

9. Learning to live wisely

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[0 : 0 0] Now we come to our reading of the scriptures. So let's turn to the book of Proverbs, if we may please. Chapter 23. And you'll find this on page 545 of our church Bibles, page 545.

I want to read from chapter 23, verse 29, through to chapter 24, verse 22. The passage I want to take tonight really begins at chapter 24, verse 3.

But I want to go back a little bit before that to give us a bit more context. So Proverbs, chapter 23, beginning at verse 29. Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaining? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who tarry long over wine.

Those who go to try mixed wine.

Do not look at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup and goes down smoothly. In the end, it bites like a serpent and stings like an adder.

[1 : 1 5] Your eyes will see strange things and your heart utter perverse things. You will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea. Like one who lies on the top of a mast.

They struck me, you will say, but I was not hurt. They beat me, but I did not feel it. When shall I awake? Or must have another drink? Be not envious of evil men, nor desire to be with them.

For their hearts devise violence, and their lips talk of trouble. By wisdom, a house is built, and by understanding, it is established.

By knowledge, the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches. A wise man is full of strength, and a man of knowledge enhances his might. For by wise guidance, you can wage your war, and in abundance of counselors, there is victory.

Wisdom is too high for a fool. In the gate, he does not open his mouth. Whoever plans to do evil will be called a schemer. The devising of folly is sin, and the scoffer is an abomination to mankind.

[2 : 3 0] If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small. Rescue those who are being taken away to death. Hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter.

If you say, behold, we did not know this, does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who keeps watch over your soul know it?

And will he not repay man according to his work? My son, eat honey, for it is good, and the drippings of the honeycomb are sweet to your taste.

Know that wisdom is such to your soul. If you find it, there will be a future, and your hope will not be cut off. Lie not in wait as a wicked man against the dwelling of the righteous.

Do no violence to his home. For the righteous falls seven times and rises again. But the wicked stumble in times of calamity. Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and let not your heart be glad when he stumbles, lest the Lord see it and be displeased and turn away his anger from him.

[3 : 4 0] Fret not yourself because of evildoers, and be not envious of the wicked. For the evil man has no future. The lamp of the wicked will be put out.

My son, fear the Lord and the king, and do not join with those who do otherwise. For disaster from them will rise suddenly, and who knows the ruin that will come from them both.

Amen. This is God's word to us, and may he add his blessing to us this evening. Well, friends, can we turn to Proverbs 24 again, please? You may have seen that I've given this sermon tonight the title, Learning to Live Wisely, which is a rather vague title, not necessarily very helpful.

I really want to pick out certain aspects of this passage from Proverbs 24, which do indeed teach us how to live more wisely. The whole of Proverbs is about wisdom, so I trust that as we look at certain individual examples of what it means to live by the wisdom of God, we shall be helped tonight.

Now, I'm tempted to say a penny for your thoughts, as I was reading that passage out a few minutes ago. I wonder how the passage struck you. Did you like it?

[5 : 01] Did it perhaps produce mixed feelings in your heart? I think it's the kind of passage that produces mixed feelings in me. On the one hand, it is a very challenging passage.

It makes me think, I guess it makes all of us think, I'm not very wise yet. I have a long way to go before I've really learned to practice the wisdom of the book of Proverbs. So it is challenging, but on the other hand, it's a very attractive passage.

Because as I read each of its sections, I say to myself, yes, this is the way for the Christian to live. I want to grow in understanding and mental strength and discernment and self-discipline.

And I want my brothers, too, in the Tron, to keep growing as well, so that together we can rejoice as a fellowship in living more wisely in the fear of the Lord. Did I say brothers?

I meant brothers and sisters. I even had brothers and sisters down here. Anyway, I mean brothers and sisters. So what I'm trying to say is that the way of life portrayed here is very attractive. Very attractive.

[6 : 05] It is such a contrast with, for example, the broken down lifestyle of the drunkard, described at the end of chapter 23, or the violent gang mentality of the first two verses of chapter 24.

