

"GOOD LIVING IS CHEAP"

Proverbs 12:28

Many people build their lives around the past. But we need to think about living in the present. If we live in the past, or if we live in the future, we are in exile to the present.

There was a young man in the cafeteria in the school. He was returning his lunch tray one day to the counter, but he turned and looked back over his shoulder at the table where he had been seated. Suddenly he felt the bump, and everything on the tray began to rattle. He then looked ahead, and there in his path stood the Principal of the School. Somewhat provoked, she said to him, "you had better read about Lot's wife." Well the lad was relieved, it was not what he expected, but he discovered later on in life - that Lot's wife came to a fearful and abrupt end because of her desire to look at the past - rather than look at the present.

Our text has something to say about a straight road - and it also tells us about a by-pass. It tells us about the way that we are to live. And it tells us about the results that will take place if we live that way.

There was a talk show on T. V. some years ago. And they were talking to a man in a small town who was celebrating his 105 Birthday. Naturally, all the talk finally reached around to the place where the question was -- to what do you attribute your long life. The old man smiled, leaned forward in his chair, and without blinking an eye he said - "I do what the good Lord said I was supposed to do." Didn't do nothing, he said, I wasn't supposed to do. And never over did nothing.

I think that man had the secret of good living and he found the cost of it was very reasonable. But in this world of ours, there are people who are plagued with stress. Who are unhappy with their jobs. With their family. With their station in life. We find the suicide rate climbing. We find that stress and mental health becomes a problem. We find that even with all of our inventions, we have not brought peace and satisfaction - only frustration.

Why has this happened. I think because we have lost our direction. We have forgotten that happiness comes from living what the book of Proverbs calls in this text a righteous life.

Keeping up a righteous lifestyle - does not mean that you are going to be pious. And live in a monastery. It does mean that if you are wise - you will admit that there are some moral laws and absolutes that will determine your destiny and outcome. That God has ordained these principles.

Now the world says that there are no such absolutes - no such commands. They say, live - do as you please. If it feels good, do it. The epic is you follow your own means. But there is proof that that is wrong. God has established a code of behavior. And the world pays a price - poor health, loneliness, depression, etc.

Living a righteous life -- doing what is good, honest, fair and acceptable to God. Brings what the Bible calls a blessing. It is peace to the soul and to the well-being. It is God's reward to those who live righteously. And if we are going to be happy, we might be involved in living the way God wants us too.

There are two or three principles and basics in the book of Proverbs. Which bear on good living or righteous living. Which we need to apply if we are going to be guaranteed the best results.

I. FEAR OF THE LORD

Proverbs 9:10 - The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. So if you want to be wise enough to interpret what the good living is all about - you first need to fear him.

First, what is fear of the Lord. When we were children, we thought it meant to be afraid of somebody. Or to be afraid of God. Which made it very difficult for us to even relate to God. Because it is hard to get close to someone who frightens us. Fear was an awesome thing.

But (fortunately) fear - the word used here - means respect. To revere. And to worship. A wise person holds God in high esteem and worship.

Solomon, Chapter 8:13 - The fear of the Lord is to hate evil. God is holy and we are to be separate and set apart from all that is sinful and evil. He hates sin. So this means that we have a value system in our lives.

Generally, we fail to do this. We shrug our shoulders at evil. We try to relabel

it or ignore it. We do not detest it or hate it with a consuming emotion. You are not repelled by it. You are not hostile toward it. You do not despise it. It is not unbearable to you.

We might (illustrate) with a child who never liked spinach. You feed the child a spoonful and what an awful face. He shakes his head. There is something about the taste and the texture about it that is repulsive. And so the child hates that vegetable. I think this is what Proverbs is saying likewise. We will not be tempted to behave unrighteously - if we hate unrighteousness. If we have a strong opposition to it.

Now, you can test it in your own personal awareness. The more you ask God to help you to see sin, and the more that you look at the situation, you see that he is perfect and that he is pure.

Second, why should we fear the Lord. Simply stated - because he deserves to be worshipped.

Look at some of the (things) that you worship in everyday life. There are people today who take better care of their automobile than they do their children. They spend hours pampering, polishing.

There are other people who put up these Hollywood actors on a pedestal. Even though they know these individuals are unGodly in their lives. Some people worship their pets or their jobs. There are endless false Gods.

Now none of these are worthy of honor. All are flawed, imperfect, and we are told that the Lord is established from ever-lasting. Proverbs 8:23-25 From the beginning, from the earliest times of the earth. There was no depths, no springs abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills - God was. So God is eternal, and God is perfect, and God is worthy of our adoration.

Psalm 96 declares the whole creation should worship God. The people, the sea, the trees, the fields, for the Lord is great and greatly to be praised. He is to be feared above all Gods - V. 4.

