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Trust in the Lord, Don't Lean On Yourself

October 6, 2019

Sermon Text: Proverbs 3:5-6

Scripture Reading: Proverbs 3

There is a reason that these verses in the 3rd chapter of Proverbs are some of the most commonly memorized Scriptures (or at least they used to be!). They are vital truths that will keep us from all kinds of grief, and yet very few people wrap their lives around them.

Pro 3:5-8 Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. (6) In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. (7) Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil. (8) It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones.

We will look closely at these words this morning.

The importance of knowing and doing God's wisdom is emphasized repeatedly in Proverbs:

Pro 1:7-9 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction. (8) Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching, (9) for they are a graceful garland for your head and pendants for your neck.

Pro 1:22-31 "How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple? How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing and fools hate knowledge? (23) If you turn at my reproof, behold, I will pour out my spirit to you; I will make my words known to you. (24) Because I have called and you refused to listen, have stretched out my hand and no one has heeded, (25) because you have ignored all my counsel and would have none of my reproof, (26) I also will laugh at your

calamity; I will mock when terror strikes you, (27) when terror strikes you like a storm and your calamity comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you. (28) Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently but will not find me. (29) Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD, (30) would have none of my counsel and despised all my reproof, (31) therefore they shall eat the fruit of their way, and have their fill of their own devices.

Knowing and doing God's wisdom in other words, is life. Ignoring and mocking them is death. So what we are considering this morning is not some mere old sage advice. It isn't a matter of listening to the Dr. Phil show or Oprah or reading some self-help book. These are God's own words. They are certain. They cannot fail. They are given to us for blessing or curse, depending upon how we respond to them. Embrace and believe these things and you will certainly be blessed. But reject them and exalt yourself as soooo wise, and you can be guaranteed that *calamity* is going to be your constant companion in this life – and in the next.

Listen again to the opening words of this 3rd chapter:

Pro 3:1-4 My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments, (2) for length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you. (3) Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you; bind them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart. (4) So you will find favor and good success in the sight of God and man.

Notice that this really is a matter of life or death. "*Length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you.*" Fools, you see, generally die young and their lives are characterized by grief and misery. "*Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord...*". They eat the rotten fruit of their own way and devices. The news is filled with accounts of such fools. Many, many, many of the people we see on the streets today are there because of this. Distress and anguish has come upon them.

Also notice the emphasis upon *the heart* here:

1. let your heart keep my commandments,
2. bind them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart.

There is only ONE way that this kind

of obedience is possible: *you must be born again by faith in Christ.* Think about it – can any of us write on our heart? The heart here is *our affections. That with which we exercise love.* These affections are compared to a kind of tablet in contrast to the cold hard stones which the Law was written on. It is the Lord's picture description of saying: *Know and love My Word, obeying Me because you love Me.* You must be born again in Christ.

What is the only alternative? What is true of every single person who refuses to acknowledge the Lord and turn to Christ in repentance and faith? Listen once again very, very carefully –

(24) Because I have called and you refused to listen, have stretched out my hand and no one has heeded, (25) because you have ignored all my counsel and would have none of my reproof, (26) I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when terror strikes you, (27) when terror strikes you like a storm and your calamity comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you. (28) Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently but will not find me. (29) Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD

If you refuse to listen to the Lord and

obey Him, then here is a promise: a calamity is coming upon you. A terror is coming. Distress and anguish. Picture yourself in a tornado or hurricane of force #5. It's bearing down on you and roaring like a locomotive, getting louder and louder and you know you are about to be ripped apart. So you call on the Lord to save you – want to know what His response is going to be? He will mock you. He will laugh at you. He will not answer and you will get what you deserve. His judgments are always ironically fitting. Mocking and laughing? Why? *Because this is exactly what the wicked are doing toward the Lord right now. Thus they will get exactly what they gave. And more. Far, far more.*

That is the warning. That is how important these things are that we are hearing right now. Listen carefully:

Pro 3:3-8 Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you; bind them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart. (4) So you will find favor and good success in the sight of God and man.

(5) Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. (6) In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. (7) Be not wise in

your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil. (8) It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones.

Trust in the Lord, Don't Lean on Yourself

What is the key to living a successful life, and in having eternal life? *Trust in the Lord with all your heart.* What does that mean? To trust the Lord? Well, the contrasting latter part of the verse helps us understand: *do not lean on your own understanding.*

Everyone here this morning is *leaning* on something or someone. You are *trusting* something or someone to guide you in life. There is something or someone that you consider to be *wisdom* and which you are relying upon to inform your decisions and actions. And fundamentally, Proverbs is telling us there are only two actual choices:

- Ourselves
- The Lord

One results in calamity, terror, and disaster and misery and death. The other assures success, fulfillment, blessing, and life. *Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on*

your own understanding.

