

GOD KNOWS BEST

Proverbs 3:1-12

Monday morning a man showed up at our door asking if we recognized him and if we could help him find his car. His story was rather fluid, but it seems Sunday night he was miffed with his live-in girlfriend so he went out drinking and gambling at a casino in Temecula where he picked up a prostitute. At the hotel, the prostitute stole all his cash. Best I can figure, he then attempted to drive home to Hemet on the 79 but got turned around and ended up in Santa Ysabel and came on in to Ramona where he ran out of gas. After sleeping off the booze, he went walking, got lost, came to our house. Never found his car; this is the fourth time he's lost it. On the drive home, he assured me he is a Christian and that he's a good preacher. "(Expletive) this" and "(expletive) that", he's sure God is going to get him through like He always does.

Is there any possibility that he's saved? Is there any possibility that he's a born-again Christian restored to God?

Absolutely!

He clearly articulated that salvation is a free gift accepted by faith.

EPHESIANS 2:8-9 (ESV)

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

He was raised in a church that emphasized the grace, faith and gift of Ephesians 2:8-9, but likely ignored the good works and walk of verse 10.

EPHESIANS 2:8-10 (ESV)

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*

Many churches emphasize being saved from the *penalty* of sin and virtually ignore being saved from the *practice* of sin. God's salvation includes not only saving us from the *penalty* of sin, but also saving us from the *practice* of sin in our lives now.

The Christian life is meant to be a life of spiritual transformation. God's goal is to re-form you to be like Jesus; to think, feel and act like Jesus. This is all part of God's salvation plan for you. It's not an add-on or an after-thought. God's salvation plan has always been multi-faceted; to first restore you to a living relationship with God and then to re-form you into the likeness of Jesus.

Just as it requires faith to be re-born so also it requires faith to be re-formed.

Please turn with me to Proverbs 3:1-12.

Proverbs 3 begins with the now familiar appeal of Solomon that his son remember his father's teachings in the sense that the son obey his father's teachings. We can rightly assume that the father's teaching and commandments reflect the commandments contained in the Law of Moses. We are not under the Law of Moses, we are under the Law of Messiah. But many principles taught in Proverbs apply to us under the Law of Messiah.

Notice the many benefits that come with obeying God's wisdom.

PROVERBS 3:1-12 (ESV)

- ¹ My son, do not forget my teaching,
but let your heart keep my commandments,
- ² for length of days and years of life
and peace they will add to you.
- ³ Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you;
bind them around your neck;
write them on the tablet of your heart.
- ⁴ So you will find favor and good success
in the sight of God and man.
- ⁵ Trust in the LORD with all your heart,
and do not lean on your own understanding.
- ⁶ In all your ways acknowledge him,
and he will make straight your paths.
- ⁷ Be not wise in your own eyes;
fear the LORD, and turn away from evil.
- ⁸ It will be healing to your flesh

and refreshment to your bones.

In verse 5 God tells you to trust Him with all your heart. For what are you to trust Him? That He will show you who to marry? That He will show which job you should take or where you should live or what house you should buy? Many times when we face major life decisions we turn to this passage which is certainly appropriate; you should seek God's wisdom in making those decisions. But in this context, God wants you to trust that all His teachings and commands are right and good and lead to the best life possible. This is the faith required to be reformed.

We don't naturally like to be told what to do – that's the influence of our Adamic nature. Coupled with that, the world around us tells us that obeying God deprives us of pleasures and experiences we deserve. We look at people living according to their own understanding and it seems like they're doing fine. In other words, it seems like they're living the good life even though they're not obeying God's commands.¹

And so, it really does require thoughtful, conscious faith to trust that doing things God's way is the best way to live. We really must believe that.

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That is at the heart of trusting in the Lord with all your heart. It is believing that God knows best especially when you don't want to do it His way and when the world tells you to do what you want.

One area of your life where your faith in the Lord is tested is money. Does God know best how you should handle your money?

⁹ Honor the LORD with your wealth

and with the firstfruits of all your produce;

¹⁰ then your barns will be filled with plenty,

and your vats will be bursting with wine.

Here is a basic financial principle: you should honor God financially. For what should you honor God? That He is your provider and the One who gives you knowledge, skill and strength to acquire wealth. God should receive the first portion of your earnings not your leftovers. Under the Law of Moses, honoring

¹ Cf. Psalm 73 for perspective.

God meant giving 27% of your earnings. We are not under the Law of Moses, but Jesus teaches us we should be rich towards God in terms of how much we give (Luke 12:13-21). A great plan by which to steward your money is GIVE / SAVE / LIVE.

This takes faith.

You must trust God is your provider. You must believe it is right and good to be thankful and to honor God for providing for you. You must trust God to continue to provide for you.

Another area where your faith will be tested is when God shows you you're wrong. We don't like being told we're wrong, but just as a loving father will correct his son when he is not doing something correctly, so also our Heavenly Father will reprove us so that we can change and do right.

**¹¹ My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline
or be weary of his reproof,**

**¹² for the LORD reproves him whom he loves,
as a father the son in whom he delights.**

This takes faith to accept God's discipline and to turn and do right. We must believe that God knows best and that He is disciplining us because He loves us.

How does God discipline us?

Sometimes it will be by divine intervention as in the case of Ananias and Saphira.

Sometimes it will be by the rebuke of a loving Christian brother or sister.

Sometimes it will need to be by the discipline of the Church.

More often it will be by the Scriptures. Last week, Nate taught Proverbs 2 very clearly and we learned that we need to get wisdom; we need to put time and energy into personal study of God's Word to get His wisdom.

Are you going after wisdom?

If you spend time reading and meditating upon God's Word, last week's teaching was confirmation that you are living wisely – digging for wisdom as one digs for buried treasure.

But if you are not going after wisdom; if you are not spending personal time and energy studying God's Word, last week's teaching is a reproof that you are not

living wisely, but foolishly. If you do not change your ways, you are despising God's reproof.

Another way we often experience God's reproof and discipline is through the natural consequences of our disobedience. Think about the man I met on Monday. In the course of twenty four hours he was robbed, he was lost, he lost his car which, when found, will cost him hundreds if not thousands, to repossess, he embarrassed himself before all to whom he had to tell his story, he intensified the conflict between himself and his live-in girlfriend. God's hope is that this man would look at the train wreck of his life and decide it would be better to live God's way!

I hope it won't come to that in your life. I hope you will trust in the Lord with all your heart; that you will trust that God knows best and live life His way.