

## A Guide To The Reader

*Pastor recommends that to obtain maximum benefit from his comments you read in full from the Bible every reference whenever one appears. Otherwise the reading of the comments is simply a skimming over the surface. They are rather designed to make you stop and meditate and even look up further references as the Holy Spirit guides you. Do pray before you read that the Holy Spirit will be your Tutor and that the time you spend will be time spent with Him.*

## Proverbs 2

Solomon is the penman but the Spirit of Christ which was in him directs us to prize wisdom as a most significant possession of the Christian life. All through our lives we are to pursue it and seek it from the Lord Himself to cope with all the many, varied situations which confront us personally, in the home, the workplace and church.

The emphasis in the first four verses is on the earnestness with which we should desire to attain to wisdom. Such expressions as “incline thine ear,” “apply thine heart,” “criest after knowledge,” “liftest up thy voice,” “seekest her,” “searchest for her” denote that an increasing intensity of desire for wisdom is the means of being blessed with it. One reason for desiring it may be that we perceive within ourselves a propensity to act hastily; or we might observe in young Christians that their ways of thinking are brought over as baggage when they are converted from the world and we need the patience of wisdom to show them a better way; we might find ourselves in a situation within the church where few think like we do and we shall feel the need to seek wisdom as to how to deal graciously with the situation. Or we may be drawn to seek salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ believing that “ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart” (Jeremiah 29.13).

“If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures” (Proverbs 2.4) encourages us to put a value upon wisdom which exceeds anything we could buy in this world and to work for its benefits as hard as in our workplace. When the gift of wisdom is imparted, it is of the Lord’s doing, for “every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (James 1.17). That it is a gift that needs to be worked for seems a contradiction in terms. It is no more so than in Isaiah 55.1 “Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.” If a thing is free people tend to grab the offer without appreciating it. The meaning in the Proverbs, as in Isaiah, is that though wisdom (and salvation in Isaiah) is free it must be valued and longed for.

Wisdom in its initial imparting brings us to fear the LORD and to open our eyes to the character of God – holy, eternal, all powerful and seeing all things. “For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding” (Proverbs 2.6). This is another way of saying that His word, His speech conveys knowledge and understanding and there can be no more essential knowledge than that which the Supreme Teacher gives. Of the Lord Jesus Christ it was said that “never man spake like this man” (John 7.46). That speech is enshrined for us in the Bible which the Lord has directed to be written down as a permanent record for us. All that we need to know to obtain life in the Lord Jesus Christ and to continue in it is written in the Holy Scriptures. To assimilate it and to apply it to the current situation of our lives means that we must call upon the Holy Spirit’s aid daily.

The Lord is always active in His creation. He delights to be proactive in the lives of believers. “He layeth up sound wisdom”, “he is a buckler (a shield which is easy to carry),” “he keepeth the paths of judgment,” “he preserveth the way of his saints” (Proverbs 2. 7-8). All these wonderful provisions reveal His never ceasing interaction with His people. No wonder the psalmist says “whereunto I may continually resort” (Psalm 71.3).

There are four pictures here. “He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous” shows His people how that in the holy scriptures He has provided a storehouse full of good things. Each of these has been laid up under the Holy Spirit’s direction by successive scripture writers. They are sound, that is life-giving, because true and because they speak of eternal things of which man could know nothing unless God had revealed them. “He is a buckler to them that walk uprightly.” A buckler is a lightweight shield for everyday use (rather than in formal battle) for defence and protection at all times. By His presence he defends us from the assaults and onslaughts of the evil one, the half of which are not told us. We do not know the near misses either physically, morally, mentally or spiritually; when Satan desired to destroy us and we were preserved unawares. “He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints.” If we compare scripture with scripture we shall see that one of the finest explanations of this active preservation is laid out for us in Psalm 121, especially in verses 3,4,7,8. In verse 8, for example, it is declared, “The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth and even for evermore”. When we go out till we come in. When we come in till we go out. Why, that’s all the time! And when we consider that this help is from God Himself. “My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth” (Psalm 121.2) how powerful this help is! Yet we must always remember that the Lord loves to hear our voice; “I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them” (Ezekiel 36.37).

To keep a path (Proverbs 2.8) may suggest keeping it from being overgrown, so that it may be used, and tidy for the pleasure of those who walk. Our heavenly Father will

make right judgments on behalf of His people and lead them throughout their lives. Or if the emphasis is on the judgments which believers are to make frequently in their lives about all sorts of matters He keeps them from error, from being deceived, from misreading situations and enables them to see what lies behind events which present themselves. All this encourages us towards the acquisition of such wisdom; “Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path” (Proverbs 2.9).

At Proverbs 2.12 we are shown some of the snares from which wisdom, when once it has entered the heart and is pleasing to us, will keep us. Discretion suggests to us tactfulness (which is always welcome) but here probably particularly refers to being able to distinguish between the precious and the vile; the good and the evil; and to evaluate priorities. These snares can come from evil men or evil women. The way of the evil man is “foward.” “Foward” is the opposite of “toward” or “towards.” It signifies “fromwards”. Instead of being turned towards God and all His ways, this is a description of one who has turned away from God. It receives great emphasis here being mentioned three times. Proverbs 2.12 refers to speaking things that are ungodly; verse 14 to the wicked enjoyment of being profane; and verse 15 to the actions and lifestyle of such. The wisdom which is from above will enable us to see and loathe what goes on behind the scenes in their gatherings; and in their minds and hearts.

When it comes to an evil woman “which forsaketh the guide of her youth and forgetteth the covenant of her God” what is mainly intended is the siren voice of sexual enticement. The word “strange” often means “foreign” or, at least, “from another part” and therefore unknown as to background as in “stranger”. But it mostly refers to “strange” ways which “estrangle” her from God; ways which are contrary to God’s law, in which she was very probably brought up and from which, preferring fleshly lusts, she has turned aside. She introduces to the unwary youth evil things of which he may not even be aware which will defile him for ever. “For her house inclineth unto death, and her paths unto the dead. None that go unto her return again, neither take they hold of the paths of life” (Proverbs 2. 18-19). Such defilement of conscience will befoul those who are brought into her clutches as will never leave them. There is a risk that even when and if delivered from her they will never be entirely free of the shame. Perhaps even a dread disease will indeed lead to an early death.

A good conscience comes from such wisdom as God gives and this is to be greatly prized. When God’s approval embraces us, when His Spirit “beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God” (Romans 8.16), what a boost it gives to our energies! What life it imparts! What encouragement to continue! Whereas the guilty sinner, unless he repents through God’s grace, is overtaken by “a certain fearful

looking for of judgment" (Hebrews 10.27) which is to be avoided at all costs and from which heavenly wisdom warns us most severely.