

Proverbs 3:13-20

Sunday 12/1/2013

If you have your Bible this morning, let us turn back to the book of Proverbs. About 20, 21, 22 years ago, I went through the book of Proverbs, probably as I was going through all the books of the Bible verse by verse, detailing it out and laying it all out. At that point in time, I saw how absolutely relevant it was to my life and everything in it, and how important it was. I went through and detailed out every chapter, every verse, and I went through it like I am giving it with you, through the paragraph marks. I saw that as how it went out. Follow the outline that I have given you.

I really thought that for the most part, I had at least a fundamental grasp on the book of Proverbs. It was always a book that will always be out of my reach as far as wanting it the way I really want it, but I was content with it that I got what God had given me. Going through the book of Proverbs this time, I am going through it completely different than I went through it last time. Last time I was going through it for me; this time I am going through it to put it into a preaching format. It is opening up so many things that I never saw. The gap between 21, 22 years with other things that you learn, and then you go back and you look at something, the insight just develops itself completely different. It has been a great thing so far for me. Every week I cannot wait for Monday morning to sit down and start cracking the next set of paragraph marks.

Today we are going to do that. We are going to look at our next set of paragraph marks. This is the way we have been coming through it. We are going to look at several more good, solid biblical principles on the classic theme of getting the knowledge of God. I told you that is really what the book of Proverbs is all about. I know there is a doctrinal application; I get it. I know there is historical application; I get it. But from a practical, spiritual standpoint, it is the greatest book in the Bible that illustrates to us what we have to do if you want to get to that point in your life where you really see life and everything in it from God's standpoint.

I. The Christian Life in Contrast to the World

It does not take a rocket scientist today to see that there is something terribly wrong in Christianity today. You can see it all over the place. Two of the greatest attributes of being a saved person are the happiness and the contentment that come from being a Christian. I would think we would all agree that the characteristics of being a child of God should be in stark contrast to what the world offers. Unfortunately today, the two have come together. The Bible talks about joy. I do not think a lot of God's people could even explain what joy is. I think they want it, but I do not think they understand it from the Bible. We talk about in the Bible the peace that passes all understanding. What does that really mean? Much of what we do with the Bible is what politicians do with issues. They become talking points. They become punchlines. They become things that we talk about, but we really do not have them in our own lives ourselves.

Happiness. I know there is a happiness in the world, and I know that the word happiness comes from the word "happenings." But there is a biblical happiness adjacent to the world's happiness. I think the source of all of the problems that we have as Christians is the lack of understanding of

the word fulfillment. What it really means to not only be fulfilled in your Christian life, but to fulfill what God saved you for. Another one is contentment. I do not see a lot of God's people content today. I think the world offers us so many great challenges and holds up so many things that we lose our perspective and we think are much more valuable than they really are. All of these things—the joy, the peace, the happiness, the fulfillment, and the contentment—they all come from the Holy Spirit of God.

In my way of thinking, it should be the drawing card for people whose lives are in a mess, unsaved people, by God's design. I think one of the outstanding characteristics of what God has done for us, if we do what is right and put the Word of God in our life, is that unsaved people see our lives. Unsaved people see what we have and what they do not have. Unsaved people come to the point where they want that because their life is a mess. They see our lives having these things in them, and it is a great drawing card.

Years ago I heard a story a preacher told, I never really forgot it, about what the Christian life should be. He talked about the Christian life is like a tornado. I do not know what you know about tornadoes or even hurricanes, but tornadoes are very devastating. There are our share of them in the Midwest, and tornadoes and hurricanes and hurricane season in the Atlantic and the South Atlantic and all those places. He said the Christian life should be just like that because in the middle of that tornado is what they call the eye of the tornado. It may be only a space of a half a mile, depending on how big the whole tornado is, but it is a small space in the middle of that tornado. You are completely at peace and completely calm. You would not even know that there is a tornado around you, as long as you are in the eye of that tornado. You never experience the destruction which is only a couple hundred yards out. He made the point that our Christian life should be that way. The Christian life should be a small center of calm, a small center of peace and happiness and fulfillment that is surrounded by the chaos of destruction, the world. That is so true. That is a perfect example of what your life and my life should be. We ought to live in the peace in the storm.

We sing songs about it all the time. Your dad's favorite, my favorite song that your dad sings, is "Peace in the Valley." There should be peace in our valleys. The valley in the Bible is always the lowest point of our life. We talk about singing the song "Shelter in the Time of Storm," the great song "Rock of Ages." Most people do not even know that that song was written by a man by the name of Reverend Toplady. He lived in the 1700s and he died in 1788. Sometime in his life, he was going to preach someplace, he was walking, and a gigantic storm blew up. It was the most ferocious storm that anybody had ever seen. He took refuge in some rocks along a wall that went back in. That is where he sat and sat out the storm. While he was sitting out that storm, the Lord used that storm to put on his heart, and out of that he wrote the song "Rock of Ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in Thee." We sing the great song, "It Is Well With My Soul, when peace like a river attendeth my way." We sing the song "Till the Storm Passes Over." But today we sing those songs with an empty heart. We really do.

I think the song service in any church is a dead giveaway of where the people are at. You have some people who sing the songs, they look forward to it. Other people are talking about this or that during the song service. You have all kinds of things. In many churches, the songs are so

irrelevant anymore, and the people have nothing to sing about. They have actually replaced that with some professional group up here or some professional praise band or whatever that takes it right out of your hands because there is nothing really in it. It is a tragedy today. It is just word without any true meaning.

II. The Inability to Sing the Lord's Song

I think in the Bible, the greatest passage in the Word of God that explains that is found way back there in Psalms 137. You do not have to necessarily turn to it; I will read it to you. That is the time after the captivity. Whoever wrote this wrote Psalms 137 after Babylon came down and took them into captivity.

Psalms 137:1-4

By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion.

We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.

For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion.

How shall we sing the LORD'S song in a strange land?

That is a great verse. It shows the nation of Israel, much like many of us. They are out of fellowship with God. They have, like we talked about last week, faced God's chastisement, and now they are down in Babylon, held captive. They are sitting there and they are remembering what they had with God and what they have got now. We can all talk about being in that place in our lives where we had something with God, and because of some stupid thing or whatever, we lost that. Then we sit here in the misery of our captivity of the world and we think back of what it was when we were with God. A lot of times we get to the idea of when we start to get out of fellowship that the world is a better place, a more fun place, and Christianity is such a boring place. It does not take long of the captivity of the world for you to look back and remember what you had with the Lord.

