

# SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

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The Good Life

PART

2

TITLE

Wisdom Is Waiting For You

SCRIPTURE

Proverbs 2:1-9



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Well, it's great to see you, Providence family, and to all of our guests, welcome. We are thrilled that you have joined us. You know, we all live in a world that feels very unpredictable, feels chaotic, and yet if you really step back and you look at how many things that we see, that we know, that we feel, that we trust, that are exceptionally predictable day in and day out. For example, the precise time of sunrise and sunset every single day is predictable. You go to the beach, and the exact times of high tide and low tide, they are very predictable.

You think about the earth and its rotation, and its moon and its rotation, and its speed; these things are absolutely predictable, so much so that if you think about what we do, we can fire a rocket, we can strap a shuttle to a rocket, fire it off of one ball that's moving at the speed of 67,000 miles an hour. Now, I know that it doesn't feel that fast right now, it feels like we're really moving slow, but we're actually moving around the sun 67,000 miles an hour.

And we can fire a rocket off of this moving ball, and we can actually watch this rocket and the shuttle fly 238,000 miles from this moving rock, and we can actually hit the moon with our shuttle, with our rocket, and the moon happens to be rotating around the earth at 2,200 miles an hour. And so, what we know absolutely is that the speed and the orbit of the earth and the moon are so predictable that we can fire a rocket from one to the other, and they're moving at different rates of speed, and we can watch that rocket move 238,000 miles, and we can hit our target on the moon within four miles. That's closer than here to Brier Creek.

It's because it's predictable. The water cycle is predictable; the strength of natural resources like steel over our head, it's predictable. You look at laws of physics, and chemistry, and genetics, and agriculture, and biology, and mathematics, and there's so many things that are predictable. Birds fly, and trees, they grow, and salmon spawn, and lions hunt, and leaves turn, because they're all predictable.

My point is that the entire created world routinely and gladly bows its collective knee before the Sovereign Designer and says, "As you wish," until you get to humanity. And we who were created in the image of God to know Him, have a relationship with Him, we who have the capacity to have a consciousness of His power, a consciousness of His authority, His mercy, His generosity, His goodness, His love, His justice, we look at God, and unpredictably, we say, "No," to His expressed will.

And thus, we fill the world with chaos and unpredictability, and God calls this rebellion sin. The Bible says that sin severs our relationship with God Almighty, and it also sends us on a quest in order to find what is missing that should be and is available in God, and near God, and yet we're far from God. We call it the good life, where we look at our life, and we imagine another life, and we want to get to that life. We want to get to this happy Promised Land place, to where there's peace, and where there's prosperity, and where there's plenty, and where there's adventure and self-development and freedom, and every other thing that we don't feel like we have at full measure now.

And we want to run there, and so we set out and we run, and we're guided by the compass within, and predictably, we get lost. Proverbs chapter 14, verse 12, it says, "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death." What that means is that when we're guided by the compass within, we walk down a path and we think, "This is it, this is going to be the good life," and suddenly we find we're just ... We didn't quite hit it. We're still looking, we're still searching. In fact, sometimes our looking and searching, it leads us further away from who God is.

But I have great news for us today, Providence. If you're a guest or not, there's great news, because the Bible tells us that God has given us a reliable Savior named Jesus Christ, and He's given us a reliable compass, and his name is Wisdom. What is wisdom? We looked at this last week. God comes to a man, a king, his name is Solomon. The Bible tells us that he had more wisdom than anyone else on the earth at the time, because God gave it to him. And how he received it was actually supernatural: God comes to him, and He goes, "What do you want? You're the king. I'll give you one thing. What is it that you want?" He could have named anything that he wanted, and what did he say? He said, "God, this is what I want. Would you give your servant an understanding mind, that I may discern good and evil?"

Now, Solomon was unlike nearly everyone in the world at that point in time, in that he had his own copy of the Word of God, his own copy of the Law, the Law that says, "This is sin, and this is righteousness. This is good, and this is evil." So how and why would he waste ... He didn't waste it. Why would it look like he would waste his one wish, his one request, to have the ability to discern right and wrong when he had a copy of the Bible? In fact, he had a copy in his own handwriting, because it was the responsibility of the king when he took office to actually record in his own handwriting, so that it would be inscribed upon his own heart the Word of God. And the reason is because wisdom is the ability to know and do the right thing, even when the Bible doesn't specifically address our situation.