God is great, and man tries to bring the Lord down to his level. In the movie "O God" - man introduced a comedy with a puny cigar puffing figure. Dressed in tennis shoes - running around making mistakes. You know, it is no wonder that people do not fear the Lord. They have so many misconceptions. And they use these as the only resources about their knowledge about God.

A wise person gets to know God as he really is. He hunts through the pages of His Word.

II. TRUST IN THE LORD

Now this is the second principle that we find in the book of Proverbs - about good living. Righteous living. And you get it at a low cost. Proverbs 3:5-6 Trust in the Lord with all of your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all of your

There are only two objects of trust - God and self. One is positive and one is negative. One is faithful and one is not.

First, we should trust the Lord - because we are not trustworthy. He is perfect, we are imperfect. Have you ever failed yourself - I have many times.

Think about the New Year's Resolutions you have made -- and half of the year is about gone. And so are all of your resolutions. How many times do you promise yourself - I am going to go on a diet. Do you stay on it? Do you promise yourself that you are going to finish a project - or you are going to change some habit. Or something in your life - but you fail to carry it through. Now God is trustworthy.

Second, another reason we should trust is because life is so complex. Humanly speaking, it is (impossible) to know always - what we should do. And how we should do it. We all need supernatural guidance and instruction. Wisdom would be unnecessary if life were lived in say black and white terms - if we had simply a system. Some do's and some don'ts. We had some yes and some no. But we did not have any gray areas to deal with. When we think about the choices of right and wrong. But life isn't like that - life is complex. And obedience is not as simple as doing one thing or the opposite thing. Without his guidance, we would be lost in the midst of indecision and confusion.

Most of us here are unaware of the choices that we make everyday. Decisions that we make, in a moment - that may effect a lifetime. There are demands made on us - one person says do this. Another person says, do that. So we are bombarded with - you should.

You ought not. And everybody wants a piece of our lives. And they want to help set our priorities.

Now without God as a superintendent of our lives, life becomes complicated. He can reveal to us. 28:26 says ✓ He who trusts in his own heart is a fool. But he who walks wisely will be delivered. ¹⁾

✓ Third, there is another reason that we need to trust God -- because we cannot see into the future. We must plan to make provision for it - because we are living in a time when we are limited and we are controlled by time. Now, what is going to happen is hidden from us. We are warned. 27:1 - Do not boast about tomorrow. We do not know what the day will bring forth. ¹⁾ How true that is.

Just think about how things turn out from day to day. You plan to run some errands - and the car breaks down. You find yourself doing other things. Now without praying and trusting the Lord as we make decisions about the unknown future - we could not have any peace of mind. The fourth thing about this trust is, that it contains both some do's and some don't's.

✓ The first do is in 3:5 - trust in the Lord with all of your heart. Trust, as it is used here, is a wrestling term. Now I do not know much about that sport - except that I know that the challenger comes in and pounces upon his opponent. Grabs ahold of whatever he can get ahold of. And they wrap themselves together - and they stick to each other like tape sticks to a paper.

I think that word has something in trust - clinging to the Lord no matter what happens. You adhere to him - and you never let go. They say the Hebrew Word for trust translated here is (body slam.) Which is a wrestling term. A body slam is not just a little casual bump - into someone. Or being next to someone. But it involves making an impact. It is like two cars coming together at high speed. Trust is more than saying "I believe". It is literally a body slamming into God - cleaving to him with all of our strength.

2 ✓ A second thing we see in this trust is - that the Lord is to be the object of our trust Jehovah God is his permanent covenant name. He is a faithful God - one who will keep our trust. He will keep his promises. And we can trust him.

3 ✓ A third thing is - this (trust must be total and complete) (3:5) - says, we encounter in that text - trust the Lord with all. There is that little but mighty word - (all.) All your heart God did not say to you - trust part of yourself to Him. He did not say, 99% of your heart should be put into it. But here is absolutely that God demands that you trust - not somewhat, not just a little bit.

Now it has been said, to talk about - I can only trust my husband (50%) of the time. I can only trust my wife 50% of the time. Now if I don't have complete trust - then I don't have trust at all. I believe that what we are saying is -- that we need to trust him with all our hearts. You either trust someone or you don't.

4 ✓ A fourth thing - part of our being with which we are to trust - is our heart

Now the Bible speaks about the heart so many times. It is a word for soul. Or the word that means to breathe. The heart is the part of man that gives him life. It supplies him with the get-up and go. The concept of the heart that embodies his emotions, his feelings. His choosing part of your being - his conscience, that helps him to determine right and wrong. His awareness about God and the people around him. His mind. Therefore, trusting God with all our heart means to commit our feelings unto Him.

