

Elements Of Motivation (Part Two)

Vision

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We are going to begin the sermon in Matthew 7. I would like to begin each one of these sermons in this series with a couple of verses that clearly illustrate the purpose of the series. These are very familiar verses.

Matthew 7:21-24 Not everyone who says unto me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name? And then I will profess to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me you who practice lawlessness.' Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on a rock.

We have to remember that we have been given very much in the way of God's truth, and it is imperative on us that we use it in a way that God ordained. I think that is obvious from this instruction from verses 21 through the end of the chapter, that Jesus had people using His name as their authority, and that shows that they were fairly familiar with Him and His teachings, and yet in their personal lives they were not submitting to His instructions that would develop the relationship with God and work to produce His image in them. Otherwise, if they were following His instructions, He would not have said, "you who practice lawlessness."

So the point is clear: If we do not know God because we are not really walking in His shoes, as it were, and if He does not recognize us because He sees no family resemblance to Him in us, then in other words, when that time arrives, if we are not one with Him, we will be commanded to depart, that is, to leave the Marriage Supper and will not spend eternity with Him—we will have built on sandy ground.

Let us tie this to another area, this time from Psalm 50:16-23. You might want to include verse 5, because I want us to see that at the very beginning of this psalm to whom it is addressed.

Psalm 50:5 Gather My saints together unto Me; those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice.

That is pretty clear that this psalm is addressed to those who have made a covenant with God by sacrifice.

Psalm 50:16 But unto the wicked God says . . .

The wicked according to verse 5 would have to be those who are within the group that has made the covenant with God, but they are not living up to that covenant—they are living their lives pretty loosely. They are somewhat in the category of those people we have just read of back there in Matthew 7 who were pretty familiar with the way of God—familiar enough with Jesus to recognize the power that was in His name, to use it, to do what we would consider mighty works, even casting out demons, but they were not living personally according to the instruction that they had been given. Now look:

Psalm 50:16-20 But to the wicked God says, “What right have you to declare My statutes, or take My covenant in your mouth, seeing you hate instruction, and cast My words behind you?” When you saw a thief, you consented with him, and have been a partaker with adulterers. You give your mouth to evil, and your tongue frames deceit. You sit and speak against your brother; you slander your own mother's son.

Have any of us done any of these things? All of us have to some degree. We are guilty.

Psalm 50:21 These things you have done, and I kept silent; you thought that I was altogether like you; but I will rebuke you, and set them in order before your eyes.

That is one of the most chilling verses in all of the Bible.

Psalm 50:22-23 "Now consider this, you who forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver: whoever offers praise glorifies Me; and to him who orders his conduct aright I will show the salvation of God."

That is really vivid instruction. We understand that this is directed toward the wicked and we hope that God's treatment of us will not be as harsh as He forecasts in these verses, but it is the principle here that I am most concerned about because I feel that it catches the essence of our position very well. We have been given something—many things—that the multitudes on earth have not been given. That puts in our camp an accountability, a responsibility, that these other people do not have. God expects us to be very serious about the calling that He has given to us, because judgment is now on the church of God—the household of God—and we are members of that house.

So now is the time of our salvation and He wants us to be aware that this is our opportunity. But as that psalm warns us, human nature deceives us into thinking that God is patient with us, giving us time to repent and change, is tacit approval of our conduct. Do you remember what it says in Ecclesiastes 8:10 about a sentence against evil work is not executed speedily, the hearts of the sons of men are fully set in them to do evil? Human nature deceives us into thinking that if things appear to be going fairly smoothly, that God approves of the conduct of our life.

In an overall sense, that may be true, but that does not mean that there are not things that we need to work on, and that there may be much in our lives that He does **not** approve of, and we are not to think that we are yet in the image of God. See, "You thought that I was altogether such a one as yourself." No, we are not there yet. There remains yet much to be done. So the reality is that we are **not** like Him, but human nature deceives us into thinking that we are like Him. The solution is to somehow find the motivation to yield to Him.

