



## Woodland Baptist Church

November 14, 2013

Text: Proverbs 3:1-12

Title: True Prosperity

I. This third chapter begins with the now familiar call of father to the son. The opening section of this chapter (v. 1–12) consists of six exhortations, each then followed by the promised reward given to those who heed it.

## II. Read Proverbs 3:1-12

### A. (1-4)

My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments, <sup>2</sup>for length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you. <sup>3</sup>Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you; bind them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart. <sup>4</sup>So you will find favor and good success in the sight of God and man.

#### i. **Exhortation # 1 - Teachings and Commandments**

- a. Teaching' is literally the Hebrew word *torah* which most often refers to God's holy Law.
- b. Commandments' is also used elsewhere to describe the Law handed down by Moses.
- c. Here in Proverbs, it often refers to the instruction as applications of the Law to daily living passed on by parent or teacher from their position of authority.
- d. To forget God and His word is not simply to misplace a memory, *but it is to disregard His commandments, to go after other gods, to live in fear and lack of faith, and to challenge God.*
- e. The word of God should penetrate, subdue, and rein in every cognition of our brain, every flame of passion, and tongue of temper that leaps from the fire of our affections, and every choice both planned and embraced.

#### ii. **Promised Reward # 1 - Days and Years**

- a. A long life is understood as an evidence of God's blessing (Exodus 20:12).

- b. Peace' will also be the lot of the one who esteems God's commands. The word *shalom* ('peace') here means more than absence of strife, but is a broad term with many variations of meaning. It refers to well-being, prosperity, bodily health, and the internal condition of being at rest, contented or fulfilled.
- c. These added days and years *will not be merely extensions of time, but they will be filled with the joy of seeing God's hand of peace and prosperity rest upon you.*
- d. This, as so many other proverbs, should be viewed as a general principle. *We all know of a godly person who has died while still young or of the person who conducted himself by God's word and yet bore great sorrows in this life.*
- e. The basic pattern of life is that, *if you keep God's commands, you will avoid the pitfalls and perils of seeking to walk out of step with Him and will instead enjoy the benefits of walking in step with the Creator and Sustainer of the universe.*

### iii. **Exhortation # 2 - Steadfast Love & Faithfulness**

- a. These two commandments summarize the Ten Commandments. Showing truth toward God summarizes the first four of the Ten Commandments, while showing mercy toward our neighbor summarizes the last six of the Ten Commandments.
- b. We should not let these qualities become distant from us. We need to keep them as close to us as we can.
- c. We should make these covenant commitments so much a part of our lives that they adorn us like a beautiful necklace (Prov. 1:9; 3:22; 6:21).
- d. We are to 'write them on the tablet' of our hearts (Prov. 7:3).
- e. The 'heart' is the comprehensive term for the inner person you are. It is the well spring from which all of life flows (Prov. 4:23). For this reason, the commands of God must be written down in our minds through constant determined meditation and application.

### iv. **Promised Reward # 2 - Favor**

- a. 'Favor' means to be gracious or to show favor toward.
- b. The Hebrew word means shrewdness, insight, or understanding. Many translators, believe this does not seem to be an appropriate reward.
- c. There needs to be no conflict, because shrewdness does not need to be a negative trait. Indeed, it may lead one to success (cf. Prov. 10:5).
- d. This success would give one a reputation as one who wins at life.

e. (Luke 2:52) Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man. (2 Cor. 8:21) We have regard for what is honorable, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.

## B. (5-8)

<sup>5</sup>Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. <sup>6</sup>In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. <sup>7</sup>Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord, and turn away from evil. <sup>8</sup>It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones.

### i. **Exhortation # 3 - Heart**

- a. Verse 5 calls us to **‘trust’** in the Lord with all our hearts. *This ‘trust’ is the sense of security and safety that comes from being under the care of another more competent than ourselves.*
- b. The heart represents the totality of one’s inner being: mind, emotions and will. Everything we are, and all we have must be rested upon the Lord as our security.
- c. We are not to ‘lean’ on our own understanding. The root of the verb means to support yourself on something, to lean with your entire weight upon something.
- d. ‘Understanding’ is a word that is generally given a positive spin by Solomon (Prov. 1:2; 2:3), but here is seen negatively. Here, it is that human wisdom worked up from our natural selves as compared to the divine wisdom that God gives to those who seek Him (James 3:15–18)
- e. This does not mean to imply that there is nothing to be trusted in ‘common sense,’ but simply that you don’t use it as your sole, or even primary, support in life. Rather, we should bank our all on God and the wisdom of His ways.

### ii. **Promised Reward # 3 - Make straight your paths**

- a. The verb ‘acknowledge’ means simply ‘to know.’
- b. Such knowledge is more than acquainting yourself with God, but describes a deep experiential knowledge.
- c. The fact that this is to be ‘in all your ways’ drives deeper still the level of intimacy intended.
- d. The reward is stated: ‘And He will make your paths straight.’ The reward is more than the promise of simple guidance. It includes the removal of obstacles (Isa. 40:3; 45:13) from the path of the wise and the surety of arriving at one’s destination.