This life of wisdom described here in chapter 24 is human life at its best under the grace of God. So as we look at this passage together this evening, let's allow it to whet our appetites.

Yes, it is a challenge because we have so much to learn. But the lifestyle described here, by God's goodness, is not beyond the reach of the Christian.

The Christian life is one of continual growth into increasing maturity. Even the wisest Christian in this building, the Christian who is as ripe as a Stilton cheese, is not going to live like this fully and perfectly.

By the grace of God, all of us are able to grow and to make progress in learning to live life in the fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom. So I trust that reading these verses together will help all of us to take one or two steps forward in our understanding and our actual living of the Christian life.

[7 : 21] Now, I'm not going to try and work through this passage verse by verse or look at every verse. There's too much for that. But I want to try and draw out some central themes of the passage.

Let's remind ourselves first of the nature and purpose of the book of Proverbs. It's set out as a manual of instruction for the young. Look back, for example, to chapter 23 and verse 19.

Hear, my son. Now, this son is quite a young man. He could be a teenager. He could be a bit older. But it's addressed to a young person. Hear, my son, and be wise and direct your heart in the way.

Or verse 26. My son, give me your heart and let your eyes observe my ways. So this is wisdom here, which is ideally to be learned when we're young so that we can then practice it all through life. But this is not the wisdom of the world. The wisdom of the world will always tend to be man-centered and self-serving and lacking in integrity.

[8 : 28] Whereas the wisdom taught here in the book of Proverbs is God-centered and neighbor-centered. It teaches us to love the Lord and to love our neighbor. The wisdom of the world will take as its starting point the pleasure and the profit and the advantage of men, especially of me.

Whereas the wisdom of the book of Proverbs starts with the fear of the Lord. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. That's the motto text of the whole book in chapter 1.

So as we read our passage this evening, we're not learning wisdom as if it were a man-centered and man-glorifying skill, as if we were learning, for example, cordon bleu cookery or fine needlework.

The wisdom of Proverbs is not intended to make us proud or pleased with ourselves. It's not here so that we should cover ourselves with gold stars or diplomas in wise living.

It's not so that we should look at a fellow Christian and say, look at this man, here is Mr. Wise. Isn't he wonderful? Let's make him our guru. No, the emphasis here is not on man's achievement.

[9 : 37] It's on the greatness and the awesomeness of God. So this wisdom humbles us. It's not here to make us proud. It's here to lift our lives up to God and to honor him.

So with that in mind, let's turn to our verses. And I think I've got three main points tonight. So here's the first. Let's notice how this wisdom from God brings strength and pleasure.

Strength and pleasure. We'll look here at verses 3 to 7. And I'd like to start with verse 5. A wise man is full of strength and a man of knowledge enhances his might.

So the wise man here, full of strength, is pictured, well, he's pictured really in verses 3 and 4 as a house.

Let me read those to remind you of what comes immediately before. By wisdom, a house is built, and by understanding it is established. By knowledge, the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches.

[10:40] Now, those two verses are describing a process. Rome wasn't built in a day. Neither is the structure that is your life or mine.

It takes a long time to build God's wisdom into a person. In your mind's eye, just place side by side a 20-year-old Christian and that same person when he or she has reached 80.

So have you got that? 20 years old Christian and an 80-year-old Christian, the same person, aged 80. Now, what has happened in those 60 years between the age of 20 and the age of 80?

The answer is that a house is being built. And it's the lifetime process of learning God's wisdom that adds brick to brick and stone to stone. Each of us is a work in progress.

So we start off, we begin the Christian life as we come to Christ in repentance and faith. And then the work, this long-term work of building the house, gets underway. And what material is used in building the house?

[11:47] The answer is God's wisdom. Verse 3, by wisdom a house is built. And by understanding it is established. In other words, strengthened, made solid.

Now, think of a building like this as a parallel. A building like this church is strengthened by the girders and rafters and rolled steel joists that support it.

What holds that roof up? What holds this gallery up so that the people sitting there shouldn't land on the people down below with a splat? Splash? Splat? There are various girders and rafters going on, aren't there?