Two weeks ago, we began this series on the *Elements of Motivation*, or I might put it this way, how to ensure that we will grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ—and we began this by exploring the fear of God. There is no doubt that fear motivates. We saw that some of fear's elements

are sheer terror, shame, disappointment with ourselves, guilt, admiration, awe—a deep respect. But it all adds up to a very strong drive to please, and this drive to please ranges from self-preservation all the way to a deep and abiding and reverential awe of God that will give **everything** in its drive to serve the beloved, and the beloved is God.

The right fear **grows**. Or it might be better to say, we learn it. Remember, we saw in the psalm, —David said, “Come children, and I will teach you the fear of the Lord.” It is something that we have to learn, and the Bible, in its inimitable way, gives us a definition, and that is, that when we use it we begin to depart from evil. Now I want you to see this:

Proverbs 8:13 The fear of the Lord is to hate evil: pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverse mouth I hate.

If you love something, you try to get close to it. If you hate something, you take steps to avoid it. The fear of the Lord is “**to hate evil.**” You try to get away from it—to depart from evil. Now this element—the fear of the Lord—along with the others that follow, strongly induce us to be a nonconformist where this world's ways are concerned. Remember in Roman 12:2 that Paul said, "Don't let the **world** squeeze you into its mold. Be not conformed to it." We are to be a nonconformist where the world and its ways are concerned.

This is very important in making choices in the direction of our lives because the world is an ever-present burden and it is always pressing its will and it does it from every side, everywhere we look, it seems. It is constantly appealing though the senses, not to merely satisfy them, but to satiate its desires.

This world's approach seems to be to bludgeon us into acceptance into its ways. God's ways, though they are true and righteous, are frequently abstract, especially where there is a great deal of carnality in us. Therefore, they are much more difficult to attain to, but their importance is even much more difficult to grasp at the beginning of our conversion. They require a great deal of digging, as Proverbs 2:1-6 shows.

Today we are going to take a look at **vision**. Vision is described in *Webster's 9th New Collegiate Dictionary* as meaning, “the mode of seeing or conceiving.” It also means, according to the same dictionary, “unusual discernment or foresight.” And a third one, “the act or power of imagination.”

Those ones are okay; nothing wrong with them. But I think that these definitions that I am going to give you out of the *Reader's Digest Encyclopedic Dictionary*, are better, clearer to understand: “The ability to understand and make provision for future events; foresight, insight, imagination.”

The word, as we are using it, primarily has to do with foresight and discernment—the ability to discern, and anticipate events **and** results that have not yet occurred. What does this give a person? It gives a person the ability to plan ahead—to look into the future to some degree, as it were. You already might be beginning to grasp that all of these definitions are derived from the verb “to see.” However, rather than being an object literally seen with one's eyes, it involves objects, events, and results conceived or perceived in the **mind's eye**—things that are not yet a literal reality. That is what we are dealing with here. Thus, vision is “discerning foresight.”

Proverbs 29:18 Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint; but happy is he who keeps the law.

I am beginning here, knowing full well that the word *vision* in my King James Bible does not exactly translate the Hebrew word. Many modern translations use the English word “revelation” and that indeed is literally more correct. But I think that it matters not because it is God's revelation that gives us the true and most important vision of our lives, and so I think that the *King James Version* gives us a correct understanding.

The *New King James* says, “Where there is no revelation . . .” By that, it literally means prophetic vision. “Where there is no prophetic revelation, the people cast off restraint.” The *New International Version* is similar. The *Living Bible* translates that, “Where there is ignorance of God, the people run wild. But a wonderful thing it is for a nation to know and keep His laws.”

Where there is ignorance of God—in other words, where God has not been revealed to a person—the people run wild. But what a wonderful thing it is for a nation to **know** and keep His laws.

I am going to give you one that I found in *Adam Clark's Commentary* on this verse that I think is very interesting. It is from the Vulgate, which is a Latin translation—very ancient; I think it goes back to about the 8th century AD, somewhere around there. They translate that verse, “When prophecy shall fail, the people shall be **scattered**.” Think of that in terms of what we have just gone through the past several years here. Here is Adam Clarke's comment on this Latin translation:

Where divine revelation and the faithful preaching of the sacred testimonies [i.e. the faith once delivered] are neither revered nor attended, the ruin of the land [or church] is at no great distance.