I tell people all the time, sometimes you have to lose what you have with God before you really understand what you had when you lost it. I have seen people like that all my ministry. Yet at the same time, I have seen people who simply never learn from what they lose. They just never learn the lessons of life. So he says, "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof." Hanging the harps on the willows, the harps are what they used to use when they played the Psalms. The Psalms were musical songs, and he hangs them on the willows. This is where we get the concept of weeping willows. It comes out of the Bible. "For there they that carried us away captive," that would be Babylon, "required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion." One of the greatest statements in the Bible is the answer that they give them. It is not only a picture of the nation of Israel in captivity at this time, having lost everything from God, it is a picture of Christianity today. For the answer is, in verse 4, "How shall we sing the LORD'S song in a strange land?" That is so true. It is hard to sing the things of

God. It is hard to recognize the things of God when we live in a strange land. In most cases, unfortunately, there is no real difference in the lives of God's people than there is unsaved people. I think that is a tragedy.

Matthew 5:14 says that "Ye are the light of the world." Then it says the fact that "a city on a hill cannot be hid." That is a beautiful picture of two things. One, when you got saved, there is a light of God inside you. That light of God is what shines in the darkness. The Bible says that we are the light of the world. But then he says, "a city on a hill cannot be hid." That is a picture of when we get our 180, 200, 220 people all back in one spot and all the lights are on. You cannot help but be a light in the darkness of this city. But the problem with God's people today, as the old expression goes, the lights are off. The lights have gone out, and nobody can see it anymore. Christian lives once stood for what the power of a transforming God could really do, but not today.

I think it would be a safe bet for a non-believer to look at Christianity today and most of the lives of God's people and honestly say, "It does not really work. Their life as a child of God is more messed up than mine. They claim to be a Christian. They want me to go to church. They want me to get into the Bible, but look at their lives." You know what? They would be right, at least on the last part, because it does not work by what we see. It looks like, when you look at Christianity and God's people, it really looks like there is no difference from the world. Christian marriages are in messes, just like unsaved people's marriages are in messes. Many times, I have seen unsaved people whose lives, whose families, whose marriages were better than Christian marriages. The marriages are a mess. The kids are a mess. Christians are a mess. Somebody looks at that and says to themselves, "I understand it." People look at that, unsaved. They look at God's people's lives, and we try to put out the talking points of what it means to be a Christian. Inside, they are looking through that and they are saying, "Why would I want a life like you have got? Why would I want that in my life? I do not have those problems in my life."

I totally understand it. I have people all the time, not young Christians, but older Christians, come by and ask me, "Why is it that I can't ever win anybody to Christ, or nobody wants to listen to what I have got to say?" I am kind, and I do not ever want to hurt anybody in any way unnaturally, and they are not really asking for a real answer, though I always gave them the plastic answer. But inside, I looked at myself, "Why would they? Why would anybody look at your life, your family, your marriage, and say, 'I want that?'" It is a mess today. It is a tragedy today. At the same time, I must tell you, nothing has ever changed with God and His Bible and what it will do for you. The great verse in Hebrews chapter 13, verse 8 says, "Jesus Christ the same, yesterday and today and forever." That is a true verse. We have become a captive of the evil man and the strange woman. I have told you before that in the world that we live in today, the Christian world, when you lose your Bible, you lose seven things. We are seeing today, not only in churches, but we are seeing it in the lives of God's people, the end result of not having a Bible. It is bad enough that the devil and the strange woman took your Bible, but it is doubly worse that some of God's people do not care that he did. There lies the problems.

III. The Value of God's Wisdom and Understanding

That brings us to our text today. This great passage will again provide the great formula for what we so desperately need today as God's people, but so few really ever desire and most never ever get to. We are going to approach this passage literally just one or two verses at a time. Like we have done with everything else, we are going to squeeze out of it all we can and see what it says. It is going to take us probably two weeks to get through this little passage here. We will see yet again how it takes us back to the theme of Proverbs chapter 1 through 20. The fundamental greatest attribute of your Christian life is getting God's knowledge and getting God's mind about the things in life. Yet it will warn us yet one more time with the dangers and the results and the consequences of leaning unto our own understanding and being wise in your own eyes.

Let us read Proverbs chapter 3, verses 13 through 20. As I said, we are in no hurry here. We will take our time down through it and we will break this down into a couple of weeks here.

Proverbs 3:13-20

Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding.

For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold.

She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her.

Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour.

Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.

She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy is every one that retaineth her.

The LORD by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens.

By his knowledge the depths are broken up, and the clouds drop down the dew.

Father, take us today and help us to break down this great passage. Lord, I think that the people here, Father, for the most part, most people here today really want to do and be everything that God wants them to be. I know that there are people here today that struggle, that people here today that Lord have issues, but Lord, they keep coming back and they keep trying to do the best they can do. Lord, I pray Father that You will continue to bless them and help them and let them know that I am here to help them. Lord, most of all, let the Word of God as it goes out today be a salve to their wounds or their soul and help them to be everything in time that God wants them to be. Help them to be better husbands and better wives. Help them to be better parents. Help them to be better Christians and help them to realize and understand that Lord, that we are all that is left in this world of any semblance of what is right and wrong, and we should be that light that shines in a dark place. We will thank You and praise You in Jesus' name for the sake we ask it. Amen.

He says in Proverbs 3:13, "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom and the man that getteth understanding." I do not know if you have ever counted them up, but when you go through the

Bible, this phrase "happy is the man" is found four times in the Old Testament. You find it once in Job 5:17. You find it once in Psalms 127:5. You find it here in Proverbs 3:13, and then a little later on in Proverbs 28:14. Whenever you look at these passages, this happiness comes only from two things. One, it comes from getting God's wisdom and getting God's understanding. That is really what this passage is about. He likens these two things to some great analogies that we want to look at today. A happy heart is based on spiritual things, not the happenings of the world.

