

Proverbs 22-10-19a

Greetings and welcome to the Wednesday night Bible study at Grace and Truth Bible Church. This is the 19th of October 2022. We are in the book of Proverbs.

We are in the first few chapters and a few weeks back we addressed ourselves to a bit of review and summary. Having covered the first part of chapter 2 in particular, we went back to Proverbs 1, verse 7. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction. It is central to the message of the book that we understand why the wisdom and the knowledge and the instruction that are presented in this book are emphasized and set apart as content throughout this book.

It is all about the fear of the Lord. I got into the subject and decided I was not sufficiently prepared once I got to looking at it. So I've spent some time and we're going to continue.

We'll briefly review and then continue our study of the fear of the Lord. This is such a prevalent theme throughout scripture. So our study tonight is the fear of the Lord.

Proverbs 1, verse 7 is our theme verse, but we will be looking at quite a bit of scripture to include perhaps my favorite book. It's my favorite book when I'm looking at it, and it is the book of Job. Let's ask God's blessing on our fellowship and our study, and we'll get started.

Father, it is such a privilege to have the chance to gather together with believers who share an enthusiasm for your word, your plan and purpose, who celebrate the work of the Lord Jesus Christ and the unique privileges and opportunities that belong to us in him. We pray that as we look together at your word that the Holy Spirit will reveal the truth to us, help us to not only understand it, but to see its pertinence and how it applies to us in the time that remains to us, the hours and days, the tasks and challenges that face us, the opportunities we have to grow in grace and knowledge of the Savior by facing those challenges, by making decisions and performing actions heartily as unto you and not unto men. You ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen. Let me briefly recap what we covered back on the 28th of September. If you want to go back and get the details of that study, it was that many weeks ago.

But we saw that the fear of the is prominent in these early chapters of Proverbs. We saw it here in 1-7, which I've already quoted. We saw it in this portion that we have memorized together as a church, Proverbs 2, verses 1 through 5 and following.

But the real apex is in verse 5, having received and treasured and inclined and applied and cried out and lifted up our voice, seeking and searching, then you will understand the fear of the Lord. This is our goal tonight. I don't want to just have a shallow or superficial grasp of the fear of the Lord.

I want to understand the fear of the Lord. And you can tell by the progression in those verses that this isn't something that ought to be taken lightly. Look at the process required to understand the fear of the Lord.

We might be able to define it. We might think we understand the concept. But there's a big distance between grasping the concept and truly understanding the fear of the Lord and finding the knowledge of God.

There is a kind of knowledge that puffs up if it doesn't result in love. Paul reminds us of that over in Corinthians. So this is our goal.

We noted that there are two different kinds of fear. The fear that was instilled in the hearts of the surrounding peoples as they saw God's dealings with Egypt during the Exodus and the victories that God conferred on Joshua and the armies of Israel as they moved toward the land and as they entered the land. It struck fear into their hearts.

And it says the fear of God fell upon the surrounding nations. This is going to prevail during the tribulation period. There will be people who fear God in the sense that they are afraid of His terrible wrath.

It doesn't connect to the fear of the Lord that is being spoken of here. But we do note it in passing. Then we saw, and you may want to turn back to Deuteronomy 10.

This is where God Himself explains what the fear of the Lord is. Deuteronomy 10. Beginning in verse 12, Moses, having rehearsed the history of God's dealing with the people here in Deuteronomy, talks about making the Ark of the Covenant up in chapter 10, verse 3. I took an ark of acacia wood, hewed two tablets of stone like the first, went up in the mountain, having the two tablets in my hand.

And he wrote on the tablets, according to the first writing, the ten words, the ten commandments, which the Lord had spoken to you in the mountain from the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly. And the Lord gave them to me. I came down from the mountain.

He rehearses a bit more history. And in verse 10, as at the first time I stayed on the mountain 40 days and 40 nights, the Lord heard me at that time and the Lord chose not to destroy you. Then the Lord said to me, arise, begin your journey before the people that they may go in and possess the land which I swore to their fathers to give them.