There is a lot of insight there.

Regardless of the specific translation, every one of these translations shows cause and effect. The vision is the cause—how a people react is the effect. The vision is the cause, the revelation is the cause—the conduct of a person's life is the effect. So where there is vision, or the revelation of God, it **motivates**—that's the effect—for a people to conduct their lives in a way that produces **good** fruit. They all agree that it produces happiness, which means a blessing. If that revelation—that vision—is not present, the people then are moved to run wild, or to cast off restraint, or to perish. What happens is that where God has not revealed Himself; where there is no vision in the people—the people do not discipline themselves to take responsibility for their lives, and the final result is for them to die the second death.

Vision can be used in somewhat different senses in the Scriptures. There is foresight, which is the result of normal, mental processes. A second one is an especially vivid mental picture directly from God seen in the mind's eye (You have read of them. Somebody has a dream or a vision.). The third is an offspring of the revelation of God in His calling. This last one is the one we are concerned about—the revelation of God in His calling.

There can be no doubt about what vision produces. It enhances a person's perception of what will occur or what will be produced by following a course, and thus it increases a person's discernment, it sharpens their judgment about which way they should go with their lives, and if the vision—the foreseen result—seems good to the person, they are motivated to go in that direction. And when the vision is combined with the fear of God, they are a powerful combination for obedience, for yielding to Him. The vision gives a mental picture of results, and the deep, abiding respect for God produces a sharp inclination to please Him.

Proverbs 22:3 A prudent man foresees evil and hides himself, but the simple pass on and are punished.

Here is an example that gives every indication of involving a moral choice. We also have here something that if you give it any thought, appears to be the “chicken or the egg” sequence. Which came first—the chicken or the egg? Which came first?—the prudence or the vision? It is my opinion, that from the Bible's point of view, God first gives the revelation—i.e. the vision—and prudence, then, is vision's fruit.

Prudence means the ability to govern and discipline oneself by the use of reason. Synonyms are: sagacity [sound judgment], or shrewdness in the management of one's affairs. It means to be marked by circumspection, discreet. In other words, it allows one to have much greater control over the direction of his life. Is that not something that every single one of us desires? We want to be in control. We want to be in control of the destiny of our lives. We do not want to be whipped about by everything. Well, prudence enables a person to take great strides in doing that. But vision precedes it, because it gives a mental picture of where you want to go with your life, and if you do not have the vision, you do not have the prudence, and you run wild! And as Yogi said, “If you don't know where you're going, you're going to end up somewhere else!” Which is weird, but it is true.

Vision gives a person sensibility. It gives them the caution and enables them to avoid dangerous pitfalls. But you see, a foolish person—a simple person—they are unwary, they are uncritical, they naively blunder into trouble, and even into death. As I mentioned in the last sermon that one of the major tasks of life is to learn what to fear—that is, what to highly respect—and the Bible

shows, most people fear the wrong things. Above all, God is to be feared, but most people fear the world. They fear their peers and they give into their peers (call them family, friends, co-workers, or whatever)—they fear them more than they fear God.

I am going to give you an example from Matthew that I think illustrates a place where foresight and fear appear together. You will recognize this thing right away.

Matthew 14:22-33 Immediately Jesus made His disciples to get into the boat, and to go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when the evening came, He was there alone. But the boat was now in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary. Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, “It is a ghost!” And they cried out for fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, “Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.” And Peter answered Him and said, “Lord, if it is you, command me come to you on the water.” So He said, “Come.” And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried out, saying, “Lord, save me!?” And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said unto him, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?” And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. Then those that were in the boat came and worshipped him, saying, “Truly You are the Son of God.”

Where is the foresight? The fear is very clear. Well, Peter foresaw very quickly a very unpleasant death by drowning. Again, what I am interested in here is the process, and in this case we have an example of how foresight can come to a person in a flash—in an emergency situation. Foresight is not necessarily something that must always be thought out and discussed in order to be understood. In this case, Peter's foolhardy presumption, coupled with his lack of faith, drove him to the point of great fear, and then he foresaw his death was near. So urgency pressed in on him very hard, and

both the fear and the foresight were actively working. Now in this case he both voiced his need and he reached out to Christ for help, and that is the overall point of the lesson of this experience. These motivators should drive us to Christ for help, whether in an emergency, or in a normal circumstance of life.

