

## Pursuing Wisdom and the Knowledge of God (Prov 2.1-5)

### I. THE NEED FOR WISDOM AND THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

- A. We live in an hour of human history where there is a full-frontal assault against the things of God. We are experiencing in a manner unique to our generation the decay of public morality, the death of institutions, and the widespread acceptance of immorality and deception on a global scale.
- B. Although this is true at all times throughout history because of the sinfulness of men, the Scripture does speak of seasons where God either restrains the outworking of evil, or hands people over to greater expressions of lawlessness (cf. Rom 1.18-32; 2 Thes 2.7).
- C. The primary need for the church in the moment of history is to be filled with the knowledge of God (relationship) and wisdom (how to live in the world).
- D. Many believers do not understand the necessity of cultivating wisdom and pursuing the knowledge of God. Yet, we find ourselves at a crossroads in human history — one that will not be endured simply by new methods, new ideas, or better programs. We need to be consumed with *knowing God* and seeking to apply and understand his *wisdom* in and throughout our lives.
- E. Daniel prophesied that in times of extreme trouble, it would be the people who *know God* who are able to stand firm and take action (walk in a manner in accordance with God's wisdom).

<sup>32</sup>He shall seduce with flattery those who violate the covenant, but the people who know their God shall stand firm and take action. <sup>33</sup>And the wise among the people shall make many understand (Dan 11.32-33)

- F. David related the pursuit of the beauty of God (*knowledge of God*) with inquiring of the Lord's heart and his will (*wisdom*).

<sup>4</sup>One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple (Ps 27.4)

- G. The need to orient our lives in a way that God evaluates as wise is the call of Christian discipleship. This is the call of each generation of Christians until the Lord returns. Yet, there are particular and specific hinderances to this pursuit in our current moment.
- H. Jesus tells of days when lawlessness will be increased and love will grow cold. It is in these times that the Lord calls his disciples to be *wise* and *faithful* (possessing a life that is ordered toward what he calls wise).

<sup>12</sup>And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. <sup>13</sup>But the one who endures to the end will be saved... <sup>45</sup>Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household? (Matt 24.12-13, 45)

- I. Whether or not we live in a time of increased lawlessness one day each of us will stand before the judgment seat of Christ to give an account to what we did in our lives.

<sup>9</sup>we make it our aim to please him. <sup>10</sup>For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil (2 Cor 5.9-10)

- J. The mercy of God is free forgiveness apart from our works. Our lives are marked by his unmerited favor and abundant mercy. He lavishes the power of his kindness upon us in Christ Jesus. Wisdom, however, does require that we experience greater *blessing* (reward) or difficulty in line with the choices we make and what we give our lives to (e.g., gambling, laziness, etc.).

- K. At the judgment seat, there will be Christians who *suffer loss* because they failed to pursue the depths of the knowledge of God and walk in wisdom. They will experience the infinite mercy of God's saving power in Christ, but they will experience real loss of potential blessing (eternal reward) by building with materials that do not matter in eternity.

<sup>12</sup>Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw — <sup>13</sup>each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. <sup>14</sup>If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. <sup>15</sup>If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire. (1 Cor 3.12-15)

- L. Jesus speaks of four types of soil as how individuals engage his word. The third type of soil (falling among the thorns) potentially speaks of those who are born again (the plant grows) but they do not bear fruit because they do not pursue that which is eternal over that which is of this world.

<sup>22</sup>As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the world, and it proves unfruitful (Matt 13.22)

## II. THE PATHWAY TO WISDOM AND THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

- A. In Proverbs 2 we find an outline (or a roadmap) to pursuing the knowledge of God. God promises to grant the fear of the Lord (the starting point for wisdom) and greater knowledge of him to *any* who pursue this path.
- B. We must understand that growth in the knowledge of God and wisdom is not a *guarantee*. Salvation is not conditional. However, growing in the grace of God in Christ Jesus in our experience, growing in the knowledge of God, walking in maturity, seeing victory over sin, and experiencing the fear of the Lord are *participatory* in nature.
- C. Proverbs 2 lays out four conditions to growing in the fear of the Lord and the knowledge of God. Each of these is a *pursuit* — meaning, they have real implications for our time, energy, affections, etc.
- D. **Condition #1 — Treasure God's Word**
1. To receive God's word and treasure his commandments within the heart speaks of an active pursuit of filling our minds and hearts with God's word.
  2. This is not simply speaking of reading God's word for the purpose of information, or even studying it in order to better understand it. Rather, it is speaking of a *loving meditation* on God's word. We meditate on God's word by praying it back to him in a spirit of thanksgiving.
  3. We meditate on God's word by turning it into dialogue with him in the place of prayer.
- E. **Condition #2 — A Humble Spirit of Obedience:**
1. The next two commands are to "make your ear attentive" and to "incline your heart". This speaks first of having a *teachable spirit* when coming to the Word of God. We assume that the Word is designed to confront us and our preconceived notions.
  2. Making our ear attentive and inclining our heart are more than just possessing humility — these realities are *expressed* in a willingness to respond to the word through a spirit of obedience.

3. To possess a spirit of obedience means that we intentionally and consistently seek to wage war against sin and ask God to release the help of his Spirit to walk out obedience to his word. This does not mean perfection, but a faithful and intentional pursuit to obey God's word as an expression of our love.

#### F. **Condition #3 — A Persistent Petition**

1. If we are to grow in the knowledge of God and wisdom we must *continually, intentionally, and persistently ask* God to give it to us.
2. Jesus commands his disciples to continually ask, seek, and knock as they pursue walking in a life oriented around his kingdom.

<sup>7</sup>Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. <sup>8</sup>For everyone who asks receives, and to the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened... <sup>11</sup>If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him! (Matt 7.7-11)

3. This is the prayer that God loves to answer the most.

<sup>17</sup>...that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, <sup>18</sup>having the eyes of your hearts enlightened... (Eph 1.17-18)

<sup>9</sup>And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, <sup>10</sup>so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God. (Col 1.9-10)

#### G. **Condition #4 — A Sustained Pursuit**

1. The author of Proverbs invites us to *seek* after this and *search* for it more than we would treasures, gold, and silver. To seek after growing in wisdom and the knowledge of God will mean that we say “no” to other pursuits throughout our lives. This will be costly and may look foolish in the eyes of the world.
2. Jesus compared the kingdom of God as a treasure in the field that is worth selling all to obtain.

<sup>44</sup>The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys the field. (Matt 13.44)

3. Paul counted everything of this life as loss in order to press on to experience the knowledge of God.

<sup>7</sup>But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. <sup>8</sup>Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ <sup>9</sup>and be found in him... <sup>10</sup>that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share in his sufferings (Phil 3.7-10)

### III. THE PROMISE OF THE FEAR OF THE LORD AND THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

- A. God promises that *if* his people pursue these four conditions that he will meet them.
- B. **Fear of the Lord:** speaks of the awareness that God sees all (Prov 15.3, 11); that he cares; and that he will evaluate our lives one day in accordance with his character and nature. This is the starting place of wisdom because if we connect with these realities, we long to orient our lives around what is *pleasing* to him.
- C. **The Knowledge of God:** speaks of growing in intimate relationship with God. This is the purpose for which we were created.