And the fact is that we all have a Bible in our hand right now, at least I hope that you do, and whether you read it or not, the fact is, what's in that Bible, there are truth statements. There are things in there that says, "This is sin, and this is righteousness," and yet isn't it true that the great majority of the life situations that we find ourselves, there's not a verse that's specifically written to us at that moment in time, exactly what we're supposed to do? Oh, sometimes there is. In fact, many times there is, but many times there's not, and wisdom is the ability to not only know the right thing to do, but have the ability, the skill, and the courage to actually pull it off, and so imagine how great a gift this is.

And this is where we come to Proverbs chapter 2. If you have a Bible, if you want to turn there — if you don't, there's lots of Bibles in the chairs near you — I would invite you to turn to it with your own hands so that you can see with your own eyeballs. You can open up your phone as well, I'm sure you have one there. And if you don't have a Bible at home or on your phone, take the one home as a gift that's in that chair. Last week, we were in Proverbs chapter 1.

What we looked at there was that wisdom is coming to us, and in Proverbs chapter 2, Solomon says, “Now, you need to come to wisdom.” Meet it in the middle. Run to it, just as it runs and shouts to us.

This is what he says to us. In Proverbs chapter 2, starting in verse 1, he says, “My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you, making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom; and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding; he stores up sound wisdom for the upright; he is a shield to those who walk in integrity, guarding the paths of justice and watching over the way of his saints. Then you will understand righteousness and justice and equity, every good path; for wisdom will come into your heart.”

What I want to do right now is pray for us, and ask the Lord to give us insight to what we just read. Father, we come to you believing that without your grace in our life, we won't understand this, nor will we believe it, nor will we apply it. And yet we desperately need a word from you, and so I pray that you would give us just what we need. I pray for those in the room who have a significant decision, a significant burden in their heart, or that their anxieties just pull their attention. I pray, God, that you would give them now a peace that passes understanding, but also, would you use this passage to help them to know whether to turn right or to turn left. Would you give grace and understanding. Would you do just what it says here, would you store up sound wisdom, and then would you pour it out to us and let it come into our heart. So would you speak through weakness as we look here. We pray this in Christ's name, amen.

What does this say that God has done? Two things. The first is this, is that God has made a pathway for us to pursue wisdom. He's made a pathway for us, for you and I to actually pursue this wisdom. You notice in verse 1, 3, and 4, there's a pretty significant word, and it's the word “if.” “My son, if you receive.” Verse 3, “Yes, if you call out,” and verse 4, he says, “And if you seek it like silver.” The entire text hinges on these three “ifs.” They represent and indicate a decision that every single one of us must make and will make, whether we like to think that we're going to decide today or not. Whatever we do with this is a decision.

You see, Proverbs, what it does is it condenses all of life down to two diverging paths. It starts as one path, and then all of a sudden, there's two, and we have to make a decision. Am I going to turn left, or am I going to turn right? What the Bible says, and what Proverbs says is that these two paths, they are divided, they are separated by what it calls the fear of God, or the fear of the Lord. This is the starting place to turn one way or the other. Am I going to fear God, or am I not going to fear God? Proverbs chapter 9, verse 10, what does it say? It says that, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” It is the starting blocks of wisdom that helps us to even move down a certain path.

And then we looked last week at Proverbs chapter 1, verse 29, and what it says there, he says that, “Because they did not choose the fear of the Lord, they shall eat the fruit of their way.” And so all of Proverbs, I know it talks about all kinds of different life applications, but all of those life applications, they all boil down into one of two paths, and that is, “Am I going to fear the Lord, or am I not going to fear the Lord?” You see, one path faces towards God. It literally places our face toward the justice of God, and toward the generosity and the love and the mercy of God, to where we are conscious of Him, where we see Him, where we acknowledge Him. And the other path turns our back to God. One path, it lives to please the Lord, and one path lives without any consciousness or care of the pleasure of the Lord.

