

Wisdom: making a straight path for your feet! [4]

Dear Listeners,

This is the last Sunday of February. We can see that the days are getting longer already. By this time we begin to long for the spring, even though we could encounter some severe winter weather yet. Still, the *mornings* are no longer as dark as they were for some time, the *dawn of day* is coming earlier all the time! May be there was *snow* on the ground this morning, or perhaps the snow is still there and will be there for a while yet. When the day dawns and *sun rises* on a morning like that, you can see the *light of dawn* shine over the snow. It's about this sun rise and light of dawn that I would like to speak today. In the past weeks we have been *browsing* through the book of *Proverbs*. We have used this book as a *text book* in the *school of life* to learn to go our way of life in the *light* of that Word. When we do so, as we have seen, we receive a totally different *understanding* of life, *new insights* in the paths of life that people travel. In order that these paths for our feet may be *straight*, we have seen, we need to learn the *wisdom* for a new life in the school of life, the *church*! Today, I would like to show you what difference it makes whether you go your way by faith in God, believing the Word of God, and seeking your life outside of yourself in Jesus Christ, *or not*, but continuing your life in your own way, by your own rules, and in your own wisdom.

In the book of Proverbs, chapter 4:18, 19, Solomon, holds up to us this *contrast*: "The paths of the *righteous* is like the first gleam of dawn, shining ever brighter till the full light of day. But the way of the *wicked* is like deep darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble." Again, Solomon is speaking about the way of our life, the *paths* we take with *our feet* on our journey through life. We may be wondering sometimes what *difference* it makes whether we are believer or not, whether we trust in God or not, as we move on in our life. Then Solomon first mentions the *righteous*, that is the people who seek their life with the *LORD*, seeking it outside of

themselves in *Jesus Christ*. They are *righteous in Christ*. They live a *new life* by the *Spirit* of Christ, sincerely and obediently. They put away what is *dark* in their life, in their heart, and what is unjust, unrighteous. They've *learned* what this is from Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. *He* is their life, and because *He* is the *light* of the world their life shows the *dawn of this light* too, showing the *first gleam* of the morning light, as the proverb puts it.

Then Solomon is not advertising dear listener, a new *detergent*, neither is he speaking about some *false radiance* over their life; he shows that there is the radiance of a *new day*. Jesus Christ, the morning light, is shining over their life; it's the light of a new life in *Him* that's breaking through, like the first gleam of dawn does in the morning. The way the light of dawn shines on a wintry day over the snow, so the path of the *righteous* appears in the midst of this world. It lights up in a dark world; it radiates a new life of love and care and justice and uprightness, etc. It's as *clear* as the morning light; it doesn't obscure or cover up anything! That's the comparison Solomon makes to teach us the *wisdom* we need to examine our life, our way of life: does it reflect this first gleam of dawn, the radiance of a new wintry day?

I do not know, dear listener, who you are or what your life is like, whether you are a believer or not. The question I just asked though applies to *believers* and *unbelievers* alike: does your life reflect or radiate this *newness* of life that the Spirit of Christ works in this dark world? What do we often hear though: we complain about darkness in our life, about doubt and uncertainty, about fear and anxiety. Believers, too, complain that their faith is so small, about the hope that is missing so often; while the unbeliever complains that he would like to have faith but doesn't know how or where to receive it. However, it could also be due to illness, or depression, or fear that we walk in the *darkness* of death rather than the *light of faith* and *hope* in Jesus Christ. Whatever your present situation or circumstances though, dear listener, you may wonder in that state *where* that gleam of dawn *is*, this morning light, Solomon is speaking about?

If this is what you were thinking when hearing me quote this text from proverbs 4, dear listener, then I should draw your attention to the fact that the proverb does say: “the path of the righteous *is* like the first gleam of dawn.” That’s a reality! May be *today* is a dark and dreary day so that you didn’t *see* the day dawn or the sun rise. Does that mean that the *sun didn’t rise*? No, it *did* rise and the morning light *was* there. You would not say, would you, that since you didn’t *see* the sun rise that’s why the sun *wasn’t* there?! Well, that’s how it is with the *righteous*, with the *believer* too, and with his paths of life: the light *is* there in their life, even if that’s just a first *gleam* of dawn rather than the bright morning light. Even if your life seems to be getting darker, the sun is *still* shining behind the clouds! That’s not a cliché but the *truth* in the life of everyone who trusts in the LORD and seeks his life in Jesus Christ, who is the light of the world! Right through the darkness of this broken world with all its misery, the light of the world in Jesus Christ still makes the *first gleam of dawn* shine over the life of the believer, over the paths of his life!

Yes, dear listener, and this proverb of Solomon is even more promising than that: “shining ever brighter till the full light of day!” The light of the *dawn* of day is different from the light at noon. It’s *weak* in the morning, but very soon it drives the darkness away, and when it rises it gets *brighter* and its power increases until it *peaks* and shines over the day with all its activities and developments! That’s how it is in the life of the believer too, there is *progress*: it’s going from light to lighter, from strength to strength, despite the darkness, which can be so intense in days of illness, fear, doubt, and depression! How do I know; because it *looks like* the life of *Jesus Christ*, the light of the world. In the manger there was no light; after that it started to climb, through suffering, humiliation, cross, and the grave, when on the morning of the *resurrection* the day dawned and the morning light shone over the lives of the believers! That’s what God’s Word shows us! And because we *believe that Word*, the *path* for our feet becomes more and more *straight*, as does the *strength* of the *light* becomes more and more intense! There will be *growth*, an increase in knowledge of God’s Word, a growing

desire to live for God, to worship Him with His people, an increase in love for the neighbour, at home, in the church, and in the world. Believers *grow*, first from milk then from the solid food in the preaching of the gospel. They *grow* in wisdom, in discernment!

That's what we have seen these past weeks, dear listeners: listening to God's Word, seeking the preaching of the gospel in the church, we *learn to discern* and to *act* according to God's wisdom, *growing* in love, in obedience, and in service to God; *growing* in a life, also, in which we find *straight paths* for our feet, straight paths over which the *light* of Christ will shine brighter and brighter. We pray that you may see this, dear listener, and desire it, and believe that God's Word also reaches out to you that you may live this life of light in Jesus Christ!