

The Wisdom of God

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- [0 : 00] I mentioned them in prayer there, how precious these words are. I just want to for a few moments just think on them. We've all been in situations, I'm sure, where all of a sudden our plans have been changed very quickly.
- Things happen and you're feeling nice and relaxed and prepared one minute, and suddenly something changes those plans and you're set into a panic. You can be all set to go away on holiday.
- You've got the car packed, you go out of the car, turn the key and nothing happens. There's a panic. What are you going to do? Or you're all set to go on a text come through from Calmark, ferries cancelled.
- Again, how often does that occur and our plans are changed? Again, we see so many people have had COVID recently. A COVID test changes your plans there and then.
- There are so many things that just come our way. Our best laid plans don't always work out. But are our plans the priority?
- [1 : 03] Or whose plans are important? Surely it's not our own plans that so often take priority. But we lean towards that, don't we?
- And yet as we read in these words in verse 5 and 6 of Proverbs chapter 3, they're a great reminder to us of where our plans and our focus is always to be.
- Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him and he will direct your paths.
- We need to be open to a change of plans. Things can change very quickly. And we saw that in our reading in Acts chapter 16 where we saw Paul and Timothy on their journey there.
- Their plans were being changed. Where they thought they were going, suddenly they weren't. The spirit of God stopped them in their tracks, changed their direction. And then in a vision God spoke to Paul about a call to Macedonia.
- [2 : 11] Now Paul could easily have said, that's not the plans we have in mind. That's not where we're going. That's not what we're doing. What was important was that's what God wanted them to do.
- That's where God wanted them. Where he wanted them to go. And so we want to see for ourselves the importance of these words in verse 5 and 6.
- We're just going to go through them individually. Three different parts. Split them into three different parts. And see the wisdom of God in always listening to him.
- Somebody once said, Wisdom is the reward you get for a lifetime of listening when you would have preferred to talk. Wisdom is the reward you get for a lifetime of listening when you would have preferred to talk.
- And when we think of that with ourselves and God, how often do we want to be the ones doing the talking to God? Telling him, this is our plans. This is what we're going to do. But wisdom is listening.
- [3 : 17] And listening requires patience. So we look at these words. And we begin first of all with these words. Trust in the Lord with all your heart.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart. This is where it begins. Trust in the Lord. Not in ourselves.

Trust in the Lord. The creator of heaven and earth. The sustainer of our lives. The God who created all that we see around us.

The God who made us in his own image. And the God who puts faith in our hearts by his grace. And yet we still think that we know better than him.

No. He says, Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Samuel Rutherford once said, Duties are ours.

[4 : 14] Events are God's. When our faith goes to meddle with events and to hold account upon God's providence and begins to say, How will you do this or that?

We lose ground. We have nothing to do there. We leave him to steer his own helm. There is nothing left for us but to see how we may be approved of him.

How often are we guilty of that? Saying to God, How will you do this or that for us? Instead of just looking to God to steer his own helm.

To steer the direction of our lives individually and collectively. That is trust. Trusting God to direct everything for us.

His providence and his will are in his hands. But instead we so often seek our own will. When we think of relationships, whatever relationships they are, without trust, our relationship is doomed.

[5 : 22] If there is no trust in our relationship, where is it going to go? There is always going to be doubt, anxiety, fear, worries. And yet we are told here, Trust in the Lord.

Because we can. We can depend on him, the one who won't leave us. Trust in God as we go about his business, as we go about all that we do in his name.

And trust is very similar to faith. You could almost tie the two together. Trust in the Lord is the same thing. Have faith in the Lord. When you think of that great passage in Hebrews 11 and all these people we read of there who by faith, by trust in God, lived their lives, went forward in life in circumstances where it seemed senseless.

They could have easily said to God, what are you doing? By faith Noah built an ark in the middle of nowhere with no sign of rain or water. But he did it by trust, by faith that God knew what he was doing.

And so many others, that you read in that passage and throughout scripture, they didn't know. They didn't know what was ahead or what they were doing sometimes. But they trusted God.

[6 : 42] They had faith in God. And that's what we are being told here, to trust in the Lord with all our heart, with all that we are. The wisdom of God's word.

There was a well-off lady who was interested in the things of God. And she was searching her Bible for answers. She wasn't trusting in the Lord at this point, but she was showing an interest.