I have told you many times this great truth that in life we have knowledge, we have wisdom, and we have understanding. I have told you and described it and spent a lot of time in it how that knowledge is simply the facts of things. Wisdom is when you take those facts and you apply it. Every unsaved man, along with God's people, an unsaved man can have knowledge and have wisdom. You take a mechanic, he can have the knowledge of what makes an engine work and the wisdom of how to fix it. So that is not restricted to just Christians. But when a Christian gets knowledge, we know now the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge and the wisdom of how it moves through that. When he gets knowledge and he gets wisdom, in time if he stays with it, it will translate into something that the world or an unsaved man will never get: that is understanding. An unsaved man may have knowledge about an engine and have the wisdom to fix it, but he will never have the understanding of how God fits into everything. That is really what understanding is on a global concept. Understanding is looking at any situation, any circumstance, whether it be in history, whether it be in your own life, whether it be in people that you are dealing with or whatever, and understanding how God looks at it and how God views it. It is the development of these three things in our lives that come when you begin to work at getting God's wisdom and getting God's understanding.

I want to tell you something. I do not know where you go in life and I do not know what all you are going to do in life. Some of you will do great things for God. Some of you probably will not ever develop it past any point in life. I hope not, but it is hard to get a crowd this size together and not have both ends of the spectrum. But I want to tell you something today. That ability to be able to know for sure when you look at any situation, whether it be in your life, whether it be in a situation you are confronted with, whether it be in a situation of looking at history or looking at current events around you or looking at situations with your children, situations with your marriage, situations with everything in life, when you get to that point that you have the ability to know for sure when God is in something and when God is not in something, you have come to the place that you have got probably the greatest treasure you will ever have. Not getting to that point in your life will cause you miserable grief, I guarantee you.

It sounds like some mystical, magical crystal ball concept. You drive down 350 here going down to the plaza, and right there as you get past the barbecue places, if you look right over here, there is a fortune teller there. She has been there for years. I moved here in 1976 and she was there then. You go in there and she will do palm reading, she will do horoscopes—what a horror they call horoscopes because when she looks at it, your life is a real horror. She does all kinds of things. She reads tea leaves. She will put down her tarot cards. She will do whatever you want to do as long as you pay for it. You will go in there and sit down, as many people do. She must make some money on it; she is still in business. She has been there for years. You tell her she

will read your palm and she will read your cracks in your hands and all those things, and she will tell you, "You have got a long life. You cut off here, you are going to die tomorrow." She will tell you whatever you need to hear. We get so used to that, and we know it is funny. We know it is not real.

So when I start talking about somebody having the ability to look at any given situation in life and know before you have to make a decision if God is in it or God is not in it, how invaluable is that? How would you like to have at your disposal every time you had to make a major decision in life or a minor decision in life that all you had to do was flip your cell phone and hit the number speed dial 7 and it would call up God and He would say, "Uh-uh," or "Go ahead"? Would not that be a great thing? Would not that solve all of our problems? You have that option. It is just not on your phone yet. You have that option. You have that option because when you get God's wisdom and God's understanding, and you really make it work in your life, you do not have to wonder about circumstances. You do not have to look at some scenario in life that you have to make a decision on whether you are going to allow it into your world or not. You do not have to look at it and say, "Hmm, I wonder if God is in this or it is not."

I had a young man a couple of years ago that came up and he sat down after one of our ball games and he said to me, "Well, I just wanted you to..." I love how people phrase things. People phrase things like they want to get my opinion on it after they have already decided to do it. I guess they think I am stupid. I do not figure those things out. I have been around people for the last 45 years of my life. I have heard every story, every lie, every twisted thing, everything that you want to do. I know how human nature pads it for their way. He came in, and he basically wanted to say, "I would like to get your opinion." But it was very obvious he already made his decision. I was the last guy he talked to on it. I am cool with that. I told you before, I always take the position: you come in and ask me up front, "What does the Bible say about this? I am faced with this." I will tell you what the Bible says. You play a game where you already have it constructed and you just want to come in so you can go down the line and feel good about what I have run it by, when you have already made your decision. I will tell you whatever you want to hear. I will follow Ezekiel chapter 13. I will give you the lie to believe if that is what you want. I am not stupid by any stretch of the imagination.

So he came in, and when he told me all these things, I told him, "You know what, everything you have told me violates every biblical principle that you ought to know." In cases like that, it was the easiest thing to see. What he was doing violated every principle that kids in our junior high class would know that you do not violate. But when you want to lean to your own understanding and your own wisdom over the wisdom and understanding that God gives you, you are going to have some problems in life. I am guaranteeing you. You will have some definite issues that you are going to struggle with and you are going to get to that point. You will always be happy when you have the ability to be smarter than the problem, and the ability to simply understand when God is in something and when He is not.

Back in the 1940s, around 1941, radar was a relatively unknown deal. The British had worked with it, and it was very elementary in its basic design. They had these big high towers along the coast of Dover that would pick up the Germans flying over in the Battle of Britain, but it was a

very elementary thing. As they developed it, it came to the point where it got a little bit better, and they started installing it on U.S. naval ships. But the process was slow, and you saw in some of the great battles in the Pacific, like the Battle of Guadalcanal in '42 and places like that, where only one in ten American ships actually had radar installed. The ones that had radar installed could see the enemy ships long before they ever got there. But when they got separated out and they were under radio silence, the other ships were very vulnerable because they were just plodding along. Actually, we almost lost that battle because we ran smack into the Japanese fleet, did not even know they were there. Radar was a great thing, even though it was elementary at that point.

Now, we have developed a day where they can look out four or five thousand miles and they can see and tell by a signature whether it is an enemy or a foe. Up in Alaska, all along the coast up there, they have got radar stations stationed everywhere. They call it the early warning system because we were afraid that the Russians would fire missiles and we wanted as much time to prepare. So today the radar is so sophisticated, it goes out past the moon and they can detail everything. We call it our early warning system. Every Christian ought to have an early warning system in them. Every Christian ought to have the spiritual radar where that big hand sweeps the dial and you see what is out there that you cannot see with your eyes. You know when something evil this way comes. You know that when something is coming your way, it is not good. The radar is so sophisticated today they can tell by the heat signatures and all of the things. Why, those sonar boys in our submarines, they can listen to the screws of a Russian submarine and tell you what kind of submarine it is and what class it is. You know why? They programmed all of that. When you get your spiritual mind tuned into that book and get God's wisdom and understanding, you can understand to that great detail what you are dealing with. When you get to that place in your life, that is the greatest, most valuable thing that God ever made available to us.

IV. Things Money Cannot Buy

Look at Proverbs 3:14, and it says this: "For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver and the gain thereof more than fine gold." That is a great word, "merchandise," and we will develop it as we move through this passage, but it is used here in a biblical sense. Do not forget now that our job as Christians is to be doing God's business. We will talk about that as we come down through here. What he is saying here basically is that for the merchandise of it, and that would be the wisdom and understanding, it is better than the merchandise of silver and the gain thereof of fine gold. In other words, from God's wisdom and God's understanding, we get some things your money cannot buy you. We get some things that this world does not have, and all the money in the world you may attain, all the things that you invest your life with will never give it to you because it is something that you have to look at and trade for, and I will talk about that here in a little bit.

