

## WISDOM FROM HEAVEN FOR LIFE ON EARTH - Practical Studies From Proverbs

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Part sixteen - Teaching #1861

Sunday, January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2016 - 6:00 p.m.

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### PROVERBS, THE HOLY SPIRIT, AND PERSONAL REVIVAL

**Proverbs 1:23 - "If you turn at my reproof, behold, I will pour out my spirit to you; I will make my words known to you."**

This is the final teaching in this series of subject studies from the book of Proverbs. I wanted to wrap this series up with a verse everyone could remember. Rather than examining a thread of verses throughout the whole book gathered around one common theme, this single verse will be the study of this evening.

And what could be more important? The subject is having God pour out His Spirit on our lives. This is what gives life to religion. We can all relate to Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dried out, bleached bones. Only the Holy Spirit can give life to the dry bones of religious practice. This is what lifts it above self improvement and moral reform. Who, with any kind of sense at all, could ask for more than to have God's Spirit poured out on his or her life?

It would be easy to form a different view than the one Solomon presents here. People can write books on how revival comes - what *initiates* or *prompts* the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on our lives. One could be forgiven for concluding that all we have to do is *pray*. We can all sympathize with the idea that the experience of revival is simply a matter of calling on God fervently enough. And there are plenty of verses in the Bible highlighting the great importance of calling out to God and seeking His face. But our text doesn't link the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to our speaking *to* God but to our *listening* to God speak to us.

In this modern age we're very prone to link the outpouring of the Holy Spirit with just the right kind of *renewal worship*. Renewal churches know the latest Hill Song choruses. They pursue more expressive, exuberant worship. They're less tied to forms and traditions. Many think those are the places where the river - the flow of the Spirit - reaches it's highest water level.

I'm sure the writer of Proverbs would have no argument with any of those things. But he *does* caution us about overlooking something right under our noses. He's telling us there is a pathway to the outpouring of the Spirit of God in our lives that is within all our reach. In fact, he's saying even more than that. He's saying that *none of these other approaches will avail anything worthwhile if this divinely appointed path toward renewal is ignored*. Without *this* truth, everything else will ultimately come up empty.

**Proverbs 1:23 - "If you turn at my reproof, *behold*, I will pour out my spirit to you; I will make my words known to you."**

Underscore that word, *"behold."* We're to *look* at this truth. We are being called to *reconsider* something we could easily miss. We should be *startled* at how big this promise is. And You can test this. You can prove the results for yourself. If you will obey God in this, you will *see* the results in your soul.

#### 1) **THIS VERSE ANSWERS TO THE FEAR THAT YOU WILL NEVER BE ABLE TO REALIZE THE BLESSING OF GOD IN YOUR LIFE OR OVERCOME DEEPLY ROOTED SIN**

I want to start with the *promise* that follows the command. *"I will pour out my Spirit on you..."* This is important because it answers to our deepest fear whenever we begin to ache for a richer, fuller experience of God's grace and power in our lives. We *know* these things work for *other* Christians because we've seen it in their experience. What we aren't so sure of, in fact, what we fear deep inside, is that this won't work as well for *us*.

Goodness knows we've experienced enough failure in the past. We've had great dreams of revival and reformation that seemed to dry up as soon as we forgot about the last book we read, or the last moving video we saw in our church, or the last special time we had at the altar. And each experience like that leaves *scar tissue*. We're just that much harder to reach the next time round.

But there are *reasons* for those failures. Renewal won't *end* right if it didn't *start* right. It's not enough to be *moved* in some emotionally charged setting. It's a very tricky thing to sustain a response in your soul that was stimulated in an emotional setting because your emotions are soon going to *change*. And you're going to feel *guilty* when they do. You will soon think that God has somehow let you down.

Solomon has wisdom in this verse that is way beyond the general tone of his Old Testament era. He's talking about the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on people. And he says the starting point for true revival is a response to God that is **emotional**. He says God directs His speaking to us on issues of our **holiness**. After all, He's called the **Holy** Spirit, not the **emotional** Spirit.

Solomon's promise is, **yes, God will give - pour out - His Holy Spirit on you**. But He doesn't do this just under **any** conditions. The Holy Spirit can't just be **worked up** at your bidding. But God will give Him in great measure - **poured out** - when people encounter one very special and specific situation.

This leads to the second point:

## 2) TIMES OF SPIRITUAL OUTPOURING FOLLOW HOT ON THE HEELS OF TIMES OF REPROOF

**Proverbs 1:23** - "If you **turn at my reproof**, behold, I will pour out my spirit to you; I will make my words known to you."

It's easy to badly misjudge times of divine reproof. It's easy to only feel the **pain** or the **guilt** of them without realizing God's full **intention** for them. It's easy to brush off the word **reproof** as one of those harsh, negative words we should just evolve out of.

