

Series Title: Proverbs: The really, really, great gift of wisdom.

Week 2: The Wisdom of Freedom Date: 07-04-21

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- *Today July 4th, Independence Day. Day we celebrate Freedom as Americans, and hopefully recognize the incredibly precious value of that which we celebrate.*
- *As disciples of Christ- people who have crossed over from death to life- we are people of Freedom.*
- *But there is a difference between our freedom as Americans and our freedom in Christ.*
- *As Americans we have grown up with the historically rare gifts of religious freedom, freedom of expression, political freedom, and financial freedom.*
- *Must be acknowledged our freedom as Americans is accessible to differing degrees- and to protect and increase this freedom should be core to who we are.*
- *These are attributes the great majority of humanity has sought after- and died in the cause of- for much of human history. They flow from the intrinsic worth God has instilled in every human soul and few of us can truly appreciate their value. And yet, these are freedoms that can be taken away. They often are.*
- *The believers Freedom in Christ, however, is a different matter. It is eternal and cannot be taken away, for it is born of the presence and power of God. Now, we regularly surrender this freedom, choosing dependence upon self rather than God, but this freedom is ours nonetheless. It is our birthright as brothers and sisters of Christ.*
- *In Galatians 5:1 the Apostle Paul cries out: "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free! Stand firm then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery!" To pity that up just a bit, "Jesus has set you free! Don't become a slave again!"*
- *HOW? How do we stay free of chains we so regularly pick up and drape back over ourselves? Yes, scripture proclaims that In Christ we have been set free, but how does scripture equip us to live in good of that freedom? What does this freedom look like?*
- *In Galatians Paul is specifically talking about freedom from LAW- cannot overstate significance. Today however, we will look at another of Scriptures great gifts of freedom. Freedom flowing from the wisdom of God, poured out in great measure in the amazing collection we know as the Proverbs.*
- *This is the freedom that flows from what we value. Our daily choice of what we hold to be best. This is freedom rooted in our character, our identity, our choices, and how we value and treat people.*
- *The irony is that we can have all the political, social, and economic freedom in the world, and still live in bondage.... While a life lived in the wisdom of God will be free, even if our political, social, and economic freedoms are taken away.*
- *IN EACH Proverb- what is BETTER. What is the most valuable- in each of these- invitation into freedom.*

#### **✠ The Freedom of WISDOM**

**Proverbs 3:13-15** *Blessed is a person who finds wisdom,*

*And one who obtains understanding. For her profit is better than the profit of silver, And her produce better than gold.*

*She is more precious than jewels,*

*And nothing you desire compares with her.*

- **Silver, Gold, Jewels- these described what would make a person incredibly wealthy. We think- If I was financially secure, I would be free. AND- scripture has a LOT to say about financial wisdom.**
- **BUT even greater is the value of wisdom. Of understanding. Of perspective, good decisions.**
- **So SEEK WISDOM! Be a person who is intellectually humble, seeks to learn, to THINK, to understand, to be led by the Spirit in our MINDS.**

**Proverbs 15:16** *Better is a little with the fear of the LORD  
Than great treasure, and turmoil with the treasure.*

- **What is of greatest value? Not shaky foundation of financial prosperity without integrity. NO- of great value is a heart at rest before the Lord, living in the wisdom of God- for this brings freedom.**

† **The Freedom of INTEGRITY Of Character**

**Proverbs 28:6** *Better is a poor person who walks in his integrity,  
Than a person who is crooked, though he is rich.*

**Proverbs 19:1** *Better is a poor person who walks in his integrity  
Than a person who is perverse in speech and is a fool.*

- **What is 'integrity' here? Honesty. Truthful in all ways. Trustworthy. AND, an attribute of integrity you might not first think of... KINDNESS.**

**Proverbs 19:22** *What is desirable in a person is his kindness,  
And it is better to be a poor person than a liar.*

- **Clear implication- better to be a poor HONEST person, poor person with integrity, than a liar, who ultimately has nothing.**

† **The Freedom of RELATIONAL peace**

- **Freedom of peace, trust, in our personal relationships. THIS IS HUGE, and it doesn't happen by accident. INCREDIBLY VALUABLE- priceless.**

**Proverbs 21:19** *It is better to live in a desert land  
Than with a contentious and irritating woman.*

- **Okay, little OT sexism coming out here. But the point is powerful. It is better to be on verge of starvation- just getting by- than to be bound into a relationship with a contentious person.**
- **CHOOSE YOUR FRIENDS WISELY. Be kind to all- but be discerning with who you grant influence and authority in your life!**

**Proverbs 27:10** *Do not abandon your friend or your father's friend, And do not go to your brother's house on the day of your disaster; Better is a neighbor who is near than a brother far away.*

- **Lots here! But simply... BE A GOOD NEIGHBOR! BE A FRIEND. Cultivate community- develop good and healthy relationships with those AROUND YOU. For when you are in need, they are right there, even if your family is far away.**
- **THIS IS SO PRACTICAL! There is FREEDOM in having good friends- close by- whom you can rely on in time of need. THAT ONLY HAPPENS by YOU making the investment to be a good friend, a good neighbor- kind, eager to help, to listen, to support.**