I want you to think, while you are turning to Hebrews 11, about some of the things that are written in this chapter. Maybe you never noticed this before, but in this chapter there are, or there is a play on forms of the word for the verb “**to see.**” As we heard from Earl's [Henn] sermon last week, we are to walk, i.e. to live by faith, not by sight. That comes from II Corinthians 5, and there Paul contrasts two modes of living. The lives of those in the world are directed by confidence and conviction in things **physically** literal, understood by the term “**by sight.**”

Those whose lives are directed by faith in God, have assurance and conviction in things **not** literally seen with the eye, but things that are just as real, but spiritually discerned. These things are convictions that are seen in the mind's eye and they are even **more real** than those things that are seen by the physical eye, because they are eternal.

Hebrews 11:1 will begin to show you how forms of the verb “see” appear, and there are related words as well within the context.

Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Now, what **is** seen? In the person who is living by faith, what is seen on the outside is the way the person lives his life—but what the person who is living by faith is following, is in his **mind's eye**. It is something perceived. It is something conceived on the basis of evidence that he has been given by God, and so he sees it in his mind's eye—but what the world sees on the outside, is the way the person conducts his life.

Hebrews 11: 3 “Through faith we understand. . .”

You see, faith operates within the mental processes. It is something internal, not external. In this case, faith causes believing people to look backward in time for understanding of events. But you see, there is knowledge. It is something internal.

Hebrews 11:7 By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear.

We have these two things operating together in the case of Noah, because Noah was warned by God—something he could not see yet—but he moved with deep respect, with reverential awe. Do you not think he had a very strong mental picture of what was coming—something that he could foresee in his mind's eye? I do not mean that his picture was complete. I do not mean that at all.

Now apply this to us today. We have been warned through the prophecies of a holocaust that is coming. Are you able to form a mental picture to at least have some sort of vision of its horror? Sure you are. How come? Well, because of experiences you have already had in your life. You have either been involved directly with modern warfare—let us say, from the Second World War, up through Korea and Vietnam. Even if you did not take part in those, you have seen movies that have given you at least some sort of vicarious experience in that way, and I know a movie cannot catch any more than just the essence of that. You have seen photographs of what took place in the holocaust in Europe. You have read statistics of x number of people—millions of people who have died because of this. You have seen pictures of bombs, pictures of blown up automobiles, sunken ships, and airplanes shot down. In addition to that you have seen pictures of starving people around the world. You have seen pictures of famine, of drought, of diseased people.

These things all help to give you a mental image that forms for you a basis of a picture of what is coming. God—just like he warned Noah, “Get ready, the end is coming”—He has done the same thing to you and He has begun to give you a picture, and brethren, if you are following prophecy, the picture gradually gets sharper, does it not? This is what I mean—the vision that we

are after is the **third** one on that list—the one that gradually appreciates as a result of the revelation that God has given to us. It comes through the mental processes, but it is not the kind of vision that God gave the prophets.

Hebrews 11:8-10 By faith Abraham obeyed, when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out not knowing where he was going. By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city [There is the “looked,” “see,” trying to see, as it were.] which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

Now again, recall the previous sermon, that faith undergirds. It lies under every one of these motivators. It is the foundation for them. We are looking at specific elements now, of those things that motivate. Now Abraham **looked** for a city. City, there, is a figurative expression for the Kingdom of God, but it is clearly saying that one of the elements that drove him was his vision of what lay ahead. So in this case it was vivid and wonderful contrast to the horror that faced Noah.

