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Walk As Wise People, Not Fools, Pt 2

Ephesians 5:15

PowerPoint Presentation: None

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SermonAudio blurb:

I. Introduction.

A. Read 5:15.

1. We are told we cannot conduct ourselves as fools. As a result I spent the hour describing what God calls a fool.
 - a. Simply put, a fool is one who hardens his mind and heart to the instruction of the Lord.
 - b. “A man who hardens his neck after much reproof will suddenly be broken beyond remedy.” (Proverbs 29:1)
2. A fool is many things and none of them good, helpful or proper.
 - a. To continue in biblical folly is merely to ultimately expose yourself as an unbeliever.
 - b. The fool may say with his lips that there is a God and that he trusts in Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior, but his heart in the end betrays him.
3. The fool does not recognize the time that he lives in (5:16).
 - a. The recent court decisions make plain that the days we live in are evil. We live in a fallen, broken, dark age.
 - b. James says to walk in the wisdom of this age is to walk in the thinking of demons (James 3:13).

B. These things ought not be part of a Christian’s life. We are to be constantly cognizant that we live in an age that is not ours. A thinking and a wisdom that cannot be ours. A lifestyle and a value system that is contrary to the Cross.

1. 1 Peter 1:1 with 2:11.
2. Galatians 1:4.
3. Titus 2:12.

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4. 1 Corinthians 3:18.
5. These passages make a clear point that we live in an unusual situation, one in which we straddle two ages.
 - a. Ephesians 6:12. In this age we are not ultimately battling against human forces but rather that spiritual powers that lie behind all that we witness every day.
 - b. 2 Corinthians 10:3-5. We battle first and foremost in the arena of truth. We battle not through marches and violence but by refuting and rejecting every lofty, wise-sounding lie that this age produces.
- C. It is easy to be a fool. You are essentially born that way.
- D. God did not redeem you out of slavery to sin to remain that way. But it is not something you just fall into. It takes careful, intentional choices over a long period of time.
- E. I want to spend two weeks considering what wisdom looks like and how one becomes wise so that Paul's command becomes something we strive for together rather than shrug and go on living any old way.

II. What is wisdom?

- A. The foundation for true wisdom begins with God (Proverbs 1:7). To fear God is what must be first understood.
 1. To fear God is not the same as to be afraid of God.
 - a. Moses said this to Pharaoh after that nation has been struck time after time with plagues. ““But as for you and your servants, I know that you do not yet fear the Lord God.” Exodus 9:30
 - b. There was fear but not a fear of the Lord.
 2. To fear God is to believe in Him and His ability to deliver them.
 - a. “So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its normal state at daybreak, while the Egyptians were fleeing right into it; then the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. The waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen, even Pharaoh's entire army that had gone into the sea after them; not even one of them remained. But the sons of Israel walked on dry land through the midst of the sea, and the waters were like a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. Thus the Lord saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and

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Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. When Israel saw the great power which the Lord had used against the Egyptians, the people feared the Lord, and they believed in the Lord and in His servant Moses.” (Exodus 14:27-31)

- b. To fear the Lord involves an implicit trust that He is sufficient and faithful to accomplish what He desires.
 - c. This is not something that is merely a concept, but something that is personal and individual. Each person must be involved in fearing God.
3. In our passage in Proverbs 1 we can discern certain other aspects regarding the fear of the Lord.
- a. It is without limitations as to who can learn wisdom. To whomever fears the Lord to them belongs the path of wisdom. Rich or poor, intelligent or simple, nor slave or free; all who fear the Lord have the beginning of wisdom.
 - b. To fear the Lord is the gateway to wisdom, it is not the end of wisdom.
 - (1) Wisdom begins with a right relationship to the fount of all true wisdom—God.
 - (2) Wisdom then is enlarged as one lives a life of fear before the Lord.
 - (3) No matter what you or I say and no matter what anyone else says, without the fear of the Lord there is no true wisdom.
 - (a) Stalin had no wisdom.
 - (b) Freud had no wisdom.
 - (c) Aristotle had no wisdom.
 - (d) They were wise for this age, but not wise before the Lord. Their wisdom is destined to be destroyed.
 - (e) Only when you build your worldview firmly upon the Lord will true wisdom begin.
 - (4) Until this is embraced nothing else that I will say will matter. You will pursue wisdom in all the wrong places and you will never find it.