Arise and go if you want to receive the inheritance. God could have simply transported the Israelites directly to the land. Why must they journey? If God can pick Ezekiel up by the hair of the head and drop him in the temple from the river Kabar in Babylon, why did God not simply transfer his people from Egypt directly to the promised land? They have to journey.

Why? There is a learning process that can only be accomplished by facing the testing and the challenges in the wilderness. Critically important to understand the fear of the Lord, to understand how it is developed. You think, if I'm saved, hypothetically speaking, at the point that I accept Jesus as my Savior, why can't I just pop straight into heavenly glory before the throne of the Father and appreciate Him and fear Him and serve Him and go into the eternal future? Why am I left here on this earth with a corrupt nature, a fallen world, and an active enemy, the devil, seeking to devour me? I'm saved.

Why can't I just go to glory? The journey that we make through this life is critical to our grasp of and entrance into the fear of the Lord. That's the background here as you begin chapter 10, verse 12. Now Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you? As I said the first time, how handy is this? Have you ever been in a situation or facing a circumstance or a challenge and thought, well, I wonder what God requires of me, but what does He want me to do? Well, here it is spelled right out in black and white in English instead of Hebrew.

It doesn't get any better than this. What does the Lord require of you but to fear the Lord your God? Well, great. If that's all there is, let's just start doing that.

If we don't understand what the fear of the Lord is, it's going to be exceedingly difficult to accomplish it, right? Fear the Lord your God. Now it looks like this is just *seriatim*, one thing after another, elements in series separated by commas, but you remember how Hebrew works. The first statement is the topic statement, the header.

The rest of this is describing what that is. So what does the Lord require of you but to fear the Lord your God? What is that? What does it entail? Number one, to walk in all His ways. Not just some of His ways, all of His ways.

How do we do that? You want to go to a location, you want to attend an event or visit a relative or friend, and you want to travel the way. How do you find out that way? Do you just start out and kind of wait to see if you get close or begin to sense that the smoke from the chimney might be your destination? You have to study the way. You have to know what the way is.

Is it a toll way? Do you need quarters? Do you need a toll tag? Is it two-lane, four-lane? Are there any stops along the way? Will I have enough fuel? You've got to study the way and understand the way to travel it, right? And not just some of them. Have you ever gotten close to a place but the last turn left you completely confused and not arriving? If you tune pianos in this part of the country, I promise you, you can almost get there and then get completely turned around and end up in a place where they're cooking meth instead of your client. It has happened to me.

All His ways, everything that pertains to the journey, and that requires paying attention, requires study, to walk in all His ways and to love Him. So to fear the Lord, we need to

love Him. How? How can we develop love for God? How do you develop love for anyone, especially someone who is intrinsically worthy, intrinsically admirable, intrinsically to be respected and has those qualities, those characteristics that are lovable? You have to get to know them, right? Be the most amazing person in the world, but if you don't know them, it's pretty difficult to love them.

How do we get to know God? Well, in the same way that we get to know His ways, it is by learning, it is receiving information and to understand the perfection of God's character, not only His perfect righteousness and His perfect justice, but also His love and His compassion, His patience and long-suffering, His willingness to go more than halfway to meet us, His willingness to forgive us and to enter us into relationship with Himself, love that is sacrificial to Him and beneficial to us. There's a lot to love, and our human character is built to appreciate the things that characterize God, and to come to know Him is automatically to appreciate and to love Him, to love Him, to serve the Lord your God. How? Serve Him on Sundays and Wednesdays, serve Him at feast days and Sabbaths.

How to serve Him? We are to walk in all His ways and we are to serve Him with all our heart and all our soul, prompting Jesus much later to say, you cannot serve God and mammon. If we do not serve Him completely, we are not really serving Him at all. It is not the fear of the Lord if it is sporadic, partial, erratic, on again, off again.

Serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. What's the difference in your heart and your soul? Why doesn't it just say all your heart and be done? The heart, tangible or intangible in normal parlance. The Ruach, the spirit, tangible or intangible.

So both in the part of your life that is observable, that is physical, that partakes of the earth and its circumstance, its relationships, and the soul, which is the intangible, the inner sanctums, the thoughts and intents of the heart are taking place in our soul. So this is the physical and the non-physical, the spiritual and the earthly reality. All your heart and with all your soul.

