

The Stewardship of Grace Pt. #3: Proverbs 3:1-12

Preached @ Harambee Church by Pastor Michael Gunn on September 27th, 2009

"Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."
Hebrews 11:1

"Faith is not opposed to knowledge; it is opposed to sight."
Dallas Willard

"Stepping out onto the invisible bridge without the assurance of little pebbles to bolster your courage."
Greg Wright

"God did not give so much to us to improve our standard of living, He did it to improve our standard of giving."
Mark Driscoll quoting unknown source

Intro

In our last week on biblical "Stewardship," we are going to take a look at trust and its connection to biblical stewardship. Trust is something that we all have are issues with; especially trusting the people we give money to. There are so many people using unscrupulous methods to take our money, and nothing is as horrific as when the church uses those methods to do it, since they are playing on your fears and guilt, and actually destroy the gospel in the process since they direct your devotion toward what we do for our acceptance before God and not what Jesus has done. Any giving to God is an "Act of grace (Devotion)" not an act of merit. We already are fully accepted by God through the work of Jesus on the cross. Our giving is a result of that gift. As Mark Driscoll says, *"God did not give so much to us to improve our standard of living, He did it to improve our standard of giving."*

Today I want to take a look at the value associated with giving; trust/faith. What does it mean to *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding?"*

From the Head...

Obedience Is The result Of A Changed Heart Caused By God's Steadfast Love (Proverbs 3:1-4)

Our set of verses today begins with Solomon exhorting his son to "Remember" his teaching and to let his *"Heart keep my commandments."* You can't look very far in the scriptures without realizing this is what God cares about. Not religious devotion, but a heart that is given to Him. And then in **v. 3** we see the motivation for this kind of heart change (*"Let no steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you, bind them on your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart."*)

In typical "Proverbial" fashion, we see that the command to obey is completed with a promise of prosperity and success. Words like this are often used to prove a poor theology. Proverbs are statements of basic reality. If you do the right thing, don't drink too much, eat right, etc, chances are you will live longer. These aren't existential principles that are formulas for success. They need to be seen in context with all of scripture and even all of Proverbs that make it clear that the righteous don't always prosper right away (See **Proverbs 10:2-3; 16:8, 19; 17:1; 19:1, 22; 21; 9**). It also must be seen in light of its literary genre (Primer on morality for his son), which looks toward the future when the righteous will rise (**Proverbs 24:16**). Whereas some of these consequences are logical, some of them are realized qualitatively, not quantitatively. The main issue in these promises is the fact that justice will ultimately be done (**Proverbs 3:31-35**). In these verse we are promised that our days will be extended and that we will find favor and success, the very thing that we are trying to gain through disobedience and faithlessness.

Trust In The Lord, Not In Yourself (Proverbs 3:5-8)

So much of our culture and our parenting and our education is centered on "believing in yourself." Somehow we think this is a positive message to our children, but after a couple decades of this message we have created self-centered, narcissistic kids who feel entitled to wealth and success, without the work and hardship that success usually takes. As I said in the intro, "Trust" is very hard for us to do and a barometer for us to see how well we understand the gospel. Trust (Batach) is the primary meaning of faith. It has the idea of 1) to trust, 2) have confidence, 3) be confident, 3) to be bold, and 4) to be secure. These parameters all have something to add to the idea of trusting in the Lord. Proper confidence begins in trust/faith. The question is where is our confidence coming from? Our own abilities? Our achievements? Our money? Trust is the linchpin to obedience, honoring the Lord with our wealth, with service, etc. This trust leads to a Whole body (Meaning a psychological wholeness). Trusting in God brings mental healing to our fallen brains. One respondent to my Facebook question ("How do you define faith?") wrote, *"believing God tells the truth."* Do you believe that?

Honor The Lord With Your Wealth (Proverbs 3:9-10)

Here we have context to the verses in regards to trust and obedience. Giving of our money and wealth is a sure sign of our belief that Jesus is all we need. Note the giving here is the "Firs Fruits" of what you make. Giving to the Lord doesn't

mean you spend on yourself all month and then give to the Lord what is left over. God demands to be first in our lives, not an after thought.

Connected with the meter of each of these verse sets the author promises that God will bless you for giving. Here he promises “Fullness” of the things that money can buy (Wheat and wine). Ultimately they are metaphors for happiness. It is wine that “*gladdens the heart!*” The promise of blessing here is a strong wine that will be a symbol of success and blessing and happiness.

Understand The Discipline Of The Lord (Proverbs 3:11-12)

In our last two verses the author exhorts his son not to “*Despise the Lord’s discipline.*” This is the verse quoted in **Hebrews 12:5-6**). Here we have a strange requests, but one that is real important for us as believers; as kids. When we hate discipline, we are in a sense asking God to stop caring. Only in a trusting heart can we truly not despise God’s discipline in our life. The Jars of Clay song “World Apart” is a very scary song to sing:

*I look beyond the empty cross
forgetting what my life has cost
so wipe away the crimson stains
and dull the nails that still remain
so steal my heart and take the pain
take the selfish, take the weak
and all the things I cannot hide
take the beauty, take my tears
take my world apart, take my world apart
I pray, I pray, I pray
take my world apart”*

Can you say that with any certainty that God is good enough to handle such a request? Is God’s discipline better than the most loving parent?

...to the Heart

What is it in your heart that holds you back from trusting in Him? Why is it that you feel you have to control everything in your life? How is that working for you in regards to your mental health and relational spheres? How is your lack of trust a sign that the gospel has not taken full root in your heart? What is it that you need to repent of, and believe that that God has forgiven you, so you too can trust Him with your wealth, with obedience, with loving Him and others?