Hebrews 11:13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were assured of them, embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

There it is again. Did those people actually see it? No they did not. It was in their mind's eye. God revealed to them what was coming, and what did it do? It motivated these people to begin, as it were, **moving** toward that city. They became pilgrims! Do you know what a pilgrim is? A pilgrim is somebody who is **on the move!** Tie that to **motivated!** It is somebody on a journey from one place to another, and usually pilgrim is used in a religious sense, and it means that the person is on the journey for the purpose of worship. I think that in this verse it is especially clear that all of those people of faith who went before us were motivated by their vision of what lay ahead at the end of their journey—but as yet unseen—but it is visualized.

Hebrews 11:19 Concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.

Now here is an example of a person, Abraham, who received Isaac in a figure. It is interesting—an accounting term is used here. You know what Abraham did? He added up the evidence (that is literally what it means). The evidence of what? The evidence of the things that he knew about God—about God's promise—and what did that result in? **He foresaw Isaac alive** after being sacrificed.

Now how did he do this? I can add it up for you. The figures are simple. God gave Abraham a promise that his seed, his descendants, would be as the stars of heaven, as the sands of the sea, and that seed—that descendant through whom all the other descendants **had** to come—was Isaac. In this case, Ishmael did not count. Isaac was the **promised seed**. If Isaac died, then God **had to resurrect him**, because at this time Isaac was not even married yet. He did not have any children that would pass on the line that was coming from Abraham.

From this then, Abraham concluded that one of two things was going to happen. This is why he told his servant, “You wait here. **We'll be back**,” (he meant both of them, Abraham and Isaac), “while we go up here and worship God.” So he went up there knowing that:

1. God was either going to provide a substitute, or
2. God was going to allow Isaac to be killed and then, in order to fulfill the prophecy, the promise, He had to resurrect Isaac.

He added it up. So you see, he received it in a figure. He envisioned the end result of the revelation that God had to him. Okay, we'll look at another one.

Hebrews 11:27 By faith he [Moses] forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible.

That one is so clear, nobody can misunderstand that. Moses saw it in his mind's eye.

Did you notice that in each illustration the people were moved to do something different, but in each case, what they did was done in respect or response to God. I think we can safely say then that God's Word clearly shows that vision motivates.

Now let us go to Acts 26. Paul is describing his vision on the road to Damascus. And Jesus is speaking.

Acts 26:16 But rise, and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, [So Paul literally saw Him.] to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you.

Acts 26:19 Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.

This is an example of a person having a literal vision, and it clearly shows that Paul was motivated to follow through. This kind of vision can be especially vivid and especially motivating, and God has given them to very few. He has not blessed very many of us with that—with both the having of and having the responsibility of having one, but He has given all of us the ability to have the other kind which are very motivating. I might add here that according to Joel 2:28, more of the kind of visions that maybe we would like to have in order to have really clear direction in our lives—more of those are coming! Dreams and visions are prophesied.

I Corinthians 2:7-15 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages to our glory, which none of the rulers of this world knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him.” But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what

man knows the things of a man except the spirit of man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. These things we also speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged of no one.

Here is the source of vision that the overwhelming majority of us have. It comes by means of our calling. It is given by God just as surely as Paul's was, but it is a gradually accumulating one in which the pieces which complete the picture are added through the processes of study, comparing, analyzing, and experiencing in applying what we learn. Notice how clearly Paul shows that the revelation of God—remember, Proverbs 29:18—changes the course of a person's life. Now back in verse 8 he says:

I Corinthians 2:8 Which none of the rulers of this world knew; for they had known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

God never revealed who the Christ was to them. I know that you, because God has revealed these things to you, if you were in that situation with the revelation that you have been given, you would not have wanted to kill the Lord of glory. But you see, we see things from a different perspective. It is something that God has given us—vision to see. These people did what they did because they did not **know** any better. So they could not change the course of the conduct of their lives.

We **see** things from an entirely different view because we see the consequences of our actions *differently* from what those people did. Now had they had the vision, their foresight would have produced the prudence in them would not have permitted them to kill Him.

Notice in verse 9, how Paul shows that what God has done has given us a perspective that does not involve things literally seen.

I Corinthians 2:9 . . . “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him.”

