

“A Firm Foundation!”

Proverbs 1-3

Intro. – In the August, 1992, p. 27 of *Popular Science Magazine* an article appeared “Propping Up Pisa.” It tells of the drastic measures taken to stabilize this historic structure. The drastic measures included a steel corset around the middle and counterweights at its feet.

The tower was started in AD 1173. It was then the famous architect/builder, Bonano Pisano was employed to build this structure. In AD 1185, Pisano stopped work on the tower at only three and one half floors high.

Ninety years later (1275) a second architect added three and one-half more circular tiers. The tower was already leaning when the architect started. What he should have done was start again from the foundation. The original foundation was the circumference of the first floor and only ten feet down... Instead, this architect tried to fix the lean by positioning the upper tiers to make up for the tower’s slant.

Another eighty years passed (1355) before a third architect put on the eighth and final floor. Still it leaned then, as most certainly it leans today. According to this article in *Popular Science* the tower was “very near to collapse” earlier in 1992.

With all of the above fresh in mind, we go downtown Chicago, IL, almost directly across from the Willis (Sears) Tower, massive work for the foundation of a building that is rumored to be going higher than the Willis Tower’s 108 floors...

Here then is my point: foundation is the key in building anything. Unless you have a solid foundation whatever you are building will be precarious at best. Hymn # 338 “How Firm a Foundation” says this:

How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in His excellent Word!

With what are we filling our minds? What is being cultivated in our hearts? Upon what kind of foundation are we building our hopes and dreams?

Purpose: to learn the knowledge of God’s Truth (His Word) is our only firm foundation

Throughout the Bible there is a constant reference to knowing God... Truth... even ourselves. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 10:1 “*I do not want you to be ignorant...*” Ignorance is the flip side to *truth* and *understanding*. Put another way, ignorance is the absence of *truth* and *knowledge*. No man is truly knowledgeable unless he accepts and responds to *truth* – God’s Word is *TRUTH* (John 17:17)

I Knowledge Begins with the FEAR of God (1:7; 3:5-6)

- Illus. – heard a guy said he would have gone to college but one thing stopped him. High School.

A. Knowledge Defined

1. Throughout Proverbs we find two prominent or key words: *wisdom* and *knowledge*

2. Knowledge = the accumulation of facts and truth...

3. Wisdom = the use of facts and truth in practical way... in short = application of truth.

- Illus. – 2 persons taught the same facts doesn’t mean the same results will happen:

a. true in the secular world – lot of head knowledge out there, but not a lot of wisdom...

- Illus. – Jan 1970, Max Born died. He was close friend to Albert Einstein and colleague of Max Planck and Otto Hahn (nuclear physicists). Born was considered one of the greatest minds in the 20th century. In an interview on German TV just before his death, Born said, “I’d be happier if we had scientist with less brains and more wisdom.”

b. even more true in spiritual realm. There are hearers of the Word... but there are also doers who put into practice *TRUTH*. (James 1).

B. The Acceptance of Knowledge (v 7)

1. Must begin with “true knowledge” – i.e. if not “true knowledge” it is really not knowledge.

2. For one to have “true knowledge” must begin with Christ:

a. v 7 makes this abundantly clear “*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge...*”

- b. “fear” best understood in relation to 3:5-6 “*Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.*”
 - Illus. – preacher went to a distraught newlywed. She was crying. Asked why, “My husband’s gone out to shoot craps and I don’t know how to cook’em.”
- c. for *truth* to be realized... *trust* in God is essential and not optional.
- 3. The only basis for true understanding in this world = is GOD!
- 4. When we’re willing to TRUST the Lord, willing to acknowledge our need for Him, then and only then is there the beginning of knowledge!

C. The Channels of Knowledge

- 1. Creation declares the glories of God (Psalm 19:1-6) etc.
- 2. The Bible, God’s Word equips us for every perfect work (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
- 3. Those who permit the Word of God to change them:
 - a. teacher asked “What is sin’s omission?” Student responded, “Those are the sins we should have committed.”
 - b. “What color are your preacher’s eyes?” “I don’t know; when he prays he closes his eyes and when he preaches I close mine.”
- 4. Fact remains, God has given channels to know Him... Remember, knowledge begins fear of God!