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- c. This fear has an object—the Lord.
 - (1) This is not some vague anxiety or phobia that captures our mind.
 - (2) It is very clear as to its object. It is a fear of YHWH.
 - (a) Your bible likely shows the name as “LORD” which is unfortunate but it is the reality of tradition.
 - (b) YHWH, pronounced likely as Yahweh is the actual name of God.
 - (c) It speaks of God as being the faithful, covenant-keeping God who is every and always present. He did not arrive and neither shall He disappear. He simply is.
 - (d) But the point of 1:7 is that until we are rightly oriented before the one, true God—YHWH then we can never know true wisdom.
- 4. But the driving question is how does a person fear YHWH?
- B. Three aspects to the fear of the Lord:
 - 1. First, it involves divine revelation (Deuteronomy 4:1-15).
 - a. The key passage is verse 10.
 - b. Notice the absence of mere emotion in this verse.
 - (1) What was the purpose of assembling the people before the mountain? That they could hear God’s word. For what purpose were they to hear it? To fear the Lord.
 - (2) This means that one who fears the Lord is one who hears and learns from His word.
 - c. Notice how the verses following vs 10 downplay the supernatural experience that so many yearn for and focus upon the **content** of the words rather than the experience of hearing the words.
 - d. Deuteronomy 31:9-13 brings this out again. Notice the broadness of the command to read and to hear the Word of God. Fascinating how the focus is upon hearing the Word rather than some sort of experience that so many today are seeking to have.

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- e. I would say this to anyone here. To fear the Lord requires that you open your bible, read what is written, believe what is written and then do it because it is God's word.
 - (1) It is through the hearing of God's Word that you understand why you are to fear the Lord.
 - (2) It is through the hearing of God's Word that you understand who to fear.
 - (3) It is through the hearing of God's Word that you understand what fearing the Lord involves.
 - (4) It is through the hearing of God's Word that you learn of the blessings attached to fearing the Lord.
2. Closely attached to the first point is that the fear of the Lord is something that is taught (Deuteronomy 17:18-20).
 - a. Here Moses is writing in anticipation to the entrance of the Promised Land. When they entered the land there would come a time for a king to be chosen by God.
 - b. Note carefully what was expected of the king.
 - (1) First, he must personally copy the law of God in the presence of the priests (18)
 - (2) Second, he was to make it his habit to read it (19a).
 - (3) Third, he was to learn to fear the Lord and this was only done by observing/obeying all that the Word said (19b).
 - (4) Fourth, a key result of this would be humility rather than pride (20).
 - c. Once again we see the assumption by God that the written word is sufficient. There is no need for miracles and personal experiences to bring one to a right or mature relationship to the Lord.
 - d. J. Barton Payne, an Old Testament scholar said it well, "'Fear' is faith, as it submits to [God's] will." (J. Barton Payne, *The Theology of the Older Testament*, 307.)
3. Finally, the fear of the Lord involves a proper orientation toward a person—YHWH.
 - a. The fear of the Lord is not merely agreeing to a list of expectations and laws. It is intensely personal.

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- b. We need to recognize our sinful state on our own (Psalm 130:3-4).
 - (1) To reject your sinful state is to reject God's statement about you.
 - (2) To be like Isaiah when he was given that vision of YHWH high and lifted up. His reaction was to proclaim his sinfulness and sinfulness of his people.
 - (3) It is to be like the Psalmist, who trembles at the thought that his sins would be marked out by God.
 - (a) Who could stand!?
 - (b) Only those full of arrogance would scoff at the searching eye of the Lord.
 - (c) But it is in the Lord's forgiveness that we learn to fear Him.
 - (d) This shows us that fear of the Lord is again not simply being afraid.
 - (4) This need for forgiveness reminds us of our relationship to the Lord.
 - (a) We are not equals. We are not in a conversation with the Lord.
 - (b) We are rebels who are in active rebellion against Him and His creation.
 - (c) We stand under the fulness of His wrath and it is proper for us to be there.
 - (d) And it is His beneficent grace that moves us into the realm of the forgiven.
 - (e) When you have a man or woman who is not yet a Christian; who has not yet been forgiven, you have a person who does not yet fear the Lord and therefore is not wise.
- c. The second point is that because the fear of the Lord requires forgiveness it also requires humility (Proverbs 22:4).
 - (1) Depending on your translation it will read very differently from others.