1. Insight: The ability to see the inside of things, what really are not as they appear, how things really are. You are going to learn that people are going to tell you what you want to hear. The naive pastor, the naive Christian, falls for those things. The smart pastor or the smart

Christian pretends he believes those things, but he always understands because he has radar underneath. You can always tell when a ship is flying under false colors, and it is insight. Insight is discernment, it is discretion, it is your Christian radar, it is your early warning system for the Christian. You cannot buy insight into things in this life. You can go to college and get all degrees, and what you will get is you will get knowledge and you will get wisdom, but you will never get understanding; that only comes from God.

2. The Peace of God: In the Bible we talk about the peace of God a lot, but when you bring it down to the lowest common denominator, the peace of God is simply your ability to rest in God, and this is the rest of the believer should have. There is a biblical formula in the Bible, and I do not know if you have ever seen it, but it is over in Psalm 37, and I think it is one of the greatest defining passages on what peace is and what real rest is. Psalm 37:1-7

Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity.

For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb.

Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.

Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.

Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.

And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday.

Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass. The first thing he says is "fret not thyself." We do a lot of fretting as Christians. We worry about everything, and we worry about all the things we fret and worry about, and do not ever worry about the real things we ought to worry about. But we are fretters. We all are. We are that by nature because we are weak. So what God has done to us weak fretters is give us the supernatural power of God that you do not, and the peace of God that you have the ability, even though you are human and you are faced out there with all of that traumatic tornado that is brewing around you, that you live in the eye of that storm and you have that peace. You have that rest. See the process? Fret not. Why fret not? How can you get out of fretting? Verse 3: Because you trust in the Lord. Verse 4: Then you delight yourself in the Lord. Verse 5: You commit your way unto the Lord. When you do those three things, then you have the ability to rest in the Lord. That is how it works. That is the peace of God.

3. Long Life: In the Old Testament that is literally living to be 100 years old. Not so in the New Testament. It deals with the fulfilled life as God's plan unfolds in your life, fulfilling your destiny. Every time I marry a couple, the last thing I say to them is I turn them around and pray for them and get ready to turn them loose. I always pray that together they will fulfill God's destiny of what God wants them to be and what God wants them to do. God has a destiny for you. He has a destiny for me. Your job is when you get God's wisdom and God's knowledge and understanding is to find out and understand what that destiny is and then fulfill it.
4. Salvation: I know, I understand how we use it. Even the Bible talks about salvation being a free gift, but only in the concept that it is free to you. Salvation is like freedom. It was not

free. Somebody had to pay for that salvation for it to be free to you. Jesus Christ on the cross, He knew that I could not pay for it. He knew that you could not pay for it. He knew the cost of our souls was so great that I could not pay it. You could not pay it. So He chose the only One who could pay it was God's Son. That is why when you come down here in Proverbs 3:14, it says the merchandise is silver and gold. Silver represents the redemption of God. Gold represents the deity of God. God thought more of His deity in redeeming your soul than He thought of His own Son. It is an incredible process. You cannot buy salvation. You cannot. It is a thing where you could have all the money in the world. You could amass it all. And you will never be able to buy what God paid the price for you to have.

5. Assurance of Salvation: I do not mean this to be cruel or in a negative way, though it is negative. But I think the most worthless people in the world that are saved people are the ones who believe they can lose their salvation. Because as long as you believe you can lose your salvation, you are never going to step up by faith for God. If you might lose it. As long as a person believes that you can actually lose it and you can do something that God will take it away. I have never understood the concept. If you did not do anything to get it, why would you do something to lose it? Somebody said, "Well, I am afraid you can lose your salvation by doing something wrong." Well, I was doing things wrong when He gave it to me. Do you think God thought, "Well, because I am going to give it to you, you are never going to do anything wrong before?" You do not deserve it after you do things wrong. I did not deserve it before He gave it to me. What is your point? People do not get it sometimes. It is just the way that it works.² Timothy 1:12

For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day. There is your, you cannot buy that. I may have the worst day of my life tomorrow, and I may just fall apart, and I may just do a lot of stupid things, but I will tell you what, at the end of the day, thank God I know I am saved. It is the only positive thing I have got in my life sometimes, but it is the most important thing. You cannot pay for that.

6. The Power of God in Your Life: Acts chapter 8, we have a good example, this was Simon the Sorcerer. He saw the apostles do all these great miracles and he goes up and he says, "Here, here is money, give me this power." There are a lot of people like that in churches today. They think if they give a lot of money or they do this and they do that, they can buy their way in, that they will get some kind of status and they will get to be this. I have known people that gave money and they got made deacons. I know people that gave money were made pastors, but I will tell you what, there has never been a person, no matter how much money you gave to the church, ever got God's power. It does not come that way. Position, yes. Popularity, yes, till your money runs out, but the power of God, no. They looked at him and they said, "Thy money perish with you, pal." You cannot buy that thing. You just cannot.

V. Life as a Trade-Off and Investment

In everything in life, I have learned this, and I have learned, I am 63 years old, and I started about a year and a half ago listing all the things I have learned. I hope I have learned something

in 63 years, but I have a tendency to forget. So I started to make a book of the things that I have learned, and one of the things I have learned in there when I wrote down in my book is that everything in this life that is true, there will be a counterfeit deception. There just will. You have counterfeit churches. You have counterfeit Bibles. You have counterfeit facts. Everything is a counterfeit.