And to keep the commandments of the Lord and His statutes, which I command you today for your good. This is review from a few weeks back. What's the difference in the commandments and the statutes? Anytime you see two things mentioned, God's not just being wordy.

There's a reason why both are mentioned. Heart and soul are mentioned for reasons. Commandments and statutes are mentioned for a reason.

What's the difference? If you're going to have the fear of the Lord, we need to keep His commandments. What's a commandment? What's another way of saying it's a command? There's a grammatical term for it. It's not a declarative.

It's not conditional. It's an imperative. Do this.

Don't do that. Those are the commandments, right? I can say, close the door. It's cold outside.

Or in the summertime, close the door. It's hot outside. You don't have to understand why I give the command.

If I just tell a child, go close the door, please. Please close the door. Anytime you go in and out, please close the door behind you.

That's a command. Do they have to understand the whys and wherefores and causes, conditions, successions, relations, reasons, motivations? All that the Lord hath said, they committed themselves, Israel at the base of Mount Sinai, all that the Lord has said, we will do. He says, don't shave the corners of your beard.

We won't shave them. He says, put a tassel on the corner of your garment. We'll put on a tassel.

He says, sacrifice a lamb in the morning and evening. We'll do it. Those are the commandments, right? What are the statutes? What are the statutes? Statutes are the standards.

If I say we're going to travel a statute mile, that means exactly 5,280 feet, right? If it's longer than that, that's not a mile. If it's shorter than that, it's not a mile. It's a standard.

It's something by which you can measure. And it is also a principle. There are principles expressed in statutes.

Sometimes a statute and a command are very close together, but statute gets at the why and the wherefore of the command. Choose you this day whom you will serve, Joshua says. Choose.

That's an imperative. But if God says, this is the way, walk ye in it, the command side of that is, this is what God has asked me to do. If I would like to understand why God is asking me to do it, why God is commanding me to do it, I would look at his statutes.

Do not put a stumbling block in front of the blind. That's a command. It is also a statute which has wider application.

Don't take advantage of someone just because they're vulnerable, right? So commandments and statutes. Be obedient and enter into an understanding of why you are obeying and what God's thinking behind the command is. Those are the statutes which I command you today.

Notice the commands of the Lord and his statutes which I command you. I command the

statutes. I command adherence to the statutes.

So that's a command. But the statutes embody and express the principles. The poor, the widow, the orphan, leave the corners ungleaned.

That's a command. Why? So that people can fend for themselves and have some sense of accomplishment and self-respect in going and gleaning and grinding and mixing and baking and securing food for themselves. They enter into a good portion of the work.

Someone gives them the opportunity by leaving that grain ungleaned, but they don't just go around with a wagon handing out bread loaves to the poor. Statute. There's a reason why the command is what it is.

Then there is a break here. And this is a rationale. This is something like what the statutes teach in verse 14 of Deuteronomy 10, when God says, what does the Lord require of you? But to fear the Lord your God, what does that entail? Walking in his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, to keep the commandments of the Lord and his statutes, which I command you today for your good.

That is all the fear of the Lord. Now, why fear the Lord? Why is it required? Indeed, heaven and the highest heavens belong to the Lord your God, the earth with all that is in it. If you just come to this passage cold, you would think, why this information at this point? It is certainly true, but what does the Lord require of you? But to fear him.

Here's what the fear of the Lord looks like. And now you have this. Heaven and the highest heavens belong to the Lord your God and the earth with all that is in it.

The Lord delighted only in your fathers to love them. And he chose their descendants after them, you above all peoples, as it is this day. So there is this little interruption, this little side track.

And then he picks up again with Therefore, once again, description of the fear of the Lord, circumcise the foreskin of your heart and be stiff necked no longer. Then you have another explanatory section beginning in verse 17. Why? Why circumcise the foreskin of your heart? Why be stiff necked no longer? For the Lord your God is God of Gods and Lord of Lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality, does not take a bribe.

He administers justice for the fatherless and the widow and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing. So just as we had a Therefore in verse 16 after the side excursion, now we have another Therefore. Verse 19.

