

Ecclesiastes 7: 19-22; “Wisdom Strengthens the Wise” - A Bible Study
presented by Pastor Paul Rendall to those gathered at
the Rendall home on January 19th, 2011.

Once again we are focusing on the practical benefits of having wisdom. “Wisdom strengthens the wise,” it says in verse 19. In these verses we will learn that obtaining the wisdom which is from God will give you more strength to do what needs to be done in righteousness, than your having all the influential and powerful men of the city on your side. The intent of these verses, I believe, is to convince us that it is not essential for the believer in God and Christ; that they be popular, or that they somehow must believe everything that is said about them. But it is essential, to glorifying God, to have wisdom from God on how we can come to have a realistic view of ourselves and other people. The question that we want to ask this evening is this: In what ways does wisdom strengthen the wise? And the answer from these verses is 3-fold. 1st – Wisdom strengthens the wise more than all the help and influence of men in public authority. 2nd – Wisdom strengthens the wise so that they believe that there is not a just man on earth who always does what is good. And 3^{rdly} – Wisdom strengthens the wise so that they will not take to heart everything that is said about them. Let’s see if we can learn some things that will help us to be wise in all of our dealings with other people.

1st – Wisdom from God strengthens the wise more than all the help and influence of men in public authority. (Verse 19)

“Wisdom strengthens the wise more than ten rulers of the city.” I believe that this is a little known principle of truth among people in general. Why do I say this? Because many people are not used to going to God for wisdom and strength. They instead think and believe that it is only people in authority; people in political government especially, or people in positions where they work, go to school, or church, who alone can help them. They do not really believe that God Himself can help them in any direct sense. But turn with me over to James Chapter 1, and verse 5. “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.” “But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.” “For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.” Do you see here, how straightforward God is about your receiving wisdom from Him? Many people do not have wisdom because they do not ask God for it; and then when they do ask, they may not be asking in faith. Ask yourself if you are a person who asks for wisdom from God? Now, let me qualify this by saying that there is nothing necessarily wrong with going to people in positions of political authority or in a church, to ask them to help you. They may be in a position to do so. Turn with me to Proverbs Chapter 24, verses 5-7. “A wise man is strong, yes a man of knowledge

increases strength; for by wise counsel you will wage your own war; and in a multitude of counselors there is safety.” “Wisdom is too lofty for a fool; he does not open his mouth in the gate.”

Now you can see from this, that a part of the wise man’s strength is that he does not think that all truth and wisdom resides in himself. He sees that it is a very good thing; it is a very wise thing; to seek out other people who he has reason to believe are wise; and to ask their advice about what should be done in this or that case, or how this or that difficult situation is to be resolved. And really; if you are perplexed on how to proceed; if you will take counsel with a number of good Biblical counselors; how much better it will be for you; to insure a right decision; a decision which will cause you to be safe in the sight of God, in terms of your own thoughts or behavior. If you are wise, you will want to know what the right thing is to do; you want to know what would honor God and truly help other people. But Proverbs 24: 7 says, a fool will not “open his mouth in the gate.” That is; that even if he does go to the elders which sit at the gate; he will not open his mouth. The “gate” was the place where decisions for the city were made and the political rulers of the city were there present, to take questions from people who had need of wisdom or help. However, even being there, in that good situation of counsel, the fool will not open his mouth. Usually, in those days, if you knew that there were to be 10 men sitting in the gate as rulers; you would be assured that you would be able to resolve whatever difficulties you might be having in relation to almost any situation of difficulty that you found yourself in. But, our text says that wisdom from God strengthens the wise more than ten rulers of the city.

And so this should lead us to conclude God’s wisdom goes beyond men’s counsel. And we should be able to infer from this that it is wrong to put the government of your city or your country into such a position in your mind and heart that they are seen as the highest authority, or greatest help in your life. It is wrong to think that somehow God should not be sought first; and trusted in more, than all the political authorities in your life. It is wrong to think that the authorities in government can provide for you better, and keep you more safe than God Himself can. God can use the means of Government to do those things, but He is certainly not limited to it. And neither are you to put those earthly authorities into the position that belongs to God in your mind and heart when you have needs. Turn over with me to Psalm 118, verse 5 – “I called on the Lord in distress; the Lord answered me and set me in a broad place.” “The Lord is on my side; I will not fear, what can man do to me?” “The Lord is for me among those who help me; therefore I shall see my desire on those who hate me.” “It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man. “It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes.” This Psalm, which can be applied equally well, both to David and to our Lord Jesus Christ, tells us that David was surrounded by enemies. He had learned by hard experiences in the day of battle, that ultimately and primarily, it was the Lord who was His strength and His song, and He had

become His victory. Even though greatly outnumbered, God gave him the strength to take them all on, and to prevail over them. He might have tried some other way to resolve his difficulties and put his trust in his own military strength, or in men of rank and power, or some compromises with the nations coming against him. But he knew that this was not wise; it would not strengthen him really; it would not honor God, or really help him at all. “It was better to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in princes.” Look at Psalm 20, verse 7. “Now I know that the Lord saves His anointed; He will answer him from His holy heaven with the saving strength of His right hand.” “Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the Lord our God.” “They have bowed down and fallen; but we have risen and stand upright.” You see; it is not the strength or the number of chariots and horses; it is calling upon the name of the Lord that brings the provision and defense which is truly needed. God can, by the use of feebler means than worldly men boast in; bring to his people the victory. It is indeed, a matter of where your trust is. Is your trust in God?