I will show you what I mean. We know in the Bible that the Bible says that heaven is north. Psalm 75 says promotion comes neither from the south, from the west, from the east, but from the Lord. He put Himself in the place of north. We know that. We know that Psalm 48 talks about that God's throne is on the sides of the north. We know that, and I am not going to give you the astronomy lesson today, but if you go out and you want to find out where heaven is, you can look north, and you cannot see it, but that is the direction it is. But you know that there are two norths. You know that there is true north and then there is what they call magnetic north. On this place, when you get your compass and you get in, you want to go north, you want to set a heading on it. You are not getting true north. You are getting magnetic north, which is off the North Pole, which is not true north. In other words, it is affected by the things in this world that throw your compass off, that you think you are going north, but you are really not going north. You may be four or five degrees off. Four or five degrees may not sound like much, but you put it into two, three thousand miles, and it is a big deal. There is a true north and there is a magnetic north. True north, you do not, you look and say, "Well, I will follow the North Star." No, that is not the way to do it either. The North Star is off true north by about two and a half degrees. The only way you can get true north is to get a triangulation of the stars to what they call a sextant, and you get true north off the stars. Do you know who made the stars? God did. So there is a true north and then there is a false north. A counterfeit that man will follow, and he will follow and he will follow, and he says, "I am going north, I am going to church, I am doing right." There is a way that seems right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death. There is a false in everything. The true north is right on the money. The magnetic north is made by man to find north, but it is never going to be right on because, just like in many things in our Christian life, it is affected by the things of the world.

Gold is the same way. Luke 16:11, I love that. The true riches in the Bible are found in Luke 16:11. The true riches are found in an AV 1611. I love it. You say, "Well, that is just a coincidence." Just let me enjoy it, okay? I will let you enjoy your delusion that you are going to heaven, so let me delude my own, and this is the delusion. Luke chapter 16 talks about gold the same way. These are the true riches of God. That is silver and gold. But you also know in the 1880s they found the big gold rush out in Sutter's Mill in California. Everybody from the East was leaving and going out there because there is gold in them there hills. They found many, many, many made their fortunes and all that stuff. But once they got out there and they started panning for gold and they started doing all the things, they found out that there is also a false, phony gold. It is called fool's gold. That would be the gold of this world. The wise man in the book of Proverbs, you will find the true riches, the real gold, the real north. The foolish man, he just finds the fool's gold. In our passage, he calls wisdom and understanding silver and gold. I think that is very appropriate. Gold will always be the price of redemption. Gold will always be the deity of Christ.

In our society, we call our merchandising of goods free trade. We make trade agreements with other nations for our merchandise. Every town will have a trademark. When we put up the Iran sanctions against the country of Iran because of their nuclear program, those sanctions, in case you did not know what they were, were in the form of trade agreements. We do not trade with you. You cannot export your stuff. We are not going to import any stuff, and it puts pressure on people. Free trade is again, it is elusive in its term, free trade. It is not free. You are free to trade it. But it is not free. Somebody pays for the good someplace along the line or makes a decision to buy it or not buy it or invest in it or not invest in it. But it is never free. The only thing that is free is your free will to exercise it to either engage in it or not.

Life has always been and will always be about free trade. Trading this to get that. Simply put, in Christianity today, it is real simple. People have traded away the gold of the silver of God for the fool's gold of this world. That is what they have done. Along with that, many of them are following the magnetic compass of life and will miss heaven by a million light years. They go into church, so they think that is headed north. They do good Christian things. Get baptized for salvation. Do good works. Join a church. Get your church membership. Get your baby baptized. It is a social gospel. Yet it may be just three degrees off the true north. Well, you are going to hell. Because there is a true north. There is a magnetic north. There are true riches and there are false riches.

I have told my kids growing up, and they will testify to this, I am sure they are sick of hearing it, I still tell them. I have told my wife many times, because I am ducking if she is throwing something at me. I told my kids all their life growing up that when we go through life, life is about trading. We will trade one thing for something else. Life is about choices. Life is a trade-off. When they did something stupid or did something wrong and they had to face the consequences and they did not get something over here, I very lovingly, very kindly explained to them that, "You know what, honey, you simply traded this for this. I do not know what to do about that. I cannot go back and undo the trade. But what you can do from this point on is learn from this trade and from this point on make good trades in life." Because I am telling you folks, everything in life is a trade-off. You are going to trade this for this. Whatever you do, you are going to trade this for this.

I think it is one of the greatest teaching elements that you can take with your children. I think if you are smarter than the problem and you understand the concept, I think it is simply one of the greatest things that I can tell you, but you can take you who have young kids and tell them. When people around you, their kids or their family or whatever, you see some screw up, most parents try to hide it from their kids. I am not sure that is a good idea because parents do not figure it out that their kids probably know more about it than the parents do. Kids have their own little party line of what goes on in the world. You putting your head in the sand and say, "Well, I am not going to talk about that with them because they do not know anything about it." They already know more about it than you do. You are missing the greatest opportunity to deal with them. I think that it is a great thing when you see something that is over here that is not right or something here that happens with this or something that happens with that, your kids are exposed to it, they see it. It is a great thing. You do not be judgmental about it. You do not be cruel about

it. You just simply use it as a teaching aid. "Now, how did they get into that problem? I want you to know, they simply traded this for this, and honey, I do not want you to make bad trades. I am not saying anything around with them. We need to pray for them. We need to do what we can do to help them, but at the end of the day, why did it happen? Because they traded this for this." Life is a trade-off. You go through life not understanding that great principle, you are in for some trouble.

Over the years I have seen terrible trade deals with people. I have seen girls trade a life of serving God in ministry and having a happy home and traded away for Bozo the Clown. I have seen young men through bad choices who had great potential to be something for God traded away by getting hooked up with some bimbo. I have seen God's people make some of the most horrendous trades in their life. I have seen it by the hundreds. I have seen it by the thousands. Trade all that God had for them now and at the judgment seat of Christ, just so they could play the fool down here for a small period of time. God's people will forsake the true riches of wisdom and understanding and a relationship with God, and they will trade it for booze. They will trade it for drugs. They will trade it for all the slop of this world. I have seen them trade their kids. I have seen them trade their families. I have seen them trade the blessings of God. I have seen them trade their health. I have seen them trade their ministry for God for something that is fool's gold. It never ceases to amaze me.

People all the time, as you get older, you think about these things, and I hang out with a lot of older people now. It is about the shuffleboard court, and I am the king there, by the way. I will go to the gym and walk around, and they kind of know the guys that are my age, a little older. The thing that every time there is a catastrophe in the country someplace, it always goes to one thing, and that is the investment they have got in their retirement. They have IRAs. They have stocks. They have gold. They have silver. They have their 401ks. I understand it, and I am not saying you should not have those things, but these guys, all their hope is in these things.

Danny has a brother who is the goofy side of the family. Danny is the good side. He passed out a, sent a letter out to all the family a couple of years ago that everybody, the world is coming to an end, and everybody needs to buy gold. He said, "Sell everything you have, every dime you have, and put it in gold." That is probably one of the stupidest things I ever heard of my life. You are going to amass all the gold you have. You are going to amass all this stuff. Do you know what they did in 1932 or 1935 when Roosevelt was president? He passed a decree that you could not have any gold, and they just came in and took every gold that everybody had. You are going to hang on to that?