Therefore love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. Now we come back full circle. This is the closing bracket.

Therefore you shall fear the Lord your God. You shall serve him and to him you shall hold fast and take oaths in his name. He is your praise and he is your God, who has done for you these great and awesome things which your eyes have seen.

So this is a very fulsome description of what the fear of the Lord looks like. So we pick up tonight in having reviewed this definition and description, if you will. My question is, it's one thing to describe it.

It is another thing to enter into it and to accomplish it. We have seen in Proverbs 1.7, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. That was 1.7. So making a priority out of those things that Moses describes in Deuteronomy 10, requiring knowing about him so that we can follow his commandments and his statutes, we can love him, we can serve him fully.

This is also mentioned in Proverbs 9.10. Remember Proverbs 1-9 is the introduction to the whole book. It begins with this and it is going to conclude with it in Proverbs 9.10. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. So the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.

If you don't want to start gaining the knowledge of God so that you can expand and exercise fear of the Lord, you're a fool. Fools hate wisdom and instruction. So listening to instruction, pursuing wisdom and knowledge are key to the fear of the Lord.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. I would like to have the end of wisdom, wouldn't you? I don't want to just be at the beginning. It's like the variable X is the beginning of algebra.

I don't want to be at the beginning where I'm just finding out what a variable is. I want to be at the end where I can solve parallel equations and quadratic equations and all other kinds. I would like to be at the end of algebra.

But you can't learn anything and make productive use of it, bear fruit from it, without the fear of the Lord. The fear of the Lord is the beginning. So establishing the priority, recognizing the Most High—one of God's most frequent appellations is the Most High, the Most High God—recognizing that and deciding that everything we're going to think and do are going to be in reference to God Most High.

What is, by the way, the description of Melchizedek back in Genesis? Do you remember? He is the Priest of the Most High God. That's who Abraham goes to and has bread and wine with, has the constituent elements of the Upper Room meal with. Melchizedek, Priest of God Most High.

So the fear of the Lord begins with knowledge. It's the beginning of wisdom. Knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

You see the parallel there in 9-10 of Proverbs? Fear of the Lord, when you're doing a topical study of this in Scripture, you have to kind of double up and say fear of the Lord or fear of God. They're almost entirely overlapping, kind of like Kingdom of Heaven and Kingdom of God in Matthew. But here, knowledge of the Holy One.

Now, let's do a little, it's not exactly a syllogism, but a little bit of logical progression. What does Proverbs 1-7 say? The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. That's what it says in Proverbs 1-7.

In 9-10, it says the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. They are two different things. Knowledge is possession of the facts.

Wisdom is knowing how to use those facts in a productive way. So you begin to gain knowledge of God and begin to put that knowledge to practical use. But it begins with the fear of the Lord.

Knowledge without the fear of the Lord is just going to puff us up and make us arrogant. And we're going to use it for our own purposes, whether it is to be admired or to be influential or whatever it is we think we're after. The fear of the Lord has to begin our knowledge.

The fear of the Lord has to begin our wisdom, or it's going to go off the rails. So 1-7 said the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. The second part of this, verse 10 of chapter 9 says, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

So we've got these three things. You have the beginning of knowledge, and the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One, the fear of the Lord. Lord is God's rank.

You remember those two little interruptions in Deuteronomy 10? God is the God of heaven most high. He's the one that created the earth and everything that's in it. He is the most high.

That's His Lord identity. He is the creator Lord God. But as our knowledge, and from that knowledge, our wisdom increases, and we begin to gain understanding, we move beyond recognizing God's role as creator and as the most high, and we start coming to know Him as what? Last part of this verse, 9-10 of Proverbs.

What do we start to understand? Knowledge of the Holy One. You can look around at creation and see power, design, great craftsmanship. What about holiness? We begin accumulating knowledge and wisdom, and it is not long before we begin to understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God, and we begin to understand Him as the Holy One, His character when it comes to the invisible.

Creation is visible. God's righteousness and His holiness are invisible. They are

conceptual.

They are not concrete substance realities. So we are raised up out of the material and the mundane into righteousness, holiness, which then immediately creates in us recognition of our need for God's righteousness and justice to be satisfied because we can say, I'm a wonderful citizen of the earth. I'm green.

