

AM Proverbs 30:24-28 Small and Wise

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[0 : 00] Please turn back in your Bibles to Proverbs chapter 30 on page 665 and we'll consider these words together.

Proverbs chapter 30 from verse 24. Four things on the earth are small, but they are exceedingly wise. The ants are a people not strong, yet they provide their food in the summer. The rock badgers are a people not mighty, yet they make their homes in the cliffs. The locusts have no king, yet all of them march in rank.

The lizard you can take in your hands, yet is in king's palaces. Now I must say I'm very much indebted to the writings of J.C. Ryle for first drawing my attention to this passage and for his comments on it.

So if you would like to read it, he's got some excellent material on this passage. But as we come to these verses, we come to the book of Proverbs. Now the book of Proverbs is a very interesting book.

[1 : 03] It's part of the wisdom literature in the Bible, along with the book of Job and Ecclesiastes. And it's a collection of wise sayings and guidance. And it covers a wide range of subjects.

It makes it quite different from most of the other books of the Bible that we read. One Puritan once said that if most of the other books of the Bible are like long golden chains, where each link, from the start to the finish, they all link together.

The book of Proverbs can be likened to almost like a pile of golden rings as the different sayings are mentioned. And if you read Proverbs, you can see what he's getting at. But every verse is in isolation, particularly when you get past chapter 9.

You see that many of the verses are just singular statements. And this is the way that the Lord has ordered this book. But it can make it quite challenging to form a study or to put a sermon together. But here in chapter 30, verse 24 to 28, we have at least a short chain of five verses, five connecting rings. So this was written by a man called Agur.

[2 : 16] We know little about this man. We just know at the beginning of the chapter that he is the son of Jaca. And he draws our attention to these four small and very insignificant creatures.

The ant, the rock badger, the locust and the lizard. And we are told to learn wisdom from them. We might not expect to find wisdom in such a place.

I think most of us would be more inclined to call rent a kill if we were to see many of these creatures. But we will study these verses in five points. And each verse will be a point for us.

So firstly we will consider from verse 24 the nature of true wisdom. From 25 we will look at the prepared ants. From verse 26 the sheltering rock badgers.

From verse 27 the united locusts. And from verse 28 the persevering lizards. So first the nature of true wisdom.

[3 : 18] We read there in the verse 24. Four things on the earth are small. But they are exceedingly wise. And I think from the outset it is important for us to all know what it means here by wise.

What is true wisdom? Because wisdom is seen as a virtue whether you are a Christian or whether you are not a Christian. There are many godless people out there who appear wise.

Perhaps through their intellect or their success. Perhaps their attitude to life. Even the degree of contentment that they may have.

Might be something that a Christian would like to have. And there is a sort of wisdom which is evident in the ungodly. But we must remember it is only for temporary gain.

For example if we take our first creature in the study the ant. It says that it prepares for the future. Well the wisdom of the world would say. Well yes you must prepare for the future.

[4 : 17] You must save your money. You must get a pension in place. You must make a will. All of which is true of course. But as always with the world.

It lacks that eternal view on things. Which is always the purpose of scripture. So when you are reading Proverbs the purpose of it is the eternal view always. We can see this if we turn back a few pages to Proverbs chapter 3.

If you just turn back to Proverbs chapter 3. And reading from verse 13. Blessed is the one who finds wisdom.

And the one who gets understanding. For the gain from her is better than the gain of silver. And the profit better than gold. For she is more precious than jewels.

And nothing you desire can compare with her. Long life is in her right hand. In her left hand are riches and honour. Her ways are the ways of pleasantness.

[5 : 20] And all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her. Those who hold fast to her are called blessed. And we see that eternal view there.

It's described wisdom as the tree of life. This is spiritual wisdom. Not a natural wisdom. Which leads us to think about God. To think about eternity.

To think about salvation. Righteousness and sin. And most importantly to think about Christ. We saw this when we read 1 Corinthians chapter 1 earlier.

That the wisdom of the cross is often seen as foolishness of the world. But it is the wisdom of God. So we should always have in mind when reading the Proverbs. That these are not just clever thoughts for today.

This is wise instruction for today. But for eternity also. So with that in mind. Let's go to our first creature. The little ant. We must learn from the ants.