I see people getting ready for the apocalypse. They are buying, they go to Steve's gun shop. They buy guns, they buy ammo. He cannot even keep ammo on the shelf. Everybody is stocking it in the basement. They are buying guns. They are buying rifles, and they are buying all this stuff. They are going to fend off that you can protect what you have. May I ask an honest question? You have you, your wife, and your two kids. A hundred armed men assault your house. How long will you last? Even if your wife is a good shot. Even if your kids are good shots. If you can train the dog to pull a trigger. The bark is bigger than he is. How long will you last when a hundred people want what you have? There is nothing in this world that is safe. Do you not

know that by now? Do you not know you can lock your house up, get all the alarm systems you want, put all the bolts on the door, and if somebody wants in your house, they are going to get in your house. If they want to steal what you have got, they will steal.

Now I am not against having those things. It would be fun to take out a few of them as they are coming over the back fence. My advice is to get sneaky. Put your barbed wire grill up along the back fence, and when they start coming over, put an armor-piercing round through that tank of gas. Light them up. Give a whole new purpose to the neighborhood. But let us be honest. What do you have that you can honestly protect to keep from somebody taking it if they want it? There is only one thing you ought to be investing and hanging on to that is going to last for all of eternity. I have preached all my life. There are only three things worth investing your life in as a child of God. Two things. One of them is the souls of men. The other one is the Word of God, because there are only two things that will last forever.

But I see them. These guys talk about, "Boy, my 401k took a hit. Boy, I will tell you what, stocks are not looking good." My 401k is down to a 201k. It is a mess. I am not saying you should not have that. I am not saying, "Occupy till I come." I understand it. I am not saying that. But they spend more time worrying over their investments and never even think about their life and what God has given them to invest down here.

Now look at Proverbs 3:15. "She is more precious than rubies." She, being wisdom and understanding, in the format of a female as the church, the Christian. When you go over to Proverbs 31:10, you will find that this is the end result, the virtuous woman who is filled with God's wisdom and God's understanding. So it is like a "she" here. It says, "Her price is far above rubies." Rubies, have you ever seen her blood red? They cut them in small little ovals or circles or squares. When we look at them, they are about the size of a bloody nail print that must have been in Christ's hands and His feet. Her price is far above rubies, more precious than that. If you take the study all the way through, you will find the thing that is more precious than rubies is a pearl, and she is called the pearl of great price. You can take a ruby and cut it in half and still have two perfect rubies. You can take a diamond, cut it in half. Any gem, any stone, you can cut it in half and you can have two. You take a pearl and cut it in half, both have died because it is a living thing. The church is a living thing. Its price is far above rubies.

I think the last part of that verse is just incredible where it says, "and all the things that thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her." Can you let that sink in just for a moment? My dear friend, we all sit here today and we all want to know about God's wisdom. We all want that radar. We all want that early warning system. We all want the ability to look and see a problem and know when God is in and when He is not, and how to deal with all those things. We want all of that. When you get to that point, it is not some title. It is not some position. It is not being a pastor or being a deacon or even a Christian. It is when you get to that last part of Proverbs 3:15, it is true in your life when all things in this world that you could ever desire could never replace the book that God gave you. When you get to that place in your life, you are there. Is it a fact that you say it? It is a fact that you live your life like you do.

The greatest example of that in the Bible would be the Apostle Paul, who probably was the most educated man, who probably had more going for him than any man in the New Testament. When he found that book and he found God and he got the wisdom and understanding of God, and God gave him the revelation of the church, he looked at all he learned and he compared it to dung. It is an incredible concept. All the things that thou canst desire: money, fame, friends, relationships, education, careers, praise of men, your boyfriend or your girlfriend, the booze, the drugs, the parties, hunting, fishing, sports, and all else the world will offer you to trade you out of those true riches. Let me say, I am not saying that you cannot have any of these things. I am not saying that these things should not be part of your life. I am saying not at the expense of trading what God has given you and you trade that for this. All my life I have seen God's people simply trade away what God has given them for something absolutely worthless. An old preacher told me one time, he put his arm around me and he says, "Bob, let me tell you something about life. All that glitters is not gold."

The making of bad investments. In the New Testament, Luke chapter 19, there is a story of three men who God gave a pound to. A pound being an English weight amount of money. As the story goes, he goes his way and lets them take what he has given them, and he wants to see what they will do with it, if they will make a gain out of it by investing it and making good investments. This is a great picture of the church age and what God has given you and what God has given me.

Luke 19:15

And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading.

When accounting was coming and what they did with what God gave them. Keep in mind, they all got the same. He gave them all one pound. He did not give one a pound and somebody else a half a pound and a quarter of a pound. Everybody got the same measurement. They got a pound. We all start with the same in life. When you got saved and I got saved, I got no more out of it than you got out of it. You got no more than the person sitting next to you. When we got saved, we all got the same measure of grace and faith. It is what you invested in where you go with it. It is just that simple. The investments they made and the good trades they made that took what God gave them and brought back a good return for the Lord.

As the senior investment advisor in this church, sometimes called a pastor, I want this church to make a very good investment and bring a good return for the Lord. But it starts with us as individuals making the right investments. I had a lady one time, she said, "Well, Bob, he will not give you the time of day if you do not do right." That is not exactly true. It is kind of true, but it is not exactly true. She knew better than that. But this is the woman who goes to the graveyard and will tell you that if you speak to your dead parents, they can hear you. Kind of like the Christian witch at Endor. I will help anybody, no matter where you are at or what you do. But I will confess to you, I am not into wasting a lot of time chasing people who do not want to get caught.

We do not have a visitation program here. I used to hate visitation, and the only one that hated it more than me was the people who you visited. Most churches you go to, they will have you fill out a card. They lie to you out of the gate. They will say, "We would like to have a record of your visit today. Would you honor us with giving us your name and your address?" That is all a lie. They want it because come whatever night visitation night is, somebody is going to knock on your door. They know if they told you, "We are going to come visit you," you would not put it down. They are just honest out of the chute. We do not do that here. I figure if you come on Sunday morning, you are seeing the best I have got. Me showing up on your porch on Thursday night or Wednesday night, it is going to do it for you. You are seeing everything we are this morning. You are hearing everything I have got to say today. You do not need me coming over and begging you to come. I will never beg anybody to do anything for God. It is your responsibility as a free moral agent to listen to truth, listen to the Word of God, and then you say, "You know what, that is what I want," or "No, that is what I do not want." I am good either way.