The whole thing is held together. It's because of this girding by various bits and pieces that this building doesn't fall down when the January gales blow. And in the same way, the human house of the believer is built by God's wisdom and is strengthened or established by God's understanding. And that is a long-term process. And how does it happen? How does God's wisdom get into the very structure of our lives to make them strong and durable so that they can withstand the January gales of life?

[12:57] The answer is by means of the Bible getting into our systems regularly and frequently. That's why whenever a person stops coming to church and stops reading the Bible, the house of his life begins to fall down pretty rapidly.

It's the wisdom and the understanding that come from God which establish a house and make it strong. I came across an interesting illustration of this just a few years ago.

I'd gone as a visiting preacher to a church not so far from here, which had had several decades of good, strong Bible ministry from its pulpit. There'd been years of good work and good ministry going on at this church.

And after the service, over the cups of tea and coffee, I got talking to a couple at the back who proved to be an English couple. They were a middle-aged English couple. And they'd quite recently moved up to Scotland from England.

And the wife of this couple said to me, you know, this church that we've recently joined, it's a very different kind of fellowship from the one that we used to belong to down in England. So I was rather intrigued.

[14:02] And I said to her, in what way is it different? And she said, the Christians here seem to be much tougher than the ones in our last church.

And she meant tough in a very good way. She didn't mean tough in a kind of nasty, hard way. She meant tough in the sense of being durable under stress. So I asked a few more questions about the church that she and her husband had left, the one down in England.

And it was obvious that the Bible did not occupy a robust, central position in the life of that church. So the members of that church were not being given the wisdom and the understanding needed in order to build and establish them as strong believers.

It meant that they weren't being taught about the difficulties of the Christian life, the setbacks and the hardships. They weren't being taught how to cope with adversity and suffering. But a thoroughgoing teaching of the Bible will often touch on the harder aspects of Christian living.

And a church that has been regularly taught such things over decades becomes tough and durable. And its individual members become, in the best way, strong and durable Christians.

[15:13] Just look on to verse 10 in our passage. If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small.

And then look back to verse 5. A wise man is full of strength. And when you put those two verses together, you see that the strength that sustains the believer in the day of adversity is the strength that comes from the wisdom and the understanding which themselves come from the Lord.

Verse 3. It's wisdom that builds a house. And it's understanding that puts in the girders and the joists. Let me make a very practical application of all this.

Every church has to find a new minister from time to time. Now, friends, I very much hope that St. George's Tron will not be looking for a new minister for many years.

But the time will come eventually, even if it's 20-odd years down the track. And when that time eventually comes, the elders and other senior people in the church will need to ensure, if they're wise, they'll need to ensure that their new minister is utterly committed to the centrality of the Bible's message and teaching at every level of church life, certainly in the pulpit on Sundays, but equally importantly, in the children's groups, the youth groups, the home Bible study groups, the teaching events like Release the Word and whatever may succeed that, and in the decision-making groups of the church, the Kirk Session, the church management team, and other decision-making places.

[16:55] In the terms of verse 3, it's God's wisdom, and only that, that builds the house of an individual Christian's life, and it's God's wisdom that builds and establishes a congregation.

And the only source of God's wisdom is the Bible. And if a new minister comes to a church who is not absolutely determined to cause the Bible to course through the veins of the congregation at every level of its activity, that church will quickly find that its girders are collapsing and its steel joists are rusting through.

And I'm not talking about the building. I'm talking about the people. It's the wisdom of God that makes our lives strong. And that wisdom is richly found in the 66 books of the Bible.

Now, God's wisdom, according to our passage here, brings pleasure as well as strength. Let's notice verse 4. By knowledge, and knowledge here is just the same thing as the wisdom and the understanding of verse 3, by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches.

Now, that's a lovely verse which speaks of the interior decorations and furnishings of a house. If you like the curtains, the pictures that hang on the walls, the rugs from the Orient, the bowls of potpourri that you find in some houses, even the photograph of the family dog.

