

## Dr. August Konkell, Proverbs, Session 2

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This is Dr. August Konkell in his teaching on the book of Proverbs. This is session number two, Purpose of Proverbs, Exordium to Proverbs chapter 1.

Welcome back to our lectures on Proverbs. We're going to talk a little bit more about Proverbs This is session two. In this session, we want to talk especially about the short but very important introduction to Proverbs, which tells us about its purpose.

I want to begin by outlining the book of Proverbs according to its titles. And I'll tell you why this is important. It is important because, in this short introduction, the title is often made the subject of the purpose statements that follow.

I don't think that that is the correct interpretation of this exordium as we call it. Rather, I think it should be left as a title along with all of the other titles that there are in Proverbs. So, they're very distinctly retained and marked out within the book of Proverbs itself.

So, the Proverbs of Solomon in 1.1, the Proverbs of Solomon in 10.1, the words of the wise, and then these two are the words of the wise. And then these are the Proverbs of Solomon, which the man of Hezekiah collected, the words of Agur, and then the words of Lemuel, which his mother taught him. These are distinct titles given to the various sections.

So, I am suggesting that the title for the whole book is the Proverbs of Solomon. Then follow four purpose statements. Now, in English, this kind of sentence structure doesn't work because, in English, the subject has to come first.

But in Hebrew, that is not the case. For emphasis, you can place first whatever it is that you want to in the sentence, and then the subject follows. So here we have four infinitive statements followed in verse five with these words.

I think that part of the purpose of Proverbs is giving the youth the gullible craftiness, and the subject is the wise, that is the people who are reading the book. So the audience of the book, the people that it is addressed to, are the ones who are called wise because they will hear. They are wise because they acquire understanding, they will know Proverbs and axioms, and they will understand the words of the wise and their riddles.

Now, the wise in Proverbs is anyone who is willing to listen to its instruction. This doesn't mean that they necessarily have a whole lot of experience. It might mean that they have a whole lot of experience.

But in either case, they are wise simply because they listen to lady wisdom. Those who don't are the fools. So, what is the prerequisite? Who are the wise and who are the ones who will listen to wisdom? Well, they are the ones who have the fear of the Lord.

Now, we've already cited that phrase, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. In the Hebrew language, the word used in this word, in this verse, is the word Rosh, which can have three different senses. It can have a temporal sense, it's the point of beginning.

It can have the sense of essence, this is the chief part, this is what it's all about. Or it can have the sense of quality, this is the best part, this is what you need to know. Now, it's probably all three that are intended.

But there is no question whatever that the temporal is deliberately included. You cannot even begin as a member of the wise until you have the fear of the Lord. And we know that because in 9.10, this axiom is repeated.

And there we have a different word. As I point out here, it's the word Tikila. And the word Tikila always means first.

So, the starting point, and this isn't the endpoint, but the starting point of wisdom is the fear of the Lord. And until we start with that attitude, until we have that disposition, we won't be listening to Proverbs. We won't be understanding their teaching.

And we will not be in that category. Instead, we will be in the category of those who despise it, and they are called fools. Fools are not people who lack intelligence.

And they aren't just people who aren't able to think. As a matter of fact, they can be the most intelligent, and they can be the most clear in their thinking. But they don't understand a proper sense of values or the right way in which this thinking should be used.

And so, they are morally perverse. Now, what is fear? Well, we often say that what fear is, is a reverence for God. And that is true.

But fear is a little more than just reverence. And here, I'd like to take you back to the various encounters that we have in the Scripture of the encounter with the divine majesty of God. We could use Mount Sinai, and you'll remember that when the majesty of God appeared on the mountain, the people fell back, and they were expressly instructed not to cross the boundary because they would violate the majesty and the holiness of God.

But in other words, to have the fear of the Lord is to understand something about that majesty, that divinity, to understand something about its power of judgment, as the book of Hebrews says, our God is a consuming fire. Let's take another example. Isaiah, the prophet, says, In the year that King Isaiah died, I saw the Lord high and lifted up.

And then he gives a little bit of a glimpse as to what you might see if you were to come to God's throne room. And his response is, Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live in the midst of a people of unclean lips. In other words, there's a genuine fear when we realize our frailty, and when we come to truly understand the dependence that we have on this life giver, this one who has made possible our home and the means to be able to live within it.

So that's always the starting point for wisdom, to know this life giver, to know the source of our own life and well-being, and to have this kind of complete knowledge of our dependence, which means we reverence it, respect it, and would be afraid to do that which is contrary. Within Proverbs, we encounter several personalities. There are those who are historically wise, those who preserve the instruction in books like Proverbs, the words of the wise in chapter 1, verse 6. So, this is the legacy of wisdom that gets transmitted and passed down.

But there are the literary wise, and that's the ones that Proverbs is addressed to. That is, in our case, we as readers of this book. We are reading it because we have a need to know what it is that God has to tell us.

And we have a need to know how we can relate not only to God, his world but also to others within it. The fools, of course, are those who take part of that tree of knowledge that we read about way back in the book of Genesis. This tree of knowledge was a tree of good and evil.

It was a claim to knowledge that said, on the one hand, we can know everything that there is to be known, good or evil, the totality, all of it. But of course, the implication of that is, that if I know everything I need to know, I know what is good, and I determine and decide what is good. And that's where Proverbs has its indictment.

There's a way that seems right to a person, and its end is death. So, those who reject this revelation of the wise are the ones who are on this path that leads to the pit. There is a third group, and these are kind of best described by the English word, callow.

But that's not one that is very common to anyone, and I think the best substance we can give for it really is gullible. And these are those individuals who are kind of in the balance in relation to the fear of the Lord. They know about the fear of the Lord, they

haven't rejected the fear of the Lord, but neither have they learned anything about what it means to follow the fear of the Lord.

And so, it is especially these that need the instruction of Proverbs, and the words of the Father are addressed to these youth that they may acquire wisdom.

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