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- (2) Classic Hebrew proverb that is very hard to translate into English. Not a single verb. Here is a very literal translation,

Result-of humility fear-of Yahweh

Wealth and-honor and-life.

(Phillips, D. *God's Wisdom in Proverbs: Hearing God's Voice in Scripture*, p. 78.)

- (3) In many translations the reward for humility and the fear of the Lord are a pair of equals.
 - (4) But it is better to see these in an appositional sense, “Humility—the-fear-of-the-Lord sort” (Waltke, Proverbs, 2:193).
 - (5) True humility is not thinking poorly of oneself; rather, it begins by thinking rightly of God. If you only consider your standing and relationship toward other people pride and envy are inevitable. But when you are rightly understanding your place in light of God then humility occurs.
4. When you understand that the fear of YHWH comes through divine revelation, that it requires you are taught and that it requires you to be properly oriented toward God then you will be on the path of wisdom.

III. How do you seek and find wisdom? (Proverbs 21-6)

A. Three conditions found in vss 1-2, 3, and 4.

1. Vss 1-2.

- a. One must receive the Word of God. The second half of vs 1 helps explain that, to receive is to treasure.
- b. Vs two expands on this by showing us the heart attitude of treasuring and receiving God's word.
 - (1) It speaks of a habit and a life-long commitment.
 - (2) it speaks of taking in the Word of God until it becomes ours. It is something we draw into the innermost part of ourselves.
 - (3) This is a life of thinking and considering the Word of God. It is learning, memorizing, contemplating, applying and obeying what is learned and treasured.
 - (4) It is learning to hear it. To make your ear attentive to it.

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- (a) It is like when I was learning woodworking and one of the students would be giving his opinion on something but then I heard the master woodworker begin to talk, I immediately turned my attention to her.
 - (b) When your ear is quick to hear and respond to everything but the Word folly is just around the corner.
2. Second condition is to pray (3).
- a. What we pray for and not pray for reveals what we treasure and delight in. This is worthy of your thoughts.
 - b. If you truly desire wisdom that only comes from the Lord then it is only fitting that it is to the Lord to whom you pray.
 - c. It is noteworthy that the call to pray for wisdom comes after the call to learning and receiving the Word of God.
 - (1) I believe it is intentional. It points us to the need to know and to learn the Word so as to rightly pray.
 - (2) You do not learn wisdom by merely asking for it. You learn wisdom by reading the Word, delighting in it and as you learn you convert those things to prayer to see more of them.
3. Third condition is to study (4).
- a. Again there is purpose behind this placement. It puts receiving the Word of God and studying the Word of God as bookends with prayer in the middle.
 - b. Note the principle here, to know wisdom requires major effort and diligence.
 - (1) It is like mining for silver or looking not for treasure, but hidden treasure.
 - (2) If you don't delight in God's word then you will find little need to diligently study God's word.
 - c. But also built into this verse is faith.
 - (1) You search for wisdom only if you believe it is to be found in the Word.

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- (2) How long would you hack away at a spot in the ground if you did not believe gold or silver was to be found?
 - (3) Same is true of those who half-heartedly look at their bible and just shrug.
- B. The prize in vs 5.
1. But for the faithful, the prayerful and the diligent the Word of God will always yield up the prize—wisdom.
 2. Notice here that the fear of YHWH is parallel to the knowledge of God. Again we are reminded that fear here is less of emotion and more of a true understanding of the person of God.
 3. This is something this is a lifelong journey.
 - a. For the young Christian there comes that point where they believe and trust in the promises found in the gospel.
 - b. But their journey is only beginning. As they live and learn and as they endure trials and put away sin, they
 4. Vs 6 then closes up the whole section by explaining that it is YHWH who gives wisdom; therefore it is to the Lord we are to go.

IV. Conclusion.

- A. Wisdom, we have learned, is not something that this age can even know.
- B. True wisdom comes only when we are rightly related to God. This only comes when we believe the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- C. But that is only the beginning. From there is will be the prize of all who seek it, treasure it, pray for it and diligently study.
- D. May this be true of MDF.