

Message Nine

**Reading the Book of Proverbs with a Praying Spirit  
So That It Will Render Us Nuggets and Gems  
to Strengthen Our Life of Pursuing Christ  
for the Fulfillment of God's Economy**

Scripture Reading: Prov. 1:1-7; Eph. 4:22-24; 6:17-18

**I. Proverbs is a collection of the words of the wise (1:1-7); it stresses the wisdom that man receives of God through his contacting of God (cf. 2 Chron. 1:10-12; Col. 2:2-3; 1:28-29), and it teaches man how to behave and build up his character in his human life (cf. Phil. 1:20; Gal. 6:7-8; 5:22-26):**

- A. Since the proverbs were collected mainly by two kings (Solomon and Hezekiah) in the age of the law, the book of Proverbs may be considered a subsidiary to the law.
- B. The law is the portrait of God; as such, it demands that God's people keep it so that they may be made copies of God for His expression and glorification—cf. Rom. 8:4.
- C. Proverbs, as a subsidiary to the law, instructs people how to behave and how to build themselves up according to God's attributes, that is, according to what God is.

**II. Proverbs has a particular character; that is, it presents to us the words of wisdom by many ancient wise men, which is unanimously considered good by all the people who read it; but we have to realize that what the book of Proverbs is to us depends upon what kind of persons we are and by what way we take it:**

- A. If we are ethical persons with a strong mind and have a desire to be perfect as genuine moral persons, surely this book would help us to make a success in our pursuit of perfection; however, it would not help us to be persons who live in our spirit according to the Spirit of God (2 Tim. 4:22; Rom. 1:9; 2:29; 7:6; 8:4-6, 9-11, 16; 1 Cor. 16:18; 2 Cor. 2:13-14; Phil. 3:3; Gal. 5:15-17, 22-25; 6:18; Eph. 5:18; 6:18):
  - 1. In the Old Testament Job was satisfied with his integrity, with his pursuit of human perfection, but that was not what God wanted of him; rather, it replaced what God wanted of him, and it became an enemy of God, frustrating Job as a man created by God to fulfill God's purpose.
  - 2. God's purpose was for Job to gain Him for the glorification of God, the expression of God; the highest service that we can render to God is for us to gain God to the uttermost, to be filled with God, in order to express God for His glory—Phil. 3:7-8, 12; Isa. 43:7; 1 Cor. 6:20; 10:31; cf. John 17:1.
  - 3. God's purpose in creating man is to have man gain Him and be filled with Him to be His expression, not an expression of human perfection; therefore, the success of Job in human perfection was torn down by God; then God came in to reveal Himself to Job, indicating that He Himself is what Job should pursue, gain, and express—Job 42:1-6; 10:13; Eph. 3:9; Phil. 3:14; 2 Cor. 3:18; 4:16-18.
- B. When we come to the book of Proverbs, we need to turn ourselves from the mind to the spirit by praying in our spirit (Eph. 6:18; Luke 18:1; Col. 4:2); if we come to Proverbs in this way, we will be touching the Word by the new man, and we will live a life not by our natural man, by our old man, and by our self but by the Lord Jesus, who is our life and person living in our spirit (2 Tim. 4:22; John 6:57, 63; Jer. 15:16).
- C. We must reject self-cultivation, condemn the building up of the natural man in the old creation (cf. Matt. 16:24; Rom. 6:6; Gal. 2:20), and come to Proverbs as a regenerated man in the new creation (Eph. 4:22-24; 2 Cor. 4:16) by exercising our spirit with the

Spirit to contact the word in the spirit of prayer so that the word in Proverbs will become spirit and life to us (John 6:63; Matt. 4:4; Eph. 6:17-18).

- D. As New Testament believers, we should believe that Proverbs is a part of the holy word in God's Holy Scriptures; the psalmist says, "I will lift up my hand to Your commandments, which I love" (Psa. 119:48); to lift up our hand unto the word of God is to indicate that we receive it warmly and gladly and that we say Amen to it (Neh. 8:5-6).
- E. Proverbs is the breath of God for us to breathe in that we may receive the life supply from God; the Bible is God's exhaling; when we read any verse by means of all prayer, this pray-reading becomes our inhaling of God's breath—2 Tim. 3:16; Eph. 6:17-18:
  - 1. All the words in Proverbs are God's breathing, which is altogether embodied in Christ; as we read Proverbs, we need to inhale all that God has exhaled, all that He has breathed out; by inhaling the divine breath in Proverbs, the more we receive the breath of the speaking God, the more we will enjoy Christ—2 Tim. 3:16; John 20:22.
  - 2. Whereas the children of Israel were charged to keep the commandments, statutes, and ordinances, we today need to keep Christ; by taking Christ, keeping Christ, and holding fast to Him, we will gain Him, enjoy Him, and live Him; we need to love Christ, keep Christ, teach Christ, wear Christ, and write Christ—Deut. 6:1, 5-9; Phil. 3:9; 1:19-21a.
  - 3. Because the Scriptures are the breathing out of God, the exhaling of God (2 Tim. 3:16), we should inhale the Scriptures by receiving the word of God, including the book of Proverbs, by means of all prayer (Eph. 6:17-18); as we are teaching the Bible, we should be exhaling God into people.
- F. We should read Proverbs by being filled with the fullness of God in our spirit (Eph. 5:18-19; 3:19); furthermore, we should read Proverbs in the New Testament Spirit of life (Rom. 8:2), with our regenerated spirit (v. 16), and by mingling prayer with our reading (Eph. 6:17-18) in order to mingle the words with spirit and life (cf. John 6:63).