And so she wrote a letter to her minister. And she wrote this letter saying, Will you put down in black and white what I am to believe?

I have been told of so many different texts, she said, and there are so many that I'm confused. Please tell me one text and I will try and believe it.

Well, the minister's reply was this. It's not one text more than another or any number of texts that saves. It's by trusting in a person, by trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ that we are saved.

[7 : 52] And we see the word of God before us. I'm sure this kind of text is a kind of text you see on so many walls and homes. Proverbs 3, verse 5 and 6.

But we don't just trust in these words. We trust in the Lord of these words. Trust in the Lord with all your heart.

And that's what we see Paul doing so often on his missionary journeys and in his life. Trusting in the Lord when change seems to come along. We don't see him asking, why?

Why don't we do it this way? Why don't we do it another way? He goes where he's directed. And as a people that is what we are to be open to as well.

Individually and collectively in our lives. To trust in the Lord with all our hearts. Trust him when dark doubts assail thee.

[8 : 57] Trust him when thy strength is small. Trust him when to simply trust him seems the hardest thing of all. Trust him he is ever faithful.

Trust him for his will is best. Trust him for the heart of Jesus is the only place of rest. Trust in the Lord with all your heart.

that's the first thing that we see here. The second thing is lean not on your own understanding. Lean not on your own understanding.

And again the idea here is of being self reliant. I and I'm sure all of us would love to be able to say we're right all the time.

I would love to be able to say to everyone look I've got the answer I know best but the reality is I don't you don't but collectively we can find the right answer with God.

[10 : 09] Lean not on your own understanding. We all have opinions. We all have opinions about anything and everything in this world.

We all have something to say but they are just that our own opinions. And when we think of the situation that we're in just now a time of vacancy it's a time when we'll hear many different opinions.

Who has the right answer? Can we look to one person here and say they've got the right answer? Well we don't want to lean on our own understanding.

We don't want to lean on our own wisdom, our own opinions. We want to lean on the Lord. That's what the writer here is saying Solomon in his wisdom is saying.

Lean not on your own understanding. The world has changed a lot since the days of Solomon or indeed the days of Paul. But what hasn't changed is that we need to hear what God is saying to us.

[11 : 24] Yet we hear so often things have changed. We've moved on. We've moved on from the dark ages of the Bible. We've got all this wisdom in our world now. We've got all this wisdom all around us.

We don't need the wisdom of God. But in the many things that have changed, some things remain the same. people of fears and anxieties, a people who face joy and sorrows, a people who struggle with all kinds of sin, the needs that we have, the responsibilities that they bring upon us.

All of these things remain the same. They haven't changed. So as you look at the Bible and you see God speaking to people 3,000 years ago through Solomon or 2,000 years ago through Paul, the people are still the same as ourselves.

They're no different. We have the same issues. And in chapter 2, verse 1 of Proverbs, you see what is key to it all is about trusting in the word of God.

My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you, it begins there, this wisdom that is being imparted from God, the value of wisdom, and that we see built on us, you go on through the book of Proverbs.

[13 : 13] And these words, lean not on your own understanding. The word literally means to rest upon something, but you wait down on something, to make you think that this is going to hold me, this is going to keep me up.

Well, our own understanding, our own wisdom, is not. but by the grace of God that he shows towards us, the one whose ways are above our ways and his thoughts are above our thoughts, he imparts wisdom to us.

As the writer James says in the New Testament, if anybody lacks wisdom, let him ask God. And that ties in with just what we have here.

Lean not on your own understanding. understanding. God is there. God is there to be lent upon. Our own understanding, our own wisdom, will so often let us down.

And you just have to look at Paul. When you read Paul's testimony in Acts chapter 9, and throughout the book of Acts, you see people talking about Paul and the wisdom that he was perceived to have.

[14 : 29] But it was worthless. He counted it as dung, he says in the book of Philippians. His own understanding, leaning on his own understanding, led him down a path of destruction and chaos.

He was there destroying the church, destroying the Christians, out to pursue them and persecute them. But then the Lord intervened.

And when you see what was happening then in Paul as he was converted, and as we read in Acts chapter 16 in verse 5, this man who had persecuted the Christians, it says in Acts 16 verse 5, the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers.

Because no longer was he leaning on his own understanding, his own wisdom. He was leaning upon the Lord. And it's always tempting of us to think we have understanding, we have wisdom.