The word “fear” is one that we often struggle with. It means to admire, it means to reverence, it means to acknowledge, and so what he’s saying here is this, is there’s two ways to live, a God-ward life and a ward that’s not toward God. Where our attention, our affection, our admiration, our longing for His pleasure is in one direction, and there’s another way to live. And sometimes what we do is when we hear the word “fear of the Lord,” we say, “I don’t want to fear anybody, so I’m not choosing that path, because if that’s the ‘fear of the Lord’ path, I don’t want fear into my life, and so I’m going to walk down this path.” But here’s the deal: There’s a set of eyes that govern and lord over each of the two paths. There’s a master over both, there’s a lord over both. God is in one path, and He’s observing, and everybody’s walking down the God-ward or the God-fearing path is looking and seeing God, acknowledging God, reverencing God.

But the other path is not without a master, it’s not without a lord, it’s just a different one. That lord may be you, may be your boss, it may be your parent. Even if you’re an adult, it still may be your parent; you’re just living to please, just, “I have to please my dad. I just ... I have to do something to acknowledge ...” It may be pleasure. I don’t know what it is. It may be sin. And the question you have to ask is not “Am I going to live with fear or without fear?” The question is this, is who is the most kind master over your life? Who is the one who is more committed to your good than anyone else, including yourself? And the Bible says that that’s Jesus Christ, that Jesus alone, He gave up His own life so that we could be forgiven of our sin. He took on the wrath of God that was directed towards us. No one is more committed to you than Jesus Christ. No one. And down this path, He is looking, He is observing, and those who are walking, they’re observing Him.

It’s interesting, when you look to the Scriptures and you see this idea of the fear of the Lord, there’s lots of different passages. My favorite is Isaiah 8. God comes to His prophet, his name is Isaiah, and He tells him, “There’s a judgment coming. There’s an invasion coming. The Assyrians are going to come, they’re going to invade Israel, and it’s going to be difficult.” And all the people of Israel, they’re lined up at the wall, and they’re all [inaudible 00:15:11], and they got their head over, and they’re looking, and they’re all terrified, and they’re all trembling. And right in the middle of all of them is Isaiah, and he’s got his head over, and he’s trembling right next to them.

And so God comes to Isaiah, the prophet, and this is what He says. He says, “Isaiah, do not fear what they fear, and do not dread it. For the Lord Almighty is the one that you are to regard as holy.” What does that mean? He is the one that you’re supposed to revere and admire and acknowledge and desire more than anyone else. He is the powerful one, He is the holy one, He is the righteous one, He is the just one, He is the one you are to regard as holy. And then He says this: “He is the one you are to fear, He is the one you are to dread, and He will be to you a sanctuary.”

And this is what we find with the Lord, is that when we fear the Lord, what it literally means is we draw near to Him. You see, there’s a lot of us that we get so confused over “the fear of the Lord” because we don’t understand how that can be when we fear men so much. We can think of the bully on the playground, or we can think of someone who’s abused us, or we can think about the feeling that when you drive next to ... Well, when you’re driving down the road a little too fast, or you’re not certain how fast you’re driving, and you see over there, and you see some lights turn on. You’re like, “Oh man,” and all of a sudden, you feel that adrenaline. You think, “Is that the fear that I’m supposed to feel when I think about living my entire life in a relationship with God?”

It’s interesting that there’s two ways to think about fear. One of them is what we acknowledge with what we experience on the earth with each other, and then there’s this one that’s with the Lord, and this is how you can see the difference between the two. When we fear men, we run from them, and when we fear God, we run to Him. And the reason that we run to Him is because we recognize that there’s nowhere that you can run that He’s not already there, so you might as well run straight to His lap, straight to His arms, and say, “Okay, I give, I give. I’m yours. I surrender my life to you. I repent, I turn, I believe. I can’t save myself, and you alone can save me.”