5- Now a fifth thing, that we ought to do is in V. 6. In all our ways, acknowledge Him. This is practicing the presence of Christ. Dwelling in Him, and keeping Him in the foreground. This is what happens in couples that are married - where they love each other. They have considerations and feelings for the other. They know the likes and the dislikes - and in all of their plans and decisions, they pray. And to make happy, and to contribute, and enrich wherever and whenever they can. The lives of others. And so we acknowledge others - but we acknowledge God in all thy ways. Whatever we are, whatever we do - we are going to honor Him.

Now let me say a word about some do not's. Proverbs 3:5 Do not lean on your own understanding. Now here are some things that you absolutely cannot do. (Lean) literally means to bend toward. I think the book of Proverbs was written in the days when soldiers stood guard with spheres. They carried these long spheres and they had to stand for long periods of attention.

Now, these weapons were constructed to support them. To be sort of a leaning post - to keep them from swaying and leaning from side to side. In a spiritual sense, we are to stand firm in the Lord rather than wavering from His uprightness and bending toward our

own way.

Leaning on our own understanding (implies) a falling away. The opposite is - the body slanting into God. The trust.

What happens when we trust in His way. The Lord. Well, it will make your paths straight - V. (6.) Chapter 3. Once we are depending on God, he is already in the process of directing our lives. His direction is not to boss us but to guide. Which he smoothes the road so we can travel. Without obstacles to block or hinder us.

Have you ever traveled by car on a winding mountain road - and had to maneuver around the corners. They were not easy or safe. There is a lot of difference in riding that road, than a four-lane highway. When we choose our path, we choose one. If we are going to walk after our own wisdom - it will be full of pitfalls. Detours, and gullies.

Many times, we do in a spiritual sense - in traveling in life - we try to take these icy, slippery roads that are winding and we waste time.

III. WHY IS THE GOOD LIVING CHEAP

What will it benefit if I walk in God's way - if I fear, if I trust Him rather than live life on my own terms. What will the reward be. He who listens to God, shall live securely and shall be at ease from the dread of evil.

walks securely 10:9.

Security has many aspects (it involves being loved.) It involves being accepted. In showing us that we are received with affection and with peace of mind. Those who live according to God's righteous standard, do not have to worry about what will happen to them because of wrongs they have done. The unrighteous person does not have that kind of protection - he is constantly faced with reaping the results of the evil deeds. Dreading the time when sin will find him out.

Second, living a righteous life (protects one from danger and harm) 2:7-8 says the Lord is a shield for those that walk in integrity. Guarding the paths of justice and preserves the way of his Godly ones. A shield was used by warriors to knock away weapons of enemies and to protect their lives.

We have seen on T. V. and read in the newspapers and magazines about the little boy who was born with a physical immunity to germs. In order for that boy to survive, he has had to live inside a plastic bubble, in a completely sterile atmosphere. Where no germs can touch him. The air he breathes is filtered. The people who touch him - do so from the outside, wearing special gloves, that are sewed into the side of the home in which he lives. He is sealed off from any external elements. That would infect or would hurt him in any way.

Now when we walk in integrity - in accordance with what we know and believe to be right, moral, and honorable. We are guarded from the dangerous and sometimes the fatal.

Evil cannot harm us by invading our existence.

Third, the things of insecurity are taken away when we live by God's standards. 3:23-24. You will walk securely - and your foot will not stumble. When you lie down, you will not be afraid. When you lie down in your sleep you will be sweet. Just think about the security we have. Each year - in one year, Doctors issued 33 million prescriptions. It has been estimated that 1/4 of the country's population suffers from insomnia. Sweet sleep - for those who rest in him. The fear of the Lord leads a life to one who may sleep and be satisfied by untouched evil. 19:23.

God protects us while we are sleeping - and that is proof of his keeping power. While we are in an unconscious state - of some kind, totally unprotected - we have nothing to fear. That is security.

Another result is - this security keeps us from trouble. If we do right - we will not get into trouble for doing what we should not. For righteousness is delivered from trouble and the righteous will escape from trouble. 11:8, 12-13. So we may have problems and difficulties - but we will be delivered, from a life that will be destroyed.

Another thing about this security and result is that good living is a guarantee. There will be freedom from want. 10:3 says, the Lord will not allow the righteous to hunger. In either the physical or the spiritual sense. He will supply our needs. He

knows what they are. And we may not get all we want - but we will not go without the necessities that make for a healthy body.

If somebody walked up to you on the street and said, I promise to supply you with abundant happiness and a good life, if you'll just trust me, believe in me and do as I say. How would you respond.

What God has done is just that. He has promised if we'll trust him, worship him, obey him, he will give us lives that are overflowing with blessings. The way of righteousness is life. In its pathway, there is no death. The great result of good living is that you are immune from death. No real death at the end of a righteous life. When you live such a life as this - you will walk the straight road and the straight path. And you will have a blessedness untold. That is why I say, really, it doesn't cost a lot does it? The only expense is to trust in Him.