### **III. According to God's economy, the big proverbs, like nuggets, and the small ones, like gems, are not for us to build up our old man; rather, they are for us to build up our new man to strengthen our life of pursuing Christ for the fulfillment of God's economy in producing and building up the Body of Christ, which consummates the New Jerusalem as God's heart's desire and ultimate goal:**

- A. We need to receive the living and operative word of God with a praying spirit so that we can build up our new man and so that we may be able to discern our spirit from our soul—Heb. 4:12:
  - 1. The enemy's strategy is always to mix our spirit up with our soul; our greatest problem is our mixture; the more we know God by being filled with His light, His presence, the more we will treasure purity over power—Matt. 5:8; Luke 11:34-36; Psa. 119:105, 130.
  - 2. The way to purge such mixture is through the revelation of the Holy Spirit; the dividing of the soul and the spirit occurs when God's word illuminates us, shining within us to reveal the thoughts and intentions of our heart—36:9; 1 Pet. 2:9.
  - 3. Whatever we see under the shining of God from the word of God is killed by the light; the greatest thing in the Christian experience is the killing that comes from light; the dividing of the soul and the spirit comes from the shining—Isa. 6:1-8; Acts 9:1-4; 13:9-10.
  - 4. Revelation is seeing what God sees; it is God opening our eyes to see our intentions and the deepest thoughts in our being as God sees them; as soon as God exposes our thoughts and shows us the intentions of our heart, our soul will be separated, divided, from our spirit.

5. Apart from pray-reading, the book of Proverbs is merely a collection of proverbs, but when we read Proverbs prayerfully, that is, when we pray-read Proverbs, our pray-reading causes all the proverbs to become words of spirit and life to us.
- B. We should not come to Proverbs as a letter-keeper but as a God-seeker; we should be those who seek God with all our heart, who seek God's favor by entreating His countenance, who ask God to cause His face to shine upon us, and who walk in God's presence—Psa. 27:8; 105:4; 119:2, 10, 58, 135, 168; 2 Cor. 3:6.
- IV. Ephesians 4:22-24 tells us clearly that a believer in Christ has two men—the old man and the new man; the old man is of Adam through our natural birth, and the new man is of Christ by a new birth, regeneration; we need to live a life of putting off the old man and putting on the new man; according to God's economy, Proverbs should not be used to cultivate and build up our old man but to cultivate and build up our regenerated new man:**
- A. In order to enter into the intrinsic significance of the book of Proverbs according to God's economy, we need to be those who are living according to the new creation (Gal. 6:15); the old creation is our old man in Adam (Eph. 4:22), our natural being by birth, without God's life and the divine nature; the new creation is the new man in Christ (v. 24), our being that is regenerated by the Spirit (John 3:6), having God's life and the divine nature wrought into it (v. 36; 2 Pet. 1:4), having Christ as its constituent (Col. 3:10-11), and having become a new constitution.
- B. In our spirit there is the marvelous, wonderful, processed, all-inclusive, sevenfold intensified, life-giving Spirit (Phil. 1:19; Rev. 4:5; 5:6; 1 Cor. 15:45; 2 Cor. 3:6; Rom. 8:16); when we exercise our spirit to contact Christ as the living Word of God (John 1:1; 5:39-40) in the written word of God (10:35), He becomes the applied word of God as the Spirit to us (Eph. 6:17-18); then our reading of any word in the Bible will become spirit and life to us to revive us (John 6:63).
- C. We need to turn the Bible from a book that apparently teaches us to cultivate the self and to build up the natural man into a book that actually is full of light, life, spirit, and spiritual nourishment by receiving it in a spirit and atmosphere of prayer; this will tear down our self, break our natural man, and supply us with the consummated Spirit of the Triune God.
- V. We must be persons who love the Lord and pursue Christ, not self-perfection (cf. Phil. 3:3-14), and who love the Lord's word in the entire Bible and read it with a praying spirit, not to seek the doctrine of letters but to seek the Spirit and word of life (cf. John 5:39-40; 2 Cor. 3:6); we should read Proverbs not to gain any help for self-cultivation but to nourish our spirit so that we may live a Christian life that is perfect in the divine virtues, which are the expressions of the divine attributes (Gal. 5:22-23; Matt. 5:5-9).**