And so the fear of the Lord literally takes us from a point of decision, and it says, “This is the path that I’m going to take. This is who I’m going to honor. This is who I’m going to respect. This is who I’m going to revere.” And every single one of us have to make that choice, and there’s many of us in the room today that we are honoring, revering, respecting someone else more than God, and that someone may be you. It may be ourselves, it may be our sin. And so God comes to us, and He says, “It’s me. It’s me alone.” And so what Solomon does for his son here in the first four verses is he shows, what does it look like for someone to be captured by the fear of God, to choose that path, and then because of the fear of the Lord causes us to run to God, what does that running to God look like?

I want to show you in three different applications exactly what he says here of how we can run to God because we’ve walked down a path that’s marked by this idea of fearing, honoring, revering God Himself. The first is, let’s treasure God’s Word. This is where he starts. He says, “My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commands with you, making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding.” Now, it’s clear that he’s telling his son instructions, and verse 2, though, tells us that the instructions that he’s giving him is the wisdom that God gave to him.

It's the Word of God, it's the Scriptures. For those of us who have a Bible in our lap right now, that is the Word of God. It is for you, in that these verses apply to your life, and the instruction and training that it's talking about in Proverbs chapter 2 is directing your heart to that book in your lap. To fear God is to treasure His Word.

He uses four words. He says "receive." "Receive" is pretty easy: when someone comes to you and he says, "I have a gift, I have some money, I want to give it to you." You've all watched somebody want to not receive a gift from somebody else, right? You're at the lake with a friend, and they have a boat, and they've enjoyed the boat, you've enjoyed their boat the whole day long, and so you want to help with gas, and so you pull out some money, and they say, "No, no, no, no, no, no," and they start backing up. Right? I don't want to ... What's happened, they're not receiving the gas money. This is what he's saying. Some people, this is what they do with the Word of God. God says, "Here, this is the instruction." You come here and it says, "Hey, this is what God's Word says," and we simply say, "I don't think I want to receive that."

The second thing is treasure, and the word "treasure" simply means "value." It means not to receive and then go, "Okay, hey, thanks so much for that," and throw it onto the counter. No, it means to receive it and then to acknowledge it, protect it, be grateful for it. The third one he says is to make attentive. He says to make our ears attentive to wisdom. It's interesting that the third and fourth one, he actually says that you have the authority over your ears and over your heart, it's not the other way around. He says that there's something that we can do to actually make our ears more attentive. When you drive late at night, you feel really groggy, what do you do? You make yourself attentive. How do you do that? You put the windows down so there's air, you turn the air condition up, you drink coffee, you do something, right? You slap yourself around a little bit, you shake your head, you're like, "Pay attention, pay attention. I'm too tired, I'm driving through the night, it's too difficult."

This is what he's saying; sometimes we come to the Word of God, whether it's in this place or another place, or maybe even our own home, our own living room. We open up the Bible, and we're just ... There's just this ... There's this dullness. So he says if you really want to fear the Lord, what you have to do is you got to make yourself alert, make your ears alert. Drink coffee if you have to, shake yourself around, do some push-ups. Get ready to read the Bible. And then he comes to us, and what does he say? He says "incline." To incline our heart to understand, what does that mean? The word "incline" literally means "to lean." It means to lean toward it as opposed to lean away, to say, "I want to receive this."

It's fascinating to me that our natural impulse, when we're reading through the Scriptures and we find something we don't understand, is to skip over it, and just add it to the big compilation of things that we simply don't understand in the Bible. Have you ever thought, though, that every time you don't understand something, it's God's clue to you to slow down? To say, "Why don't you lean in a little bit?"



Instead of saying, “I have no idea, let me just lean back, I don’t get that one,” well, why don’t you lean in and say, “Hey, maybe there’s a treasure here, that if I wait and if I tarry, even if it means I have to stall in my Bible reading plan and I don’t get through the whole thing in a year, but I’ve learned this”? Maybe that would be a good thing.