[18:25] So, first of all, in the passage here, we have the structure of the house being built in verse 3 and reinforced. And then in verse 4, we have all sorts of pleasing and valuable additions which are being put in.

Now, that's exactly how any of the houses that we live in is built. The walls and the roof and the flooring and the substructure, all that has to be put in first, the main structure of the place.

And then the furnishings, the ornaments and all those little bits and pieces that make the place comfortable and homely and attractive. And surely verse 4 is teaching us that as wisdom grows, it gives us pleasure and a sense of how truly valuable it is.

So, the face of wisdom, this wisdom from God, is not hard and grim and fierce and utilitarian. It's a sweet and pleasant face.

It brings us joys and satisfactions. Back in Proverbs chapter 3, we read this about wisdom. Her ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace.

[19:32] She's a tree of life to those who lay hold of her. Those who hold her fast are called blessed. I think there's a good reason why we need to get hold of this aspect of wisdom, the fact that it brings pleasure.

The world, the non-Christian world, will often look at the church and view us as being grim and negative and hard-faced. Do you know how it is? As though the church is against everything. You Christians, with your hard-set jaws and your disapproving attitudes, telling us not to do this and not to do that. Now, of course, the Christian has to be anti-sin, first and foremost in our own hearts. But the wisdom of God is not anti-joy. Verse 4 is making the point that as we exercise God's wisdom and use it in our lives, we discover that the rooms in the house that we live in are filled, notice that lavish verb, filled with all precious and pleasant riches.

So to grow as a Christian is to discover all manner of pleasant riches which the world doesn't even dream of. Let me just give three examples.

[20 : 43] First, we used to think, many of us would have done as non-Christians, that gluttony and drunkenness would bring us joy. But we discovered later that that kind of behavior was empty and degrading and that real pleasure was to be found in self-control.

Second, we used to think, perhaps, that a promiscuous lifestyle, a James Bond lifestyle, would bring joy. And then we discovered that there is far more sweetness and joy in marital fidelity. Or thirdly, we used to think, perhaps, that spending lots of money on ourselves and our pleasures was the sure road to satisfaction. And then we discovered that there were much more satisfactory ways of using our money.

And so the list can go on. God's wisdom brings us, in the words of verse 4, a filling of pleasant and precious riches. This is borne out as well by verse 13.

Chapter 24, verse 13. My son, eat honey, for it is good, and the drippings of the honeycomb are sweet to your taste.

[21 : 57] Know that wisdom is such to your soul. Do you see what he's saying? Wisdom is to the soul, as the drippings of the honeycomb are to the taste buds.

And Christians need to discover this. If you haven't discovered it yet, you've got some great discoveries in store. I sometimes find, when I'm a visiting preacher at other churches, that the congregation don't seem to know very much about the drippings of the honeycomb and the pleasant riches of wisdom.

There have been a number of times, in England as much as in Scotland, when I've got into a pulpit to start the sermon. I've opened the Bible. I've looked out at the congregation. And everybody there looks just like a codfish that has just been fished out of the North Sea.

Looking at me like that. And I say to myself, I wonder what can have been going on in this church for the last few years. Have they been clobbered with a rolling pin from the pulpit week after week? Has their joy and delight become deep frozen? Now, friends, of course, God's wisdom will make us deeply serious about life. It will strengthen us for what verse 10 calls the day of adversity.

[23 : 07] But it will also bring real pleasure to us. So let's not be shy of verse 4. Let's seek the knowledge of the Lord that will fill our lives with precious and pleasant riches.

So there's the first thing. God's wisdom brings strength and pleasure into our lives. The whole structure of our life, as the many years go on, becomes strengthened and sweetened.

And this is true of the individual Christian. It's true of the congregation. It's true as well of the Christian family, mothers and fathers and their children. Now, second, God's wisdom brings us freedom from anxiety because Christians have a solid hope for the future.

Freedom from anxiety because we have a solid hope for the future. This is really the main theme of verses 13 to 20 in our passage, 13 to 20.