The one thing I am proud about to this church, and I love about this church, and what God has done in this church, we have never lost anybody in this church that was ever worth anything. We have had people leave, and their offerings have went up. Go figure that one. Somebody will say, "Well, so and so left the church," and I will say, "Well, what ministry are they in?" "Well, they are not." "Well, who are they working with?" "Well, they are not." "Well, what are they doing around anything?" "Well, they are not." That is my take. If that is the wrong thing to say and a way to feel about it, I do not know what to tell you. Come confess to me afterwards, and I will forgive you for it. But I am not going to chase people who do not want to get caught. When you start running from God, it is very obvious you are running from God. You know when you are running from God, honestly, because I know when I run from God, when you run from God, what is the last thing you want? Me chasing you. You would like maybe your girlfriend or your boyfriend to chase you or your mom and dad to chase you, but the last person you want to chase you is me because you do not tell them your sob story. You will not tell me your sob story. I have got you on my radar screen. You are on my long-range warning. I know exactly what your problem is, and I am willing to help you, but we are going to do it on God's terms, not your terms.

How many have been out of fellowship in your life? Let me see your hands. Nobody? The rest of you, we are going to give an invitation this morning. You come on down and get right with God for lying. We all have been, every one of us, and him especially. I think he may still be, but you know as well as I do. The last thing you want is when you are running from God is to get caught. I remember one time, Missy got right with the Lord. Missy gave me one of the most classic statements, and this is why I love you. Many reasons why I love you, but I will never forget this. She came into my office and she had been running from God. She came into my office and she said, "I just came here for one reason. I am hanging up my running shoes." That is what I am talking about. That is what I am talking about. When you run from God, you do not want anybody chasing you. I have learned over the years, you are much better off just to keep running because when you are running, nobody is chasing you, you are always looking back to see if they are, and then you are running to a brick wall or a tree. That is what God uses. You did not see the tree because you are looking back to see if I am looking back to see if you are looking back at

me, and you hit the tree. I think it is a song. You guys ought to work on that. You could probably make something out of that.

I spent a lot of time talking to people, chasing people who do not want to get caught. I do not ask any. I want you here, but I only want you if you want to be here. I want you here because you love being here and you love the truth. I want you here because that is what you need to be if that is where God wants you to be. But everybody gets the same chance. You need some extra help. I hate even to say something like this, but I am going to say it. You show me one pastor in this city, just name me one that will spend Monday night, Tuesday night, Wednesday night, and Thursday night with you, having him come over to your house and solving any problem you have got. I do not care if it takes five years, 10 years, or 20 years. Some of us were going on 15, 20 years. But I have a business to run. I have investments that have to be made. How long do you think you keep your job if you put out at work like you do for the Lord? You say, "Well, I get paid at that." You get paid for this. It is just not now. It is coming up the judgment of Christ.

One guy, he took his, and in Luke 19:16, he brought back tenfold. I think that is great. That is what he should have done. The other guy, he took his, and in Luke 19:18, he brought back fivefold. He did not do exactly what the other guy did, but he did pretty good. Then you have the third guy who took what God had given him, the same amount that everybody else had.

Luke 19:20

And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin:

He does absolutely nothing with what God gave him. He says, "I just got the one pound that you gave me." You know what God did? God took that pound and gave it to somebody else. The judgment seat of Christ. That is what it is a picture of, my friend. That is a story of a picture of the church age and a Christian life. He is losing his rewards because of bad investments or even worse, no investments.

Let me ask you a question. If every morning at 6 a.m., when you got up, you got a little text on your phone that says, "We have just deposited \$86,400 in your bank account." Tomorrow, there will be another \$86,400, as the next day, as every day of life. But here is the catch. There is only one deal. You have to spend it all. If one day goes by that you do not spend all of that \$86,400, then you are going to lose what you have and you are going to lose the rest of it. I know exactly what we do. First thing we do is go out and spend it on ourselves and buy everything we ever wanted. Once we got worn out with that, we could not find anything else to buy. We would give some to others. Very few of God's people would think of God first. Very few would give to others first and then themselves. But nobody would do nothing. Nobody. You say, "What is your point?" There is no point. Just part of my charm.

The point is this. You want to know what the point is? Every day, every day of your life, God deposits 86,400 seconds in the account of your life every day. That is how many seconds in a 24-hour day, and you and I spend them one way or the other. You and I make good investments or bad investments with that time. We invest of that time and make good decisions or bad ones. We

make good investments or we make bad ones. You make good trades or you make bad trades. You either make a gain for God with that time or you just make a gain for yourself.

Proverbs 3:15 says, "She is more precious than rubies and all the things that thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her." Getting God's understanding and that great concept. You will take your life. I will take my life that God has given us and the time that He has allotted you and me. Remember now, it is a season. You start out as a child in the spring. You grow up to an adult and functional in the summer. You get a little older when you are 40s and your 50s in the fall, and then you move into winter. It is not like you have got your whole life. I never saw an apple tree bear apples in February. You will take your life that God has given you and the time that He has allotted us. We will take all those things that God has put into your life to be used for Him: your abilities, your talents, your money, your family. When you get to the place in your life when you really see God, you really understand the Bible, you really have your life down, your possession from God's standpoint, and why you really have them, then you get the wisdom and understanding of God in all things. In this life, how to use them. That is when you become invaluable to God. Most never do.

VI. The Church as a Merchant Ship

There is another great story in the New Testament. It is found in Luke chapter 9, verses 57 and 62. Here is a story where a couple of young men come to Jesus and they said, "Hey, we want to follow You. We want to be with You. We want to do. We want to go with You. We have seen You. We know who You are. We want to be part of the work of God, and we want to be part of this." When He starts to tell the one of the heartache and the hardships that the foxes have places to sleep, but the Son of Man has no place to sleep. The first one is gone. Another one comes up and he says, "I want to follow You, but let me first go bury my father." The second one comes in and he says, "I want to follow You, but let me first go say goodbye to these people." That will be the problem that will keep you every time from serving God. It is the "me first" in you. You want to serve God, but it is you first. "Oh, I want to be what God wants me to be, but me first." "Oh, I want to be everything that God wants me to be. I want to learn the Bible. I want God's wisdom, but it is me first." There is the problem.