And so he tells us to receive treasure, make attentive, and to incline. James chapter 1 says it this way. He says, “Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man’s anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires. Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.” Now, I want you to notice a few things in this text. He says there to “humbly accept the word planted in you.” This entire passage is about how you listen to a sermon, or how you read the Bible on your own. It’s how you receive the Word of God that’s been planted in you. How do you do it? Well, the very last thing he says, “Which can save you,” what does that mean? It’s to recognize that it’s different than anything else. It’s special. There’s something about this book, this instruction, that’s just different from other instruction, because this instruction is from God. This can save my soul. There’s a value to it.

But then notice, right before he says, “Accept the word,” he says, “Get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent.” What does that mean? It means if you’re planting a really precious plant in your garden, you first clean the soil. You do a soil analysis. What does that mean? It means that when you come to the Word of God, whether in your quiet time or to church ... What would it look like if we all woke up on Sunday morning 15 minutes early, confessed all of our sin, came in this building with a clean heart? Can you imagine? Imagine what the singing would be like. Just imagine what would take place if everybody had a clean heart for this Word to actually land on. See, the Word of God thrives with good soil.

But then verse 19 is interesting. A lot of us, we sort of separate verse 19 as sort of a life application, “Everyone should be quick to listen, and slow to speak, and slow to become angry,” and we divorce it from its context. Its context is to receive the truth. It’s to receive the Word of God, and this is how it works. Sometimes what happens is we start reading the Bible, and instead of wanting God to speak to us, we start speaking to it. Sometimes we come here, and I start speaking, and you would just rather ... You’re not listening anymore, now you’re, “I’m just tired of this guy, I’m ...” And we’re speaking, maybe even not out loud, but we’re speaking.

And it’s really easy to get argumentative and get angry with what God says. So what does he say? He says, “This is how we come to the Word of God.” We come recognizing its supreme worth. We come with a clean heart and clean hands, because we confessed our sin to God. And then we come, and we’re really, really patient to say, “You know, right now is not my time to speak, it’s my time to receive, and it’s not my time to get angry, so if I get angry at what’s happening right now, I need to set the anger aside so that I might be able to listen to what God is saying.” And so what is he saying? He’s saying, “Look, those who fear the Lord, what they do is they look at His Word as God speaking to them, and they say, ‘I want to receive that. I want to receive that.’”



Well, the second thing [inaudible 00:25:07] is, let's pray for wisdom. This is verse 3. This is the second way that we run towards God. He says, "Yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding." You see, when you live facing the Lord, we simply talk to Him more. We talk to Him. Several years ago, our family was in Washington state, and we decided to go rafting. We found the White Salmon River, which was Class IV, the whole thing. It was amazing. It was right under Mount Adams, and it was in the summer, and so all the water was 37 degrees because it was snow melt runoff. It was incredible rafting.

And we had a guide, and our guide was so cool. He sat in the back, and what's interesting is all of us in our family, we all knew that we didn't know what we were doing, but we knew and we trusted he knew what he was doing. And so when it came to it, my boys weren't asking me, even though I was their dad, "Dad, should I start paddling right now?" Everybody was not only listening to him, but if they weren't certain, they were calling out to him. "Should we paddle now? What should we do now?" We're all talking to him. Why? Because we were all conscious of our guide at that moment. We knew that he knew things that we didn't know, he could do things that we couldn't do, and so we were calling out to him. God is the guide of life. James chapter 1, verse 5 says, "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God." You see, you and I can imitate Solomon. If God gave you one wish, would wisdom be the one thing that you ask for? He's pleading with his sons, he said, "Plead for wisdom, it's so important for your life."

The third application here is, let's persevere in our pursuit of wisdom. This is verse 4. He says, "If you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasure." Silver was money. Y'all ever lost money? Lost your wallet, misplaced it, you didn't know where it was? How did you seek it? I guess it depends how much was there, right? But if it was a whole lot there, you sought it with intent, you were diligent, you persevered, you said, "I have to find this. This is important." You didn't say, "Well, all right, whatever, it's lost." You looked. You looked in the car, under the car, under the seat. And then it goes on, and he says, "Look, and as you search for hidden treasure." Hidden treasure is treasure under the ground. It requires digging, perseverance, effort. So the question is, are we going to pursue ... How deeply do you want to be a wise person?