II Knowledge Refused Brings DISASTER (1:24-33)

- “What this country needs is someone who knows what this country needs.”
 - all have the power of choice; thus, all offered the privilege of knowing, trusting, and obeying God.
 - BUT, as with all matters with an offer, there’s option to reject...
 - this Biblical warning is relevant because more reject God’s offer than do accept it:
- A. Only Fools Reject Instruction (v 7)
- 1. Fool is the opposite of wise man – theme throughout Proverbs.
 - 2. A fool is such solely because he/she reject knowledge:
 - a. Psalm 14:1 “*The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God.’...*”
 - b. when you remove God, you remove knowledge because He’s the only source of it!
 - c. the height of foolishness is rejection of Christ – matters not your degrees, position, influence – without God we/all are without fact, living nothing but fake news and fake history!
- B. The Cost of Rejecting Instruction
- 1. Fear and distress will come (v 27)
 - a. when knowledge of God (firm foundation) refused, there is no foundation!
 - b. when person’s life built on God – power/wisdom given to understand the onslaught!
 - c. rain falls on the just and unjust (Matt 5)... and Christ’s reference to wise/foolish man Matt 7
 - 2. Knowledge rejected leaves a vacuum to be filled (vv 30-31)
 - a. i.e. whatsoever man sows, so shall he reap...
 - b. if God be not foundation... Satan will...
 - c. idolatry is not just ancient practice – prevalent today as is so evident...
 - 3. The end of rejected knowledge (v 32)!

Knowledge refused brings disaster...

III Knowledge Received Necessitates FAITHFULNESS (2:3-6)

- God desires that none would perish but that all would repent (2 Peter 3:9)
 - choices being made every moment of every day... when Christ is chosen things happen:
- A. Opposition to Receiving Truth
- 1. Satan stands in way of obtaining/using knowledge – God author TRUTH; Satan author LIES
 - 2. Satan has/is/will oppose, confuse and do whatever it takes to keep people from knowledge of God!

- a. as result, not easy to overcome opposition and is impossible to do it alone (strength of flesh)
 - b. power of God essential to be victorious in this phase of one's life.
 - c. if Satan can keep individuals from receiving grace, he will "settle" by keeping Christians out of the Word making them weak, impotent and ineffective...
3. This is yielding to SELF rather than yielding to God's Spirit...

B. Diligent Pursuit of Knowledge (2:1-9)

- 1. Two words used to reveal such: "cry (v 3) and "search" (v 4)
 - a. these two words demonstrate the need of seeking TRUTH
 - b. both words are strong action verbs.
 - c. to get knowledge one must really WANT it!
- 2. Life is made up of choices – choices made up in the framework of time:
 - a. we all make decisions as to what direction to go
 - b. life is made up by what we have chosen as to the direction(s) we go = foundation key
- 3. Christ must seek TRUTH in the same spirit and zeal as man who seeks treasures of world:
 - a. Illus. – story of dog with bone in mouth on a bridge. Looked at water below and saw own reflection, but to him it was another dog with BIGGER bone. Dropped bone in his mouth to grasp the bigger bone – ended up with nothing.
 - b. think of the zeal of those seeking things of world all built on fuzzy foundation...
 - c. firm foundation (TRUTH) won't come easily; but results are unlimited.

May we always be students of the Word, unashamedly, handling God's Word accurately!

Conclusion: Why is the pursuit of TRUTH so difficult, while lies come so easily?

Henry Ford's mansion "Fair lane" still stands in Dearborn, Michigan. It stands as a great illustration in summary and conclusion of this passage.

For location, Ford chose beauty of a gentle slope overlooking the Rouge river. This mansion had 55 rooms spread over three floors making 31,000 sq ft. In 1917 it cost \$1,057,000.00. Ford didn't want to depend upon local public utilities, or trust anyone else to provide power; so, he had built his own power plant at the cost of \$200,000.00. All worked well until torrential rains lashed the Detroit area in April, 1947. The Rouge river went on a rampage. It soon crept into the power plant and electricity failed for the first time in forty years.

The night this power failure came, Henry Ford lay dying in his bedroom. Though surrounded by an engineering marvel – one that made him totally independent of public utilities, Ford left this world as he had entered it 87 years earlier – in a cold house lighted by candles alone.

Brethren and friend, may each of us see that God's truth is the only firm foundation upon which to build!