So it shows that God has given us a perspective that does not involve things we literally see, and yet in verse 10, they are **literally** revealed. God has *revealed* them. In verse 11, as a result of that revelation, we know things the uncalled do not, and the reason we know them is because God has given us the Spirit of God. In verse 12 that same thought is confirmed again:

I Corinthians 2:12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.

In verse 13 Paul says that this enables him to teach from this perspective of comparing spiritual things with spiritual. Otherwise, he would not have that ability. I take what he said there to indicate, first of all, the true spiritual things of God with the false spiritual things emanating from Satan and his demons. I also feel that it would include comparing various areas of God's Word correctly in order to come up with correct answers. Either way, it enables those with the Holy Spirit to get a much clearer picture of the direction that a person must go in order to make choices in life.

Now in verse 14 he tells us that it is impossible for a person without the Holy Spirit to do this. But on the other hand, one with the Holy Spirit is enabled to judge or discern all things. You see, the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God because they are foolishness to him, they are spiritually discerned, but he that is spiritual (verse 15) judges all things. God's Holy Spirit, then, gives us discernment as to where the spiritual and moral choices will lead.

This is all well and good, but there is something further that must be understood, and that is that this quality, or this ability, or this characteristic

must be developed. It too, must grow. It is not something that instantaneously or miraculously appears upon conversion. Now how do I know that? Well, chapter 3 begins to tell me.

I Corinthians 3:1-4 And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people, but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able [to bear]; for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, and are you not carnal, and behaving as mere men? For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not carnal?

These people were acting like babes. You can see in verse 2 that Paul expected better of them, and in verses 3 and 4, that they were yet carnal. He did not mean that they were unconverted. He is either saying that they had regressed from what they had formerly been, or that they were losing their power of proper spiritual judgment. Now Paul uses the word 'carnal' here as being synonymous with being immature—being incomplete, being a babe.

What is it that characterizes the action or the conduct of a baby? Well, there are a number of things, but it is all going to add up to one thing, I think. First of all, they do not have their emotions under control, do they? Not only that, they go on pell-mell from one trouble to another because they lack experience, they lack knowledge, they lack understanding of how to do things, you know, to do things the right way. They often have pretty violent tempers. They are filled with self-pity. They are often hurt. They do not even have control of their bowels! They have no common sense—no wisdom. We could go on and on about the way children act.

Wisdom is described in *Webster's* as a wise attitude or course of action. "Wise" is defined as suggesting great understanding of people and of situations, and unusual discernment and judgment in dealing with them. I think that definition is quite interesting in light of what Paul wrote there in I Corinthians 2. We **know**, we **understand**, we **perceive** things because they have been revealed by God, by His Spirit, and God has given us His Spirit that we might ultimately know all things, but it is clear that we have to *grow* in it. God's revelation gives us then these very qualities. Knowing,

discernment, and judgment—they are all used here in that section of scripture I read to you in I Corinthians 2.

Babes do not have those things. They know almost nothing. They can discern almost nothing. Their judgment is terrible! When you combine those three with the word **revelation**, it brings within it all four of them together very strong elements of foresight. Now turn with me to Proverbs 1. He is in the introduction to the book of Proverbs and here is his specific purpose statement. The reason he wrote it is:

Proverbs 1:2-6 To know wisdom and instruction, to perceive the words of understanding, to receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity; to give prudence to the simple [like a baby], to the young man knowledge and discretion—A wise man will hear and increase learning, and a man of understanding will attain unto wise counsel, to understand a proverb and an enigma, the words of the wise, and their riddles.

Now the fear of the Lord is the **beginning** of wisdom. How important is it?

Proverbs 4:5 Get wisdom! Get understanding! Do not forget, nor turn away from the words of my mouth.

Again, please brethren, remember I Corinthians 2, verses 7 through the end of the chapter there and on into the first part of chapter 3. These people were carnal. They were babes and what characterized them is that they did not understand, they did not have judgment, they were not able to discern. "Get wisdom, get understanding, forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth."

Proverbs 4:6 Do not forsake her, and she will preserve you; love her, [draw near to it, you see] and she will keep you. Wisdom is the principle thing

When principle is spelled that way it means main—like the #1 thing. Now, where do these things come from? They come from the revelation of God. They are a gift of His Spirit.