Well, not only has God made a pathway for us to pursue wisdom, the second thing is this, is that God has made promises for those who pursue wisdom. He's made promises for those who pursue wisdom. You see what verse 5 says? Now, don't forget that the path begins with the fear of the Lord. That's who travels, that's who inclines their heart, that's who makes attentive, that's who calls out for wisdom, that's who perseveres. It's people who fear the Lord. And what happens when we do that? Verse 5 says, "Then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God." And so the fear of the Lord gets us on the path, and then the path intensifies our fear of the Lord. It intensifies our admiration and our reverence and our desire for God when we walk the path that's motivated by an acknowledgment and fear of God.

Sometimes it's interesting what God loves. He loves faith, and for that reason, He does things that maybe I wouldn't necessarily do. For example, one of the things that He does is that after making promises that there really is freedom, that there really is wisdom available, one of the things He does is He makes us take the first few steps in the dark, because He loves faith. Proverbs chapter 4, verse 18 says that, "The path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day." You know what this means, is it means if you want to live a life that's obedient to Christ, what it means is this, is that He has uniquely illumined the path so that it gets brighter the more steps you take, and sometimes the very first step of what you need to do next is in pitch black, other than the promise of God that says, "I'm with you. Just do it, take it, walk."

And this is what ... He loves faith. He loves when we live God-ward, and just look at what is promised to those who yield to God with joy as the first duty of their day. This is so important that you, every single day, wake up and in delight say, "God, I recognize you are God, I recognize that you are Lord over my life, and I gladly submit to you as my king." What happens to the person who does that? He says, "For the Lord gives wisdom; and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding."

And He stores up, He literally places a vault of "sound wisdom for the upright." He literally gives us a key, and He says, "Not only do you not have to wait for me to talk to you, you can just come into the vault any time, and you can receive wisdom." He says, "He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; he's a shield to those who walk in integrity, guarding the paths of justice and watching over the way of his saints." It's remarkable what He's made available for every single one of us. He's the shield to those that want to understand His will.

All right, I want to do an illustration. Last service, it worked okay. Sometimes these work well, sometimes they don't. Just acknowledge it. But the risk is worth the potential of a reward. So, sometimes what happens is when we want to know something of God's will, sometimes we go, we look, and we go, "Okay, God, what should we do?" And it looks like this, it just looks like possibilities. "I have no idea what to do." And so we open up God's Word. "It's okay, God, I want to learn from you. I want to understand."

What I want to do right now is to give you a simple example of a life situation of three different people, three different times within the last three weeks have asked me very specifically about this life application, like, "What do I do about this?" So I thought, well, I'll just use this as the illustration for this, okay? Now, let me just tell you right now, okay, this is not the point of the sermon. This is the application, okay? Some of you, because the whole thing is, "Should a believer drink alcohol?" you're going to walk and you're going to go, "You know, he just preached about not drinking alcohol, or we can drink alcohol." That's not the point of the sermon, okay? It's about the fear of the Lord.

But how do we ... So, sometimes we look and we go, "Okay, what should I do? Is it right for a believer in Jesus Christ to drink?" It's interesting that if you went around the room, you would have very conflicting ideas, even among people who open up the Bible and say, "God, I want to know your will." So how do we understand, in particular, when sometimes it just feels like it's so open? "Should I, or should I not?" What happens is this, is that we start opening up God's Word, we start praying, we start asking other people, we start persevering in the minds of God's wisdom, and what happens is we start stringing things together.

In this context, you get to Ephesians chapter 5 in the Bible, and he says to us, "Do not get drunk on wine." So we know without a shadow of a doubt that it's sinful for us to be drunk. Not to drink, but to be drunk. And so we look at that, and we go, "Now, I know that to be true. He considers that sin, and so I consider that sin. I'm not supposed to be drunk." Then we look at various people in the Bible, one of which was a man named Noah. It says of Noah some amazing things about his character. It says that he was righteous, he was blameless, he walked with God, and he shunned evil. That's ... This is what God said, He goes ... He looked down, and he saw a man who was those four things. God looks at you, and He says that, you're doing really well, okay?