Let's begin with verse 14. Know that wisdom is such to your soul. If you find it, there will be a future and your hope will not be cut off.

[24 : 17] In other words, once we come to understand God's great plan and purpose for his people, we realize that we have an eternal future security. So in verse 14, just as the drippings of the honeycomb are sweet to the tongue, so is the knowledge that God has an unfading future for us.

That knowledge is sweet to our hearts and minds. Now, of course, the New Testament opens up our understanding of this in much richer and greater detail. It teaches us, for example, that after this life we shall be given, if we're Christians, we shall be given a new body, like the glorious body of the Lord Jesus.

We shall be able to live with him forever and all who belong to him in the new world, the new creation, where there is no pain or death or mourning or tears. And sin won't even dare to show its face in that new world at all.

Now, when you first become a Christian, you are vaguely aware that this is what the Bible teaches. But when you've been reading the Bible for decades, you become deeply aware that that is what the Bible teaches.

And you begin to look forward with increasing anticipation to your entry into the new world. Mark Ashton is a name that perhaps some of you may know.

[25 : 37] He was the vicar or senior minister of a church called St. Andrew the Great in Cambridge. And he exercised a very fruitful ministry there for 20 or more years. When he was 60, he was diagnosed with an inoperable cancer.

And he died last year at the age of 62. I'd known him for many years. He wasn't a close friend, but I knew him quite well. And apparently during the last day or two of his life, when he was at that stage where he was in bed and he hardly had the strength even to speak, apparently he said several times to members of his family, almost home.

Just those words, almost home. Now, that level of joyful conviction and anticipation is the consequence of 40 years of Bible study.

In the terms of our verse 14, that sweet tasting wisdom of God had got deep into Mark Ashton's soul so that he knew that his future hope was secure.

Now, the believer who has this wonderful, secure, eternal future is contrasted here in this passage with the man who rejects the Lord.

[26 : 48] So let me read verses 19 and 20. You'll see the contrast. Fret not yourself because of evildoers and be not envious of the wicked, for the evil man has no future.

The lamp of the wicked will be put out. So there's no future for those who reject the Lord. Their lamp will be snuffed out. So their future is darkness. But the author of Proverbs wants us to understand how this affects our whole attitude to those who rebel against the Lord.

Look at what he says in verse 19. Don't fret yourself. Don't be anxious and upset by evildoers. Don't be envious of the wicked. And he wouldn't have had to write that unless he knew that Christian people can be sometimes envious of godless people.

I wonder if you ever feel envious of successful godless people. Do you know the sort of pictures that we see in our newspapers these days? They appear in the papers and also those glossy, silly magazines that people read on trains.

You know the sort of thing. There's a picture of some handsome, golden-skinned young man, usually an actor or singer or perhaps a sporting star, and draped around him is the most gorgeous girl that you can picture.

[28 : 06] And they're just stepping out of a Ferrari in front of their multi-million pound mansion. And you read the article on, or in my case you glance in the train sitting as you look over at the person next to you, and you see that this beautiful young couple are just about to jet away to the beautiful island of Wonga-Bonga, which is a paradise island where you swim in crystal clear shark-free waters and eat scampi kebabs on the beach.

And you look at your own situation. There you are in the rain at Cross Maloof in Glasgow, earning £18,000 a year. And the green-eyed monster begins to sit rather heavily on your shoulder.

Now our author says here in verse 19, Don't. Don't be envious of these people. You think they have it all, but they have nothing in the end.

Verse 20, They have no future. But you, who are believers, you have a future. Verse 14, Your hope will not be cut off. Now it's the wisdom that comes from God that helps us to see these things for what they really are.

The truth is that even in this life, people of the kind I've just mentioned often come very badly unstuck. There's great misery there in that lifestyle so often.

[29 : 21] Divorce, adultery, damaged children, drug addiction. Think of that poor girl who died, the singer, a day or two ago. Very sad. Tax evasion, in and out of court, all that kind of thing.