[6 : 20] To take thought about time to come. We read that they are a people not strong. Yet they provide their food in the summer. We all know ants.

They are very tiny little insects. They are not strong at all. You could step on one. And you wouldn't even notice you had done so. But for all they lack in their strength. They are very organized.

And they are very hard working. They do all their work all summer long. While the sun is shining. Gathering up food stores. To put into their nest for winter. So that when the cold weather.

And the frost and the snow come. They are safe. And they are snug and warm. With plenty to eat. Earlier on in Proverbs. The ant is also mentioned. The writer of Proverbs says.

Go to the ant. O sluggard. Consider her ways. And be wise. Without having any chief. Officer. Or ruler. She prepares her bread.

[7 : 16] In the summer. And gathers her food. In harvest. So in short. Ants are prepared. Now children. J.C. Ryle does compare them. To a butterfly.

He says. Butterflies are much prettier than ants. They have beautiful wings. And they make a fine show. But they are not wise at all. They fly among the flowers.

All the summer long. Enjoying themselves. Not thinking about gathering food for the winter. So when winter comes. The poor butterflies all die off. But the ants stay alive.

So the wisdom of the ants. Is to prepare for the future. And we can do this. In two ways. Firstly. For eternity. And then secondly. For this life.

Well actually. For this life. We can view the seasons. Of spring and summer. As our youth. And autumn. As our. Perhaps our later. Older years. And then winter. As our last days.

[8 : 12] On this earth. The importance of the wisdom. Of the ant. Is that we must. Prepare for winter. The frost. And the snow. And the rain. Are like sickness.

And sorrow. And our deathbed. Let us be ready. In good time. While we still have light. As the psalmist says. Store up God's word. In our hearts. While we can.

We must pray. And take every piece. Of spiritual food. We can find. While it is still summer. And so. To get us through the winter. Through those last months. And days. That we have on the earth.

But more importantly. For eternity. We must remember. Each of us. Has a soul. That will never die. One day. Our bodies will die. And be put into the ground. But our souls.

Must live on. We must ask ourselves. Are we prepared. To meet the Lord. We read. That it is appointed. To man once to die. And after that.

[9 : 06] The judgment. We must prepare. By coming to Christ. And having our sins forgiven. As the Lord tells. The Israelites. In Amos 4.12. Prepare. To meet your God.

So let us be wise. Like the ants. And think of time to come. Secondly. From verse 26. Let's look at the wisdom. Of the rock badger. The rock badger. Teaches us.

To have a refuge. I don't suppose. Any of you. Have seen a rock badger. Or even know. What a rock badger. Looks like. They're a bit like. A little rabbit. But with.

Short ears. They live in. The Middle East. And in Africa. They can be called. A coney. Or a hydrax. You might have heard. That name mentioned. In the Bible before. And they are weak.

And defenseless. It says here. That they are a people. Not mighty. It's interesting. How the AV puts it. They write. It is a feeble folk.

[10:02] They are not fighters. So they make their homes. In the cliffs. And the rocks. So that when men come. To hunt them. Or predators. Like foxes. Or leopards. Or hawks.

Come. They can run away. To their safe hiding place. Away from the predator. Where they cannot follow them. Or even dig them out. And in this way. They're wise. Again.

Children. J.C. Ryle says. That the little rock badger. Is much cleverer. Than the mighty stag. The mighty stag. With its size. And great speed.

And its fierce antlers. It lies out in the field. All day. And has no place to run to. When men come to hunt them. And is more easily killed. Than the rock badger. While the rock badger.

Is safe. In its little house of rocks. We can go to Psalm 104. Psalm 104. Is one of those psalms. Which tells us about. All the animals. In the Bible.

[10:57] And around at that time. And giving glory to God. For how he has designed. All the creatures. And we can read there. In verse 18. In Psalm 104.

The high mountains. Are for the wild goats. And the rocks. Are a refuge. For the rock badgers. So we see even there. It mentioned in Psalm 104. So the wisdom of the rock badger.

Points us to our need. For a hiding place. For our souls. And this points to us. To our need. For the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the rock. And the hiding place. For our souls.

