

Guidelines for the exercise of the Lord's day Prophesying Message Nine : Reading the Book of Proverbs with a Praying Spirit So That It Will Render Us Nuggets and Gems to Strengthen Our Life of Pursuing Christ for the Fulfillment of God's Economy

I. Overview:

Proverbs is a collection of the words of the wise; it stresses the wisdom that man receives of God through his contacting of God, and it teaches man how to behave and build up his character in his human life. Since the proverbs were collected mainly by two kings, Solomon and Hezekiah, the book of Proverbs may be considered a subsidiary to the law. Proverbs has a particular character; that is, it presents to us the words of wisdom by many ancient wise men, but we have to realize that what the book of Proverbs is to us depends upon what kind of persons we are and by what way we take it. When we come to the book of Proverbs, we need to turn ourselves from the mind to the spirit by praying in our spirit and by exercising our spirit with the Spirit to contact the word in the spirit of prayer so that the word in Proverbs will become spirit and life to us. We must be persons who love the Lord and pursue Christ, who love the Lord's word in the entire Bible and read it with a praying spirit to seek the Spirit and word of life; we should read Proverbs not to gain any help for self-cultivation but to nourish our spirit so that we may live a Christian life that is perfect in the divine virtues, which are the expressions of the divine attributes.

II. Truth and Enlightenment:

Day 1

A. Explain the writers and the theme of Proverbs.

Proverbs is a collection of the words of the wise. The main writers and collectors are Solomon and Hezekiah. The theme of Proverbs is that this book consists of words of wisdom teaching people how to behave and how to build up their character in the human life. Proverbs stresses wisdom that man receives of God through his contacting of God and that teaches man how to behave in his human life.

B. Expound that the book of Proverbs may be considered a subsidiary to the law.

The law is the portrait of God, demanding God's people to keep it that they might be made copies of God for His expression and glorification. Proverbs, as a subsidiary to the law, helps God's people to keep the law. Because the law was written according to what God is, the law tells man how to behave and how to build up himself according to God's attributes.

Day 2 —

A. Expound what the book of Proverbs is to you as a person being a law-keeper.

Surely you will appreciate all the proverbs in this book as words of wise men, thinking that they could help you to be a good or even better law-keeper. If so, you just make all the proverbs many, many laws and fall into the snare of keeping the law as many Jews do, who do not know God's purpose in the dispensation of His law, that is, to expose fallen man's weakness.

B. Explain what the book of Proverbs is to you as a person loving the Lord.

If you are a person who loves the Lord and pursues Christ, not self-perfection, and who loves the Lord's word in the entire Bible and reads it with a praying spirit, not for the seeking of the doctrine of letters but for seeking the Spirit and word of life, not for self-cultivation but for the nourishment of your spirit that you may live a Christian life which is perfect not in human virtues but in the divine virtues which are the expressions of the divine attributes.

Day 3 —

A. Explain the old man and the new man in Ephesians 4:22-24.

The old man is of Adam through our natural birth, and the new man is of Christ by a new birth, regeneration. In your married life is it your practice to love your wife or husband by the new man or by the old man? We should not think that loving in the old man is justified by God. That kind of love is according to the law, not according to God's New Testament economy and not according to the new creation.

B. Fellowship what realization we need to have as coming to the Bible.

We may study the Bible either by the old man or by the new man. Many Christians study the Word in a natural way, according to their old man. If we merely exercise our mind to get knowledge from the Word, we are reading it

by the old man. To read the Bible by the new man is very different. Even before coming to the Bible, a person in the new man exercises his spirit to contact the Lord.

Day 4 —

A. Explain how to read the Bible by the new man.

When we come to the Bible to contact God, we should not only read but pray-read the Word. No matter who we are, as long as we read the Bible without praying, we are reading by the old man. To read the Bible without praying is to contact the Word by the old man. The genuine reading of the Bible by the new man can never be separated from praying.

B. Testify how to make the book of Proverbs becoming words of Spirit and life to us.

My burden in these messages on Proverbs is to help you touch the Word of God by your new man, by exercising your spirit to pray-read. Pray-reading changes the Bible from letters to Spirit and life. Apart from pray-reading, the book of Proverbs is merely a collection of proverbs. But when we pray-read Proverbs, our pray-reading causes all the proverbs to become words of Spirit and life to us.

Day 5 —

A. Expound how to divide the soul from the spirit in God's words.

The Hebrew believers were wondering what they should do with their old Hebrew religion. So Paul said that the word of God could pierce into their wondering like a sharp two-edged sword and divide their soul from their spirit. As the marrow is concealed deep in the joints, so the spirit is deep in the soul. The dividing of the marrow from the joints requires mainly the breaking of the joints.

B. Explain discerning the thoughts and intents of the heart in Hebrews 4:12.

In Hebrews 4:12 the word discern is used. Quite often our thoughts are deceiving. But if we exercise our spirit, there is a discernment that our thoughts are evil, because behind our thoughts there is an evil intention. To discern the thoughts and intents of the heart equals the dividing of the soul from the spirit....The enemy's strategy is always to mix our spirit up with our soul.

Day 6 —

A. Explain what the three aspects of the word of God are.

There are three aspects of the word. First, there is the written word of God—the Bible. Then there is the living word of God—Christ. Finally, there is the applied word of God—the Spirit.

The living word becomes the applied word through the Spirit. God has only one kind of word. First, He spoke, and what He spoke was written in a book. That is the Bible. There is only one book that is the word of God. The Bible is the book of books.

B. Testify how to experience the written word of God becoming the living word.

You must have some contact with the Lord by calling on Him and pray-reading the Word. When you call on Him and pray-read the Word, right away you have the deep sensation that Christ is living within you. Right away this written word becomes a living word and then an applied word to you. Then you get into your car to drive, you have something living applied to you. Then you have faith.

III. Conclusion:

Westerners value Psalms, Easterners prefer proverbs, because they like to use the words of books as sayings or as mottos to encourage themselves. But the proper way to read the book of Proverbs depends upon what kind of persons you are and by what way you take it. If you are an ethical person, this book will indeed help you succeed in the pursuit of perfection, like Job at most, who was perfect and upright, feared God and turned away from evil. This was not what God wanted in him, rather he became an enemy of God so that he could not fulfill His purpose. We must love the Lord and pursue Christ, love the word of God in the Bible, and read Scriptures in the spirit of prayer. Come to the book of Proverbs to understand that it is the breath of God for us to breathe in, we need to exercise the mingle spirit, the Spirit with our spirits, to blend the spirit with words, so that Proverbs may become spirit and life to us.