That glamour is a mirage. Who wants that kind of life in this life, followed by an eternity without hope? There are no strong girders.

There are no rolled steel joists in a life like that. There is nothing to help them in the day of adversity. So God's wisdom brings us freedom from anxiety and freedom from envy of other people because Christian people, believers, have a solid hope for the future.

Now third, God's wisdom strengthens us so that we can take responsibility for telling the good news to others.

His wisdom strengthens us so that we can take responsibility for telling the good news. This is really the subject of verses 10, 11, and 12. Verse 10 describes the person who is not strong.

[30 : 28] And the reason why the man of verse 10 is not strong is that he is not the man of verse 5. The man of verse 5 has strength and might because he has wisdom and knowledge from God.

He's frail in himself. We're all frail in ourselves. But the man of verse 5 gains strength because of the wisdom that God gives him. Now the thrust of verse 10, if you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small, the thrust there is to challenge us.

It's saying, there is no need for you to be a weary willy or a tired tim. There's no need for you to be a person of frailty, to be like the man of... Sorry, no need for you to be frail.

On the contrary, be like the man of verse 5. Get your wisdom and knowledge from God and then you will be strengthened to tackle the responsibilities outlined in verses 11 and 12.

And what are they? Well, look at first at verse 11. The responsibility there is that we shall be able to rescue others from death. Here's the verse.

[31 : 34] Rescue those who are being taken away to death. Hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter. Now that's a picture of the sad and pathetic plight of those who are not Christians.

And just notice how weak and lost they are. They're being taken away to death. They're rather like the people of the French Revolution times who were being bundled into carts and blindfolded and taken away for the slaughter.

Powerless to resist their captors. And look at the next phrase in verse 11. They're stumbling to the slaughter. Stumbling. Not walking purposefully. They're stumbling like people who are blind or semi-paralyzed.

An unbeliever moving towards death. Moving towards the grave. Moving to hell itself. That is a heartbreaking and pathetic sight.

A person who is stumbling into the abyss. But verse 11 says to those who draw their strength from the wisdom of God rescue them.

[32 : 40] Hold them back from the slaughter. Don't say you can't do it. You can. Because the wisdom from God will make you strong. Isn't verse 11 a great command from God? Launch the lifeboats.

He's saying scramble the search and rescue helicopters. And any church that deserves the name of a church of Christ is going to be engaged up to the neck in rescuing people.

Now I'm well aware that not every Christian person by any means has the kind of clever tongue that can clearly explain the gospel to others. but all Christian people can be involved deeply in the search and rescue operation of Christ's church as we pray together as we help and support and encourage in a hundred different ways.

Think for example of the summer holiday missions and camps which are running at this very moment and the others that are starting later this week where you have this team of maybe 20 leaders a dozen leaders who go away with a large group of children and teenagers.

What is the purpose of those camps and house parties? Well there are several secondary purposes such as the training of young leaders.

[33 : 50] That's a very important thing to do. There are good purposes like the provision of healthy outdoor activities for youngsters. You can even engage in a bit of scientific observation and study such as the close observation of midges and rainfall if you're in certain counties not so far from here.

But friends the primary purpose of those ventures is to rescue children and young people from the power of sin and death. Verse 11 is what the summer camps are all about.

Holding back those who are stumbling to the slaughter. It's also what our regular church services are about. It's what this evening service is about. There are other things that are important as well.

We're here to worship the Lord. We're here to pray to encourage each other and to build each other up. But we're also here this very evening to rescue those who are being in the words of verse 11 taken away to death.

You might be a Christian person here tonight sitting next to somebody that you know is not a Christian. Somebody who is in the words of verse 11 stumbling to the slaughter.

[35 : 02] Let me suggest that at the end of the service very lovingly and gently you turn to your friend and say don't stay on the road that you're on. Turn to Jesus because he is the only savior.

Begin a new life today which ends in life and not in death. Think of it friends the rescue call of the gospel rings out still across the world.

There is still time. Human beings have many needs. we have need of love. We have need of companionship and friendship and a purpose in life and a sense of identity.