**Proverbs 17:1** *Better is a dry morsel and quietness with it  
Than a house full of feasting with strife.*

**Proverbs 15:17** *Better is a portion of vegetables where there is love, Than a fattened ox served with hatred.*

- **The poorest person in a home with love and peace is a rich man, a rich woman, a rich family.**
- **Children who grow up with kindness, integrity, honesty, love, forgiveness... those children receive a rich inheritance.**
- **PEACE in our closest relationships- this is of great value, and it is a doorway into freedom of our hearts.**

#### † The Freedom of a secure IDENTITY

**Proverbs 12:9** *Better is one who is lightly esteemed and has a servant, Than one who honors himself and lacks bread.*

- **Need to look closely here. VALUE of knowing who you are, of not needing to build yourself up in the eyes of people. This proverb describes a person who may have wealth, but that is not their identity.**
- **On the other hand is a person who pretends- seeks to find their identity in the approval of others. To do this you must always be performing, and when our identity is bound up in our performance, it's really tempting to lie and pretend. This is bondage.**
- **But by God's Grace, OUR IDENTITY IS IN CHRIST- a secure foundation where who we are is bound up in WHO GOD IS, and what God declares is TRUE OF US because of our faith in HIM.**
- **The VALUE of WHO WE ARE IN CHRIST- what is TRUE OF US IN CHRIST- is one of the great gifts we can learn from scripture.... But moving on.**

#### † The Freedom of SELF-CONTROL

**Proverbs 16:32** *One who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, And one who rules his spirit, than one who captures a city.*

- **Our human perspective is to elevate strength, conquest, external success.**
- **The wisdom of God proclaims that more powerful than these is the wisdom- great value of SELF CONTROL.**
- **This is invitation to search our hearts. Where do we lack self-control? Hard to be more practical than this**
- **As disciples of Christ, we are told that Self-control is a fruit of the spirit- a result/a marker- of our dependence upon God.**
- **By the way, a constant traveling companion of self-control is HUMILITY, and the constant companion of rash and foolish behavior is PRIDE.**
- **Moving on... This one is huge, and a powerful gift from the heart of God... the TRULY VALUABLE GIFT..**

#### † The Freedom of CONTENTMENT

- **The proverbs- and scripture in general- overflow with this truth. Rich is the person whose heart is content. But what is the source of true contentment?**

**Proverbs 16:8** *Better is a little with righteousness  
Than great income with injustice.*

**Proverbs 16:19** *It is better to be humble in spirit with the needy  
Than to divide the spoils with the proud.*

- **Look closely here... these are a portrait of a person who is CONTENT- because what they truly value is**
  - **Righteousness... being right with God**
  - **Justice- a clean heart before God and themselves**
  - **Humility- heart secure in who they are, whose security flows from who God says they are.**
- **Last week we closed with Paul's exhortation to consider what is RIGHT, GOOD, NOBLE, PURE... and think on such things... for our hearts to be transformed by what we PLACE IN THEM.**
- **The very next thing says- in Philippians 4, is the power and freedom of CONTENTMENT.**

**Philippians 4:11b-13** *I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. <sup>12</sup> I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. <sup>13</sup> I can do all this through him who gives me strength.*

- **Paul says- my strength- my trust- my identity- flows from CHRIST, his goodness, his nature, his character, his truth, his love. THESE are of the greatest value- and come what may, I have the freedom of being CONTENT.**
- **One more thought...**
- † **Ultimately, true Freedom is experienced when we are at rest in the presence of GOD.**
- **FREEDOM and REST of our soul, our mind, our heart- knowing through faith in Christ, we are FORGIVEN, new creations, children of God, and right with God.**
- **FREEDOM and rest that we experience when we live in dependence on God, in obedience to God**
- **FREEDOM and rest that we experience as we increasingly live in the WISDOM OF GOD**
- **And FREEDOM, REST, HOPE, and JOY we receive- by FAITH- knowing we live FREE FROM CONDEMNATION- in the PRESENCE OF GOD.**

**Psalm 84:10** *Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked.*

**2 Corinthians 3:17** *Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.*

- **TODAY, may we remember, celebrate, and give thanks for the freedom we enjoy as Americans. It is precious. It is not cheap, and it was bought at a great price.**
- **AND EVEN MORE, as people of faith in Christ- BROUGHT FROM DEATH TO LIFE- may we choose to embrace God's wisdom, and LIVE IN THE GOOD OF the FREEDOM that is OURS IN CHRIST- Freedom of our hearts, our minds, our souls.**
- **This freedom is ours because we, too, were bought at a great price- the price of the cross.**
- **FRIEND- because of what Jesus accomplished through His death, burial, and resurrection, He invites you to enter into his freedom, his rest. If you have never taken the step of faith to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to believe in your heart that He died to pay the debt of your sin, and that God raised him from the dead, defeating sin and death... I invite you to take that step today.**

- ***This is not a step into religion- it is a step into LIFE- freedom for your soul, both now and for all eternity.***