- e. When you abandon yourself to God in trusting obedience, finding your entire support in Him and striving in every avenue of your life to know Him more intimately, He promises that the path before you will be clearer and smoother than it would have been, and that He will keep you in His will.

**iii. Exhortation # 4 - Be NOT wise...**

- a. We are called to recognize that wisdom does not come from within, but from without—from God (Prov. 2:6).
- b. Fools say, 'Just let me think! I can figure this out if you'll just give me time!'
- c. Isaiah 5:21 says, 'Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, And clever in their own sight!'
- d. The opposite of being wise in one's own eyes is fearing the Lord. This is the theme of the book (see on Prov. 1:7).
- e. When we put God in His rightful place and reverence Him appropriately, we will 'turn away from evil.'

**iv. Promised Reward # 4 - Healing and Refreshening**

- a. This lifestyle will bring 'healing to your body.'
- b. This should come as no surprise, since Scripture clearly reveals the negative effects of unconfessed sin on the human body: **(Psalm 32:3-4) 'When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. For night and day Thy hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer.'**
- c. It should follow that righteous living will have a positive effect upon the body. The Hebrew term here translated 'body' literally refers to the umbilical cord. *It is possible that the navel is chosen because it goes back to the original health of a newborn, when its first moments of independent life is experienced.*
- d. 'Refreshment' comes from a root word that is often used to speak of giving drink to humans or animals. It is also used of irrigating or watering parched ground to make it fertile. Here, the idea of 'moisture' to the bones gives the same sense of refreshment or renewal to the body.
- e. 'Bones' are the framing structure of the entire body, so this also is a metaphorical reference to the whole of the body. The moisture for the health of the bones is contrasted by the consequences of sin on the bones: 'a broken spirit dries up the bones.'

### C. (9-12)

<sup>9</sup>Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the first fruits of all your produce; <sup>10</sup>then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine. <sup>11</sup>My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline or be weary of his reproof, <sup>12</sup>for the Lord reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights.

#### i. **Exhortation # 5 - Honor**

a. This verse represents the only time Proverbs advises making any of the sacrifices required by the books of Moses. 'Honor' is a verb used occasionally—as here—in the sense of making sacrifice to the Lord (Ps. 50:23; Isa. 43:23; Dan. 11:38; Mal. 1:6–7).

b. 'Wealth' refers to having enough of the goods of life for them to be considered riches or wealth.

c. Wealth may not only be the reward of wisdom, but, when submitted to God, wealth may be transformed by wisdom into an opportunity to worship Him.

d. 'First' is often a reference to 'first fruits.' This offering of the first fruits makes clear our complete reliance upon God instead of the yield of our fields.

e. Such sacrificial giving surely requires that we 'do not lean on our own understanding.'

#### ii. **Promised Reward # 5 "Then"**

a. The reward for such giving is now stated.

b. Such giving cannot be viewed as taking some of 'mine' and giving it to God. Instead, it is selecting some of what is God's and trusting Him with it as He has trusted me with that which remains under my discretion. Such giving is a supreme act of faith.

c. It evidences that we believe the God who gave us this is able and willing to give us more from where this came from.

**d. (Matt. 6:33) 'But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you.'**

e. Let us guard our gifts from greediness and make them pure and holy offerings unto Him.

#### iii. **Exhortation # 6 - Do not despise...**

a. Wisdom is not only gained by receiving rewards for faithfulness (9–10), but also by receiving discipline for unfaithfulness (11–12).

b. Wisdom is learned not only by prosperity and blessing, but also through hardship and suffering.

c. 'Discipline' points first to an exhortation with a warning of consequences for disobedience, but it also may refer to the physical punishment applied if the counsel is not followed.

d. 'Reproof' points more exclusively to verbal correction.

e. (Job 5:18) 'He inflicts pain, and gives relief; He wounds, and His hands also heal.'

iv. **Promised Reward # 6 - The Lord Reproves**

a. God disciplines us, not because He does not love us, but to protect us.

b. He allows difficult things to come our way, not because He delights in pain, but because He delights in us.

c. (Psalm 94:12) **Blessed is the man whom you discipline, O Lord, and whom you teach out of your law.**

d. This is the only place in Proverbs where God is called 'Father, along with lessons about our heavenly Father's love.

e. Discipline does not signal displeasure.

III. Closing:

***Treasure has at best only short-term benefit but can bring spiritual dangers. Spiritual treasure is of eternal value and comes from knowing and serving God. True prosperity is obtained when we honor God first and gratefully accepts any spiritual and material blessings as the overflow of a Gospel-centered life. God doesn't owe us anything, but WE OWE HIM EVERYTHING.***

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<sup>i</sup> Deut. 8:5; 1 Cor. 11:32