But there is nothing that human beings need as much as being rescued from death. And there is only one person the Lord Jesus to whom we can turn if we are to be kept from stumbling to the slaughter.

Now this paragraph is about what we will do when we are strengthened by the wisdom of God. So look on to verse 12. If we say but behold we did not know this in other words if we pretend ignorance of God's command to rescue the dying God will call us to account for our failure to do his will.

[36 : 19] So let me read the whole of verse 12. If you say behold we did not know this does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who keeps watch over your soul know it? And will he not repay man according to his work?

So the Lord will call us to account if we fail to do this great commandment of verse 11. But a true church of Christ which feeds on the wisdom of God week after week will not want to say and will not need to say to God behold we did not know this.

Because we come to understand the reasons for verse 11 more and more as we get to know the Lord and the Bible better. Let me put it like this from a slightly different angle.

When we first pick up a Bible first of all we probably think it's rather like the highway code rules for safe living or moral instructions for a good life.

Now of course it contains moral instruction but as we get to know our Bible better and better we realize that its big subject its central subject is the way that God deals with the human race and how God is moving history towards a great consummation and at this consummation God will reveal a recreated universe a perfect new creation that rejoices in the leadership of Christ from which sin and death are entirely banished and the people who belong to the new creation are Christ's people those who in the words of verse 11 have been rescued from death and held back from stumbling to the slaughter and those of us who are Christians are deeply thankful that we have been rescued we wouldn't want to rejoin the road to death for any money would we?

[38 : 09] It is so good to belong to Christ and as the wisdom from God from the Bible fills our understanding we come to see from the Bible that there are only two sorts of people in the world those who are on the road to life and those who are on the road to death and because we Christians know how wonderful it is to have been rescued from death and how wonderful it is to be journeying to life we want to see others join us we have peered into the pit of hell and we've seen how grim it is we don't want anyone to go that way we want to share the good news of rescue with as many people as we possibly can that's why when God's wisdom from the Bible begins to fill our hearts and our minds we're not going to say to God behold we did not know this we do know it from Genesis to Revelation the Bible overwhelmingly teaches the division of the human race into two groups the heaven bound and the hell bound and the glory of the gospel is that those whose feet are on the wrong road can be rescued as Christians lovingly reach out to them and tell them the good news my feet were on the wrong road till I was about 16 so were yours till whatever age it was that you came to Christ every Christian was once bound for perdition until someone came alongside and explained the good news about Jesus the only rescuer sent from God well time has ticked on we must stop it's time for tea let me sum it up briefly

Proverbs the whole book of Proverbs urges us to desire God's wisdom to get the wisdom of God coursing through our veins as we study our Bibles and this particular passage in chapter 24 teaches us first that God's wisdom brings strength and pleasure both to an individual and to a congregation second God's wisdom brings freedom from anxiety because Christians have a sure hope for the future unlike unbelievers whom we need not envy we must not envy and then third God's wisdom gives us the strength so that as a body as a congregation we can take responsibility for rescuing others now isn't it wonderful friends that this wisdom this kind of wisdom is available to us just think of the tens of thousands of self-help books that weigh down the shelves in the bookshops the how-to books the pop psychology books about how life is going to get better think of the billions of words that are available on the internet on the same sort of subject only one book is needed this one here it is here is the wisdom so let's pray friends that we all have a good appetite for it let us pray by wisdom a house is built and by understanding it is established by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches a wise man is full of strength and a man of knowledge enhances his might dear God our father we thank you so much that you're not content to leave us as babies once we come to Christ but it is your will and your wonderful purpose to make us strong over the course of many years and to teach us your wisdom not like the wisdom from the world and

we pray for all of us here for those who are
Christians that you will indeed develop in us a growing appetite to know your mind to understand
your heart and your values and for any here tonight dear father who are not Christian believers give
them the grace and the courage we pray to turn to Christ now and to discover in their own
experience what it is to be forgiven and rescued and given a new life and these things we pray in
Jesus name Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Again Amen Amen