

The Beginning of Knowledge - Part 1

Proverbs 1:7

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.” - Proverbs 1:7

I. Introduction

- This verse is one of the more famous and well-known verses in the Book of Proverbs.
 - There are several purposes that Solomon has for the book outlined in the chapter as a whole.
 - But verses 1-7 tells what is surely the more central and significant purpose, not to mention that it is perhaps the most important to you and I and enables believers to gain the knowledge that is badly needed to live in a godly fashion as they walk through the world.
 - One writer described this purpose as: **“To promote wisdom and godly living”**.
 - Also, we might acknowledge our verse here as a theme of the entire book.
 - What it puts forth as this ventral purpose can be described in two sections:

A. First, God desires for us

- **First, God desires for us to have a working, functional understanding** of what true wisdom is and where it comes from.
 - Solomon takes great pains throughout the Book to tell us what this knowledge and wisdom is and how we should view life, in all of its parts and degrees in order to be successful in all areas that God leads us into.

B. We Also Need to Note:

- We might also note that the Book, at least the beginning of it, speaks of **the “fear of the Lord” as the foundation or beginning** of this knowledge.
 - The phrase “fear of the Lord” appears 27 times in the Bible,
 - 26 of those times being in the OT and only one of them, interestingly, in the NT ().
 - 13 times here in the Book of Proverbs.

C. Basic Interpretation

- These words form a motto, as it were, shadowing forth the teaching of this Book.
 - For by “the fear of the Lord” (so often referred to) is meant true religion.

- It comprehends all the principles of godliness.
- It is the basis, or root, of knowledge.
- There is no true knowledge without it.
- But fools, the (spiritually) hardened and stupid, despise the wisdom and “discipline” which come through fear of the Lord, and so long as this is their habit, fools they must remain.

D. An Essential Prelude

- Reverence toward God and the fear of the Lord is the essential prelude to all wisdom and successful living.
 - The Bible, quite understandably, has a great deal to say about this matter,
 - we can call it “Godly Fear” for our purposes here.
1. *God is the object and author of “Godly Fear”.*

Is 8:13 The LORD of hosts, Him you shall hallow; Let Him be your fear, And let Him be your dread.

- Remember that the Name for the Lord - “Lord of Hosts” is essentially a Military term - it tells Israel to remember that God is a God Who can fight for them, defending them and protecting them from ANY attack.
- It is this God who Isaiah tells his readers to treat as ‘hallow’ or to treat as holy.
- Their God is different than any of the gods of the surrounding nations!!

Jer 32:39–40 then I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me forever, for the good of them and their children after them. 40 And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from doing them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts so that they will not depart from Me.

- We might think of a couple different reasons for knowing this is so.
 - **First, God is God** and we are not.
 - He exists in an entirely different level or realm than we are.
 - I’m not talking about a scientific kind of idea here,
 - but just that as the “holy” One,
 - we know that God is utterly “different” that any part or member of His creation.
 - “Different” or “separate” is actually the primary or basic meaning of the word “holy” in the Bible.
 - Man, as a creation of God, and as a sinful and rebellious one at that.

- He is, by nature, about as far in the opposite direction as can possibly be thought of.
- The only way that man can come, at least to some degree, in a godly direction is to, as Solomon indicates here,
- adopt the “fear of the Lord” which is, as Solomon says, the beginning of knowledge.
- That lead us to our second idea...

2. *“Godly Fear” is clearly put forth and understood through Scripture.*

- In fact, the Bible is the ONLY place where men can understand and gather the fear of the Lord.
 - Spiritual wisdom is not a matter of any human device or thinking.
 - We do not and, in fact, cannot understand the fear of the Lord,
 - or Godly Wisdom for that matter,
 - by any human device, save, perhaps,
 - by our ability to read!
 - Our only available device, is by means of prayer and the earnest seeking of it via the Bible.
 - Men don’t like this to be true, but it is none-the-less.
 - Solomon tells us so in number of place here in Proverbs,
- The place we have under consideration here is the first and best known of these places
 - He mentions it again:

Prov 2:3–5 Yes, if you cry out for discernment, And lift up your voice for understanding, 4 If you seek her as silver, And search for her as for hidden treasures; 5 Then you will understand the fear of the LORD, And find the knowledge of God.

3. *This “fear” is not something that men know instinctively.*

- It is true, according to Romans 1 & 2, that
 - all men know that there is a God and
 - that they are accountable to Him.
- But it seems that this “built in” knowledge is very different knowing the “fear of the Lord”.
- It is described in a number of fashions throughout the Scripture:
- We’ll undertake a discussion of these descriptions next time!