Proverbs 4:7 Wisdom is the principle thing; therefore get wisdom. And in all your getting, get understanding.

Let us break this down and try to make it even simpler. What is Biblical wisdom? We might even call it common sense. Some people might call it horse sense. A little bit more specifically, it is the right application of knowledge, or comprehension—the right application. But brethren, it is more than that! That is why Solomon said it is the **main** thing in life. **Get it!** Because, what it is—it is common sense; it is horse sense—**from God's point of view**, and that is what makes all the difference in the world. It is what He reveals to us about how He would act in a given situation, and you know that He would act in the way that is going to produce the best and the most.

So it is common sense. Maybe we ought to say **un**common sense, from God's point of view, not merely human experience. So one of wisdom's primary attributes is *foresight* as to the best way to produce the best from any given situation—that it is always from God's perspective. Now wisdom, with its foresight, has another fruit. It produces something very valuable to God's purpose.

Ecclesiastes 7:11-14 Wisdom is good with an inheritance, and profitable to those who see the sun. For wisdom is a defense as money is a defense, but the excellence of knowledge is that wisdom gives life to those who have it. Consider the work of God; for who can make straight what He has made crooked? In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider; surely God also has appointed the one as well as the other, so that man can find out nothing that will come after him.

Keil-Delitzsch Commentary says that that can also be translated, “Wisdom is good **as** an inheritance.” What is an inheritance? It is a gift. It is that which is passed on by those who have gone before us. *Keil-Delitzsch* paraphrases verses 11 and 12 this way:

Wisdom is good with family possessions and an advantage for those who see the sun (i.e. those who are alive). For wisdom

affords a shadow. Money affords a shadow. Yet the advantage of knowledge is this—that wisdom preserves life to its possessor.

Hang onto that! Now the *Soncino*, which is a Jewish commentary, says on those verses—they say it should be translated:

Wisdom is good as an inheritance, meaning something gleaned from those who have gone on before. The reason is because it is a defense, that is, a shelter from danger. [What does a carnal person do? What do kids do? What do the immature do? They just blunder into things.] Solomon compares it with money, which also gives a measure of security and therefore it is a defense or shelter, but concludes that wisdom is better because it preserves life. Wisdom produces things that material possessions cannot.

Now this is my comment: What wisdom ensures against is willful, self-destruction. Fools walk in where angels fear to tread. Who is the wiser of the two? Wisdom preserves life, and if you begin to read over the Bible, you are going to see wisdom **gives** life, not merely preserves it. It gives life. You know why? Because wisdom gives the person **foresight!** Wisdom enables him—before he gets involved in something that might kill him, or something that is evil, something that is bad, something that is going to lead to him perishing, something that is going to lead to him dying or hurt very bad—warns him before he even gets into it, that this is not going to end up right! It gives him foresight. Do not go that way!

That is why that Proverbs 29:18 says that those without vision perish! And the carnal go along heedless to the revelation of God. That is why Paul was so upset with those Corinthians. Here they were converted, but they were acting like they were carnal. God had revealed these things to them. God had given them the vision of the way to go. He had given them vision so that they would have discernment, so that they would have judgment about what to do with their lives, and they were making the wrong choices, and choosing the wrong path.

This lesson in chapter 7 of Ecclesiastes goes on. You will see in verses 13 and 14 the verb *consider*. Do you know what that verb literally means? In

Hebrew it means **to see!** Solomon is saying, “Look at this! See it!” He says, ” Look at the work of God and think about it”

Ecclesiastes 7:13-14 Consider the work of God; For who can make straight what He has made crooked? In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider [see, think—Where is this leading? Why am I in it? How did I get in it? Is there anything that I could have done to avoid it? What will I do the next time it comes around? You see how God is sharpening up the vision, so that when we come to those partings of the road—which way are we going to go?] Surely God has appointed the one as well as the other, so that man can find out nothing that will come after him.

It is really interesting. Verse 13 counsels us to understand that there are going to be some situations in life that cannot be rectified. There is nothing we can do about them. They are beyond our power and we should not be overly fretful about them.

