

LOOKING TO CHRIST FOR GUIDANCE AND WISDOM (PROVERBS 4)

In the first part of this year, 2024, for our first three Sundays, we started out the year looking at the first three chapters in the book of Proverbs. So before this year gets away from us, we're going to show some love then for the next chapter in Proverbs, that is, Proverbs 4. While Proverbs is called a "Book of Wisdom", it certainly isn't just a collection of wise sayings for one to just be "illuminated" with knowledge, to puff one's self up in thinking that they/we are more in the know than others. In a quote from gotquestions.org, it says, "Knowledge is nothing more than an accumulation of raw facts, but wisdom is the ability to see people, events, and situations as God sees them. In the Book of Proverbs, Solomon reveals the mind of God in matters high and lofty and in common, ordinary, everyday situations, too. It appears that no topic escaped King Solomon's attention. Matters pertaining to personal conduct, sexual relations, business, wealth, charity, ambition, discipline, debt, child-rearing, character, alcohol, politics, revenge, and godliness are among the many topics covered in this rich collection of wise sayings."¹ It is indeed the wisdom of God that we are pursuing, not only for ourselves but for others as well, as we not alone, as a child of God, in the family of God. We are all then looking to Christ Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, for His Wisdom and Guidance, so that we can be living a victorious life in Christ. In that, we are then encouraging and uplifting one another in prayer so that we will all have that same hope and faith in Christ, as the Apostle Paul put it, "till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." (**Eph. 4:13**)

It is not the wisdom of this world that we are seeking, as we are told, "For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God." (**1 Corinthians 3:19**), but it is the wisdom that comes directly from God through Christ, that is imparted to us through the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, that can and will lead us into all truth, as Jesus put it (**John 16:13**), according to the will of God. The Apostle Paul mentioned 4 things in **1 Corinthians 1:30**, that come from God through Christ, "who became for us Wisdom from God—and Righteousness and Sanctification and Redemption." And as Paul then said, "that, as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the Lord." (**1 Corinthians 1:31**) We are therefore, once again, not seeking His wisdom to just be smarter, we're not being called by God to just be like a computer that continues to be programmed in more facts that we can then spit out, we are being guided by God through Christ to live our lives according to the will and ways of God as children of God. Speaking of Christ being for us Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption of God, we are then being led and expected to live in and according to the Wisdom & Righteousness of

¹ <https://www.gotquestions.org/Book-of-Proverbs.html>

God. As the Apostle John tells us, "If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him." (1 John 2:29) While God spoke through Isaiah the prophet, in Isaiah 28, in quoting "God's people", of their complaints to Him that the word of the Lord was to them just, "Precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little." (Isaiah 28:10) They were wearied by the fact that life just seemed to be one precept or commandment after another, one line of God's Word after another. Yet God continues by saying, it was so "that they might go and fall backward, and be broken and snared and caught." (Isaiah 28:13) That being broken, snared, and caught, can mean two different things. 1. Being broken, snared, and caught by the enemy of our souls, of which the Apostle Peter warned, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." (1 Peter 5:8) Yet a child of God need not fear, as Jesus assures us, "I am the door [of the sheep, vs. 7]. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep." (John 10:9-11)

Being broken, snared, and caught then can mean that a person is being broken, snared, and caught by the wicked one, the devil, the thief, and the father of all lies (John 8:44), when one is in contention with God and His Word. Yet one can also be broken, snared, and caught by the Lord Jesus Christ! Isaiah, in Isaiah 28 went on to quote God saying, "Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; whoever believes will not act hastily." (Isaiah 28:16) Jesus, in speaking to the Jewish rulers "looked at them and said, "What then is this that is written: 'The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone'? Whoever falls on that stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder." (Luke 20:17-18) While it is mostly agreed upon by Bible scholars that the falling on the stone is referring to the "stone of stumbling" that is mentioned in Isaiah 8:14, nevertheless, it can and does also speak to the brokenness, the incompleteness, our great need, that is revealed, once we come before our Lord, God, and Savior. If one is to fall, there is no better place to fall than on Christ Jesus, in the loving arms of our Creator, Sustainer, Savior, and God! We are then reminded, from Hebrews 12:3-8, "For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin. And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: "My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives. If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there

whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons." That being captured by Christ is beautifully described by the Apostle Paul in saying, "Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." (**Philippians 3:12-14**) That is exactly what the Israelites were told, to "cling to Him, for He is your life." (**Deuteronomy 30:20**)

Proverbs 4

Hear, my children, the instruction of a father [our Heavenly Father], and give attention to know understanding; for I give you good doctrine: do not forsake my law.