He gets off the boat, he was probably really tired, so he gets drunk, and then he gets naked, which for some reason oftentimes happen together. I don't know why that is, but oftentimes when people get drunk, they get naked, right? And so, at very least, what we learn from this, okay, is that this thing called alcohol has the capacity to take someone who has really strong convictions about who God is, and make them do foolish things. That's at least one thing that we can take from that. We look at Proverbs chapter 23, and he says, "Woe is the man who wakes up in the morning, and he just looks at the wine. Who carries over it, who drinks so much that he falls asleep, only to wake up to look at it some more." So we absolutely know that a life that's controlled by it, that's hypnotized by it, the Bible says that's not the way to live your life. That's not the way of wisdom.

Well, then you look to Jesus, and you think, "Well, how did Jesus live?" Jesus came to earth, and one time, in John chapter 2, He decided to go to a wedding that He knew they'd be serving alcohol. And He gets there, and they run out of alcohol, so He makes alcohol. He makes more wine, and not only does He make wine, He makes the best wine. All right, so that has to be factored into all of this somehow. And Luke chapter 7, people are saying, "You know, what you eat and what you drink makes you unclean," and He says, "Actually, that's not true at all." He says, "What comes out of your heart is what makes you unclean, not what comes in through your mouth."

And then Jesus goes on, and He says ... Actually, that was Mark 7. In Luke chapter 7, what happens is there's a lot of people that are really uptight with Jesus because He was drinking, and Jesus Himself says, "Look, the Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, 'Look, he's a glutton and a drunkard.'" And so we [inaudible 00:34:53] go, "Wow, okay, so the Son of God actually came to this earth, and He actually ... At least, it says there that He drank alcohol, and that He says Himself, 'I did this.'" Well, that's interesting.

Well, then all of a sudden, you get to 1 Timothy chapter 4, and Paul's talking to Timothy about what's wise living and not. Should you eat certain things, drink certain things, wear certain things? What should we do? And this is what he says. He goes, "Look, everything created by God is good." What is he saying? Wine didn't sin against anybody; it's what we do with a good gift. He says, "Therefore, nothing is to be rejected if it's received with thanksgiving." All right, so now all of a sudden, God makes things, and we're supposed to be thankful.

And then all of a sudden, the same book, a chapter later, he tells Timothy, he goes, "Look, I know you got some stomach issues," and so he says, "No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach." So what's happening here? Well, the Bible never wants, legislates sin. He doesn't say, "Look, don't rob a bank, but if you're going to rob a bank, this is how you should do it." Okay? It never does that. And so he would never tell Timothy, "Hey, do something sinful in order to fix your stomach."

It goes on. Go to Romans chapter 14, and there's a lot of people, now they're in community, and there's some people who think it's right, and there's some people who think it's wrong, and unsure what to do. And some people say, "I'm free in Christ to be able to do this," and so he goes, and he goes, "Now look." He goes, "If you drinking, and you know that you violate someone else's conscience who's a weaker believer than you, and in doing so," he says, "you're going to sin against Christ," he says, "what does this mean? It means in certain situations, we need to exercise wisdom, and not violate anyone else's conscience." Then a chapter later, he gets to Romans 14, verse 5, and he says, "Look, each one should be fully convinced in his own mind." What does that mean? It means that every single one of us are going to stand before God without anyone else with us. We can't blame anyone else; we have to have an answer as to why we should.

Now, what does this do? At least in this case, what we know is this, right? As it relates to alcohol, we absolutely know, first of all, that we're not supposed to get drunk. We know that no matter what anything happens, if God has placed upon your consciousness that I shouldn't do this, then you shouldn't do it. You shouldn't violate your conscience. God may put something on your conscience that's different than someone else, because He may be protecting you from something that maybe you're not strong enough and someone else is. I don't know. But you don't violate your conscience. And then He says, "And you know what? You have to be careful that even if you have freedom, that in certain situations, you would abstain to not make someone else violate their conscience."