In and of itself, your understanding, your thinking and thoughts, your ideas – and mine – are foolishness Why? Because apart from being born again and having our minds and eyes opened to Christ's glory and truth, we are blind. The sinner is laughs and mocks at God's wisdom, who insists on writing the score of his own life, *is like a blind man demanding to walk unaided along a precipice.* This is a picture of leaning on our own understanding.

I know many, many unsaved people – and I suspect that you do as well – who are quite nice and in some ways outwardly moral, but nevertheless they insist on living their lives according to their own understanding.

Understanding of what:

- Of themselves
- Of the World
- Of God
- Of where they came from and of where they are going

They are leaning upon their own understanding you see. They are leaning on a staff made of jello. They trust it, but they are going to fall. *Do not lean on your own*

understanding. That is to say:

Don't write your own worldview!

Instead, *trust in the Lord with all your heart.* Believe Him when He tells us where we came from. Believe Him when He says that He created us male and female. Believe and trust Him when He speaks to us about ethics and using our money and relating to other people.... *Don't write your own script!* If you do, it is all going to go very, very, very wrong for you.

The text goes on:

(6) In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.
(7) Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil. (8) It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones.

We know from Romans chapter 1 that the chief and fundamental sin is this:

Rom 1:20-21 For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.
(21) For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give

thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

What is the chief sin of man? It is to live his life as if God is irrelevant. To go on about his daily affairs refusing to even acknowledge that God is his Creator and provides every good thing. It is to live as if we are God ourselves in other words.

This is what Proverbs is warning us against. *In all your ways acknowledge Him.*

Our lives here are pictured as a path or road. And we are travelers on it. That path has all kinds of tricky twists and turns, some of which are quite dangerous – even deadly. Other sections are quite steep and hard. We need help as we travel daily along. Worse, there are all kinds of false signs and guides along this path trying their best to get us off the narrow way and onto Broadway that leads to death.

The Lord's promise is that if we acknowledge HIM, if we admit our complete reliance upon Him and ask for His guidance and help, He will give it. *He will make our paths straight.* Therefore:

Be not wise in your own eyes;

John Bunyan of course wrote about this journey in Pilgrim's Progress and there is more than one instance in that book of Christian being wise in his own eyes and getting into trouble.

Being wise in our own eyes is the opposite of acknowledging Him in all our ways, you see. "I don't need any Guide. I know where I am going and I know how to get there." Really? Good luck with that.

Pro 23:9 Do not speak in the hearing of a fool, for he will despise the good sense of your words.

In contrast:

...fear the LORD, and turn away from evil. (8) It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones.

Acknowledging the Lord. Knowing and obeying His Word from your heart. These are descriptions of what it means to *fear the Lord*. And hear is a promise for those who obey: *It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones*.

Pro 4:20-22 My son, be attentive to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. (21) Let them not escape from your sight; keep them within

your heart. (22) For they are life to those who find them, and healing to all their flesh.

We enter this fallen world, sick. Dead actually. And as a person continues to walk in sin, they keep getting beat up and injured further. Mentally, physically, spiritually, emotionally. Many people around us are literally sick and suffering physical pains *as a direct result of being wise in their own eyes, refusing to acknowledge the Lord*. Others are depressed and still others are so mentally ill they cannot function. Not all who suffer these things are the fools Proverbs is talking about, but many are.

What is the remedy? *Fear the Lord and turn away from evil*. Your flesh will be healed and your bones refreshed.

Final Thoughts for Believers

We who know the Lord must work at heeding these words as well. It's true, isn't it?

Pro 3:5-6 Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. (6) In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

In all our ways, acknowledge Him.
This is a daily, moment by moment task, is it not? How many things do we take on each day without acknowledging the Lord, leaning on our own understanding?

Prayer is the language of *faith*. It is a chief way in which we acknowledge the Lord in our ways. And **reading His Word** carefully is the chief means by which we reject leaning on our own understanding and instead embracing what HE says.

His promise to all who trust in Him is here: *He will direct their paths*. He will order our lives in the way we should go. And every time we start to make a wrong turn, we will hear a voice behind us saying – “no, here is the way. Walk in it.”