[As we all hopefully know, we are not living our lives in Christ according to all of the laws given to Moses and the Israelites. We are now called, according to the New Covenant in Christ, to live according to "the law of Spirit of life in Christ". We are led by our Great Shepherd, as He IS, as He said in **John 14:6**, "the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." As the Apostle Paul in **Romans 8:1-2** tells us, "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death." The Apostle John elaborates what that means to us as children of God through Christ, "Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him." (**2 John 9-10**) That word "greet" is the Greek word "chairō" (khah-ee-ro), which actually means to rejoice, be glad, to hail. It means then that one is not giving an impression of favorable opinion about them, spiritually speaking. That doesn't mean one is mean or rude, as **1 Corinthians 13** tells us, "Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." (**1 Corinthians 13:4-7**) Yet we are intended to rely upon the wisdom from God to guide us in who with and how we should operate, conduct ourselves, and respond to situations and people. An example is in how Jehoshaphat joined forces with Ahab in battle, even though the prophet Micaiah said it would not go well with them. King Ahab almost got Jehoshaphat killed, as Ahab disguised himself and Jehoshaphat became a sitting duck, so to

speaking, as the only recognizable king in the battle. Yet God, by His great mercy, spared Jehoshaphat's life and Ahab was killed anyways. **(1 Kings 22)** The fullness of the doctrine of Christ is the combination of the Great Commandment to love God with all of our heart, soul, strength, and mind, with the Royal Law, as it is called, to love others as ourselves, yet the latter requires the wisdom that comes from God through Christ. As the enemy of our souls is out to steal, kill, and destroy, he will use other people to drain God's people dry of all of their energy and resources, if we let him, and even, God forbid, lead us into destruction. Praise the Lord for His grace and mercies!]

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When I was my father's son, tender and the only one in the sight of my mother, he also taught me, and said to me: "Let your heart retain my words; keep my commands, and live. Get wisdom! Get understanding! Do not forget, nor turn away from the words of my mouth.

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[It is important for us to not only get wisdom but understanding, as it makes it easier for us to know the way in which God is leading us. Unfortunately that understanding comes at a price when we have to learn the hard way. Many, many, many times though we just have to put our trust in Him, wholeheartedly, without that understanding. The understanding part is that we CAN fully trust Him, as He is perfect in all of His Ways **(2 Samuel 22:31)** and His Works **(Deuteronomy 32:4)**. **Proverbs 3:5-6** tells us to "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths." Wisdom and understanding:]

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Do not forsake her, and she will preserve you; [As Christ is our Wisdom from God, it then can be rephrased, do not forsake Him and He will preserve you!] love her[Him], and she[He] will keep you [Love Him and He will keep you!]. Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom [through Christ Jesus].

And in all your getting, get understanding. Exalt her, and she will promote you; she will bring you honor, when you embrace her. She will place on your head an ornament of grace; a crown of glory she will deliver to you. Hear, my son[/daughter], and receive my sayings, and the years of your life will be many.

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[Even moreso, we read in **Revelation 21:3-8**, "And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful." And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the

Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. He who overcomes [prevails, is victorious in Christ] shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."]

I have taught you in the way of wisdom; I have led you in right paths. When you walk, your steps will not be hindered, and when you run, **you will not stumble**. Take firm hold of instruction, do not let go; keep her, for she is your life. Do not enter the path of the wicked, and do not walk in the way of evil. Avoid it, do not travel on it; turn away from it and pass on. For they do not sleep unless they have done evil; and their sleep is taken away unless they make someone fall. For they eat the bread of wickedness, and drink the wine of violence.

[Contrary to that, we as children of God in Christ, have the Bread of Life and the blood of Jesus that was shed for the remission of our sins!]

But the path of the just is like the shining sun, that shines ever brighter unto the perfect day. The way of the wicked is like darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble. My son, give attention to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. Do not let them depart from your eyes; keep them in the midst of your heart; For they are life to those who find them, and health to all their flesh. Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life. Put away from you a deceitful mouth, and put perverse lips far from you. Let your eyes look straight ahead, and your eyelids look right before you. Ponder the path of your feet, and let all your ways be established. Do not turn to the right or the left; Remove your foot from evil.

Do you get, like I did, the sense of pleading in the words of this Proverb? I was again reminded of Paul saying to the church at Corinth, "Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God." (**2 Corinthians 5:20**) Or as Paul said in **Romans 12:1-2**, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." "But the path of the just is like the shining sun, that shines ever brighter unto the perfect day." Sound familiar? Jesus, spoke of the time of the separating of the tares from the wheat, the bad from the good, and that those who practice lawlessness (sin) will be cast into

a furnace of fire where there will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. But then He says, **"Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to ear, let him hear!"** It is then up to us, to not only put our wholehearted trust in Christ Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, but to repent from our sinful ways and live in and according to His righteousness, and to also rely upon Him for His guidance and wisdom.

A perfect Psalm for this message, most of us know, **Psalm 23**. "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

"Behold, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for Him; we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation." (Isaiah 25:7-9) **"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"** (John 1:29) It is in Christ Jesus that we look for guidance and wisdom!