Again in this life. As well as for in time to come. Because after all. We are weak and feeble. Corrupted by sin. But he is a refuge. For us to run to.

In time of trouble. We can run to him. When we need to flee away. From our enemy Satan. When he is tempting us. When we are mistreated by men. And when we need physical.

[11:55] Or emotional support. In time of sickness and pain. As well as in suffering and sorrow. David many times in the Psalms. Speaks about the Lord in this way.

We know David. When he was hiding from Saul. He would go and hide in caves himself. And I am sure when he was in that cave. He found the security and the salvation. That he had spiritually in Christ.

We sang earlier in Psalm 31. About the need for shelter. And a refuge. Most of all we do need shelter. For eternity.

He is our refuge. From the judgment and condemnation. That is to come. That we all deserve. For we all have sinned in many ways. And we have all broken his commandments. By our nature.

And by our actions. We have all committed idolatry. By not putting the Lord first. We have blasphemed his name. By not honoring it. As we should do. Or even using his name.

[12:52] As a curse word. We have dishonored him. By breaking his Sabbath day. By not using his day properly. As he meant it to do. We have all dishonored our parents.

In so many different ways. We have used hateful words. And even had hateful thoughts. About other people. Which in God's eyes. Is the same as murder. We have committed adultery.

By looking at other people. With lust. Or even images. We have stolen things. Whether it's something physical. Whether it's even something very small. Or even stealing time.

From our employer. And not working. As we should do. We have all told countless lies. We are envious in our hearts. And wanting to have what others have.

As our own. And for all these sins. We have earned God's just and righteous punishment in hell. Because he is a good. And he is a holy and just God.

[13:49] But we are thankful to him. That he is also merciful and kind. And he sent the Lord Jesus Christ. To die upon the cross. And to take the punishment for our sins. That we deserve. That Christ upon that cross.

Endured the wrath of God. Which should have fallen upon us. And we remember those famous words. From Romans 8.1. There is now no condemnation. For those who are in Christ Jesus.

So on that great day of judgment. We are safe from the wrath of God. Due to us for all our sins. Because we can shelter. Into the blood of Christ. The rock of our salvation. And yes he is strong enough to save us. But not only strong enough. He is willing to save us. He is not wishing that any should perish. But that all should reach repentance. So you too must come. And find shelter in Christ. So there we have the wisdom. Of the rock badger. Thirdly. We have the wisdom of the locust. The locust teaches us.

[14 : 48] To love one another. And to work together. Locusts are like. Very large grasshoppers. And one locust by itself. Can do very little. But the thing about locusts is.

They are quite often not alone. They travel around in groups called swarms. And if you were to see one of these swarms. Of locusts coming towards you. It would be really quite frightening. They are like a black cloud.

Hovering across the sky. And especially frightening. If you are a farmer. In places like Australia. Or in certain parts of Africa. And Asia. Where they can come. And they would land on your field of grain.

And they would strip it to nothing. In a matter of hours. There was a really bad swarm. Back in 2013. In Madagascar. And there was over a billion locusts.

In that swarm. And they covered more than half the country. In a matter of months. So locusts are in scripture quite a bit. They are often used by the Lord. As a temporary means of judgment.

[15 : 46] And we. I'm sure we all know about. The eighth plague in Exodus. When the Lord sent the locusts to Egypt. Another place where locusts are mentioned quite a lot.

Is the book of Joel. The land had been devastated. By a locust invasion. And a drought. And they are compared. Well in fact. An invading army. Are compared to the locusts.

If we turn over. Into Joel chapter 2. Verses 4 to 9. Joel chapter 2. Verses 4 to 9. We read here.

Their appearance. Is like the appearance of horses. Like war horses they run. As with the rumbling of chariots. They leap on the top of mountains. Like the crackling of a flame of fire.

They devour the stubble. Like a powerful army. Drawn up in battle. Drawn up for battle. Before them. People are in anguish. All faces grow pale.

[16 : 47] Like warriors they charge. Like soldiers they scale the wall. They march. Each his way. They do not swerve from their paths. They do not jostle with one another.

Each marches in his path. They burst through the weapons. And are not halted. They leap upon the city.

