the Angel of the Lord (Messiah in apparitions), Jesus Christ (Messiah in the flesh), and King David (Messiah on the Throne of David). The Book of Proverbs is timeless across man's 7000-year salvation history.

### **Appendix: Contents of the Book of Proverbs**

541 Proverbs

40 Commands

9 Concomitants:	What the Lord Hates (6 no 7)	6:16-19
	May I Have Two Requests	30:7-9
	Four Kinds of People	30:11-14
	Leech's Two Daughters	30:15a
	Never Enough of Four Things	30:15b-16
	Mysteries (3 no 4)	30:18-19
	What Makes the Earth Quake (3 no 4)	30:21-23
	Four Creatures Created Wise	30:24-28
	Things That Stride Regally (3 no 4)	30:29-31
3 Allegories	Keep Your Pump at Home	5:15-23
	Adulterer Must Pay Seven Times	6:30-31
	Wisdom Personified as Wife	31:1-31
20 Homilies	Avoid Bad Company	1:8-16
	Wisdom	1:20-33 to 3:1-12
	Man's Wisdom	3:13-18
	God's Wisdom	3:19-20
	Be Kind and Generous	3:21-26
	Solomon's Father's Teaching	4:1-9
	Avoid Bad Company	4:10-19
	Guard My Words	4:20-27
	Forsake Lust	5:1-14
	Avoid Cosigning	6:1-5
	Laziness	6:6-11
	Low Life	6:12-15
	Avoid Adultery	6:20-29
	Avoid the Harlot	7:1-27
	The Qualities of Wisdom	8:1-36 to 9:1-12
	The Foolish Woman	9:13-18
	Drunkenness	23:29-35
	The Prudent Steward	27:23-27
	God Almighty	30:2-6

Pride

30:32-33.