This can be applied very practically to ourselves today. When you come into situations of difficulty or need, do you immediately think to yourself; here is another situation in which I can trust in my Lord? Here is another situation in which I can prove His power to help me deal with my enemies, or to provide for my needs. Or do you immediately run to people in authority to do this? Do you seek the Lord first? Remember Matthew 6: 31 -34. “Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’” “For after all these things the Gentiles seek.” “For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.” “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” Here is the principle of principles for the Christian, in relation to having his or her needs met. Seek first the kingdom of God; seek first His ruling over your life; His taking you under His wing; His defending you and delivering you from all your sins and all of your enemies. Seek first, to walk in His ways; in accordance with His laws and the principles of truth which are found in the Bible; learn to live by faith and not by sight; learn to trust in Christ and His righteousness and not your own. Learn to depend upon His grace to strengthen you in every situation; and then, you can be assured – All these things related to eating and drinking and the clothing that you wear; all these, He shall provide. Only faith can establish this perspective in your heart so that you will find the reality of the truth of the promises of God. Without exercising that kind of faith in God; that He can give us the wisdom which will lead us to salvation, and the provision of our every need; we will not be wise people. But with faith in God, we will.

Now 2ndly - Wisdom strengthens the wise so that they believe that there is not a just man on earth who always does what is good.

Verse 20 says, “For there is not a just man on the earth who does good and does not sin.” The word, “For” begins this sentence. This sentence explains the

reason that we should trust in the wisdom which God gives, rather than relying upon even the wisdom and strength of just men who are in political office. “For – there is not a just man on the earth who does good and does not sin”. Notice that it is “a just man” that we are speaking of here; not an unjust man. Unjust men should not be allowed to continue in their position of authority; if the righteous can do anything about it, without taking matters of justice into their own hands. This verse is implying, however, that we do tend to put a just person up on a pedestal when they come into political office; trusting and hoping that they will be wise in everything that they say and do. We trust that they will do what is good and right, in everything that they undertake. We trust that they will always give us the answer which will strengthen our hearts; the answer that will cause us to believe that they will continue to do good things while they are in that office. We believe that this is not unrealistic. After all, it is a trust; their being in the office of authority. And all of our expectation is that they will lead us in government, and counsel us in such a way that all will go well with us now, and in the future; in accordance with our expectations, because they are a just person in authority. In this country, this expectation becomes even more a reality for us because we have been a part of the process of electing those just people who hold the office that they hold. And so, when things do not go well for our city, or our state, or our country; even though they apparently are a just person; there is still a tendency to want to blame them for everything which does not go well. Perhaps we have found ourselves bitterly disappointed in that just person. We then assert to others, some aspect of our own observations in relation to that situation or person, showing where they were deceived or wrong in the decisions that they made, or the actions that they took; implying that we could never think such a way, or do such a thing; forgetting this truth that we are looking at now. “For there is not a just man on the earth who does good and does not sin.”

This is often how we think, if I am not mistaken. This can happen in relation to city government, or on any level of authority. It can happen even in the church that we attend. So how are we to be wise in relation to how we think about just people who are in positions of political office in city, state, and national government; people who may not have been wise in some particular ways? Our text says that we should remember that they are not perfect, and when we find out that they are not; that we would remember this text. Let us cry for wisdom to know what we personally should do; how we personally should speak. Perhaps we should seek their replacement based upon what they might have done wrong. But it is more likely that we should remember that even in regard to the best of men; there is not one just man on earth who does good and who does not sin. Perhaps this realization should humble us. Perhaps it will even lead us to pray for those who are in authority over us; more than just to criticize them. Wisdom will strengthen you to think this way. Wisdom will lead you to pray for others; especially those who are in political authority over you. Turn with me to 1 Timothy

Chapter 2, verse 1. “Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men,, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.” “For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” Now, this is an exhortation which takes in all who are in authority over us; not just the righteous persons. The object of our praying for all these persons in authority over us is; that “we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence”. This is the wisdom that strengthens us to do God’s will. It is to remember that God is sovereign over all men. He is able to bring about good things for His people; even through men who are far less than perfect. Turn to Proverbs Chapter 21, verse 1 – “The king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord, like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes.” Wisdom will strengthen the heart of the wise to believe this great truth; to rejoice in it; and to ask, “Lord, how can I do the most good for the city that I live in?”

Then Finally - Wisdom strengthens the wise so that they will not take to heart everything that is said about them.

Verses 21 and 22 say, “Also do not take to heart everything people say, lest you hear your servant cursing you.” “For many times, also your own heart has known that even you have cursed others.” Let us remember that even though it is true that people may speak mean and hurtful things about us; that we do not, by God’s grace, need to take it to heart. If it is something related to our character, we should no doubt consider what is being said, and ask ourselves whether it is true or not; and if it is, we need to pray and ask the Lord to help us to change and to become righteous in relation to whatever sin or defect of character is being seen in us by others. But let us not be those who after we have heard something spoken about us or against us; that we feel that we have to respond to defend ourselves in everything that is said. It is just not necessary. We should think to ourselves, of what the Lord Jesus went through; He being perfect, pure, and holy. John 15: 24 and 25 – “If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would have no sin; but now they have seen and also hated both Me and My Father.” “But this happened that the word might be fulfilled which is written in their law, “They hated Me without a cause.” The Lord Jesus did not take their words against him to heart. Instead He went on to die for some of those who hated Him without a cause. In our case; we who do have sin, and who may have sinned in cursing others in our heart; we should remember to try to be more like Jesus in this regard. We should remember the words of Titus 3: 1 – 3. “Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men.” “For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.” “But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man

appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us....” Let us remember this and not take to heart everything which people might say to us, or about us. The wisdom which is in the grace of Christ will teach us to do this.