And they run upon the walls. They climb into the houses. And enter through the windows. Like a thief. And even in this. We see the wisdom of the locust. In the fact that they have no king.

Yet they all march in rank. Locusts don't have an apparent leader. They are not like bees. That have a queen bee. They are not jostling for any position. But they do not swerve from their paths. They are not fighting with one another. They are there helping one another. And working together as one. And there is great wisdom in this. Of Christian brothers and sisters. Working alongside each other.

[17 : 45] For the cause of Christ. And though we are all different. And we can hold different views on things. We must love one another. As Christ first loved us. Knowing in that.

We are always stronger together. Jesus told his disciples. In John 13. 34 to 35. A new command I give you. That you love one another.

Just as I have loved you. You also are to love one another. By this all people will know. That you are my disciples. If you have love.

For one another. So let this wisdom be amongst us. Like the locust. We must know that we are no good on our own. A Christian never fares well in isolation. Let us march on together.

As one in Christ. And as we were reminded in 1 Corinthians 12.25. That the members of the body. May have the same care for one another. If one member suffers.

[18 : 41] All suffer together. If one member is honoured. All rejoice together. And finally now. From verse 28. Let's look at the wisdom of the lizard.

We read. You can take them in your hands. Yet it is in king's palaces. Now we learn from the lizard. To persevere. In order to reach glory.

If you had an authorised version. In front of you. You would see. Not a lizard here. But you would actually see a spider. Now. Not that I know much about Hebrew at all. But apparently the words for spider.

And lizard. Are very very similar. Particularly when the lizard. Is some kind of small gecko. And so. Just because their names are close. The AV has rendered it spider.

But our ESV has rendered it lizard. But not that it matters to us. Because for either creature. We notice that it is too weak. And it is both lowly.

[19 : 35] And it perseveres. And finds itself in high places. So we'll use the lizard. As we look at. In our translations. Now these lizards.

Would scuttle around. In people's houses. They would be a bit of a nuisance. A bit like how mice are to us. When they get into our houses. In the northern hemisphere. Lizards would be a bit like that.

But the only difference is. With lizards. Is they could climb up walls. And onto ceilings. And get pretty much everywhere. And they would even find themselves. In the king's palace. In the most ornate.

Wealthy residence. In all the land. You might find a lizard. High up on a wall. All safe and warm. Clinging to some gold gilding. Or something. The lowly lizard.

Has no business. Being in a king's palace. He has not earned his right. To be there. And he has no status. Or position. Why he should be there. But he has forced his way in.

[20 : 31] And he has not given up. And the same is true. Of a Christian. We are but lonely creatures too. And sinful ones at that. But as we've been learning. About God is loving.

And kind. To forgive us of our sins. But to have this forgiveness. We must truly repent of our sins. We must earnestly trust in Christ. As described in Luke 16.

Jesus says. We are to force our way into the kingdom. We are to earnestly strive to enter glory. And he will make us righteous. And he even adopts us into his family.

All this is down to the finished work of his son. Who went before us. So we have direct access to the father through him. In John 1.12.

In those early verses of John's gospel. We read. But to all who did receive him. Who believed in his name. He gave the right to become children of God. And then we can turn to Ephesians chapter 1.

[21 : 29] Verses 3 to 7. Blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

Even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world. That we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he destined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ.

According to the purpose of his will. To the praise of his glorious grace. Which he has blessed us in the beloved. In him we have redemption.

Through his blood. The forgiveness of our trespasses. According to the riches of his grace. Which he lavished upon us in all wisdom and insight. So all this work of us ending up in the heavenly places.

It is all his work. We can take no credit. From predestination to salvation to adoption. He chose us. And this will see its ultimate fulfillment at the end of time.

[22 : 29] In the consummation. The new heavens and the new earth. We'll read finally in Revelation chapter 21. Verses 1 to 3. Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth.

For the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. And the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city of Jerusalem coming down out of heaven. Prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying. Behold. The dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them. And they will be his people.

And God himself will be their God. So let us remember the wisdom of the ants. The rock badger. The locust and the lizard. Let us prepare to meet God.

Let us find shelter in Christ. Let us love one another. And let us find ourselves in heavenly places. In the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[23 : 29] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.