But let's not think so highly of ourselves. We must decrease, and he must increase.

[15 : 45] We must look to the Lord, lean on him and his ways, and wait upon him with patience and with prayer. prayer. And thirdly, you see here in verse 6, in all your ways, acknowledge him and he will make straight your paths.

There is this assurance, there is this promise that comes from God. He will make straight your paths. In all your ways, acknowledge him.

How do you acknowledge God? How do you acknowledge God? Is it just paying a token gesture to him? Is it just by turning up in church? Is that acknowledging God?

It's more than that. It comes back to that wisdom of listening, of not seeking to speak first and have the answers to all of what we see as the important issues in our church.

It's about listening. By acknowledging him, we listen to his word. We seek the guidance of his Holy Spirit. We wait upon him.

[17 : 01] Paul found himself in that situation in Acts chapter 16, waiting upon the Lord. And he found the Lord directing his path.

In Acts 16, verse 10, when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

You see, it wasn't their idea. It wasn't this is our understanding of the situation. They concluded that God had called them to preach the gospel to them in Macedonia.

the Lord directed their paths. And our earnest prayer at all times would be that the Lord would show us his ways, to show us where to go, to show us what to do, to tell us what to say.

In all your ways acknowledge him and he will make straight your paths. This was prayed earlier. When we think even of speaking to people, inviting them to church, these words tie in.

[18 : 19] Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Trust in the Lord that he will prepare that person you're wanting to speak to, to invite along. That there will be an opening, a door opening for you, even before you arrive.

Trust in the Lord. Don't lean on your own understanding. Don't start saying to yourself, they're never going to listen to me. They're going to laugh in my face.

They're going to turn me away. They're going to rip up the invitation. Don't lean on your own understanding of the situation. In all your ways acknowledge him and he will direct your paths.

There will be times when we feel discouraged. There will be times when we meet a closed door. Paul made these things.

The disciples made these things. But it didn't turn them away. It didn't turn them off going out with the gospel. They continued to press on. And so should we.

[19 : 25] To press on because we have the glorious gospel of Christ. And when we think of the amazing ways that the Lord directs our paths.

He's done it in the past to all of you I'm sure. Directed your paths towards the Lord. When you were going in completely the opposite direction. Showing you his wonderful ways that he works to bring you back to himself.

When you trust in the Lord with all your heart. When you lean on his understanding. When you acknowledge him he directs your paths. And God uses remarkable ways to remind us that he loves us.

An amazing story a man on the west side once told me of his days in the Navy during the Second World War. He was on a destroyer called HMS Lapwing.

And he'd been on it for a while. He was part of the crew but he was granted leave to go home in March 1945 as he was told his mother was gravely ill.

[20 : 34] And so he left that destroyer and he made his journey back home to the west side. And what did he find when he got home? His mother was not ill at all.

She was up and about quite healthy quite strong. And he couldn't understand what had happened. How this message had been communicated that she was gravely and he was to go home only to find this was the situation.

After a few days at home he left to go back to rejoin his ship once it would come back into port. The thing was the ship never returned to port.

Since the time that he left it it had been torpedoed on a Russian convoy run. it had sank and 158 men were lost.

Only 61 survived. He wasn't a professing Christian at the time but it spoke to him of the Lord's protection over him and it spoke to him in a powerful way that he came to give his life to Christ.

[21 : 44] His mother lived for a number of years after the war and he himself lived until he was over a hundred and he served the Lord in a strong faith all his days.

The Lord used a remarkable situation a tragic situation to remind him of his protection over him and he came to trust in the Lord with all his heart and God uses different ways and different means to bring us to put our trust in the Lord and to strengthen our trust in the Lord.

It's not just about a moment of trust it's a lifetime of trust an ongoing trust day by day living for the Lord today tomorrow the day after all our days these words speak to us Proverbs is a book of wisdom and there's none of us who have all the answers there's none of us who know the best way to go forward but the Lord does and that's what we're being encouraged to do in these words and when we see the likes of Paul in that call to Macedonia to preach the gospel there this is where it comes from trust in the Lord with all your heart do not lean on your own understanding in all your ways acknowledge him and he will make straight your paths well may the

Lord the same Lord of Proverbs be our Lord to lead us and to guide us in his paths we're going to conclude by singing to God's praise in Psalm 143 to