I don't litter. I don't do this and that and the other. I'm a good citizen of the planet.

What about the immaterial? What about the spiritual? What about God, not as the creator who wants you to keep a clean house, as it were, but the Holy One? And I look at myself, and I am not qualified to be in His presence. I cannot meet His righteous statute standards. So the beginning of knowledge, the beginning of wisdom quickly leads us into an understanding of spiritual truths, and that's where it should lead.

So as you move forward, you say, well, how can I get this process started? I know that I need to love the Lord. I know that I need to serve Him. Turn forward in Proverbs to chapter 15.

Proverbs 15, 33 is our destination. The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom. These words keep reappearing.

Notice it doesn't say, if I just love God enough, I will enter into the fear and the respect and the righteousness and the spiritual understanding. What gets us there? The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom. You cannot fear the Lord.

You cannot truly enter into an appreciation of who He is, not just as creator, not just as the author of things visible, but as the Holy One, the One who has a higher and greater existence, a higher and greater way. The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom, and before honor, humility. Humility has to come before honor.

This is why the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge and the beginning of wisdom. We have to be humble enough to receive instruction. It isn't enough to appreciate God's grace.

It isn't enough to appreciate God in this age, having sent His Son to die for our sins. Appreciation, gratitude is not the way to the fear of the Lord. Isn't that interesting? Instruction in His commandments, in His statutes, in His mighty works, and His divine words.

Why didn't Jesus say to Satan, when He said, turn these stones into bread, Jesus says, manage to not live by bread alone, but feast on the love of God. I'm sustained by the love of my Father. Why doesn't He say that? Every word that proceeds from the mouth of God is life.

We're going to have an entire point devoted to this in the second session. But it is humility that comes before honor. Humility, I have heard defined in the past, and I like it, is teachability.

Have you ever had a debate with someone and all they're doing is tapping their fingers, waiting for you to stop making your point so that they can come back and make theirs? They don't really listen. They don't consider what you're saying and weigh your argument or your evidence or your facts and open themselves to the possibility that maybe there is a perspective that is better than their own. A good listener, a good learner, someone who can actually make progress and refine and improve their understanding, move beyond the beginning of knowledge and the beginning of wisdom, is someone with the humility to say, maybe there's a way I can incorporate what I am hearing from this source to learn more, to have a better grasp, to be closer to the truth, and not just blithely assume that I've got it figured out.

My little internal magnetic compass is stuck right on magnetic north, and I know exactly what's right, and it's me. And I know exactly what's wrong, and it's everybody else. Humility comes before honor.

If we want to be honored as having acquired the knowledge of God, the wisdom of God, receiving instruction from God, humility comes before honor. Humility in one sense of the word is teachability, willingness to consider the possibility that maybe I don't know at all. Maybe the conclusions I've drawn up to this point can be refined or in some cases even overthrown and changed in the light of the word of God.

Humility comes before honor. Well, turn with me quickly back to Deuteronomy, Deuteronomy chapter 17. Something for us to think about as we go to the break.

Deuteronomy 17, 18 through 20. Principles governing a king is the section here. Instructions for the future time when Israel will have a king.

He's already been told that he shouldn't multiply horses. He's been told that he shouldn't multiply wives. Solomon multiplied both.

But you get to verse 18, also it shall be when he, the king, sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book from the one that the priests, the Levites, maintain. Go to the priests, go to the Levites, those intermediaries between Israel and God, and get the book and write a copy of it. And that copy shall be with him.

And he shall read it all the days of his life. Why? What does it say? So that he may learn to fear the Lord, his God. Making his own personal copy by hand of the book, keeping it with him and reading it every day of his life.

This is the means of learning to fear the Lord, his God. And then once he has read it and

digested it, be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes, so that his heart may not be lifted above his brethren. What would you call that? Humility before honor? Right? Humility.

His heart is not raised above his brethren, that he may not turn aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left, that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children in the midst of Israel. The Word of God is nothing if not consistent on these points. Something to ponder as we go to the break.

When we come back, we're going to continue our analysis of what the Word of God has to say about the fear of the Lord.