

Wisdom: Making a straight path for your feet! [2]

Dear Listeners,

Last week I introduced you to the book of *Proverbs* in the Word of God. I took you to the *school of God* to show you how you can learn *wisdom* there. Today I invite you to come along on another *excursion* in this school to show you what all can be learned there. Are you coming along again? Then just like almost every student at school will do, as do others who want to learn in the school of life, they *browse* through the textbook for the course. Well *browsing* through the book of Proverbs, dear listeners, you'll see that it covers a lot of areas of life. Solomon wrote about *trees*, from the cedars of Lebanon to the hyssop plant that grows against the wall. He wrote about cattle, birds, fish, and other *animals*. If you would try to categorize his topics, divide them into different subjects, you would have a hard time. Still, what we can learn from this book can be summarized in one word: *wisdom*!

Then you should realize that the *Hebrew* concept of '*wisdom*' is very widespread, very complex, and multifaceted. It addresses matters of *principle* and matters that are very *fundamental* to a life in the LORD: like living in the *fear of the LORD*. It also broaches *every day issues* such as the relationship between parents and children, the differences between people that are righteous or wicked, rich or poor, rulers and subjects, employers and employees, etc. It also teaches *the art of living*, so to speak, and helps the students learn how to conduct themselves in company, when to speak and when to keep silent, how to recognize happiness and joy or how to understand people who are filled with sadness and depression. In short, it's God's study of life and *God's wisdom of life*: basic knowledge, practical wisdom, and rules for wholesome living!

God's study of life, dear listeners, also takes a special approach, *a wise approach* you could say. Solomon's proverbs help you look around in life, *observe*, compare, and conclude what works and what does not. They help you *listen*, think, and understand how life works. It teaches in the form of

admonitions and exhortations – do this, don't do it that way – and by *examples* instills the way of God, the way of obedience, of righteousness, holiness, and redemption. That's how the apostle Paul summarizes *Christ* as the wisdom of God as well [1Cor. 1:30]. That's why the study of God's Word helps you develop a *Christian intuition* and a *practical knowledge* about what will be a *blessing* and what will become a *temptation*. The ways of the Spirit show in the interaction between people, in the way you use God's creation, and what objectives you have in your service to God in the fear of His Name. This *same wisdom* Moses describes when he has to choose Bezaleel and Aholiab for the work of implementing the designs of the ark and the tabernacle. The wisdom of God can be seen as well in the *wise way* in which the *farmer* carries out his work, considering the kinds of soil, choosing the kinds of seeds, and following the ways of harvest and threshing (Isaiah Ch. 28!).

Now *this* wisdom of God, dear listener, is taught and studied in the *school of God* with the calling to learn wisdom. Hence, an important aspect in this book of Proverbs is the matter of *discipline*. At God's school the study is *not non-committal*, taught in a manner of 'take it or leave it.' God's study methods and means aren't given for your kind consideration only, to which you could respond by saying, 'thanks for the advice, I'll think about it.' No, these proverbs are taught to train you in *discipline*, in obedience, and in righteousness. God's study ensures that you *apply* the things you learn in your everyday life. Its discipline also keeps you from missing out on the *salvation* in Christ, from true life, now and eternally! That's why there are *admonitions* included, *corrections*, yes even *rebuke*! You'll hear at times a warning, 'not *this* way but *that* way!' The instruction is *not* always pleasant, pleasing to our ears, easy on our feelings, or attractive to the everyday experiences. That's only, though, to keep us in the *way of life*, to preserve us for the way of *salvation*!

Another characteristic of God's study is the *nature* of His lessons: they're not always *clear* immediately. In fact, many of the teachings, Solomon says, are proverbs and parables, sayings and *riddles of the wise*! It's not always

easy or obvious right away what they mean. That's stimulating or challenging at times. That helps though *train* you in listening, thinking, developing discernment, and so giving you *knowledge*. They make you careful in coming to conclusions and obtaining insight. Indeed, they *activate* the students of the Word of God! That's why it's important that the students work *together* in their classes. That's why it's so important that the various *gifts* of the students have a bearing on the understanding and insight of others. Yes, dear listener, that's what makes the *church* such a wonderful gathering, namely of people whom the Spirit of Christ has given a variety of *gifts* for the purpose of ensuring that everyone understands, accepts, and walks in the way of life with the wisdom of God!

So, *who*, dear listeners, are the students in this school of God? Well, says Solomon in his introduction, they're first of all the *simple*, the *young*. They're the people who don't have much wisdom yet, and little experience perhaps about the way of life in the truth. They're still very *vulnerable* and can be influenced easily. The one moment they're excited about *this* and the next moment they follow *that*; it all depends who leads them. That's how it is quite often with young people; however, it's not just them, they're *also* the people who don't feel as *stable* and *secure* in their life with God. That's fine though; then you should seek the study at this school! Don't think that it will be too difficult for you or too advanced in the congregation of the LORD, the *church*; there's a place for simple Christians too!

Solomon mentions in the second place the *wise*. They can *add* to their learning, he says, and the discerning receive guidance too. They can learn lots *more*! In fact, when you're *truly wise*, you realize how *little* you know of the vast and deep wisdom of God and how *complex* this world of God really is! At the same time, in this school of God, the *church*, the students form a class that's *one*, bound together by the Spirit of God! It's a student *body* that attends this school of God, and in that body the students are all *members of one another*, sharing with each other the manifold wisdom of God! Yes, and their unifying *principle* is: the *fear of the LORD*; that's the basis: a deep *respect* for the Founder of the School, God, and a deep *gratitude*

for the *price* paid by the schoolmaster, Jesus Christ! Would *you* not desire to join this school, this church of the Lord Jesus Christ? Everyone is invited! It's your chance of a lifetime!