"**Turn at my reproof...**" Isn't that an interesting way of putting it? It's almost like Solomon is saying we don't **have** to treat divine reproof like this. You don't have to turn. Divine reproof is easily **avoided**. It's easily **dodged**. You can turn **away** from it in a heartbeat.

I don't doubt that some of us have become **masters** at turning away from reproof. We don't necessarily **deny** it, or **argue** with it. But we don't **embrace** it either. We don't turn **to** the issue of reproof with suddenness. We don't give the issue the attention God wants us to fix on it. We're afraid of divine reproof like some small children are afraid of the dark.

## 3) A PROPER RESPONSE TO REPROOF SETS OUR ATTENTION ON THE THINGS GOD HAS HIS ATTENTION ON ALREADY

Perhaps this is the most important point of all. There are two kinds of spiritual focus we can all choose between. There are the things **we** are interested in - perhaps very good, Biblical things like healing, prophecy, theology and the like. Then there is a set of things **God** has set His attention on. They're usually very personal things - things like my temper, greed, my habit of wasting valuable time, and my love for worldly pleasures.

Now, Solomon says there is a simple way to ensure the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on your life in a way that will deepen and not vanish, satisfy and not disappoint, free up and not end in failure and condemnation: **Give your attention to the same things God is putting His attention on**. And the way you can know you are doing that is by turning immediately to His voice of reproof when He speaks.

Here's why success is certain. You certainly **don't** have the strength to overcome the sins and failures of your own heart. But God's reproof in any specific area is His tell-tale sign that He's already anxious to work in that area! And this brings confidence in God's abundant grace and help:

**1 John 5:14-15** - "And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. [15] And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him."

When you turn your own will in the direction of His divine reproof you **know** you are setting yourself to work in an area where He's already giving you token that He's prepared to sign on with you. In fact, His reproof is the sign that He's already **at** work. He's showing us He is already beginning His work in that area.

## 4) THIS KIND OF SPIRITUAL RENEWAL IS DIFFERENT FROM THE EMPTY PURSUIT OF MERE MORAL IMPROVEMENT

Moral reform is destined to **failure** not **success**. That is why Solomon is so specific in his instruction. You have to be careful to emphasize the right words in this verse:

**Proverbs 1:23** - "If you turn at **my** reproof, behold, I will pour out my spirit to you; I will make my words known to you.

This turning is a turning to **God**. It's motivated by a concern for His glory, and a hatred of sin - even sins that no one else even knows about yet - simply because we know these sins are **displeasing to God**. And the reason we know they're displeasing to God is because we've heard **His** reproof.

The sins may still feel **pleasing** to my warped heart. The odds are I will only be sensitized to these sins **because** of God's reproof. The sins themselves may not have brought any pain at all to my personal life. But I turn to God's reproof because I **trust God's assessment of them**. I have **faith in God's care and concern for my eternal destiny**. In both these ways I **value God** more than I **treasure my sin**. And my turning immediately at His reproof **proves** this is the desire of my heart.

And **that's** why God will pour out His Spirit on those who turn to His reproof. And His Spirit guarantees success.

#### 5) **GOD WILL REVEAL HIS WORD IN DEEPER WAYS TO THOSE WHO TURN AT HIS REPROOF**

**Proverbs 1:23** - "If you turn at my reproof, behold, I will pour out my spirit to you; **I will make my words known to you.**"

Solomon doesn't take the time to tell us **why** this is so, but Jesus **did** take the time to explain this profound process in depth:

**Mark 4:24-25** - "And he said to them, "Pay attention to what you hear: with the measure you use, it will be measured to you, and still more will be added to you. [25] For to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away."

This is a passage about how we are to **sustain** and **increase** what we receive from the Lord. Jesus describes a great promise and a painful tragedy.

The tragedy is far too often ignored in the Body of Christ. If, at any point, I choose to ignore the transforming truth of my Lord - if, even occasionally, I make the choice **not** to **"turn at His reproof"** - not only do I lose the freedom and the joy His reproof would have brought into my life at that moment, I start to lose the benefit of truths I have accumulated in my heart from His Word over years of Christian walk and experience. In other words, **my soul starts to leak**.

On the other hand (and this is the point Solomon was describing) **every time I listen to the correcting voice of the Lord's reproof, the increase of the life and grace of the Spirit isn't just added one reproof at a time, it's multiplied exponentially**.

The increase of His life and transforming grace gains momentum. His Spirit truly is **poured out** on my life and His Word **opens and grows 30, 60, and even 100 fold**.

**Proverbs 1:23** - "If you turn at my reproof, behold, I will pour out my spirit to you; I will make my words known to you."

Precious promise indeed!