

Last week we talked about “Attaining Wisdom.”

You are probably familiar with these two references about the beginning of wisdom:

Pr 1.7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge;
Fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Pr 9.10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom,
And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

It is not an accident that these two statements stand near the beginning of Proverbs and near the end of the first section. Proverbs 1-9 introduces the subject of wisdom to us, which begins with the fear of the Lord.

I. Understanding the fear of the Lord

The starting point

1. Beginning = height

Pr 1.7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge;
Fools despise wisdom and instruction.

- Primary meaning of root: “head”
- Metaphorically: chief, leader, top [of a structure or hill]
- Used of things that are “best, foremost”

“Wisdom comes from God, and whoever fears Him receives it.”¹

“What the alphabet is to reading, notes to reading music, and numerals to mathematics, the fear of the Lord is to attaining the revealed knowledge of this book.”²

2. Beginning = starting point

Pr 9.10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom,
And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

¹ Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Proverbs of Solomon*, trans. M. G Easton, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, n.d.), 58.

² Bruce K Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 2004), 181.

- a. The beginning of a series
- b. The beginning of a season (“the barley harvest”)
- c. The first principle of something, as here

“One cannot gain knowledge of spiritual things if he begins at the wrong point, refusing to fear the Lord (*i.e.*, to recognize God’s character and respond by revering, trusting, worshiping, obeying, and serving Him).”³

3. Counterpoint to wisdom

Pr 1.7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge;
Fools despise wisdom and instruction.

- a. Wisdom despised || fear of the Lord rejected

Delitzsch calls the fool the “the hard, thick, stupid”⁴

Buzzell: “arrogant and flippant as well as mentally dull. He is coarse and hardened in his ways.”⁵

- b. Despise: touches on the non-rational component of fear
 - 1) Rationally, the fear of the Lord involves accepting objective revelation, “what God says”
 - 2) Non-rationally, the fear of the Lord involves “an emotional response of fear, love, and trust”⁶
 - 3) Fools want none of these responses

II. Benefits of fearing the Lord

1. Clear **moral judgement** (8.13)

³ Sid S. Buzzell, “Proverbs,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 907–8.

⁴ Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Proverbs of Solomon*, 1:59.

⁵ Buzzell, “Proverbs,” 908.

⁶ Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15*, 101.

Pr 8.13 “The fear of the LORD is to hate evil;
Pride and arrogance and the evil way
And the perverted mouth, I hate.

2. **Longevity** [all other things being equal]

Pr 10.27 The fear of the LORD prolongs life,
But the years of the wicked will be shortened.

3. **Confidence** and **safety**

Pr 14.26 In the fear of the LORD there is strong confidence,
And his children will have refuge.

4. A **fountain of life**

Pr 14.27 The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life,
That one may avoid the snares of death.

5. **Contentment**

Pr 15.16 Better is a little with the fear of the LORD
Than great treasure and turmoil with it.

6. Necessary **humility**

Pr 15.33 The fear of the LORD is the instruction for wisdom,
And before honor *comes* humility.

7. **Preservation** from evil

Pr 16.6 By lovingkindness and truth iniquity is atoned for,
And by the fear of the LORD one keeps away from evil.

8. **Peace of mind**

Pr 19.23 The fear of the LORD *leads* to life,
So that one may sleep satisfied, untouched by evil.

9. **Full life**

Pr 22.4 The reward of humility *and* the fear of the LORD
Are riches, honor and life.

10. Respect

Pr 31.30 Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain,
But a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be
praised.

Conclusion:

Remember these comments:

“Prerequisite to obeying God in a way that pleases Him is fearing Him. Fearing God requires knowing God. Proverbs puts things in the proper order: saving faith precedes sanctification. That is good theology.”⁷

“‘The fear of the Lord’ is an important Old Testament concept and has significant dimensions, At this point in our study, however, it is well just to observe that ‘fearing Yahweh’ is the Old Testament’s equivalent to ‘knowing the Lord’ or ‘being saved.’ Those not born again do not have even the beginning of Biblical wisdom. Hence, it is clear that wisdom comes in a person’s relationship with God. It is not learned at universities. It is spiritual and practical, not intellectual.”⁸

⁷ “Editorial,” *Biblical Viewpoint: Focus on Proverbs 23*, no. 2 (November 1999): iii.

⁸ Terry Rude, “Wisdom in Proverbs,” *Biblical Viewpoint: Focus on Proverbs 23*, no. 2 (November 1999): 9.