When you get it together, you see that you are not going to be the first. When you get it together, you see yourself as a merchant with the greatest merchandise the world has ever seen. Now you are like a medical student with God's wisdom and knowledge. You have got the cure for all mankind that you can go pass out freely. Proverbs 31:14, talking about that virtuous woman, it says, "She is like the merchant ships; she bringeth her food from afar."

I remember coming up and when I was studying church history. The great time in history that changed everything at the end of the Crusades. Here is a situation, as all situations in history, when you have understanding and you see what God is doing, how God did this. The Crusades really brought an end to the Dark Ages. The Dark Ages ran from 500 to about 1,000 to about 1,500. It was a time when the Roman Catholic Church ran the world and threw the world in the darkness and limited everybody. Everybody was told that they lived like in squalor. They lived in terrible conditions. The Roman Catholic Church told them, "You have got the best life on the

planet." When the Crusades started, all these hundreds of thousands, if not millions of men, went to fight in the Crusades in the foreign lands of the Middle East. When they got over there, they saw that what the Catholic Church had told them was not true. They brought back goods that nobody had ever seen before. They brought back silk. They brought back iron. They brought back rubber. They brought back all the animals that nobody had ever seen. They came back, and it was very obvious that what the Roman Catholic Church had told them was not true. That there was a world out there that had better things, greater things that they did not have. All those men now had their horizons broadened. Now they had been in a foreign land, and they had seen what other people have that they do not have to a great magnitude. It changed planet Earth.

On the spiritual side, that was the seeds planted that sprung into the Reformation a couple of hundred years later. That time in history and secular history is called the Renaissance. We have a festival up here that has nothing to do with what happened in history up here in Kansas, but it was called the Renaissance. The Renaissance means rebirth. It was a time when Europe was reborn in its thinking because of all the new things that had been introduced into it that they never knew existed. It was a catalyst for Europe to explode into all the great venues of inventing and bringing things in and trade and opening up the trade routes and working in to bring all of this stuff in. It literally changed the world when they brought merchandise from afar.

I think how the world was changed the day God brought His merchandise from afar. The day my Savior came down and kissed this planet with His blood, died on the cross, and brought His merchandise from afar. That was good merchandise. The merchandise of salvation. The Bible says in Proverbs chapter 31 that you and me, the church, are like a merchant ship. "She bringeth her food from afar." We have the answer to all man's problems. We have the fix for everything that man wants. We have the solution as God's people in His book. We have the solution to death and dying, to sickness, to pain, to heartache, to disappointment and discouragement. The answer that man has sought for since the beginning of time now comes down to man through us and this Word and the merchandise that God brought from afar.

Those of God's people who attain the wisdom and understanding, those of God's people who have made the right and good and wise investments of our time on this earth and our lives, those of God's people who have traded up and not down, who saw the true riches for what they were based on the gold, the deity of Christ, and the silver, the redemption that He paid for me. Proverbs 31:18 says, "She perceives that her merchandise is good." She knows what she has. I know what this church has. I know what I have. Many of you know what you have, and you perceive, I perceive that the merchandise is good. "Her candle goeth not out by night." She is that light on the hill. We get 40 or 50, 100, 150, 200 with the lights on. We, the world sees it, this city sees it. The light that shines in the darkness of this whole world, and people see it. People who have broken lives, broken marriages, broken families, and they see families and marriages that are good and wholesome and strong. They see a place where they can come and get uplifted and get the truth, and nobody will lie to them. The true light that declares that in the midst of the storm, the peace of God is real. The light that people really see in you and me that there is a real difference between Christianity and the world. The light that guides you, guides your kids, your family, and the world sees the difference and says, "I want what you have."

How many times in life, I do this all the time. How many times in life have you been out someplace and you saw somebody have something that you thought, "Man, I would love to have one of those"? It may be a phone. I have done it many times, to my wife's embarrassment. I will be out there and we will be eating someplace or out there someplace, and somebody will have a hat that I think is really neat or they will have a jacket that I think is really neat or they will have something that I think is really cool, and I will go over there and say, "Excuse me, I do not mean to bother. Where did you get that? I think that is one of the coolest things in the world." Most people think, "What are you bugging them for?" If somebody came up to me while I was eating and said, "Man, that is the coolest thing I have ever seen, where did you get that?" That would be a compliment to me. That would make me a cool guy. That is how I look at it. But how many times have you seen something and you said, "Man, I would like to get that"? You see the new iPhone 28 or the new this or the new plasma Magnum TV. You were over in your friend's house and you say to yourself, "Man, I have got to have one of them." We all do it. People drive up in their car and we say, "Man, I would like to have that. I just love to have one of those." See a big old four-wheel drive come up there, and if you are an outdoorsman like myself, you say, "Man, I would love to have one of them. That is a man truck."

That is how the world has to look at your life. When you have what God has given you and it works, and they do not have it, and you invite them to softball, volleyball, Bible study, church, have them over for something to eat, spend some time with them. They see you, see your wife, see your husband, see your kids, see your family, and they go home, and the Holy Spirit of God takes that and they say to themselves, "I want that." The light that shines in a dark place. "I want that." Our lives should be the same way. People see what we have that we do not have to say. We do not say it. We live it. "I want what they have." Young couples with a great marriage, young family with great kids, husbands who love and respect their wives, wives who love and respect their husband, God's people in their lives, the world, what really see all the contrast between light and darkness. But it has to be real. The great contrast between the world and what really Christianity is, is not ever what we say. We are all famous for our talking points. We are all famous. We know how to say the right thing. The problem is people see through what we say and always look at how we live.

Romans 14:7

For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.

There is always somebody watching their life. It simply comes down to, does what comes out of your mouth line up with what your life is? God's people, they have the ability by trading, making the right investments, taking the pound that God gave them, their abilities and development that they have insight, that they have the peace of God, that they have the fulfilled life, that they have an understanding of salvation and the assurance of salvation, and most of all the power of God in their life. It is really evident in every aspect of their lives. The first seven chapters in Proverbs are some of the greatest principles that you will ever find. They show us how to prepare for what is coming. Chapter 8 through 30, the great wisdom and understanding on man's life and the issues of life. All to one end that you and I might get to the place in our lives of Proverbs chapter 31 that we become the virtuous woman. We become her by understanding God's wisdom, God's

knowledge, and getting all of those things and learning never to be wise in our own eyes or lean to our own understanding.

Let us pray. Father, we thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus. We love You. Thank You for today and for what You have given.