And so what I'm saying is this. Like, for those of you saying, "Just say it's wrong," for those of you saying, "Just say it's right," what I'm saying is this, is that sometimes what happens is we come into these life situations, and we don't know what to do. In fact, still, a web is formed, but isn't it amazing how much space is between each one of these absolute certain Scriptures?

But what we find is this, is that if we tarry in the Word of God, if we spend our time there, if we live there, if we enjoy the Word of God and we're studying it for ourself, what happens is we begin to see who God is, what God does, what He does in other people's lives, His different instructions in all manner of life, and what we find is it forms a web, so that when we fly through and we think God has nothing to say, our wings eventually touch one of the webs. And God's Word gives us understanding, and He protects us, and He guides us in these ways.

You see, no matter what it is that you are looking at, I want you to know, there's not a life situation, there's not a single situation in life that God's Word does not speak to. It may not speak to it directly, you know, "Thou shalt not do this," but there is wisdom within the Word of God for every single one of us, and we have to be wise enough to study the whole thing so that we can grow.

Now, the question I want to end with is this, is how can such benefits be given to any one of us who've rebelled against God? And the answer to this is Jesus. Jesus came into this world that He created, and He looked at all the chaos that He did not create, and He saved, or He died for the people that created all of it. It's interesting, He came, and they didn't receive Him. When He was on the earth, there was a bunch of people in Matthew 12, they're all uptight with Him, and He says, "You guys remember this queen from the south who went to Solomon in order to see his wisdom?" He goes, "Yeah, yeah, yeah." And then He says this: "The queen of the south is going to rise at the judgment of this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, behold, something greater than Solomon is here."

What's He saying? He's saying, "Solomon spoke wisdom, but I am wisdom. He spoke about the Way, but I am the Way. He spoke truth, but I am the truth." You see, every single one of us, we're trapped in a cage, unable to pay our debt, and so Jesus came to this earth, and He died for our sin. He was buried in a grave, and He rose from the dead. This path that we've been talking about was built by Jesus, and the promises that He gives to us for wisdom, they're all guaranteed in Jesus. And so I want to encourage you this morning, let's place our faith in Jesus.

Some of you maybe have never done that in your life, and I want to give you the opportunity now. You see, Providence, if the Bible had its way, we would not come away from our study in Proverbs with a desire to lead a principled life. We would come away with a glad and predictable impulse to bow before God. That's His point, that's His goal, that's His idea, and Romans chapter 10, verse 9 says this. He says, "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." No matter how chaotic your world is, no matter what you're looking for in the future that says, "This is the good life," I want you to know it is not a good life unless Jesus is your guide. You must trust Jesus and be forgiven of your sin.

So what I want to do right now, if you want to trust Jesus Christ, I want to lead you in a prayer. For those of you who already know Christ, you may have a life situation right now where you need wisdom, and you can spend this time, and you can ask God, say, "God, would you give me wisdom in knowing what to do here." But if you would like to trust Jesus Christ, I want to lead you in a prayer, so if you would, would you bow your head, and you can say this directly to God. He hears, and He knows your heart.

Father in heaven, I come to you today, and I acknowledge that my decisions have made my life more chaotic. I have sinned against you, and as a result of that, there's a measure of longing in my heart that I simply cannot find in this earth. I acknowledge that I'm a sinner. I can't save myself, but I believe in Jesus Christ. I believe that Jesus came from heaven to earth. I believe that Jesus died on a cross, that He was buried in a grave, and I believe that Jesus rose from the dead. I admit that I cannot save myself. I believe in Jesus Christ, and I confess Him as Lord of my life. Would you help me to live a life that's facing Jesus. Would you help me to live Godward. We thank you for your kindness to us.

Now, Father, I pray that as we sing, I pray for those who have trusted Jesus Christ, Lord, that you would comfort them, that you would strengthen them, you would forgive them, and you would assure them even now. And as a church family, we thank you, God, that you have poured out for us not only a path, but also promises to walk that path. And so, as we sing to you now, I pray. I pray, God, that you would fill our hearts with joy. As we sing about coming to an altar, coming to you, I pray, God, that you would do just that, you would allow us to come straight to you. We pray this in Jesus' name, amen.



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