Now verse 14 expands on this a bit more. It says that there are going to be good times and there are going to be bad times in everybody's life. There are going to be situations that are seem unjust. The righteous seemingly are not prospered and die young. The evil are prosperous and lives comfortably to a good, old age. The righteous are persecuted, and the evil get away with their evil things.

So, in an overall sense here, we are to consider that God rules over all. Never forget this. In your mind's eye, understand that God rules over all, and if God has permitted us to get into a situation, we are to understand that he is aware of it. There is only so much you can do and you might be involved in it through no fault of your own. It may be that you have not sinned, and so do not be overly fretful because it may be that you cannot really straighten the thing out. Maybe God has **willed** that it occur this way. That is why He says, “Who can make straight which He has made crooked?” But we get overly fretful.

And verse 14 adds to that picture. Only in verse 14, the very last phrase, God draws our attention to the future—what lies after us, what lies beyond us,

and what He is saying here is that we will never know precisely what is going to happen. We do not know how long a current trial will last. We do not know whether we will be drawn into another, whether we will be prospered beyond our wildest dreams. It could go any which way. But never lose sight in your mind's eye, because faith is **built** on this. God IS! Even though we may be going through a difficult circumstance, God is still on His throne. Now what are you going to do with that? That is Solomon's concern. He never really gets around to answering it in this section too much, but he does say something in verse 18.

Ecclesiastes 7:18 It is good that you grasp this, and also not remove your hand from the other; for he who fears God will escape them all.

Do you know what this verse is? First of all, it is a precursor to the overall conclusion there in chapter 12. Solomon says, “What's the conclusion of the whole matter? Fear God, and keep His commandments.” Is there vision there? You better believe there is vision there! Regardless of what you are going through, Solomon is saying, fear God because you have the vision that He is on His throne—He is ruling over all—and if we die, He can always resurrect us! If you have that vision, you are going to be motivated in that direction.

It is also a precursor to Romans 8:28, is it not? “All things work together for good for those who love God and are the called according to His purpose.” God has revealed that to you by His Spirit. Never lose sight of it, because He has given you a vision of what to do in the good times and what to do in the bad times. In the good times rejoice. Be happy with it. But understand this—it is probably going to end. When the times are bad, consider it, learn from it. You may not have caused it. It may have been something that God brought on because He wanted to put us through a test. He wants to see whether or not we are going to use our vision and hang fast there to His Word—to the revelation that He has given to us. It is going to end too! Because God is still on His throne—that is His promise. That is why He has **given** that revelation to you, so that you can conduct your life in such a way that always leads to the preservation of life—meaning eternal life.

Remember Proverbs 22:3. We started there, practically—the prudent foresees the danger, and hides himself. Foresight, or vision, produces a prudence in conduct to ensure that the person's life is preserved. It is that simple. And what God has in mind is the Kingdom of God. If the person is preserved, there is a **very** good chance his goals are going to be reached. That is beautiful!

Proverbs 8:11-12 For wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things one may desire cannot be compared with her. I, wisdom, dwell with prudence, and find out knowledge and discretion.

Now brethren, wisdom, foresight, prudence, and discretion are all linked together as being vital to God's purpose, and although none of them is specifically synonymous—where you find the one, the others will also be present. If the revelation of God is their source, than that person is well on his way to living an abundant life and growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ, because they motivate the person to go in the direction of the Kingdom of God.

Let us go back to chapter 2 and we will conclude here.

Proverbs 2:5 Then you will understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.

Proverbs 2:7-12 He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield [a shelter, a shadow, a defense] to those who walk uprightly; He guards the paths of justice, and preserves the way of His saints. Then you will understand righteousness and justice, equity and every good path. When wisdom enters your heart, and knowledge is pleasant to your soul, discretion will preserve you, understanding will keep you, to deliver you from the way of evil, from the man who speaks perverse things.

Brethren, this should give us every reason to be motivated, to develop the relationship with God. God is the **giver** of every good and perfect gift and He loves to give good gifts to His children, and there could hardly be given a greater, more important gift than the vision of the way that we should go.

